

# BATCHELDOR BROS.

RADIO AND TELEVISION SERVICE

51 MUSKET PARADE, LITHGOW. 2790  
FAX & PHONE (063) 513020

TETIA  
TESA



TELEVISION & RADIO  
TECHNICIANS



*glyb*  
2571

**Compiled by Colin Ferguson Palmers Oakey early 2012.**

The following is about the Batcheldor brothers Des and Lester. I first met them in 1985 when they came here looking for gold. These boys were wonderful people, interested in everything especially if it was technical. At one stage when they were interested in "the heavens" Lester said to Des "It was just on the TV that NASSA have lost that satellite you were following", Des has a look and there it was. So he contacted NASSA told them where to look. They later presented him with a plaque in appreciation, I saw it on the wall of their house.

When they came here they stayed in a cottage on our place. Of an evening we would sit around the fire and yarn. One story of their early days in their teens was that their father would bring them out to the Sunny Corner area on the weekend and work a "show" they had there. They wanted to spend their holidays there, but dad had to work, so they talked him into bringing them out and letting them camp. No, said Mum, what happens if something goes wrong". The boys said not to worry they would take their homing pigeons and send one home each night. After three days when they were having breakfast they heard dad coming in the Chev 4. On arrival he was not happy but, pleased to see they were OK. He had been worried as none of the birds had arrived home. Let one go each night they said. At this stage Des said we were worried as they were good birds, then we found the reason. There was a hawk perched in a nearby tree and a trail of feathers down the hill.

Des fussed over Lester and "mothered" him, cooked the meals and saw to his every need. They were great mates, did argue at times, never very serious though.

Recently I was able to get a loan of some books, notes, and a few pages of the stories that Des had written. These records are held by their executors. I have not reproduced all that is contained as some are just old receipts, there are a lot of records. Records of their gold nuggets, records of the testing of the several muzzle loading pistols and long arms they had, records of radio frequencies and the people they talked to, astronomical data, notes on radio and TV circuits and on and on.

What I have done is make up a chronologic list of events and from various notes put together Des' history of various phrases of their lives after gold. I have recorded it all verbatim.

## **1955**

Jan 1955	Muzzle loader shoot at Bill Lewis range St Bowenfels
5-4-55	I start as cleaner at S A F ( <i>small arms factory</i> )
20-4-55	Start in J S C at S A F
22-4-55	Lester gets knee action Pontiac
Mid 55	Terraplane purchased, old Chev 4 traded in
17.18-8-55	Lester left steelworks

## **1956**

27-4-56	Lester left for National Service
June-July 56	Lester sick in Army
25-7-56	Lester home finished with Army
19-10-56	I am retrenched from S A F

## **1957**

10-1-57 Lester starts at Rocla Pipes  
23-2-57 Lester starts at Woollen Mills  
June 57 I have Asian flu, get interested in astronomy  
July, Sep 57 I work for Dept Public Works  
Late 57 Time of Hudson straight 8 and Pontiac

## **1958**

28-1-58 I start S A F as process worker  
14-4-58 Lester starts S A F as cleaner  
Winter 58 Doing piers of house  
Late 58 Cementing retaining walls of house

## **1959**

Early 59 Purchased short wheelbase Land Rover off McNeil  
Late 59 Building observatory roof (flat one)  
Xmas 59 Spent mining gold at Hampton

## **1960**

Early 1960 Buy long wheelbase Land Rover from Oberon  
24-6-60 Buy 2 old Land Rovers from Rocla Pipes  
19-9-60 Monday Win 1st prize in lottery  
7-10-60 I leave factory after winning lottery  
14-10-60 Lester leaves factory, Work gold at Hampton  
12-11-60 Purchase diving gear, look for gold in Turon and Hill End etc

## **1961**

Early 61 Fit out shed as TV workshop. Start on Radio, TV service  
28-2-61 Buy Holden Panel Van  
Aug 61 Putting in sanitary drainage TV Service

## **1962**

11-10-62 Buy Topper boat  
20-11-62 Buy Playboy speed boat  
Late 62 Skiing at Mt Canobalas

## **1963**

Early 63 Lester starts back at factory  
July 63 I start back at factory  
28-9-63 Buy Kombi Van  
Late 63 Holiday at McLachlins with Pieface (Nuggetty )

## **1964**

Year of boats on Colo and Hawksbury holidays at Cowpers at Colo

## **1965**

23-10-65 Buy Land Rover from Allans  
27.28-11-65 Compete in Bridge to Bridge Ski Race  
26-12-65 Wyangala Nat Park stayed 1 week looking for coins and relics

## **1966**

21-10-66 Purchased Holden Panel Van  
30-10-66 Dad dies at 5-30 pm  
Late 66 I go to assembly at S A F

## **1967**

Jan 67 Skiing at Chifley Lester barefoot  
4-5-67 Buy Suzuki motor bike \$371-00 Interest in fossils  
2-9-67 Land Rover from Buttce traded Valiant  
9-11-67 New workshop being built

## **1968**

1-6-68 Read of plane crash Mt Werong. Cleaning mould off roof  
26-9-68 Purchased Holden Monaro (Red)

## **1969**

Jan 69 Fishing at Gulf, Oberon dam, hunting fossils Ben Bullen  
21-2-69 Had hernia operation 2pm  
21-3-69 Sold 3 HP motor to Fred Webb \$80-00  
17-9-69 Buy Monaro 350 GTS trade van  
Dec 69 12 ½ " telescope finished, hernia belt purchased

## **1970**

Jan 70 Start grinding 12 ½" mirror (never finished) very wet summer

## **1971**

## **1972**

12-4-72 Bluei dies 9 pm

19-4-72 Got Pug from East Minto

## **1973**

## **1974**

19-6-74 Mum has cerebral bleed

21-10-74 Simmo dies

13-12-74 Bedford van Hire purchase Cash price \$4487-00

## **1975**

## **1976**

## **1977**

## **1978**

9-5-1978 Henden Det Co. 2 Coingetters \$159-88. Also bought Beach Combes and one other. Looking for coins and relics Zig Zag, Clarence, Etc.

23-5-78 Smoke the cat died last night

5-8-78 Pigmy Possum dies

16-11-78 Mum has a fall at night

15-12-78 Mum dies

19-12-78 Mums funeral

## **1979**

19-1-79 Got Fritz aged 8 weeks

Big nugget found Hill End, TV News, chap from Bathurst

27-4-1979 Hennon Det. Co. Whites 5000 M/D \$411-00. Did some detecting around Dark and Sunny Corner

4-7-79 Buy Morris 8/50 P/Van \$950-00

August 1979 Fathers Day nugget was said to be found south of Hill End. Later was given as Ophir, years later. Big publicity got us going out Dark Corner, Sofala at Bathurst Point with the Whites 5000D and Coingetters etc.

6-10-1979 During long service leave visited Windyer. Bought Compass Yukon 77B with 8" and 12" loops off Ray Coomber (a TR detector) \$670-00 we also ordered a 2" loop. Same date bought a Garrett Deepseeker off N T Sanders Kelso \$592-00 7 ½ x 10 ½ coil. I used the Garrett at Bathurst Point Sofala and noticed it cranky on the ground and the 10 ½ coil heavy to swing. At this time we did not use ear phones except if you did not want to be heard. Found no gold. We went out in the Nissan Patrol and the Bedford Van

November 1979 We found 2 ironstone specimens nuggets at the George Fofers Hampton Mine with the Garrett Deepseeker 2oz. 18 DWT gold.

3-12-79 Eric Youngs Motors New Daihatsu F20 KJV- 470 \$7017-00

December 1979 Went with Browns to Maisi Burges property on Crudine went up Back Creek detecting. Ian Brown found 1 oz rich specimen with our Whites 5000D

8-12-1979 Went to Windyer and Hargraves with the elder Pilley. Met Max and Stanton Pilley at Windyer and Polly at Hargraves Got permission to detect on Long Creek in front of Stanton Pilleys, also to dredge. Went for the day in the Nissan

7-12-1979 Bought Keen dredge of Ray Coomber \$868-00

December 1979 Made several trips with Browns to Alamo, Back Creek, where Ian got his nugget, no luck. Also began dredging in the Crudine Creek behind Burgers house with Ian Brown.

## **1980**

1-1-1980 New Years Day. Found 1 DWT nugget at the Alamo with the Garrett and 7 ½ coil.

Jan 1980 Dredging in Crudine with Ian Brown very hot. Sometimes we went out in the Bedford Van (it was roomy)

30-1-1980 Bought Davey Pump and Fitz off Whalans \$479-60 for blasting up the bottom

18-2-1980 Bought 2 Mavericks and 1 Rustler off the Hendon Metal Co \$384-69. We would have made trips to Windyer detecting and the Alamo and Hampton. In the late autumn and winter we went out a lot looking for coins and relics with Mrs Jenkins from Rydal. We went around Rydal, Sodwalls, and Tarana looking at old houses and railway construction sites etc.

August 1980 Did some tests with buried targets at Sunny Corner and decided a big coil was necessary for deep nuggets. Made a rough harness to help swing the 10 ½ " coil. Lester would have had Coin Magnum (he exchanged the Yukon for it in late 79

21-8-1980 Didgy buys Rustler \$300-00

23-8-1980 Saturday found 2 nuggets of gold 11 oz at Back Creek Crudine. (So reads my diary)

On the Saturday in question Lester and I and Fritz the doberman dog drove into Maurice Burges in Back Creek Crudine, from the back way, this is from the Ilford- Sofala road at Windy Gap across the bush and down the hill into the upper reaches of Back Creek. We were driving a blue Nissan Patrol 70-71 model.

We parked some 400 yards up stream from the old gold workings we called the Alamo and began to detect in the unworked ground. Lester and Fritz went up what was later called Marks Creek and I mover up Back Creek and onto some of its tributary gullies. I was using a Garrett Deepseeker with a 10 ½ in coil and it was well extended as a pole mount out supported with a fishing rod section held in a haversack with a cord on the end of the rod.

It was probably about 10-30 am when I was attracted to a break in the ground which looked in the distance a bit like old work. On getting there I saw it was not. The area was on a slope of the ridge between a tributary creek and Marks Creek. I found a target and dug it up it was a horse shoe, I was not using head phones in those days. The second target was a part of another horse shoe. The third target was deeper and in hard ground with a good few imbedded stones. My digger was only a small rabbit hoe. I must have grubbed down about 10 to 11 ins and the target was still jammed in the hole. On cleaning dirt out with my hands I saw the gleam of gold. I had no idea how far down it went.

I went looking for Lester and found him a good way off in Marks Creek. He returned and tried his Coin Magnum over the target, it read treasure. Together we worked at the hole and finally got it out, about the size of a somewhat flattened duck egg. It was dirty and we went back to the truck and washed in some water. It was heavy and showed gold and quartz, we did not know how much it weighed. We searched again, Maurice Burges had came up to the Alamo to feed cattle and he must have seen us. He did not come up. After ½ an hour I got another signal and dug up a smaller specimen from 6 to 7 ins about 10 yards from the first. All other signals were junk, bullets, nails etc. for the rest of the day. We left early. The specific gravity test gave 8 oz of gold for the big nugget and 3 for the smaller. But on later calculation gives 7 ½ for the big one and 2 ½ for the small. We were very entranced with the find in virgin ground. On the Monday we took the nuggets to work to show them. Unfortunately the find got into the papers and over the air.

25-8-1980

Docket Hendon Metal Co 1x840, 1xRustler, 1 maverick 536-61

The next weekend we went back to Maurice Burges house and he had heard of our find over the air and congratulated us. We knew he had seen us up Back Creek on Saturday and he even asked if this area was where we made the find. I had to lie, and say we got them on Sunday at Bingletree.

This meant we could not go back and search Back Creek (we were now busting to do so) . We had purchased 14IN Garrett coil and were hoping to get even bigger nuggets deeper. We went into Back Creek the back way and I searched while Lester kept watch with binoculars and CB radio. It slowed things down a lot. Did not find any more nuggets. We had now reached a week long service leave (which we had put in for before we found the nuggets.) and we spent a lot of time scouring the Back Creek area, returning to our secret patch only when it was safe to do so.

We found no more gold until near the end of the leave we found a ¾ DWT nugget in what appeared to be an old ants nest in our patch. Memory is not good of who found this small nugget (1993) 13 years late but we think it was Lester using a Red Baron. Warrick Burges and a friend came up that day and we showed them the small nugget (or did we ) (it would have given our patch away). To this day no other nugget has been found on this patch.. A reef of quartz cut across the gullies here at an angle and we wondered if the nuggets came off it.. The nuggets do not fit together. There were faint signs of an old road or track not far from the nuggets, did they drop off a cart coming down from the Back Creek hard rock mines some ½ mile further up the gully. The quartz and the gold in the specimens has some rounding indicating some erosion perhaps they were brought down by water from the reefs further up the creek.

The year before (1979) Brownie had found a 1oz nugget at the Alamo. It was also a similar specimen and I have found a 1DWT there. Other small pieces are found there still. Lester found a ½ oz solid (but very flat) at a later date to the spec finds.

Several points come out of this. At the time (late 1980) we only searched in virgin ground between workings etc. of in free ground well away from workings We never looked in mullock heaps (giving the oldtimers credit for not throwing nuggets out on a shovel). We did not use headphones at the time of the find, but had these at the time of the one month search.

Sept 1980

On long service leave for one month, searching the Back Creek area and also at Long Creek.

Bought 14" Deepseeker coil of Sanders

4-9--1980

Hendon M/D Co 1x840 \$309-00

12-9-1980

Hendon M/D Co \$309-00

15-9-1980

Aust G Supplies Jones 3-73 Freight (Pulse Industries)

19-9-1980

Hendon Red Baron/S/12 \$649-00

24-9-1980

Freight Jones \$8-89

20-10-1980

Hendon M/D Co M/D \$415-00

In Oct

We must have contacted Richie Hough about going into Nuggetty Gully and made 3 trips there before Xmas and one to Long Creek for nothing. Must have been a very dry summer as we purchased a dry concentrator from Rynstyle 17-10-80 \$809-00. Also in the late spring we went to Mauri Burges At Crudine with Didge and Jack Green dredging in Crudine. We purchased a surface dredge like theirs from Orange (Jim Picker) and purchased a trailer to carry it in early Nov. (Trailer rig will tell)

## 1981

Jan 1981

Dredging on Crudine with Digby and Jack Green Holiday. Early in month heavy rain put the creek up. So we all went up to Back Creek. Digby and Gary dredged while Lester and I detected Lester detected a ½ oz nugget at the site of the Alamo in the afternoon. It is called the Dog Nugget from its shape. All began scouring the surrounding hills looking for more old works, and Digby found some in South Arm of Back Creek and Mark Green used the Whites detected a 1 ½ oz specimen. It began to dawn on us that these nuggets were thrown out on mullock heaps. Lester had been using a Relic Magnum to find the Dog nugget.

18-1-81

Aust Goldfields Det coil \$172-92 a bigger coil for the Relic Magnum. I found other small nuggets near where Mark got his and some further down the exact date or quantity not recorded (probably 3 and in Jan 81)

The wether was very hot and Digby and Jack did not have much faith in their Rustler detectors.

26-1-81 Aust Day Lester found 2 nuggets of gold with Relic Magnum 8" coil. 1 ½ oz and 2 ½ oz at South Branch of Back Creek. The 1 ½ oz gross (the slab) a spec in Marks branch and the 2 ½ oz gross spec in the main branch. Both on mullock heaps. This find of nuggets in mullock heaps turned our attention back to Nuggetty Gully Windyer and we returned there.

1-2-81 I got the Jelly Bean 19 DWT 3GR Garrett Deepseeker 10 ½" Lester got the Tooth 7DWT 9GR Compass Relic Magnum. Lester got the First nugget 1 DWT 10 GR, Rough Face 1 DWT 16 GR, Hutte 9GR. Total of 31 DWT 11GR for the day. We showed Richie the 2 smallest and a few relics for fear he might withdraw his permission to search as it was a drought.

5-2-81 2<sup>nd</sup> First 17 G and Pear 23 G all very pure rounded gold no stone

7-2-81 Fletchers Creek 20 G. Richie came down to Fletchers Creek and told us the big Yank had got a good one in Nuggetty during the week, so we walked over to Nuggetty and got 20 G and 14 G,

14-2-81 Lester got 3 with Relic Magnum Pointed Ironstone 1 DWT 21 G, 1 DWT, 8 G

21-2-81 Nuggetty 1 DWT 8 G, 9 G, 3 G,  
In between these we had first gone to Dam Creek with Didgie

28-2-81 Marks Creek 1 DWY 16 G, ¾ DWT. We were making more and more trips out with Didgie and family to Crudine and Dam Creek. Dam Creek did not show up very well to start with. On the first day Lester got 3 small ones. Peter Healey the owner told us an old retired couple from Bathurst were working there over the last 6 months and had got some nice nuggets. We concentrated on the mullock heaps and noted that the Bathurst couple had done the same. After the first trip we could not seem to get any more. We visited Jews and Dry creeks. We met the old couple one day Alex and Edna Hargans, they both had Garrett Deepseekers. Also this time March 81 Didgie and Jack Green seemed to fall out and Greeny did not go out with us much. Lester and I offered them a trip to Nuggetty Gully but only Jack Green accepted. We went out one day Greeny in his old Holden car with Mark his son and Lester and I in the Daihatsu F20. We struck a heavy storm and rain over Aarons Pass. When we tried to climb the hill to Nuggetty with Greens gear in the F20 it slipped and would not climb and we found Didgies kids had clipped the hubs out on the previous day trip to Dam Creek.

26-3-81 Nuggetty Gully The Mouth 9 DWT 15 G, Large 1DWT 13G, Small 12 G.

29-3-81 Went to Nuggetty with Ernie Clements (who had purchased Bounty Hunter 840 from us) and worked downstream. I got the Bottom nugget 1 DWT 14 G. We noticed on this trip that a lot of backhoe holes had been dug in Nuggetty. I think this was the last time we were let in. When we rang Richie up at a later date (It must have been some time later to ring him up perhaps we heard something) we were told a claim had been pegged on Nuggetty and we could not go in there. Sometime Didgie decided to get a better detector and we got him a Garrett Deepseeker through Rynstyle probably around 16-3-81. I remember the day he first used it we worked down where Dam Creek crosses the road.

9-3-81 Jews creek or Wallaby Creek I got 9.5 G nugget with Red Baron

22-3-81 Rough and porous 2 DWY

25-3-81 The Bird 3 DWT 5 G, with green rock 1 DWT 6G These were got between the Big Bend gate and the mine. About this time Alex and Edna followed us to Jews Creek and mentioned they were going to Victoria for a month or so. One day about this time we had a strange thing happen when we went separate ways at Dam Creek and on meeting at dinner time we had all found some coins. Didgie had some copper coins, Lester had found an old shilling near the Big Bend, and I had gone upstream with the 14" Garrett Deepseeker had found 4 ½ crowns just before the mine (at the present site of the caravan).

11-4-81 It was a nice autumn day Lester and I were dry blowing a mullock heap (actually it was half a hopper load) near the present site of the caravan. Didgie and his kids were working detecting down on what we called the flat. He would be going over new ground (not mullock). The ground here was extremely noisy. We got a 15 G nugget in the dry blower. It was near dinner time when Didgie came up in his Landcruiser for lunch and showed us a ¼ oz nugget he got on the flat near a sluiced area. We were digging off the mullock and detecting over the mullock before putting it into the dry blower and just before dinner Lester got a target under what had been removed using the Red Baron. When he dug it out it was covered with calamite with some gold showing. It was a 1oz 9DWT 12G nugget we called the Parrot. After dinner Diggy and Co went back to the flat, we decided to stay where we were and give him a good chance to get some more.. In about an hour we heard the Landcruiser roaring up the creek towards us. We thought one of them must have got snake bitten. Didgie was yelling out. He had a 3 ½ oz nugget, a flat sort of one. Once again it had come from beside the sluiced area on the flat.. He went back again and we waited an hour or so before joining him, there was no animosity at this time between us and we felt he deserved to find some nuggets. We went down later after washing up and had a look at where he found the nugget. It was Saturday and when we went home we rang him to find out what the nugget weighed, we decided to go out again on Sunday and give the flat a good go. We went out on Sunday and found Alex and Edna arrived also. We did not tell them about the nugget. We detected all day for no gold. The next weekend was Easter and Didgie had to go away. Greeny got word of the Big Find and we arranged a trip out there over Easter, Brad Wilson had bought a Red Baron off us he was invited so from memory it was Jack and Mark Green Lester and I and Brad Wilson.

19-4-81 It was reasoned that a big coil might be better to cover the larger area of the flat and Didgies nugget had been deep. So I had the 14" coil rigged on a harness (haversack and fishing rod) and used the Garrett Deepseeker. I think Lester used the Relic Magnum or the Red Baron, Mark Green had the Whites 5000D Jack Green the Rustler.

I got The Fist 15DWT, The Cat 9DWT 9G, The Bean Seed 5 DWT 15G, The Knot 1 oz 2DWT 15 G, Lester got one it may have been the Bean Seed, Brad got a little one 1 DWT or so, Mark got a ½ oz outside the south fence, the Knot was also outside the SW fence.. Jack Green was the only one not to get anything. I only showed them the Fist. It convinced Lester and I of the advantage of large coils on the flat. Didgie was not overly pleased when he heard people had been over his claim. Then we entered a period when we made a lot of trips to the Flat. Winter was coming on it was too cold to dredge and Dam Creek was reasonably close. Didgie now seemed to go through a bad period of getting gold. He would get plenty of targets, hands full of nails, bullets etc, but no nuggets, were as Lester and I kept getting nuggets. About this time we bought 2 more Garrett Deepseekers and a 14" coil off Rynstyles.

13-5-81 Rynstyle Garrett 7 2/1 x 14" coils \$559-00  
24-4-81 Dam Creek 11 G  
25-4-81 Back Creek Plum Mullock 1DWT 20 G

Lester and I went out there through the winter, often in the Diahatsu  
A chap that was working for Peter Healey with a backhoe and Didgie and we had him spread a lot of mullock over a weekend or two and got some more nuggets this way.

2-5-81 Back Hoe 2DWT 20G, Back Hoe 5 DWT 20G Sunday Back Hoe 3 DWT 17G  
9-5-81 Upper Creek porous 5 DWT 5 G Mine Mullock NSW nugget (det) 5 DWT 8 G  
10-5-81 Small Dredge 7 DWT 2 G Small Pea 16 G  
17-5-81 Dam Creek iron stone cracker bedrock 6 DWT 2 G, Deep Nugget bedrock 5 DWT 9 G, Grub bedrock 3 DWT 1 G, Jack bedrock 1 DWT 6 G  
20-5-81 The Beetle 5 DWT 18 G, A wet day at Dam Creek, snowed at MT Lambie on the way home.  
24-5-81 Rynstyle M/D \$424-36  
6-6-81 Big Mud 11 DWT 13 ½ G, Small Mud 3 DWT 17 G, Garrett 1 3 DWT 10G  
13-6-81 The Last Flat 2DWT 2G  
20-6-81 TR Nugget 8 DWT 20 G  
30-6-81 Rynstyle M/D \$467-00  
11-7-81 The Penguin 2 DWT 18G  
16-7-81 We bought a Bloodhound attachment for the Garrett Deepseeker from the Gold Prospectors for \$350. It was to go deeper for any large nuggets on the Flat. It was not successful. Now at Dam Creek on the  
19-7-81 The Bug 2 DWT 2G  
9-8-81 The Spider in the creek itself 1 DWT 18G  
22-8-81 Iron spec 6 DWT  
30-8-81 Leaf 14 G  
18-8-81 Prospectors Home Whites 6000D \$791-10  
7-9-81 Prospectors Home coil \$167-00 Alex had returned and had a Whites 6000D and a big super loop coil and we felt he would get deep nuggets on the flat so we purchased the Whites 6000D and big coil 15"  
18-9-81 Octopus 5 DWT 12 G  
7-10-81 The Wheel Rut 4 DWT 6G got after a hot day with 14" Garrett. Nuggets getting hard to get on the flat. About this time we camped out for the first time on the flat. We camped with Didgie and his kids, We camped in a tent with stretchers and sleeping bags and had a very cold night. Later we returned and camped a night in the Bedford Van at the top gate, it rained and blew. Also about this time Didgie luck changed. He found the Heart nugget about ¾ oz, another at the end of the day 1 oz, then the Oldman nugget 1 ½ oz. All on the flat with 14" We doubled our efforts  
24-10-81 The Barnicle 5.82 DWT  
31-10-81 The Old Woman 10 DWT 2 G wet day  
5-12-81 The Snake 10 G, probably named because of Fritz's encounter with a snake, we would have been camped in a small tent on the flat  
27-11-81 Purchased a Toyota Landcruiser long wheel base petrol off Bathurst Toyota. The nuggets on the flat were getting impossible to get. We were shut off from Nuggetty Gully The Back Creek was not yielding anymore nuggets and Marie Burgers either sold out or trying to do so, So we felt we would have to travel further afield. Ophir and Burrendong diggings beckoned We would need to camp a night and could sleep in the Landcruiser and get to rough places which we could not do in the Bedford Van. The Bedford Van was traded in. Both Didgie, Lester and I made some scouting trips to Ophir in the late spring of 81  
24-12-81 Wattle Flat small nugget specked  
26-12-81 Ophir The Peanut 8 DWT 8G  
27-12-81 Ophir 6 DWT 12 G. The Duck 1 DWT 16 G

**1982**

2-1-82 Ophir Salvation Bob 1st Whites 6000D 8" 7.77 DWT  
3-1-82 Ophir Salvation Bob 2<sup>nd</sup> 2 ½ DWT, Salvation Bob 3<sup>rd</sup> spec 4.4 DWT  
4-1-82 Didgy bought a CB radio off us for \$210-00  
5-1-82 Box Ridge Creek 1 at 1 DWT 14 G  
8-1-82 Kerrys Motors s/h Sea Topper \$450-00  
10-1-82 Box Ridge Creek 2 & 3 15 1/2 G 8 G  
15-1-82 Spring Creek Burrendong 2.6 DWT Didgie made the big Kidley on the trip to Burrendong.  
24-2-82 Home built caravan TW 2691 off A Williams \$500-00. About this time Lester and I got some small nuggets at Stanton Pilley's lease.  
28-2-82 Ophir 1 DWT. This was probably the time we took the caravan to Ophir and ran into Barry Maggs and the Sydney club. He had found a big nugget the weekend before.  
19-3-82 Spring Creek Burrendong 1.2 DWT. Lester and I returned and dug off Didgies mullock  
27-3-82 Dam Creek 1 DWT 14 G Garrett 14"  
4-4-82 Lewis Ponds Creek with Clem Thompson and Didgie, The Holster 7 DWT 8 G, The Boat 5 DWT  
9-4-82 Lewis Ponds 2 small 1/3 DWT each  
10-4-82 Ophir 1 small 1/3 DWT

- 8-5-82 Dam Creek The Boxing Glove 8.2 DWT Whites During this time we had some feedback from Nick Tremain on the happenings in Nuggetty Gully from Didgie who worked with him. In late May the word was the people who had the claim had gone. Lester rang Ritchie Hough sometime in June and he said it would be OK to go in but to ring before we came. We rang in mid June and he, John Hough were away but we got his niece June who said it would be OK to go in.
- 19-6-82 Nuggetty Gully 3 nuggets total 2 DWT 2 G
- 26-6-82 4 small nuggets 2 DWT 23 G mostly got with Whites 6000D We must have met Richie on his return from the Gulf country. He mentioned he could get us onto a property where gold had been specked (Downys) on Pyramul Creek. He took us there one day and introduced to Downy (an old man) and down to where the gold was. It was a fair walk along the creek.
- 31-7-82 Downys 2 small nuggets 5 & 6 G A2B, Lester had just got it off Dan Cooper in SA
- 6-8-82 Nuggetty Gully The Tulip 9.8 DWT Diamond .8 DWT A2B
- 14-8-82 Nuggetty Gully 5 small nuggets 1 DWT 6 G A2B. The Hand picked it up in Pickup Gully 2DWT 4 G
- About this time we had taken Didgie for the first time into Nuggetty Gully. He was there when I picked up the nugget in Pickup Gully. I had wandered away from Lester and Didgie in Nuggetty and gone down stream. The nugget was what are called black faced not like a nuggetty nugget and reminded me of the nuggets on the flat in free ground. It was thrown out on the side of a small creek and I felt I might of found another area like the flat with nuggets in free ground. I did not tell Didgie (we were now scared of his arse).
- Lester and I took a day off and went out to Nuggetty, probably next Monday. We spoke to Richie and John Hough and went down to the new area. Found a lot of targets but no gold. Have never found anymore to this date.
- 22-8-82 Pyramul Creek (Downys) 10 small nuggets 1 DWT 17 G. Lester got these with his A2B Didgie and I decided to buy one also. Somewhere about this time we approached Ritchie to see if we could bring the caravan out to Nuggetty Gully. We must have felt that there was scope there for a base. Ritchie had mentioned new areas he would get for us at Hargraves etc. Nuggetty was yielding small nuggets with the A2Bs. The caravan had made one or two trips to Ophir and one to Dam Creek in the Autumn. It had then been parked for the winter in the back yard. We can't remember the exact date or what vehicle towed it out to Nuggetty, It probably was the Toyota
- 31-8-82 Nuggetty 10 nuggets 3.6 DWT A2B
- 5-9-82 Fletchers Creek 6 nuggets 2.2 DWT A2B
- 9-9-82 Dam Creek 2 nuggets 1 G & .8 DWT, Fat 2.5 DWT Long 2.5 DWT
- 11-9-82 6 small nuggets 2.9 DWT. About this time Didgie camped with us at Nuggetty on at least 2 occasions with his kids. He was there with his camp when Darryl Jones arrived and camped there when he found the 1 ¼ oz nugget. At our long service leave I think we took a fortnight. We moved in for 3 days stays. We bought a muzzle loading rifle for Ritchie and John and left it at the Stanly back door, they were away. As night fell it began to rain, it had been a drought. Lester went up and put the loading kit in a plastic bag and hung it on the back door. It rained steadily, not heavy but lightly with a mist closing in. It was very peaceful in the caravan. The weather during this stay was generally very cold and black easterly with high winds day and night
- 19-9-82 Nuggetty Gully 12 small nuggets 3 DWT 14 G. Picture Nugget 2 DWT 7 G
- 27-9-82 Hargraves spec 2 DWT 10 G
- 29-9-82 Dam Creek ¾ DWT. Long Creek Nuggetty 8 nuggets and 13 nuggets 9 DWT 4 G
- 4-10-82 Nuggetty Hargraves 12 nuggets 3 DWT Hargraves Ducat ¾ DWT
- 9-10-82 Nuggetty 10 Nuggets 4 DWT 21 G
- 16-10-82 4 nuggets 2 DWT 7 G
- 30-10-82 Lewis Ponds (Pitts) Little Heart 5 DWT 7 G
- 00-11-82 Nuggetty Heat Nugget 2DWT 19 G Some were about this time Oct/Nov 82 we bought the camper van off Tom Hutchinson
- 00-11-82 Nuggetty 6 nuggets 2 DWT 11 G
- 28-11-82 Long Creek The Face 2 DWT 13 G, 2 DWT 11 G . About this time we had Clem Thompson camping with us at Nuggetty. Nick got us all to Scabby Hill Apple Tree Flat.
- 12-12-82 Scabby Hill nugget 1 DWT 13 G, Mini Heart 2 DWT 12 G plus 18 small nuggets 6 DWT 18 G
- 19-12-82 Long Creek and Scabby Hill 3 small nuggets 1 DWT 4 G The Bear 3 DWT 10 G, The Foot 2 DWT 13 G At about this time Nov/Dec we camped in the camper trailer at Mrs Pitts Lewis Ponds with Clem Thompson. Dec saw us move into Marie Barretts with Clem Thompson He found a good nugget, We found a few small ones. About the time of the Xmas break up he found on his own trip another good nugget 1 ½ oz or so. Then without really saying where in Barretts he got it he went away on a trip to Victoria. We went out to Barretts with the camper van and worked the bend where the caravan is now for some small nuggets
- 1983**
- Xmas holidays we made 3 trips with Toyota and camper trailer to Grenfell, very hot, leased dry blower, got some nice gold.
- 7-8-1-83 Nuggetty Lead Grenfell 4 ½ DWT & small nuggets 11 DWT, Dry Blower 13 DWT 8 G. Treasury Grants no count of nuggets probably 1 ½ oz + small gold. Near the end of the holidays Didgie saw the Grenfell gold and we arranged a trip to the Burrandong with Nick. The nugget count from here on is vague.
- 26-1-83 Croakes Gulley with Nick 2 DWT 15 G Clarkes Creek + Pyramul 4 DWT 3 G. About this time I has a big row with Clem Thompson over his secret finds of gold at Barretts and we parted company. This shut us off from Ophir and Pitts etc. We seem to have drifted away from Dam Creek also,
- 12.13-2-83 Jackhammer trip to Nuggetty 4 DWT 20 G

19.20-2-83 Clarks Creek and Nuggetty 3 DWT 22G  
26.27-2-83 Nuggetty 2 DWT 20 G. I think at Easter Jack Green and Didgie Lester and I camped at Nuggetty and detected round Croaks. Greeny got a good nugget Went from there on way home (hot day) to Scabby Hill. Somewhere about this time probably 1-5-83 Sunday John McCrae tied it up for us to go up to the Apple Tree Flat diggings owned by Jack Stubbs. We went up after lunch and Didgie got a nice 4 oz nugget in no time. Lester and I got 6 DWT 11 G in small nuggets

4-5-83 We all went out Lester and I got 10 nuggets 9 DWT 19 G. Many other trips were made there. One day Lester and I went out on a Saturday , Didgie always went Sunday. We intended to go to Scabby Hill but the river was up so we into Apple Tree Flat. We got a couple of small nuggets but when Lester told Didgie on the phone that night he got quite upset we had gone in without him. From that time on we did very few more trips together. Before this happened we had the idea of buying a small backhoe to spread or dig into mullock heaps at Nuggetty etc. We had used a jack hammer on some of them and got gold. A back hoe at Portland came up We approached Jack Green and Didgie to go in shares but after first thinking it was a good idea they declined. Lester and I bought the back hoe and stored it at Ian Bannings property at Morangaroo It was \$1300-00. We had asked Richie Hough before we brought it up if we could do the Nuggetty heaps and he agreed at the time. The back hoe was in a bad state of repair. Having split with Didgie and Clem we were a bit cut off from new areas to search. So we spent the winter doing up the backhoe and buying and doing up a trailer to tow it on. The trailer was bought from young Sullivan down the lane We spent a lot of money on it'

4-3-83 Para Tools Penrith Clay Spade. When we went out to Nuggetty in the Spring we found Richies horses had trampled down the caravan annex and kicked a hole in the caravan. We took long service leave in Spring to shift the backhoe out to Nuggetty. When we went out to see Richie Hough about bringing it out we were told he was thinking about selling out to developers. The trailer we were working on was not ready so we hired a trailer from the top garage. It was a big job to get it out to Nuggetty and unload and bring the trailer back in one day. We went out and camped and towed the backhoe over into Nuggetty. For the whole of the long service period I don't think we got a pennyweight with it. We dug holes and spread heaps to no avail. It was a wet spring and we have a lot of pictures. Went out again in summer more pictures.

25.26-12-83 Pug very sick It threw a gloom over Xmas and New year. We took old Pug out to Nuggetty camping but it was really too late. We had to wheel him down to Hells Gate in the wheel barrow, his wind was gone and he had trouble breathing, it was his heart. When we were camped in the caravan with him that a strange thing happened. Sometime before in the winter at home I noticed he was cold at night on the back veranda where he camped and threw him out an old army greatcoat. We were camped in the caravan wit Pug on the mat at the side of my bunk. One night I dreamed I awoke very cold and a shadowy figure threw something over me to keep me warm, it was the army greatcoat. We made at least one trip to Apple Tree Flat. It was too hot for him. We still were getting a few small nuggets there

29-12-83 Car trailer reg and stored at Merrangaroo.

**1984**

7-1-84 Poor old Pug died at home, all those trips we made out over the last few years he usually remained at home especially the camping trips. Fritz nearly always went but not pug. He was 12 years old.

13-1-84 Got red cattle dog from Cow Flat called him Dick

24-2-84 Buy Jackeroo \$11623-00 trade in 78 Daihatsu \$4300-00

26-4-84 Buy Stihl chainsaw. \$245-00 Ritchie Hough spoke that much about selling the property that we towed the backhoe back to the caravan and covered it up ready for quick removal. Towards the middle of the year we became friends with Clem Thompson at work and arranged to go back out to Max Barrets. We went first to the Doctors property at Dead Horse Gully. Then we went back out and mat Max Barret next Saturday. Clem found a 2 oz nugget on that day, no trouble at all. This sort of thing went on for a lot of weekends.

22-9-84 I found a 5 oz nugget on the Golden Mountain. Total for the day 6 oz 6 DWT. Next weekend we went out to camp with camper trailer. Lester found 2 x 2 ¾ oz nuggets and other smaller ones.  
No records of finds except for large ones were kept from this point unfortunately. We got a lot more nuggets off the Golden Mountain that spring. Peter Gregory came into the picture. We scoured the area looking for another Golden Mountain. We bought a pop up caravan second hand in Oct and replaced the campervan with it.

**1985**

Big searching around Lewis Ponds. Made a try to Palmers Oakey "Kelvin" Col Fergusons with Peter Gregory.

15-9-85 Buy dredging hose \$128-00 Ron Wilson

3-11-85 Fritz had bad heart

28-11-85 Buy dredge 3" Ron Wilson

29-11-85 Buy 175 metres polypipe from Whalans

Dec 58 At Maxe's with Clem, Harold Staines and John McMahon Fritz and Dick dredging etc

**1986**

25-1-86 Got Patrick from Viynyard 3 months old. Camped at Nuggetty with Alex and Edna

4-2-86 Traded old Nissan 40720 miles \$1500-00 for Diahatsu Hi Jet \$11621-00 . Made trip to Triamble

30-3-86 Fritz died to day

0-4-86 Go with Alex to Red Bank, other trips to Red Bank

July- Aug Lester sick

Sept- Oct Long service leave. Trips to Dark Corner, Wattle Flat, Lachlan, and Stuart Town, No gold

1-11-86 Patrick speared himself at Nuggetty, left him with Lithgow Vet

Dec 86 Ritchie Hough has taken up with a woman Elizabeth with a family Things seem a lot better at Nuggetty



## **1987**

14-1-87 Dick and Patrick chased a sheep at Nuggetty and tore it badly, and we had to shoot and buy it.  
6-4-87 Lester 6-11 on tests  
28-8-87 Pros Home Metal Det \$800-00 Time of buying Goldseeker found more small gold at Golden Mt, Dam Creek and Nuggetty  
30-11-87 Buy Suzuki off John Davis Motors trade in the Hi Jet  
Dec 87 Buy Minelab 1600 PT but did not like it and trade in on G S 15000 H/M  
29-12-87 Things looked good at Nuggetty with Ritchie buy a new tractor. Paid Ron Wilson \$84-00 to repair Ritchies Red Baron Det. When we took it out we were informed he had sold the property and didn't know what would happen to us. He wanted a bigger property to support his new family. Later he said there was no rush to go as he would be there for several months.

## **1988**

The new owner of Stanley would be Tony and Rita Lawrence his next door neighbours. Ritchie said he had seen them and it would probably be OK for us to stay. We decided to shift the backhoe and got the trailer and took it back to Marrangroo. We did as much detecting as possible around Nuggetty and Long Creek and Fletchers creek. Ritchie said he had seen Tony and it was OK to stay.  
5-2-88 Backhoe sold to Tony Piper \$2300-00, we kept the trailer  
23-2-88 Don Cooper M/D this would be the final payment on the Bridgewright. It was never much good Total price about \$1700-00. Saw Tony and Rita and did some detecting in Nuggetty and camped first night in caravan. In spring we traded the car trailer to Burgess Bathurst on a small aluminium caravan which we towed out to Dam Creek and put at the Big Bend,  
Dec 88 We made a cover for the trailer so we could take Dick out with us. He had a loose bowel and used to shit over everything in the truck  
27-12-88 I found a 1 oz 6 DWT upstream from Big Bend with the Whites 6000D

## **1989**

27-1-89 Lester found a cache of buried coins on Jews Creek 7 florins, 6 shillings latest date 1893. Spring mover the caravan up Dam Creek to its present site because Healeys garbage dump nearby. Pulled it up with the Suzuki  
7-9-89 Got Doberman pup Billy Fred Ryan and friends had been out at Nuggetty getting a lot of small nuggets with Gold Bug Detectors so Steve said.  
15-12-89 Prospectors Home Gold Bug

## **1990**

5-1-90 Prospectors Home Gold Bug. The Gold Bugs brought a few more small nuggets to light

## **1991**

1-1-91 Very hot summer Went with Billy and Patrick to Nuggetty. Got 4 small nuggets with Gold Bug and Bridgewright. Saw Steve kill a large kangaroo Big rain storm about 2-30 just got out.  
2-2-91 Got Jo-Jo at Jews creek. Autumn working on TV and looking for gold on Upper Turon

## **1992**

## **1993**

1-1-93 Went to Nuggetty Gully Lester detected one small nugget we had not been there for 12 months It was a very hot day we gave them a shot with a flintlock rifle. Lester had trouble with his testicles.  
3-4-93 Purchased Midas detector and 18" Superdepth coil off of John Dwyer.

## **1994**

2-1-94 We purchased a mobile phone, tried it out today at Dam Creek  
6-3-94 To day we visited the caravan at Stanley near Nuggetty Gully Windyer We had not been out there for some 3 months. The poor old caravan that stood out there for almost 12 years is not in good repair. Part of it has rusted away and the side sprung open to admit mud wasps which has built their nests inside. We decided it had gone too far for repairs. We removed the remaining things of value managed to fold it down and covered it with a tarp. I feel with the end of Nuggetty its story should be told. So this list is a start.

# **THE NUGGETTY STORY.**

## **OUR FIRST VISITS**

The events in this story took place some 14 years ago (I am writing this in 1994) and my age is 64 years and some events are hard to recall. Where I have given definite dates they are based on sound documentary evidence (dockets, cheque butts, and diary entries.)

The inspiration to write this story came from an entry in my diary which reads as follows:-

Sunday 6-3-94. To-day we visited the caravan at Stanley near Nuggetty Gully Windeyer We had not been out there for some 3 months. The poor old caravan which had stood out there for at least eleven years is not in good repair. Part of the closing mechanism has partly rotted away and one side has sprung open. Mud wasps have entered and made nests on the stainless steel sink and various other places. We decided it was too far

gone to repair and after removing every thing of any use managed to fold it up to towing size and tied a tarp over it. I feel with the end of the Nuggetty caravan it's story should be written.

On the CMA map of Rylstone the road between Pyramul and Windeyer is show and half way between the two towns on the NE side of the road is Nuggetty Gully. A track is depicted leading to the gully from a small cluster of houses. These buildings form the farm "Stanly"

A Nuggetty Gully to a prospector is like a honey pot to a bee, so it was with Lester (my brother aged 43) and myself age 50. We had been fossicking at Windeyer on property that belonged to Max and Stanton Pilley and on our way to and from Windeyer we drove past the track into Nuggetty Gully. You cannot see the Gully from the road because it is behind a range of hills but there were a lot of old gold workings on Long Creek which ran beside the road. We did not know at the time who owned the property or if we had any chance of getting access to it. With a name like Nuggetty Gully we felt sure it must have been spoken for.

Old Stanton Pilley was a great conversationalist and one day we brought up the subject of Nuggetty Gully. Stanton said it belonged to Richie Hough who lived at Stanley and he would put in a word for us if we wanted to fossick there. Next trip out to Stantons we were hoping he would have some news for us on the matter, but he was away when we arrived at his house in the morning and we didn't see him until we were leaving that afternoon. He mentioned he had seen Richie Hough on our behalf and that Richie wanted to see us and he was in the Windeyer Hotel. Stanton said "he was a good little fellow" and he didn't think we would have any trouble getting into Nuggetty Gully. This all happened as far as I can place it in early Nov 1980.

We stopped at the Windeyer Hotel and Lester went in while I minded the dog Fritz (being a coward in such matters). Lester said later it was very crowded inside the bar and as he did not know Richie Hough he had to ask people. A chap said "yes there he is over there" and pointed to a big thick set man of about 40 with a beard and wearing a wide brimmed hat. Lester said he wouldn't describe him as little and hoped the other part of Stanton's description was OK. Lester introduced himself and Richie Hough mentioned that Stanton had seen him about the matter. He said it was OK to go in but we must first let him know when we are coming out and he stipulated no dogs allowed. Lester gathered he didn't let many people in.

Surely it must have been next weekend when we rang Richie up from Lithgow and said we were coming out. On arrival we drove up to Stanley (it is on the other side of the road from Nuggetty) and I met Richie for the first time. We would have yarned about things for some time and I could see he was very much upset by people going into Nuggetty without his permission and due to people going in without it had just about banned any admission at all. We were lucky Stanton had put in a good word for us.

He gave us directions how to get to Nuggetty and wished us good luck. We over the road opened the gate closed it carefully when through. The track dropped down to Long Creek at a ford there was a steep climb out of it up the hill towards Nuggetty. At the top of the hill the track diverged to the right and to what Richie called a Cookies Gate, a gate clipped and swung with wire. Now we were coming to the workings of Nuggetty Gully.

We would have parked under the big shady gum tree near the head of the main Nuggetty workings and had our morning tea (sandwiches and a cuppa from a flask) too much danger to boil the billy in the bush in summer.. Then we would have walked around to have a look at the lay of the land. The oldtimers had constructed a dam across the Nuggetty creek at this point the wall was about 20 yards across and 6 feet high. It had been breached by floods and did not hold much water now. A race had been constructed around the hills a distance of some 5 or 6 miles to bring water from a distant creek (Fletchers) to fill the dam. The water had then been let down through races to sluice out a lot of Nuggetty Gully at this point for about 300 yards. At this point another arm of Nuggetty came in from the East. Some of this had been sluiced with another race. The depth of the sluiced away area was from 6 to 10 feet and was 10 to 15 yards across in places. A lot of mullock had been thrown on to the banks of the sluiced areas. A lot of pot holes had been sunk and mullock thrown up in the unsluiced areas of various depths from a foot to of so to 10 feet. The soil was a reddish clay with many little jagged stones ranging up to big stones, the bottom a red slate in parts to a brown vulcanite rock in others. The creek itself had very little water in dry times and below the dam it was mainly an area of swampy ground then it ran for 50 yards through sluiced out areas and joined the eastern arm in a deep cutting. After the junction it swung N/W through a fence and continued on in a straight line for a ½ mile or so to Richies boundary fence, Some work had been all the way down. The main sluiced area was for 300 yards below the wall on the west bank of the creek. Above the dam the workings continued up to where the creek made up in the range of hills separating Nuggetty from Long creek. Below the wall of the dam on the east side between the two arms of the creek the country had been cleared in the old days with some dead trees here and there. An old European tree spread its branches over the only remains of a house its chimney made of angular stones. I would have been using a Garretts Deepseeker and Lester either Compass Relic Mag or a Red Baron. We had found 2 big nuggets at the Crudine in August. We were at the time working mainly unworked ground near the edges of sluices and banks of sluiced areas. We did not believe the oldtimers would have thrown out gold on these mullock heaps. We detected all day for a lot of old relics, bullets, nails, tins tacks etc, but no gold.

We made two other trips to Nuggetty Gully that year and one to Long Creek We found plenty of relics and an odd old English coin. Sadly we decided that the area like Stanton Pilley had been cleaned out of nuggets by the old timers.

The start of 1981 found us dredging in the Crudine Creek with Didgie and Jack Green. It was holiday time from our work Early in the month rain put the river up and made dredging impossible on the day we went out. We decided to go up Back Creek Also on Maurice Burges property for some detecting and to look for some dredging sites. Being a small creek it would not be running too strongly. In the afternoon when we were detecting in the area Lester found a 1/2oz nugget of gold in an area we called the Alamo. (There were some old stones walls in the area). Brownie had found announce nugget here a year ago. The nugget was very thin and flat and had the shape of a dog with a small piece of rose coloured stone for his eye. Lester found it beside a washaway where we had not looked before. The washaway was actually an old gold mining trench and the nugget had been thrown out, we did not realise this at the time.

The nugget inspired us all with detecting fever and the next trip out we all scoured the bush for more old workings. Didgie found some up an arm of Back creek in the bush and we mover up there to have a look at them. When we reached the workings Mark Green who was carrying the Whites 5000D got a signal. He was tied and not even swinging the coil so it was pure luck, On digging up the target he found it to be a 1½ oz specimen nugget. This happened late in the day and we all vowed to return the next day. The next day we all again went to where Mark had found his nugget (We named that arm of Back Creek, Marks Creek) Once again it was on the top of a worked area as if it had been thrown out.

The others detected around and moved on but I kept around the area, got a signal and it was a rough little nugget about 1 1/2 DWT, definitely on top of a mullock heap. The others came back and were more careful in going over the ground. The weather was very hot and Didgie and Jack Green were beginning to have doubts about the detectors being sensitive enough to pick up the smaller pieces of gold.

26-1-81 Australia Day Lester and I went out to Back Creek in the Diahatsu F20 4 wd. We went in by the back way. You take the Sofala road from Ilford and turn onto a track at Windy Gap and proceed down through the bush onto Back Creek. Normally when we went to Marie Burges house or for dredging in the Crudine we kept on the Mudgee road to the Crudine turnoff about 9 miles north of Ilford and travelled along it to Maries house which was on the road

We were fairly sure now in our minds now that the nuggets we had been getting over the last few days were thrown out onto the mullock heaps surrounding the pot holes and trenches dug by the old time miners. They had been thrown out with the last few inches before the miners began saving the wash dirt. Perhaps because of the shortage of water they could not process a lot of dirt and so saved only the last few inches above the bedrock. We started first in Marks creek and Lester found a 1 1/2 oz specimen shaped like a slab. We searched for several hours concentrating on the mullock heaps but could find no more. After lunch we moved up the main arm of Back Creek. Here there hard rock mines in the side of the mountain on the north side of the creek, some of the shafts are very deep. In several places in the creek in the creek below the mines a large number of potholes had been dug close together indicating something had been got. The area was fairly well overgrown with Chinese Apples. The mullock heaps had a good many targets in them mainly those of a ferrous nature and bullets etc. Lester got a good signal (a pointy signal) and dug down into a large mullock heap in a golden sandy wash to bring out a 2 1/2 oz specimen very rich in gold, shaped like and about the size of a plum (A gravity test indicated 1 1/4 oz of gold). We went home very pleased with our selves that day.. With the knowledge of gold in mullock heaps we began to wonder if the same thing happened at Nuggetty Gully and at Stanton Pilleys. At Nuggetty Gully it was dry but they had the water in the sluicing dam. At Stanton Pilleys at Windyer they had more water. Long Creek is fairly big at this point as it has the water from Clark creek in it

1-2-81 Sunday We went out to Nuggetty. Ritchie said it was OK to go in and we drove over and had crib and started detecting the mullock heaps on the east side of the heavily sluiced area. After getting a deal of junk targets but probably within the first 1/2 hour Lester held up his arm and called out, he had a nugget from out of a mullock heap. We called it the first nugget it was 1 DWT 10 G, very pure gold, no stone at all and solid and rounded and smooth. Then it was my turn, in an area near the deepest sluiced out channel and where the deepest pot holes had been sunk (about 9 feet), I got a signal with the Garrett Deepseeker and 10 1/2" coil in a clayey mullock not far from a ants nest. I remember trying it on number 5 discriminate (at that time we still had not realised that TR was really a waste of time) It came through faintly on discriminate. It was 19 DWT 3 G gold smooth and rounded the shape of a big jelly bean.. After dinner Lester got a 17 DWT 9 G piece with a hole in it near the edge of the sluiced area somewhat further down the workings with his Relic Magnum. Two other pieces came up one of 1 DWT 16 G and the other 9 G. It was 31 DWT 11 G for the day the best we were to ever do at Nuggetty just a little over 1 1/2 oz. What we didn't know at the time was that the area would keep on yielding little pieces of the same rich gold right up to the present time 18 years later. We showed Richie the 2 small pieces and a lot of relics, did not show the large ones for fear he might withdraw his permission for us to enter. Ritchie and his brother John (who lived at Hargraves) were fairly keen on gold prospecting themselves they had a metal detector, dredge and sluice box. We kept the news of our find to ourselves at this stage. On getting home and weighing up our finds we must have decided to go out through the week as the next entry in the diary is for 5-2-81 a Thursday its shows only two nuggets got, for the day. They were small 17 G and 23 G one I think we picked up in a gutter. It was tear shaped like a little pear. A thunder storm came up in the afternoon and washed us out, about 3-30 I think. On the way home (it was during a big drought) noticed poor starver sheep in a paddock near the end of Aarons Pass standing and lying in the mud, there was no grass in the paddock. Diary shows us again at Nuggetty on Saturday 7-2-81 We were probably using the big coils now Lester the 12" and I the 14". The yields is shown as 3 one 1 DWT 21 G, one 1 DWT 11 G and a small 11 G. A pattern was showing up now, all the nuggets were being got on the east side of the sluiced area down from the dam wall for about 200 yards. Nothing in the eastern arm or on the west side of the main sluiced area. Nothing below the junction of the 2 arms and nothing above the dam wall. We had found a lot of relics and some English coins in the mullock heaps. Probably on this day we also tried some of the workings on Long Creek with no bush. We had asked Richie Hough about going into Fletchers creek further back up the road which he also owned. We had noticed work on mullock heaps in there on our way to and fro and decided to try it next trip, feeling that we had worked Nuggetty and Long Creeks out. Actually there a lot of nuggets within reach of our detectors in both places, what we did not realise was the long and careful searching it requires to strip an area of targets, something is perhaps never completely done. On 15-2-81 a Sunday we set out for Fletchers Creek. On the Sunday before we had gone with Didgie to Dam Creek Turondale and Lester had got 3 small nuggets with his Relic Magnum. Fletchers Creek was were the water race from Nuggetty Gully had drawn it water. It had a fair amount of water running into it after storms or wet weather. It ran in a much deeper channel than Long Creek, the banks were 20 ft high in places and the sinking had been just that 20 ft. We worked for some hours for nothing, when we noticed Richies truck going very slowly along the road (about 300 yards away) It stopped and he came down towards us with his sheep dogs. About this time Lester got a signal but did not dig it up Ritchie said "I didn't know it was you fellows until I got close I couldn't see your car from the road and I thought some strangers were in here without permission" We had parked the Diahatsu behind some trees. We were glad we had permission as Richie had lost no time in getting down to evict any trespassers. Then he mentioned that he had never done much good on the gold on the creek, had never specked any. Also he brought up in conversation that we had missed a big nugget in Nuggetty last week when we were there (he did not know about the Jelly Bean, we had only shown him the little ones). He said "The Yank" had gone metal detecting, rolled over a few logs and got quite a few including an 18 DWT one. When Richie departed back to his truck Lester dug up the target he had detected before Richie came down it was a 20 G nugget. However we were upset at leaving gold behind in Nuggetty, especially an 18 DWT nugget or perhaps the yank had only shown Ritchie his small ones and had got even bigger ones..

After detecting for another hour and getting nothing we decided to walk over to Nuggetty and give it another try. It was a long walk probably 4 miles we followed the water race in parts and cut across its bends. At Nuggetty we could see where someone had rolled logs aside and got nuggets we had missed, but in a lot of places were fresh holes in the ground where we had just missed the targets. We got two more nuggets within an hours searching, one 20 G one 14 G. We walked back to the truck and returned home chastened

During the autumn, winter and spring of 1981 we concentrated our efforts to find a retiring nugget at Dam Creek, Turondale and the experiences there are another tale.

In the spring of 81 we camped a night at Dam Creek with Didgie and his family. We had only an old auto tent to sleep in, our four wheel drives being too short to stretch out in. That night a frost settled in and we nearly froze to death, sleep was impossible, Didgie and his boys slept warm in their Toyota Station wagon. It highlighted the need for "a better means of spending a night on the goldfields".

On the 27-11-81 we purchased a long wheel base Toyota Troop carrier, trading in the Bedford Van. This gave us three bush vehicles, the Nissan Patrol, the Daihatsu F20 and the Troop—carrier.

As 1981 drew to a close it found us travelling further afield in the search for gold. With Didgie, trips were made to Ophir, Burrandong and Hargraves. During some trips we passed Stanley and noticed two -caravans parked inside the fence near Long Creek on the Nuggetty track and reckoned they belonged to the claim holders.

Some information on the happenings in Nuggetty came back to us through Didgie as he worked with a chap called Nick Tremain. Nick knew one of the men working at Nuggetty and sometimes met and talked with him. At first the word was that good gold was being obtained, but later things were not so good and arguments developed over the best methods of mining for more gold.

In mid March 81 Lester and I applied for some long service leave. Normally we only took this leave in the Spring, but this year things were somewhat changed. The Back and Shepherds Creek, the Nuggetty and the Dam Creek areas had all yielded nuggets in the past few months and they all required more intensive searching with metal detectors.

Also we were beginning to realise how easy it was to miss gold and that one must search very carefully and slowly.

At that time a sense of urgency existed, others were busy searching with detectors and probably within 12 months all the old gold fields would have been depleted of detectable gold.

My nugget list shows that on Wednesday 25th March, 81 we found two nuggets totalling 5dwt's on upper Dam Creek.

The next day Thursday 26th. we visited Nuggetty. During the week Richie Hough was often away from Stanley, he journeyed to Hargraves to help his brother with farm work. When we called to Stanley and found him not at home a note was written out to the effect that we had gone into Nuggetty detecting for the day. Often I would leave a small present for him in appreciation for granting us permission to enter.

On this day I decided to detect above the dam wall, no nuggets had been found by us in this area.

A long search of the rock strewn area failed to reveal any further gold. Lester searched all day for only a little 12 grain bit he found on the mullocks below the wall. We noticed one ominous thing had happened at Nuggetty since our last visit, several large holes had been put down in various places in the heavily worked area. with some sort of machinery which had made heavy tyre tracks in clayey ground. Who had done it we did not know but obviously they had been searching for gold in a big way.

Holidays have a way of coming all too soon to an end. Ours ended on Sunday 29th. March and as we not found that big retiring nugget we would have to return to work on the Monday. We decided on a trip to Nuggetty on the last day of our holidays and Ernie Clements an old prospecting friend from many years ago came along with us. Ernie lived at the other end of town and would travel out to our home in his car and then travel to the goldfields in our vehicle.

Richie greeted us at the back door of Stanley and I introduced Ernie to him. In the course of conversation we raised the matter of the freshly dug holes in Nuggetty. I thought at the time that Richie was a bit evasive in his answer. He said the holes had been put down by a chap using a backhoe, who was testing in the district for gold. This fellow had been at Hargraves for some time and had done quite well up there on the gold. His brother John knew him well and now he was checking out the Windeyer district for good prospects. We drove over into Nuggetty, parked under the shade trees and had crib. Ernie had purchased a Bounty Hunter detector off us some time before and was keen to use it. It was a beautiful autumn day I can remember it well, blue cloudless skies, plenty of sunshine but not too hot. The birds sang, we were free and detecting for gold, who knew at any minute one might find a fortune!

Lunchtime found us without gold but nobody cared, after dinner the gold would turn up. The shade trees were welcome now as the sun had become hot. They were two great old gums that grew about 20ft. apart and easy to drive between. They leaned towards one another and their foliage intermingled to form a shady canopy, a cool refuge to escape the heat of Nuggetty in the summer. Nuggetty is on the North facing slope of a range and the sun beats down on it mercilessly at midday. As we ate lunch I pointed out the distant blue hills of Avisford that were visible to the North—west on the road to Hargraves and yarned about the great gold discoveries made in the area we were looking at in years gone by. After lunch we all explored downstream in the half mile or so between the two fences.

Using their A2B Lester unearthed a 3.8dwt nugget which we named the "Tulip" due to its shape. This was a nugget that should have been detected with our existing machines and the finding of it suggested to us that the A2B was a superior machine in certain situations. The mullock heaps in Nuggetty were strewn with little dark pebbles of ironstone and magnetic slate and were very noisy to detect over. It was hard to distinguish the sound of a faint target from the general background chatter. The A2B was much quieter on the ground and the fainter signals were more noticeable. Lester found another little nugget of 20 grains for the day and I got nothing with the Whites. We had only covered a small area of Nuggetty because this type of detecting was a very slow process. Every little signal had to be investigated and there were plenty of them! Mostly they were little tacks or pieces of lead shot and things of this nature, but all had to be dug up, separated from the earth and examined. It was to be a big job to search Nuggetty II again using one detector. However I did not order one for myself at this stage, still not being entirely convinced.

In the summer of 81 we were making more and more trips out with Didgie Anthes and his family of two boys (about 9 and 12 and a girl of in between age and Borica his wife. Jack Green and Didgie had a fall out over something and from then on Jack would not go out with us if Didgie was going also. For sometime we did not realise what was going on but finally we heard both sides of the story from each of them, We were to find out in later years that Didgie was very inclined to cast off friends when it suited him to do so. At this time neither Jack or Didgie had had a trip to Nuggetty Gully. The problem with Didgie was his family of kids who were bits of terrors and got up to all sorts of mischief on trips out. We thought the relationship we had built up with Richie Hough would be put at risk if we asked permission to take too many people in with us. However we felt that we owed Jack and Didgie something for getting us access to a large property at Turondale, so early in march 1981 offered

both a trip into Nuggetty (in a small party) meaning no kids. The trip was to be on a Saturday. Didgie could not go as he was involved in sport on that day but Jack Green and his son Mark decided to accompany us. Jack travelled in his old Holden car and Lester and I travelled in our blue Daihatsu F20 4WD. When we came to Aarons Pass we ran into heavy rain and a violent thunder storm. The rain persisted all the way to Stanley and the day looked like a washout, although now the rain was only light. We drove up to the house and introduced Jack to Richie. In these days Richie did even invite us inside so we didn't talk too long. Richie said he thought it would rain all day and went back inside to his bookwork after granting Jack and Mark permission to go into Nuggetty with us. After passing the road gate Jacks Holden did a lot of slipping and sliding in the little creeklet which is just inside the gate. So we decided not to cross Long Creek with it but to wait on the firmer ground between the two creeks until the weather improved. We had morning tea in the cars. Away in the NW there was a patch of blue sky which extended down to the horizon and as the hours slipped by it got larger and larger until about lunch time the sun shone out and the light rain stopped. The ground was still fairly wet and we packed Jack and Marks detectors and lunch into the Daihatsu (it was too small to put them in as well) and the plan was I would walk with them while Lester drove the vehicle over to Nuggetty. The distance is only about ½ a mile. Long Creek was up a bit with the rain but we were able to get across without wetting our feet by jumping on stones. When Lester tackled the steep hill on the other side of Long Creek the Daihatsu slipped and slithered quite a bit and ran back it put on a bad display for a four wheel drive, the front wheels didn't seem to be driving. I had a close look at the free-wheeling hubs and found them both in free-wheeling position. This was strange as I had clipped them into lock position when we entered the front gate or so I thought. Slowly what had happened began to dawn on me. As Lester was the driver in the family the job of getting out to change the hubs usually fell to me. At the age of 51, I had reading glasses for close sight and carried same in my pocket but it was a bit of a chore to get them out to check the position of the switch on the hubs. I had got into the habit of mentally noting whether they were in or out. If there was any doubt out would come the glasses. The previous weekend we had gone to Dam Creek Turondale with Didgie and his family. On getting into the steep country I had checked and put the hubs into lock, and on leaving I had got out and clipped them into free. Actually Didgies kids had been playing around the vehicles when they were parked on Dam Creek and had turned the hubs to free, and when leaving I turned them to lock, and so they remained until I changed them for the steep climb out of the creek. It was a lesson to me to be more careful and observant and to also keep a closer eye on Didgies youngsters. At Nuggetty Gully which was reached without further incident once the hubs were locked. We gave Jack a bit of a Cooks Tour of the workings then it was down to the business of detecting. We had a late lunch and some more detecting before calling it a day. Jack and Mark got some relics, Lester found an old coin and I a small nugget of 1 ½ DWT off a mullock heap.

We had the feeling that Nuggetty was worked out, however the next trip on Thursday 26 3 81 made us think somewhat different. Thursday was not our usual time for gold prospecting trips but we had taken some long service leave from work. The day before we had been to Dam Creek and found 2 nuggets totalling 5 DWT. On this day at Nuggetty I decided to consternate my efforts above the wall but we had not got any gold here before.

The potholes dug by the oldtimers were fairly isolated here, leading one to conclude the diggers had not found much. The bedrock was not far below the clay and jugged up in a number of places, it was a brownish coloured slate or claystone and in a number of areas the oldtimers had taken it up for a depth of several feet. After detecting carefully on both sides of the creek, which was only about 2 or 3 ft. wide, giving the mullock heaps special attention, I came to a flat area in the creek. The oldtimers had taken up quite a few slaty rocks here and they were jumbled up in general disorder.

Several hours had passed since I commenced detecting and a lot of targets found, but nothing of value. In the vicinity of the scattered rock slabs and near the base of a small shrub a strong signal came through the phones. A ferrous target, which is usually some rusty iron object, has a broad response to the scanning sweep of your search coil, this target had a narrow, concentrated signal. This type of pointy response usually indicates a nonferrous object, the most common being a lead bullet. At no great depth the target came out of the hole, it was almost on the surface, I separated it from the dirt and could feel something heavy in my hand. Was it another big bullet? No, here revealed as the last of the dirt fell away was a beautiful 9dwt 15grain nugget. The thrill of unearthing a decent nugget has to be experienced to be appreciated. I called to Lester, who had been detecting below the wall and he came up and admired the nugget. You must realise that we did not take gold scales out with us so could only guess it's weight. The name of 'The Mouth' was decided on for it had a bit of an opening on its side, which unlike the nuggets found below the wall contained some reddish—brown ironstone. How did the oldtimers come to lose it in such an open spot? Well to the uninitiated in the size of gold nuggets a half ounce, like this is slightly smaller than the first joint of your little finger.

Probably as the diggers levered up the slabs of rock it slipped out of a crevice unseen and became hidden with general dirt and rubble. We were still inspecting the nugget when suddenly a sound in the distance increased to an earthshaking roar of thunder and a R.A.A.F. jet fighter screamed over the ridge of hills separating Nuggetty from Long Creek. It was almost at tree top level and came directly over us, an awe—inspiring sight. We were transported with a jolt from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. One thing we noticed on this trip were a number of new holes dug in Nuggetty by a backhoe or something, they had not been here when we were out with Jack and Mark some weeks before. We had not seen Richie on this trip as he was not home and

The Christmas holidays of 81-82 were spent at Ophir with Didgie and his family. Didgie had towed his caravan out to camp in comfort. Once again it highlighted how pleasant things were with good facilities in the bush. After a hard day detecting, you could retire to the caravan, where it was relatively cool, dodge the flies and cook a meal in roomy surroundings.

On the 24-2-82 we purchased a home built folding caravan from Arthur Williams of Bent St. Lithgow for \$500. The caravan had been constructed years ago by Karl Pieper. It was made of marine plywood and painted white. When folded down the size was only that of a big box trailer, yet when extended it had room for two people to sleep and eat, with a built in ice-box, sink and drainer. A bunk at one end and the table folded away to give a second bunk.

Arthur had made two trips to Western Australia during the time he had owned the caravan. Now he had no use for it. And so what was to become the Nuggetty caravan came into our possession. Not long after obtaining it we discovered that the spare wheel did not fit the axle hubs!. Arthur was fairly lucky he didn't need that spare on his trips across the Nullabor!. The hubs were off an Austin A40 and the wheels not easy to come by. However we did manage to obtain a spare wheel and tyre before we ventured out with the van.

The first trip we made with the caravan was to Ophir for a weekend late in February, 1982. We returned again the next weekend and ' in late autumn made a trip down to Dam Creek.

The days were drawing in now and the nights and days becoming quite cool. We stored the caravan away in the yard at home to await the return of warmer weather.

As the winter of 82 began to set in, the feedback from Nick Tremain was that the group working Nuggetty Gully had broken up and departed from the area for greener pastures and that they had never filed a claim on Nuggetty as the region was already part of an exploration lease of a big mining giant.

On Saturday 14th August, 82, we introduced Didgie to Richie Hough for the first time and they hit it off O.K.. They were both fairly outspoken persons and we had harboured doubts. Over in Nuggetty we showed Didgie around and after crib proceeded with the business of detecting for gold. Didgie was using his Garrett Deepseeker with a 14 inch coil a combination with which he had landed a lot of big gold. Sometimes we had found that although a big coil is supposed to be only for fairly large targets which it will pick up to good depth, strangely over certain ground conditions it will respond to quite small items.

I can't remember what Didgie found for the day, obviously it wasn't very much or I would remember. He may have detected a small bit, whatever it was we did not begrudge the finding. It is a strange thing but when you introduce a friend to a new area you actually hope that they will find something for the day. At the same time as I have noted before Didgie had a big streak of luck operating for him and we half expected him to come up with a big nugget in the area's we had been searching. Lester was finding little nuggets with the new detector and he ended up with 5 for the day totalling 2dwt 4 grains. There was a learning curve with the A2B and every day out with it found him becoming more proficient in its use.

After lunch I decided to try a search down in the area of the Western boundary fence and walked across the hills in that direction. I wasn't finding much with the Whites in Nuggetty. Lester and Didgie remained in the Gully.

From being a fine day when we had arrived the weather had now become cloudy and cold. On reaching the area of the boundary fence, I began moving very slowly and detecting. After an hour or so I found myself detecting on some shallow workings on a little tributary creeklet which came in from the South. The oldtimers had worked up the creeklet throwing its bed up on one side, the country here was fairly flat and bedrock only some feet away. Suddenly I received a strong signal and at the same time noticed a nugget under the search coil. It was lying amongst the ironstone pebbles several feet from the creek mullock. Perhaps it had been thrown out with the mullock or had just weathered out of the soil? The nugget itself was also a bit of a surprise because it was nothing like a Nuggetty piece. Weighing in at a little over 2dwt it was an ironstone specimen, what we referred to as a "blackfaced nugget"

This type of nugget had been found by us at Dam Creek and at that locality they had occurred in the free or unworked ground in a place we had named "The Flat". Looking around this area at the Western boundary fence of Nuggetty I could see similarities between it and the country at Dam Creek. The problem now was what to do about my find. If I went back and told the others of my find and my brother, Didgie would come over to search the ground and he was well equipped with the 14 inch coil to cover the new ground quickly and deeply. If it was to be a second "Flat", then the area could contain a lot of nuggets, perhaps of great size.

I decided to carefully search the area with my little coil on the Whites and to say nothing of my find to the others.

That night at home I showed Lester the nugget (which I had named the Pick Up Nugget) and told him of my thoughts on the matter. We decided to visit the region as soon as a fine day presented itself and search the ground with 14 inch coils on the Garrett Deepseekers.

A nice day came along early that week and we took a day off work and went out. On arriving at Stanley we found both Richie and his brother John there. They were preparing to round up sheep for shearing and were surprised to find us out on a week day. I mentioned how hard it was for us to slave away in a factory on such a perfect day and being outdoor people they both agreed with me. It was the first time we had had a long conversation with John Hough, he was not as heavily built as Richie and of a fairer complexion. Taller and a little older than his brother and very pleasant to talk with. They both had a hate of unions and the shearers union in particular. We had common ground to talk on about unions and could certainly see that their grievances about how they were allowed to go about shearing their sheep were well founded. Richie had a lot of admiration for the Queensland premier Jo Bejelke Petersen and reckoned that if "Jo" was in power in Canberra, he would fix the unions power. Richie even had his best sheep dog named "Jo".

John asked where in Nuggetty we intended to prospect on this day and I nominated the area of our hopes, omitting any mention of the "Pick Up Nugget". Richie then gave us directions of how we could drive to the spot and John mentioned he had specked gold in the area and would look in on us later in the day to see how we were progressing.

The route they had given us lead down over dead logs and rock strewn paddocks to the Western boundary and we prepared our big coils for an assault on the free ground of "Pick Up Creek". The big coils brought many deep targets to light, but unfortunately they were all junk items that the oldtimers had left behind. By lunch time we had a fair pile of rusty horse shoes, heel plates, pick points and old tins etc.

John Hough came over about this time and told us the area he had specked the gold was some 100yds. away on the main Nuggetty Creek and they had only been half weight pieces. He also told us we were welcome to come up to his property at Hargraves and he would find some places for us to prospect up there.

After John had gone we had lunch and continued searching the area but to no avail. The dream of finding a big patch of retiring nuggets was fading as the day wore on. But all was not lost we had made contact with John and had the promise of some new ground for future prospecting. And the A2B detector had proved that Nuggetty itself was not yet worked out. So after a day in the great outdoors if nothing more we returned home and went to work the next day.

The area of "Pick Up Creek" was to remain to this day a mystery. Although over the years we occasionally searched there with more advanced detectors no further gold was found.

On Sunday 22nd August, 82 we took Didgie into Downeys property on Pyramul Creek where we had obtained some little nuggets late in July. The weather was perfect with clear blue skies and not too hot. Lester used his A2B to find a total of 10 small nuggets weighing in all 1dwt 17 grains. Didgie and I were so impressed with the A2B's performance that we decided to order one each off Don Cooper in the coming week. Don would send detectors C.O.D. from Adelaide and I think the price was about \$600.

Didgie and I managed to find one little nugget each whilst Lester had a ball. I remember it as a very pleasant day in the sun with a lot of fun had by us all. It showed that even some small nuggets (if you could call them nuggets) were still quite satisfying to find and did not generate the envy that bigger ones probably would have.

### **THE CARAVAN AT NUGGETTY.**

Early in the spring of 1982 we approached Richie about placing the little folding caravan we owned over the road near where the other gold seekers caravan still remained waiting to be removed. We told him we wished to leave it on the site until after the Christmas Holidays, some 4 months away. We mentioned that we would keep the area clean and all sanitary refuse would be buried on the site. Richie agreed and said that although the van would be in sight of Stanley, he was often away and advised us to lock it when we left as there were a few light fingered people in the neighbourhood. We now had the second A2B and Nuggetty was yielding gold again. Also there was the promise of some new ground to detect over from both Richie and John. It was a long and a rough trip out from `Lithgow and if you could camp a night or two things were a lot better.

On receiving the permission to camp from Richie we put in for 2 weeks long service leave from work for the last weeks of September. We reckoned by then the weather should be warmer for camping.

So one day early in spring we arrived opposite Stanley with the caravan behind the old Nissan Patrol and walked up to tell Richie of our arrival. Richie had a .222 rifle for us to repair at the factory and he and John had been inquiring about a reloading outfit for the same weapon. We told him we would get hold of a reloader and bring it out next trip.

Then we towed the caravan over on the Nuggetty track and placed it in its present position, little realising it would be there to the end of its days. The site overlooked the heavy gold workings on Long Creek, yet was high enough above the creek to dodge any flood. The other caravan was some 60 yds away and looking in need of a coat of paint.

It took some time to level the van after folding it out and then we erected and stayed the annex. After all that we retired inside to have our crib and enjoy the view from the only window. The site unfortunately had no shade and we were to feel the heat badly in summer months. From the van you had a view of traffic on the road between Pyramul and Windeyer and the old caravan has been a landmark to travellers on this road over the last 12 years.

Our long service leave began on a Friday and we left Lithgow early in the morning for our first 3 day stay at Nuggetty. It was hard to get away for more than 3 days as we had the shop at home and also old Pug, the blue cattle dog was always left behind on trips to the bush. Pug didn't have a good life, looking back on things I feel sorry. He didn't seem to enjoy bush trips the way Fritz did and we had got into the way of leaving him at home. He was getting old and deaf and a little blind. We would leave him shut in the backyard with food and water and some shelter. But one didn't like to leave him for too long. Poor brute, he was always so pleased to welcome us back when we arrived home. We had Richie and Johns present of the reloading outfit on board, but when we arrived at Stanley no one was home. We left a note to Richie at the back door together with the reloader and drove across to the caravan.

After unpacking all our gear and packing it into the caravan, we had crib and drove over into Nuggetty for the start of our detecting program. The district was in the grip of a severe drought and most of Richies dams were almost empty. He still had a good amount of dry feed for his sheep, but rain was desperately needed. Some of his neighbours were in dire straits with virtually no grass at all. When lunch time arrived we returned to the caravan for a hot meal, this was to be the pattern for all our days spent in the local area. We would cut some sandwiches and make a thermos of tea and return to the van for the main meals.

The A2B's brought some small nuggets to light that morning and we worked away steadily, the idea being to see what we could accumulate over the 2 week period. During the afternoon the sky began to cloud over and by 5 o'clock when we returned to the caravan the light was very poor due to the heavy cloud cover. Normally on a day trip we would not have worked so late and would have departed from Nuggetty about 4 o'clock or so. It was nice not to be faced with that 2 hour trip home. We could see no sign of Richie across the road at Stanley and presumed he had not returned. Together with Fritz we entered the caravan had a wash and began to prepare the evening meal. Fritz had to lie on Lester's bunk during meal preparation as the room inside the little van was strictly limited and he was a big dog. The evening repast usually consisted of weet bix, apple and milk, followed by some fried steak on toast with hot tea.

The van had a porta gas cooker with 3 burners, the hose for the gas ran out through the floor to a bottle outside. The plumbing for the water was fairly simple, a plastic bottle holding about 3 gallons was installed under a bench. A plastic hose brought the water to a hand pump installed on the sink. Under the sink and drainer were the cupboards and the ice box freezer (One had to bring a supply of ice out for it). Water was transported from Lithgow in 4 gallon plastic jerry. The bottle of water under the bench needed refilling every second day or so.

After tea darkness set in very rapidly and with it came some spatters of rain. We had a porta gas light and it provided good illumination in the little van. The temperature had also begun to fall and I lit the porta gas heater (the van had been wired for power but at that time we had no generator). The heater made things very cosy, it had a soothing hiss and the element glowed a cheery red.

The rain was increasing and we could see no lights up at Stanley. We were worried about the reloader which had been left on the back door step at Stanley that morning, the rain would soon soak through to it. Lester decided to walk over to Stanley and if Richie had indeed not returned, to place the present in a plastic bag.

When Lester returned he said that Stanley was deserted and he had secured the reloader and hung it on the back door knob. He had needed a raincoat and torch for the walk as the rain was now quite heavy. A mist had come in with the rain and looking out of the annex, it was difficult to

see more than 50 yards or so. We seemed isolated in another world, even the sound of an odd car on the road seemed strangely muted and distant. Richies sheep dogs, which were chained up to hollow logs at Stanley were quiet.

One imagined a great sigh of thankfulness coming up from the parched earth as the steady rain fell. We yarned about things until about 8 o'clock, had a cup of hot coffee and biscuits and decided to turn in. The bunks had to be made up for the night as my bed occupied the table position. The table was clipped up out of the way, my bedding taken off Lesters bunk where it was stored, the bunk folded out and the bedding made up.

Next morning dawned to leaden skies, but the rain had stopped and a wind from the East had sprung up. It was a cold wind and not a lot of rain had fallen, but it would put a little water in the dams. Our trips out at this time were usually for three days weather permitting. We had old Pug our old blue cattle dog at home and he had to be resupplied with food, the house seen to and our TV business meant we could not be away any longer. As the day went on the wind became stronger and colder and we had every piece of clothing pressed into service to keep warm. At least with the van you could have your meals away from the wind and cold. The van was in a fairly unprotected place as for wind and sun were concerned but it was high enough above the creek to miss out on most floods. The A2B detectors had given Nuggety a new lease of life as for small nuggets were concerned. Our records show quite often 10 or so nuggets being taken home from these three day trips, mind you, one had to work hard to get them and it only averages one or two each for each day so in terms of wages it was a dead loss, but we were driven with the ever present thought a big one might be lurking somewhere and there is a certain satisfaction in making a stubborn area give up even a small nugget. That afternoon Richie and John came past the caravan with some sheep and commented on the cold weather. The East wind blew even stronger at night fell and several times that night we thought it would blow the van over. Next trip out we brought out turn buckle chains and pegs and secured it more firmly, it has never blown over.

Didgie came out a number of times at weekends while we were there on long service leave. He brought his kids and tent and camped on at least two occasions. He had an A2B now and he also found a lot of small nuggets, in fact he was starting to show his "arse" and got a fairly big share of them. We had a trip up to Fletchers Creek again and found quite a few nuggets this time with the A2B's. Also we had several trips to Hargraves to a property where John got us on, once again for several small nuggets but nothing big. Long Creek also yielded up some small nuggets.

As Lester and I were walking back up to the truck from detecting in Nuggety carrying our A2B's (Didgie had gone back to camp some time earlier) we saw a strange vehicle being driven into Nuggety at quite a speed. It turned out to be Daryl Jones. and his wife, Compass Metal Detector dealer from Newcastle. Here we were selling his detectors and were carrying Garrett A2b's. He intended to bring in a large party of 40 or 50 people who were in his detecting club, and were camped up at Hargraves. I mentioned that Richie did not let many people in, but he said "These cookies are just about bankrupt with the drought and if we all throw in a dollar he will jump at the chance to let us in for \$50-00 for the day". With a few more pleasantness' like "This place is just a mass of pot holes no good for anything it should be thrown open to the public". He departed in a cloud of dust. When we got back to the camp Didgie was apologising for not warning us of his coming. He had gone to Stanley at first and finding no one home had come across to Didgie at the caravan and asked where we were and Didgie had sent him up to Nuggety, and could not warn us on the CB because Daryl had one in his vehicle. We thought we had better warn Richie about him as if they all arrived the next day Jonesy would probably introduce himself as a friend of ours. We waited a fair time for Richie to arrive home and the sun was just about setting when a vehicle arrived at Stanley. We went up and found John Hough there. John heard our story and laughed. "That must have been the bloke that was down at the Windeyer Pub when I was there a while ago. He was boasting then where he could and couldn't go. He has a big party of people camped up at Hargraves and they have just about dug the cricket pitch to pieces. Richie will fix him, don't you fellows worry we are keeping this property for you. You don't know what Richie is like when he strikes fellows like that, he'll give him what for. Just at this time Richie arrived, he was hot and tired having a bad afternoon with some cattle. He looked cranky before he heard our story from John. He said "Where is this fellow, down at the hotel?, I'll go down now and have it out with him" and off he went in his truck. We had to go home to Lithgow then as we were only out for a limited time and wondered what would happen. Next week we heard that when Richie arrived at the Windeyer Hotel Jonesy had departed some hours before for Hargraves, so Richie returned to Stanley to await him next day, but either Jonesy got word of what was going on or he was all bluff because no one arrived and the big Newcastle party went home on Tuesday.

On the last weekend of our long service leave the weather had improved quite a good deal. The cold Eastley wind and leaden skies of the early trips had died away and the sun shone out of a clear blue sky. We had battled the elements for three trips of nine days or so and through hard work detecting had gathered perhaps half an ounce of gold between us in many little pieces. We felt once again that Nuggety had just about ran it's race even for small nuggets with the A2b's. But it was a good base to strike out into other areas in the district and we were on excellent terms with Richie Hough and his brother John and they were finding new places for us to prospect on. The caravan had proved it's weight in gold and had enabled us to get two or three days detecting for one trip either way over the rough road of Aarons Pass also Hargraves Gulgong etc were much closer if you started your trip fresh in morning from the Nuggety caravan. Didgie and his boys arrived out to camp on the last week end. We worked in Long Creek in the morning and went over to Nuggety after lunch. I was detecting above the dam wall when I heard Didgie yelling out and knew he had found something good. He said you are looking in the wrong place. We met some where about the dam wall and Lester came up from down stream. He had a nugget that was to go 26 DWT, the biggest to be got out of Nuggety with a metal detector to our knowledge. I had got the Jelly Bean 19 DWT and the Big Yank had found the 18 DWT under a log. But Didgie had got the biggest. With sunken heart I followed him over to where he had got it. It was on the West side and just below where we usually parked our vehicles under the big gum trees, probably about 50 yds from the vehicles. Here there was a large shallow area running N/W not north like the main channels. A sheep track had broken up the western edge of the channel and here in the clay he had found the nugget, an easy target. I had walked over the area many times in the last fortnight but had never detected thoroughly there, it was a most unlikely looking spot, but there it was.. I am afraid I took it badly at the time, after all the work in appalling weather conditions for a 1/4 of an G or so of little nuggets, plus all the other days and days of swinging coils over Nuggety and here is Didgie only comes out at the week end and gets the biggest one, from under my nose. I said "Well I don't know Lyn you seem to always find the biggest one where we go. It's not much good me going on detecting I might as well go and detect under the car, there might be one there. I think I will go and take the dog for a walk. Didgie said "Don't take it that way". I went up and Fritz was usually shut in the back of the Landcruiser while we detected, so I put the lead on him and took him for a walk. He was quite pleased to get an early walk. Lester said later that I should have said nothing he is able to hold his feeling better than I. Didgie was our guest at Nuggety and he deserved to find the nugget. But the bitter disappointment of missing the biggest Nuggety nugget after all that searching was too much for me. I have since seen other people effected the same way in similar circumstances including Didgie himself. Things were never quite the same between us after that even though we were to have many more camping trips out together and we were to endure Didgie finding another big nugget. Next morning we decided not to show Richie the big nugget and Didgie said he would not talk about his find at work. However he could not keep it to himself and his workmate Nick Tremain was to haunt the area of Nuggety in coming weeks,

It was our practice through all of 1981 and 1982 to ring Didgie late in the working week and ask him how he was placed for the weekend, sometimes he had sport on (always for his boys who he thought the world of). If he was free we would decide where to prospect and what days he could go we rather liked Saturday to dodge the heavy Sunday afternoon traffic but sport often tied him up on Saturday, in which case we



would all go out on the Sunday. This practice continued after the Nuggetty episode when Didgie found the 26 Dwt nugget as the hard feelings were patched over for the time being.

Nick Tremain who worked with Didgie must have heard about the nugget from Nuggetty and went out and asked if he could detect on the property (he had purchased a A2B) Richie told him he could in once only and to keep away from Nuggetty Gully as two old chaps from Lithgow held the running there. Richie must have found him in there another day and hunted him out..

On the weekend that Didgie could not go out we took old Clem Thompson out to Nuggetty camping, he slept in his car but had his meals with us in the caravan or annex. It was about this time we found another thing out about the nuggetty gold. At times you would find a nugget with some soft white rock adhering to it. A lot of this rock was lying around the mullock heaps and projecting out of the banks. It would dissolve in acid and we had once found a 1 ½ oz nugget encased in the same material at Dam Creek. Now we found some of these rocks giving signals at Nuggetty. When broken open they would contain one or more little nuggets, with rounded shape. It was obvious they had formed in the rock which was a form of calcium carbonate or calcite. We called it calcite although not strictly correct. The nuggets found in Nuggetty were always smooth and we had put it down to water action that they had travelled a long way and had been rounded in a stream. But they had very few scratches on them, only a matt surface. They had formed in a calcite mould. Now just about all the nuggets found here and in Long Creek were throw outs, they came from low in pot holes nothing had been found in virgin ground, so what was the story of the nuggets. Had they come from veins of calcite long since eroded away or were the veins still waiting to be found under the surrounding hills or under the floor of Nuggetty itself. Had they come from pipes of calcite in the ground.. In some places the calcite occurs as irregular bunches in the volcanic rocks, in other it is in cracks or fissures in the slate bottom. Although we found quite a few pieces of calcite containing gold we have never found the lode of it. Clem at this time Nov 82 purchased a A2B and had found a little gold at Ophir. One day at Nuggetty he found a little piece ½ DWT or so on a big heap of mullock, he was very excited at the time and after showing his find to us he put it in his shirt pocket. Later he sat down for a smoke pulled out of his shirt pocket his cigarettes lit up and thought he would have another look at the nugget. He felt in his shirt pocket and could not find it there, he reckoned he must have pulled it out with the cigarettes and it went on the ground. He searched around with his detector but could not locate it. I have never seen a man so dejected at that stage Clem had found very few nuggets and that little nugget must have meant a great deal to him and now he had lost it. He sat down on a stump, too miserable to go on detecting. I could not continue detecting seeing him like that and came over to him to see if I could find the missing nugget, but to no avail. After questioning him closely on his movements since finding the nugget, I asked him to search his pocket again. Clem had big fingers like sausages from years of manual labour, so I put my fingers in his shirt pocket and down in one corner was the tiny nugget. Clem's eyes lit up when he found he had not lost it after all. I gave him a small container in which to keep it and any others he may find.

Everyday at Nuggetty the gold was getting harder to find and we tended to spend part of the day digging off mullock heaps removing and spreading the dirt and going over it with the detectors) It was heavy work for unless rain had fallen recently the clayey dirt was almost rock hard. If you were lucky two or three hours work would produce a nugget a DWT or so. One day Clem was digging a mullock and Lester and I another some 20 yards away, when suddenly Clem's mood seemed to change and he became very jovial, we didn't think much of it at the time, but that evening when Lester and I had finished our tea, Clem went detecting near the caravan on Long Creek. We heard a yell and he brought in a ¼ oz nugget he had just found. No one had found a nugget that size in that area. Didgie and ourselves had been over it a lot, the nuggets were usually all small about a 1/3 DWT and not many of them. Wether Clem found the nugget in the mullock he dug off in Nuggetty and didn't want to divulge it at the time until he had completed digging it off or wether he found it where he said he did we will never know. Gold does funny things to people. One very hot day in Nov 82 I walked down Nuggetty Creek on the northern side through the first fence. It was terribly hot and there were three very shady trees spaced about 200 yards apart on that side of the creek. I reckoned when I detected down to the third one I would have a spell out of the hot sun. Just before reaching the tree I received a signal that turned out to be a 2 DWT 19 G nugget which I called the "Heat " nugget. It was some 10 yards up from the creek on which could have been unworked ground but some nearby mullocks probably shed it during heavy rain. About this time Nick Tremain who worked with Didgie came into the picture. Nick had got hold of the nugget list put out by the Mines Dep and had traced up a spot called "Scabbie Hill" at Apple Tree Flat where nuggets had been found. He offered us all a trip. Clem had improved in detecting skills since he had been with us at Nuggetty. We usually camped on Saturday and Sunday and went home Sunday night. When we returned to the caravan after a days detecting it was very hot inside, unfortunately there were no shady trees to park it under. Clem used to have his meals in the annex after cooking them out side on his primus, he didn't seem to mind the flies. Lester and I used to prepare and eat our meals inside, at least you were away from the flies. After tea we would do some detecting near the caravan and when it was too dark Clem would come into the van proper for a drink of cold beer or a cuppa tea before retiring. He camper in his little Datsun car.

About this time we all found some 2 and 3 DWT nuggets at a spot further up Long Creek. We had noticed now that here and there in the diggings were what we called "Hopper Heaps" to differentiate them from mullock heaps. These hopper heaps consisted mainly of stones too large to fit through the ½ in holes of the miners cradle hopper. The working of a cradle is that the wash dirt is shovelled into a hopper on top of the cradle proper. The hopper is a square frame with a sheet of iron on the bottom in which are punched a large number of holes which are approx., ½ in in diam. Water is then poured over the hopper and the cradle rocked and the dirt stirred with a stick. After the wash dirt and anything smaller than ½ in has been washed down into the cradle proper the hopper is lifted off and the stones that it contains are discarded and the process repeated. When working in clayey soil and with muddy water, sometime nuggets are discarded with the hopper stones. These old hopper heaps are often a source of nuggets with a metal detector. They are much more likely to contain gold than an ordinary mullock heaps particularly where water was scarce. Hopper heaps are often covered over by mullock from later holes and not visible until you drive your pick into them. It was on such heaps that we found the Long Creek nuggets.

As Didgie could only get out of a Sunday now due to cricket on Saturday, Clem, Lester and I would often work Nuggetty on Saturday, camp Saturday night at the caravan and on Sunday morning travel over to Aarons Pass to rendezvous with Didgie and Nick Tremain at the junction of Aarons Pass and the Mudgee road and then we would travel on to Apple Tree Flat. Good gold was got at Scabbie Hill which belonged to John McCrae He let us all in to detect, it was quite a big party. We got some nice gold there but that is another story and will be told in the "Tale of Apple Tree Flat and Gulgong" which was in the end the parting of Didgie and ourselves.

Nuggetty as a Base.

The closing months of 82 saw us looking to go further afield again for gold. Nuggetty was just about exhausted of nuggets, Didgie had got the biggest one. Dam Creek had faded and the Back Creek Crudine had changed hands and was difficult to gain access to. Ophir had been done over by just about everybody. We had a trip to Grenfell in the pipe line, a friend that worked at S A F, Geoff Brown had a relation out there and could get us on to a property to search for gold. It was a long trip and our only caravan was at Nuggetty and it was fairly old to take on such a trip and we didn't really want to move it at this stage.

Tom Hutcherson who also worked at S A F had a caravan in near new condition and we purchased this.. It was light and easy to tow, store and push around and gave us the caravan advantage again. Over the Xmas period we visited the Lower Lewis Ponds with Clem and camped in it. We also made three trips to Grenfell and got many nuggets (The Grenfell Story).

Clem went to Victoria and on his return we fell out over a matter of gold which will all be told in "The Golden Mountain Story".

At the end of the holidays we had several days with Didgie and Nick at Burrendong prospecting and on our return Nick began organising other trips to the Croaks at Pyramul. As we had fallen out with Clem, Didgie often camped with us at the Nuggetty caravan. It was during these times that we had a pleasant night pointing out the various stars and planets to his son Brett who had a 4" telescope.

There are a lot of Croakes living at Pyramul and Nick got permission from most of them to enter their properties and prospect for gold. We spent a lot of time going over the area around Pyramul for some nice gold. Nothing big but plenty of 1 and 2 DWT pieces. Didgie had made up with Jack Green again and Jack came out quite a few times.

At Easter Jack Green, Didgy, Lester and I all camped at Nuggetty caravan. They had a tent, worked Croakes during several days and travelled through to Scabbie Hill on the last day to work there. At that time we seldom went over into Nuggetty considering it worked out.

One afternoon working at Croakes Richie came by just as we were leaving. I had mentioned to him on our arrival on the days before that we would get the caravan out of his way this trip. When I mentioned that we would go down to Stanley now and tow the van home out of his road. He said it was not in the way but he rather had got used of it there and not to shift it if we didn't want to. Actually we had nowhere at home to store it and would have to put it on another property. Richie also mentioned later that why he liked having it there was when he was approached by people wanting to go to Nuggetty he could point over to it and say "Two old friends of mine own that caravan and I only let them alone fossick in Nuggetty". And so the caravan remained and as the winter drew in it had been there almost a year. It was a good base to work from we could camp and travel to Hargraves, Gulgong, Stanton Pilleys lease etc. But we were still dogged with the idea of finding the secret of the nuggetty gold or getting more gold out of there.

As the sun set, from the caravan window you could look out at the race winding around the hills to Nuggetty and wonder how much gold must still be under the ground there. Three miles away on the horizon to the east the wooded hills of Fletchers Creek stood out in the last blaze of the sun, from all that way they had brought the water to work Nuggetty, how they were driven to find gold.

### **Back Hoe Era.**

In the autumn of 1983 saw us shut off from many of our old areas. Dam Creek was worked out and we had largely lost contact with Peter Healey the owner. The Crudine property had been sold and our fall out with Clem had made it difficult to return to the Lower Lewis Ponds district. We had a good caravan and work area at Nuggetty but it was difficult to find gold. Winter was coming on and it was too cold to dredge and there was little water in the creek. By digging off tops of mullock heaps in Nuggetty you could sometimes get some gold, but it was very hard work. In mid March we hired an electric jackhammer we already had a generator and dug off quite a few tops with it. The work was hard but we got 4 DWT 20 G for the weekend. Actually we were lucky because we uncovered an old hopper heap. About this time the idea of buying a second hand back hoe had began to form in Lesters mind. Something not too big that could be towed to different places where we had got gold. To dig off the mullocks and spread them out and then go over them with detectors.

Didgie, Lester and I had hired a back hoe at Dam Creek in 1981 and it had dug a lot of mullock, we got a fair bit of gold but only enough to pay the expenses. Lester found a Cranvel back hoe for sale at Portland, and we went out to look at it. It was in pretty bad shape and needed a lot of work on it. The owner wanted \$1300-00 and we approached Didgie and Jack Green to see if they wanted to go in with us on the deal. At first they thought it was a good idea but later they didn't go ahead. I didn't think much of the idea myself but Lester was dead keen to go ahead. Ask Richie if he will allow it I said. We went out to Stanley and Lester brought the subject up with Richie. I don't care what you do in Nuggetty he said. So Lester went out and paid for the back hoe, we had no place to store it. Lester had approached a friend at Marrangaroo, Ian Banning who has a big property to keep it there and he agreed. The Portland men delivered it to Ians on his trailer and we covered it with a tarpaulin. Some of the reason I did not want Lester to buy the backhoe was I didn't like the way it pitched about when the Portland man had demonstrated how it dug. I had visions of it tipping over on Lester and badly injuring him.

We set about the task of reconditioning the back hoe by travelling out to Marrangaroo a distance of 3 miles or so and bringing back a piece at the time to be worked on. Just about every moving part in it was worn out. Early in the winter of 1983 we fell out badly with Didgie over gold at Apple Tree Flat. John McCrae had seen Jack Stubbs the owner of the Apple Tree Flat diggings on our behalf in May 83 and the first afternoon we went in. Jack Green, Didgie, Lester and myself. Didgie found in the first ½ hour the biggest nugget to be found there (his great arse again) a 4 oz nugget. We made numerous trips back in May and June but did not find one anywhere near that size, but we all got a fair quantity of smaller ones. Lester and I had probably got 1 ½ to 2 oz all told out of the place. We usually went out on a Sunday as that was the day Didgie could go. One day Lester and I went out to Scabbie Hill on the Saturday but because it had been raining overnight heavily we could not get across the Cudgegong River. We decided to go into Jack Stubbs, it was the only afternoon. Two or three small nuggets turned up for the day. When Lester rang Didgie that night to tee up the trip for next day he mentioned we had been in there, Didgie was quite nasty about it. "It's not much good a man going out after you fellows have been in and cleaned the place out on your own". This was probably our 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> trip in together and Didgie had got the big one anyway. We went out together the next day but things were pretty strained. From then on Lester never rang Didgie again to arrange any trips, the partnership had lasted about 2 ½ years. Didgie then took up with Jack and they went out together, once we did strike them at Appel Tree Flat. Later in the year we heard that Jack and Didgie had fallen out again over gold found on the same property (Apple Tree Flat). The winter of 83 saw Lester and I hardly going after gold at all. Lester worked reconditioning back hoe parts and I either helped him or worked on renovating around the house. We also had to invest in a trailer to carry the back hoe on. The young chap down our back lane Tony Sullivan had a car trailer, which Lester purchased off him. But it was really too light to carry the back hoe on, and he had to spend something like \$2000-00 and a lot of work to bring it up to scratch. Because we had a small backyard we had to store the Nissan Patrol out in the back lane. The back hoe and trailer represented some \$3000-00 plus a lot of work, we were going to have to find a lot of gold to come out on top.

Spring came and the back hoe was almost completed, it looked pretty good with a new coat of paint and tyres. Some of the parts we had reconditioned in the S A F. We applied for long service leave. The trailer however would not be ready until early December so we found we could hire a heavy duty trailer from one of the Lithgow garages. We travelled out to Nuggetty in early October to see how things were going out there, we had not been out for about four months. We told Richie we were just about ready to bring out the back hoe but he seemed to have forgotten all about it. All he had to tell us was that he was considering selling out and going. It had been a dry winter again and things were not good on the land. Richie also lived a lonely life at Stanley, he and his wife had parted some time before we first knew him. However he said it was OK to work Nuggetty with the back hoe so long as we filled in our holes, but if he sold out we would have to negotiate with the new owner, in fact he felt he might get a better price off a developer who would split the property into little blocks. The position at Stanley threw a gloom over Lester and I. However we decided to make the best of it and push on with our plans. I haven't got a date for the big back hoe move but was probably late October. We picked up the trailer from the garage (it had to be back in 24 hours) and towed it out to Ian Bannings at Marrangaroo late one afternoon. The back hoe was started up with its pull cord and Lester drove it up the ramps we had made onto the trailer, here we chained it down with chains and turn buckles. Then we covered it up for the night, uncoupled the Toyota Landcruiser and drove back to Lithgow. We

rose early the next morning and journeyed out to Marrangaroo and recoupled everything up. There was a narrow little bridge over a creek out of Ian's property, but we got over that O.K. On the way out on the Mudgee road we stopped several times and checked the load. Then it was over Aaron's Pass hoping the potholes wouldn't break something on the trailer. When we topped the hill at Bob Croaks at Pyramul we knew it was downhill all the way to Stanley.

At the caravan we had to reset the ramps and drive the back hoe off, covered it up, had lunch then started out for home with the empty trailer. About 2 o'clock we had it back at the garage.

Next trip to Nuggetty we took the Nissan which had a shorter wheelbase and towed the back hoe over on its own wheels to Nuggetty. We did not take the direct track but went around the back way. It was a slow trip but eventually we had the back hoe near our shady tree. With high hopes we started on mullocks but as the days went by and we tried in all different places the sad fact emerged that we were not finding gold. The weather now turned wet and cold and we were in November. The skies were leaden we could get no gold with the back hoe and Richie kept talking of selling out.

One amusing thing happened about this time. We were sound asleep in the caravan when suddenly I woke to a rasping sound and the caravan was shaking violently it was most frightening. I grabbed a torch and went outside, two of Richie's horses were using the side of the caravan to scratch themselves. Funny thing Fritz our dog slept through it all. The long service leave ended with only one small nugget found about 1/3 DWT.

We were now isolated from the happenings of our former friends, Clem didn't speak and we were wondering what was happening at Lewis Ponds. Didgie only appeared occasionally, and did give much away about what he was doing.

He had taken up with a chap called Noel Partridge who according to Didgie was not much good at detecting. We made another attempt at Nuggetty with the back hoe over the Xmas holidays of 84—84. Also dredged with sub surface dredge. The car trailer was now completed and we registered it on 29-12-83 and we stored it at Ian Bannings, which gave us more room at home.

Poor old Pug our blue cattle dog who was about 12 years old had a mild heart attack in the excitement of us arriving home one day. He had remained home on all our camping trips and never been on one. We had taken him on odd day trips early on. He was deaf and almost blind and gradually went down hill after the heart attack. He was an affectionate old fellow and we felt very sorry for the way he had been treated, shut for a great deal of his life on the back veranda or in the yard. So we took him out with us to Nuggetty. It was really too late for him but he must have got a bit of enjoyment out of it. He was so short of breath and coughed and wheezed a lot of the time. He was so short of breath we would wheel him down to where we were working in our wheel barrow. I would say to him for a joke he would have to give up smoking. A strange thing happened to Pug when we were camped in Nuggetty caravan at that time. Some 6 months earlier at home in Lithgow I went out onto the closed in back veranda where Pug spent his nights and noticed he had little that was warm to lie on, so I scratched around the house and found an old army greatcoat which I no longer used, and I spread it out on the floor for him to sleep on. Now at Nuggetty he camped beside my bunk on a carpet and he would do a lot of wheezing and coughing in the night. One night I dreamt that I felt very cold and a shadowy figure threw something over me to keep me warm and when I looked at it there was the army greatcoat. At that time we had the back hoe down in a sluiced out area in Nuggetty which we had called from a TV show on gold in north Queensland "Hells Gate". The name was apt in that we could only drive the back hoe down into it through a narrow break away between two trees. Using the back hoe we put down a number of holes close to the banks but no gold.

On Saturday 7-1-1984 poor old Pug died at home. We missed him so much we purchased another cattle dog pup a red one this time who we called Dick, he figures prominently in the Golden Mountain Story. We tried sluicing with the sub-surface dredge. As the holidays drew to a close and the weather turned wet, we took the back hoe from Hells Gate back up to its position under or near the Nuggetty tree. Pictures depict that time, it was mid Jan 1984.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> Feb we traded the faithful Daihatsu in on a Jackaroo Richie had got us into several new property's up at Hargraves and we made some trips there in the Jackaroo but got very little gold. In late April we bought a small chainsaw to clear some blackberries and saplings off a few mullocks at Nuggetty in the hope of getting some more gold. We also towed the back hoe back to the caravan and covered it up for the winter, it was never to dig another hole for us. Richie was still talking of selling up so we expected any day to get a call to shift out the caravan. As the winter drew to a close we returned to Lower Lewis Ponds with Clem Thompson and bid events occurred there which took us away from Nuggetty for the remainder of the year. We would have returned for a day or two in the warmer weather to run the back hoe motor and repaint the caravan and for old times sake we would have gone into Nuggetty for a bit of detecting.

### Alex and Edna at Nuggetty

1985 Saw us still concentrating our efforts in the Lowe Lewis Ponds area. In the autumn we made a trip with Peter Gregory and his wife to Col Fergusons property Kelvin at Palmers Oakey. The arrival of Spring 1985 found us at a point where it was almost impossible to find any gold with our detectors, and we turned to dredging again. We purchased a 3" surface dredge and a motor and pump that would float on the water, also a small sluice box rig and several hundred feet of Poly pipe to pump water up to dry areas. The bad news was that in early 1985 we found Fritz had a bad heart. In the holidays 85-86 we spent some time at Nuggetty using the sluice box and digging off tops. The annex of the caravan had rotted away and we discarded it. The caravan was painted again, didn't get much gold. Early in 1986 we got Patrick another Doberman pup from Vynyard he was 3 months old. Next month we traded in the faithful old Nissan on a Daihatsu Hi Jet. It was a bad move. We were motivated by the thought of a trip to Triamble prospecting for gold and a 4 wheel drive van to camp in would be useful. It was never used for this purpose. Also early in 1986 we arranged with Richie for two friends to camp with us for a few days at Nuggetty. They were Alex and Edna Hargan who we had met years before at Dam Creek. They lived at Bathurst and travelled out to Nuggetty towing their caravan via Hill End, Sallys Flat road. Alex arrived after having a puncture on the way and buckling a wheel on the caravan. He reckoned they were the roughest roads in Aust. He seemed to hit it off alright with Richie and after his stay sent him a letter of appreciation. We took Alex and Edna over into Nuggetty not expecting to find much it was worked out we reckoned. Lester found a little nugget and gave it to Edna. Later to our surprise they both found some little nuggets, Alex the most, several DWT of it. We were all still using A2B's and Alex was very good with his. Next day we took them to a property at Hargraves where I found a small nugget. Next day we detected up Long Creek and they thanked us for a nice 3 days when they left. We followed them to Sofala to make sure they got home OK. Alex had promised to show us an area he had worked at Wattle Flat called Red Bank in the near future.

Fritz died 30-3-1986 at Lower Lewis Ponds and is buried near our caravan there. In April we went with Alex to Red Bank and made a number of trips there after, but very little gold. Lester was unwell and had troubles at work. We spent some of our long service leave on trips to Dark Corner, Wattle Flat, Tucklan and Stuart Town got no gold at all. Once again we painted the Nuggetty caravan and ran the back hoe motor.

Patrick the Doberman ran after a sheep and speared himself badly on a piece of wood We had to race him to a vet in Lithgow. We were in the little Daihatsu Hi Jet at the time, he recovered.

The only good news was that Richie Hough had taken up with a woman with 3 grown kids, her name was Elizabeth and she was living at Stanley. Richie was talking now about staying and buying more sheep. At Nuggetty for Xmas holidays and installed a TV antenna for Elizabeth, Richie Sells Out

Near the end of the Xmas holidays in mid Jan 1987, Dick and Patrick chased a sheep at Nuggetty and tore it so badly we had to shoot and buy it. We camped a little in the Nuggetty caravan, it leaked and we did some repairs to it. With things going better at Stanley we even had plans of taking the back hoe back to Nuggetty. In late August 87 we decided to buy a 15000 Goldseeker Metal Detector in the hope it would give new life to our old areas. It did and we found some small nuggets in the Golden Mt, Dam Creek and Nuggetty. Didgie got one soon after. At the end of November we bought a Suzuki 4 wheel drive hard top off John Davis Motors in Orange, we traded in the Hi Jet van. In December we bought a Minelab 1600 metal detector but did not like it and traded it back in on a Goldseeker 15000H/M. On our last trip to Nuggetty early in December 87 Richie had given us a Red Baron metal detector to repair, but we couldn't fix it and sent it to Ron Wilson who charged \$84-00 to fix it. When we took it out to Richie early in Jan 1988 he thanked us then dropped a bombshell. He said "I don't know what you fellows are going to do but I have sold the property". Apparently he wanted a bigger property to support his new family. He has brought a bigger property up near Inverell. It was a shock for us we had expected some years before but everything had seemed to be going so well. I thought at the time of all the things we had done for him and it had come to nought. We told him we would shift the back hoe first. When we were over measuring up the back hoe (it had never been on the trailer we had built for it years ago) he came over and said there was no hurry to shift things as the deal would take months to go through and he didn't expect to be gone before March. Also the new owner was his next door neighbour on the Windyer side Tony Lawrance and he would see him about us staying on. He would explain to him how we were a good excuse to keep people out However the shock of him going decided us to shift the back hoe the caravan we felt was now in a fairly bad state of repair to travel that we reckoned if the new owner didn't want us we would leave it there. Shifting the back hoe back to Marrangaroo was a big task. Since its completion in Dec 83 the trailer had been stored there and had seen some 2 tarpaulins covering it in their 3 years which had rotted away. We rose early picked up the trailer and proceeded to Nuggetty caravan. The back hoe loaded OK and we chained it on and carried it back to Marrangaroo being towed by the Toyota. It was a heavy day but everything went OK. For the rest of the holidays we concentrated on the Nuggetty, Long Creek and Fletchers Creek area in case we might lose them. We found a few more small nuggets. Richie said one day he had seen Tony Lawrence and it was OK for us to stay on. I can't remember when we last saw Richie but it was probably late in Jan 88. On the 5-2-88 we sold the back hoe to Rodney Piper son of Karl Piper, who was now dead. It is strange that Rodney Piper purchased the back hoe which had been out with the Nuggetty caravan for so long, Karl had made the Nuggetty caravan. Rodney did not buy the trailer so we returned it to Marrangaroo. Late in Feb we purchased an expensive metal detector off Dan Cooper for \$1700-00 we had waited some 3 months for it. It was never much good and has only found about \$40-00 worth of gold

### **The Lawrence Era**

In the spring of 1988 we took the bull by the horns and went out to meet Tony Lawrence. We had detected near his house in years gone by on Richies property but had never met him. Richie said he didn't like his son.. We drove up to the house that was some 80 yards in from the road. We went around the back and knocked. There seemed to be an argument going on inside, I reckoned we had picked a bad time to call. A lady of about 50 came out and when we introduced ourselves she was very pleasant. The teenage daughter came out and went she must have been in the argument. Tony came out he was a rough diamond, a big man with a rough manner. But generally they seemed OK, we met the son Stephen and left after much talk, they were hard to get away from, with a gun to repair. On another trip we brought up the subject of bringing our dogs in to Nuggetty. At first Tony refused but when he found we tied them up and kept them on a leash he gave permission. Rita his wife showed us a one ounce nugget she had picked up some years before under the cloths line. We came out another day and detected around the area with them but could not find another, there was a lot of junk.

We had traded the car trailer on a caravan at Burgess in Bathurst and towed it out to Dam Creek. We were having trouble with Dick doing his job in the cars and built a trailer top on the box trailer so we could transport him out to camp. We made a trip to Nuggetty just after New Year, cut the grass, painted the caravan, put up the tarp over the frame, cut the 44 gal drum to cover the generator. Used the generator for the lights and camped the night. This was the last night we would camp in the Nuggetty caravan. In Dec 77-78 I found a 1oz 6 DWT nugget at Dam Creek with Whites 608D. Did work on Tony and Rira TV installation on several occasions. There was a motor bike accident on the main road and the injured pillion passenger came to Nuggetty caravan late one night.

### **Freds Nuggets and the Gold Bugs.**

Tony Lawrence was more inclined to let people into Nuggetty than Richie had been. They had to be his friends of course. One person who got in real soon after Tony got control was Fred Ryan of Gulgong. Fred usually brought a detecting friend or two with him. He used to visit the area every week or so. Stephen used to feed to us when we came out what Fred was finding and he kept telling us that Fred was getting plenty of little nuggets down the bottom of Nuggetty near or over the boundary fence. We could not understand this, he did not seem to do much detecting in Nuggetty or else Tony told him to leave it for us. On the grapevine we found out that Fred and his friends were using Goldbug Detectors which were supposed to be very good on small pieces. In December 88 Lester purchased a Gold Bug off Ron Wilson for \$1000-00 and early in Jan 89 I got one also. Over the Xmas break they gave a new burst to Nuggetty as we got some more little pieces. And a few more showed up at Dam Creek and Golden Mountain

We had obtained a third dog in 1988 another Doberman and camping was getting out of the question, so were down to day trips.

The diary of 1-1-1991 Gives. Very hot summer, went with Billy and Patrick to Nuggetty (the two Dobermans) Got 4 small nuggets with gold bug at Bridgewright. Saw Steve kill a kangaroo in Nuggetty. Big rain storm about 2-30 just got out. Only rarely now were entries of nuggets and trips in the diary but 2 years after getting the gold bugs they were still getting a few nuggets out of Nuggetty. Every summer we would paint the old caravan just in case we should need to camp in it. It was a days work to clean off the peeling paint and repaint it and as you usually went out for some detecting it was often slummed.

We were always hoping to get the Golden Handshake from work and then we would camp a few days and look more intensely for gold.

Next in the diary is 1-1-93. Went out to nuggetty, Lester detected one small nugget, we had not been out there for 12 months. It was a very hot day, we gave the Lawrences a shot with our flintlock rifle when they came over to Nuggetty. We had now other interests to take us away from metal detecting We had joined WIRES to care for native animals, We had joined the Pistol Club. And the Muzzle Loading Club, and you could not take many days off work.

3-4-93 Purchased a Midas Metal Detector for \$1100-00 and a 18" Superdepth coil off John Dyer the coil was \$400-00 We were still feeling the call of the gold fields. The Midas did not turn out much good, but we have made a couple of trips to Nuggetty with it and got a little piece. Installed TV ant for Stephen.

In December 93 I got the Golden Handshake from work but Lester didn't

2.1.94 We purchased a mobile phone for use in emergency's in the bush.

### **The End of the Caravan.**

The last entry in the diary which opens this story is at hand.

On the 6-3-93 we went out to paint the caravan but found it beyond repair and folded it down. Now with the end of the Nuggetty caravan one can sum up the 14 years or so of history that surrounds the area of Nuggetty. We entered all these years ago hoping to find some big nugget and retire from work. We drew a blank, the success finally came. However if you add all the gold that Nuggetty and to a lesser extent Long Creek and Fletchers have yielded to us it probably wouldn't amount to more than 10ozs, if that. Didgie got about 3ozs. The big yank and the others you would not know.

But we had untold pleasure over the years, finding and digging up these little nuggets of pure gold, otherwise we would have not returned perhaps a 100 times over the years over that rough and dangerous Aarons Pass road to old Nuggetty. We enjoyed in the early days the company of Jack and Mark, Didgie, and Clem and a few others.

We enjoyed at times pleasant weather, at other times we endured the blazing heat of the summer sun, the freezing cold winds of early spring and the violent thunder storms and cloud bursts. Also the pain and frustration of Didgie finding the biggest nugget under our noses.

We conversed many times with Stanton Pilley. Richie and John Hough Tony and Rita Lawrence and Stephen. Stanton Pilley is gone now dead of a stroke perhaps 5 years ago. Never more will we sit with him on his front veranda and look across to Long Creek and listen to his tales. John Hough died some 3 to 4 years ago, he is gone from Hargraves. Richie Hough and his new family are still living on his new property at Inverell. Stephen Lawrence is married and lives in Stanley.

Where do we go from here?. I do not know. Nuggetty has been virtually worked out for years (how often have I said that and someone goes in and gets more nuggets) Recently a detector dealer from Maitland offered Tony \$50-00 an hour to detect there Tony relented and let him in, away from the main area he got several small nuggets. However the gold was thrown out on the heaps and does not exist deep in them to any extent. So new deep seeking detectors are not the answer. We have decided just to roam, looking for relics, who knows we may find a nugget. The biggest nugget found in the area was an ounce found by a Sydney chap on the Windyer Sports Ground. So a big nugget may lurk in an unsuspecting place.

The old caravan is finished however it will probably be a few more years in its fold down position before it disintegrates completely. We will probably give it to Tony, he may be able to build a farm trailer or something out of it. Perhaps we will place another caravan on the site to establish a claim to search on Nuggetty.

All that is left now is what is in the pages of this book.

I remember with nostalgia the old caravan in its heyday with the stove going cooking some steak and potatoes as the sun sinks behind Stanley. The view out the front window of the range of hills between Nuggetty and Long creek, out away east to Fletchers Creek catching the last rays of the setting sun. Then settling down to your bunk at night after coffee with old Fritz and Lester and watching the stars twinkling out the window.

### **In the middle of one of the books I found the following**

#### Total gold as at 11-9-82

Nuggets	34 oz
Hide	25
Safe	11 ½
Total	70 ½

By the time of their passing they would have found more.

On today's values the nuggets would be worth maybe two or three times their weight value.

The price March 2012 is in the \$1720 per oz US range.

As Des remarks in his story they did not make a fortune, they spent a lot of time and money **but** they had a lot of good times



LESTER ABOUT TO START THE WISCONSIN MOTOR OF THE BACKHOE WITH THE PULLCORD. A HOT DAY IN NUGGETTY, FRITZ IS IN THE SHADE AND PANTING. LOOKING NORTH-WEST DOWN NUGGETTY FROM NEAR HELLS GATE JANUARY, 1984.

Gold is measured in many ways but for some reason this precious metal is weighed in a system of measurements called "Troy Measurements" which is used internationally.

Troy measurements are such that one pound (lb) is divided up into 12 Troy Ounces and each Troy Ounce is divided up into 20 units called Pennyweight (dwt).

#### **The traditional unit of weight for precious metals and gems.**

- 1 troy ounce = 480 grains
- 1 troy ounce = 24 scruples
- 1 troy ounce = 20 pennyweights (North American jewelry trade)
- 1 troy ounce = 1.097 ordinary ounce
- 1 troy ounce = 8 drams
- 1 troy ounce = 31.1034768 grams.
- 1 troy ounce = 120 carats
- 1 troy ounce = 155.52 metric carats (diamonds / precious stones).
- 3.75 troy ounces = 10 tolas (Indian sub-continent)
- 6.02 troy ounces = 5 taels (Hong Kong)
- 12 troy ounce = 1 troy pound
- 14.583 troy ounce = 16 avoirdupois ounce (1 Pound)
- 32.15 troy ounces = 1 kilogramme (Kilo)
- 32,150 troy ounces = 1 metric ton (1,000 kilos)
- 1000 troy ounces = 31.1 kilograms