

Chapter 2:  
The Chert Road Metal  
and Timber Company  
Limited



## a. Timeline

???	Williamson finds chert deposit
???	The Mount Victoria Timber and Metal Syndicate organised
09/04/1921	Williamson applies for Mineral Leases 7 & 8
/11/1921	Mines Dept refers applications to Blue Mountains Shire Council, passed to trustees at Mount Victoria
/12/1921	Trustees of Mount Victoria Group Reserves letter to Department of Mines with no objection to leases
14/12/1921	Representative of Syndicate met with Shire Council Plant Committee to discuss supplying chert
27/01/1922	Article appears in <i>The Blue Mountain Echo</i> re company formation
22/02/1922	Mineral Leases 7 and 8 granted in name of E. A. Williamson
22/09/1922	Agreement between Syndicate and Graham
21/12/1922	Chert Road Metal and Timber Company Limited incorporated
/02/1923	Shares traded on Open Exchange (and through March and April)
/04/1923	Report of company constructing a tramway
06/06/1923	Company applies for Mineral Lease 32 for "coal & shale" northeast of Western Railway (640 acres)
22/06/1923	"Valley of Treasure" story in <i>The Blue Mountain Echo</i>
29/06/1923	Report of Williamson finding 8ft seam of coal
08/02/1924	"Clearing and excavating is proceeding apace"
15/04/1924	Company borrows £1,000 — Debenture signed
22/06/1924	Siding from Main Western railway line opened
24/06/1924	Williamson "surrenders" ML7 (ML8?)
30/06/1924	Company acquires ML7 (ML8?)
22/12/1924	Sidings "brought into use"
06/03/1925	Winding plant being installed
24/03/1925	Railway from "quarry" to siding has been constructed, winding plant installed, "small drive into coal seam"
27/03/1925	Company applying to mine coal from ML7
22/01/1926	"will resume operations ... at an early date"
16/10/1926	Official opening
/  /1926	Harry Hammon and his father use chert incline to transport firewood from Kanimbla Valley
11/12/1926	Advertisement for sawmiller
25/02/1927	"Some magnificent logs" coming from Kanimbla Valley
22/04/1927	Advertisement for timber starts appearing in <i>The Blue Mountain Echo</i>
05/10/1927	Extraordinary meeting passes motion to wind up the company
20/10/1927	Tenders called for purchase of company and notice re creditors
19/11/1927	Mountain Industrials formed to take over Chert Company
18/05/1928	Court case Chert Road Metal and Timber Company versus Dorahy in District Court
01/06/1928	Mountain Industrials to wind up voluntarily
13/08/1929	On site auction to sell the plant
07/03/1930	MLs 7, 8 and 32 cancelled
22/02/1931	Siding closed
/02/1952	Trestles burnt in bushfire

ENGINEER'S REPORT for Month ending 16/11/21			
Drawing	Letter No.	Page No.	REMARKS
Diagrams of Mines	186B	980	Mineral Lease Appln. 22/29 and 23/30 Perth. Report:- This matter will deal with early and will show nothing to be done. J.W. 1921 186B 186B 186B

NRSW: NRS18375, [3], Blue Mountains Shire Council Engineers Report Book No 3; 8 September 1920 to 27 July 1921, para 980.

## b. Company Formation

The earliest reference I have found relating to the Company chert venture is in the Blue Mountains Shire Council Engineer's Report Book for November 1921. The Mines Department wrote to the council asking if they had any objections to the granting of Mineral Lease Applications 22/29 and 23/30 (Williamson's ML7 and ML8). The Council passed the matter on to the Trustees of the Mount Victoria Group Blue Mountains Sight Reserves for their comment. (*See item at top right.*)

The Report Book also shows that in December 1921 and January 1922 a representative of the Mount Victoria Timber and Metal Syndicate met with the Plant Committee of the Blue Mountains Shire Council to discuss the possibility of supplying the Shire with chert. (*See item at top left of next page.*)

In January 1922 *The Blue Mountain Echo* published a report that "A company is now being formed to instal a most modern crushing plant with aerial transport, capable of handling 600 tons of crushed metal a day. ... For a number of years, the roads near Mt. Victoria have been metalled with local chert, and they are found as near perfection as metal roads can be, though no great care has been exercised either in the making or upkeep. The metal forms a practically smooth and even surface, and after long use, few ruts are worn into the road, and even where ruts do exist, there is no scattering and disintegration of the surrounding metal, as with basalt or other road bases." (*See item at right.*)

In 1911 Rev. W. Hessel Hall, an amateur geologist, wrote an article titled "Good Roads — Motors, Money, Materials, and Methods". It is a lengthy article and I like this sentence: "Good roads, like the streets of the Heavenly City, must be paved with gold, but the gold is best laid out in the form of skilled oversight, efficient labor, and good metal."

Further on, Hall says "At Mount Victoria are to be found large beds of chert—an altered and hardened clay shale—belonging to the Narrabeen shale series which overlie the coal measures; also at Shipley road, near Blackheath, outcrops of the same series have recently been discovered by Mr Caro, the engineer of the Blue Mountains Shire. Probably also deposits of the chocolate shales will be located in this neighborhood. These deposits, when once the problem of cheap traction haulage is solved, will supply large quantities of excellent metal that should greatly improve the condition of the Mountain roads."<sup>1</sup>

(William Hessel Hall was also a member of the first, temporary, council of Kanimbla Shire which had been established on

## Blue Mountains Roads

### Important Discovery.

#### CHERT AT MT. VICTORIA.

A company is now being formed to instal at Mt. Victoria a most modern crushing plant with aerial transport, capable of handling 600 tons of crushed metal a day. The equipment will be of the most up-to-date character for the speedy and economical handling of large quantities of chert of a size suitable for road construction. Although the merits of chert for road construction are little known, experts consider that there is no better or more suitable road metal in Australia.

For a number of years, the roads near Mt. Victoria have been metalled with local chert, and they are found as near perfection as metal roads can be, though no great care has been exercised either in the making or upkeep. The metal forms a practically smooth and even surface, and, after long use, few ruts are worn into the road, and even where ruts do exist, there is no scattering and disintegration of the surrounding metal, as with basalt or other road bases.

Owing to the natural cohesion of the material, the surface remains solid and free from all loose stones as well as being practically noiseless. It is also free from dust and mud.

The chert from the district is not as hard as blue metal, trachyte, and several other forms of good road-making material, but it is hard and uniform in quality, with considerable toughness. A fine grained tough material will give better results than a very hard stone, since the wear is more even. Some harder materials, such as most forms of granite are not suitable, since they have no great toughness under impact, with the result that the road wears quickly and becomes dusty. In the case of chert the attrition forms a cementitious binder between the stones, making a smooth, hard, concrete-like mass, which is not eroded by the flow of water, even on the steepest grades.

Motorists, in particular, will be delighted to hear of this development, and Councils adjacent to the quarry should welcome the new enterprise.

<sup>1</sup> *The Nepean Times*, Saturday 25 February 1911, p8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article101304688>.

*The Blue Mountain Echo*, Friday 27 January 1922, p2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108236128>.

ENGINEER'S REPORT for Month ending 14/12/21			
Ranking	Letter No.	Paragraph No.	SUBJECT
R. J. Coleman	A-10/104	1022	Mt. Victoria Timber & Metal Syndicate. Report:-

SRNSW: NRS18375, [3], Blue Mountains Shire Council Engineers Report Book No 3. 8/9/1920 to 27/7/21, para 1022 (also para 1064).

### COMPANY NEWS.

Messrs. B. F. Parker and W. M. Vindin have accepted seats on the local board of the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society, Limited.

The following companies have been registered, and, unless otherwise stated, shares are of the value of £1 each:—

**Chert Road Metal and Timber Company, Ltd.:** Capital £30,000. Potters, dealers in cement, lime, plasters, whiting, artificial stone, etc. First directors, G. H. Taubman, E. A. Williamson, E. H. Bishop, W. P. Lister, F. Pontey.

*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 30 December 1922, p13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16038080>.

Also reported in

*Construction and Local Government Journal*, Wednesday 10 January 1923, p15 "Company Matter, Registrations", <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article109762080>.



T H I S D E E D M A D E the *Twenty second* day of *September* One thousand nine hundred and twenty-two BETWEEN GEORGE HENRY TAUBMAN of Manly Manufacturer ERNEST ALFRED WILLIAMSON of Mt. Victoria Estate *Manly Agent of Mt. Victoria Estate Manager* Agent, EDWARD HENRY BISHOP of Artarmon Contractor WALTER PROCTOR LISTER of Manly Freeholder FRANK PONTEY of Sydney Electro-typer WILLIAM JULIAN NESBIT of Sydney *Merchant* HENRY ROBERT CURRIE of Sydney, Solicitor, JOHN RANKIN of Sydney Company Manager, ALBANDER WYVIE of Sydney Accountant MAJOR DAWSON NICHOLSON of Sydney *Real Estate Agent* ETHEL MAY JENKINS of Manly *Householder* THOMAS ROBSON ROWLANDS of Manly Retired Commercial Traveller -- THOMAS GORDON BENNETT of Manly Civil Servant JAMES WATSON of Manly *Steward* ALBERT AUSTIN HIND of Manly Builder PAUL WILHELM RUDOLF BORLKE of Sydney Medical -- Practitioner RICHARD JAMES COLEMAN of Manly, Agent and -- WILLIAM ILES of Sydney Electro-typer (hereinafter called "The Mount Victoria Timber and Metal Syndicate") of the one part and Walter Paulstone Graham of Sydney *Articles Clerk* as Trustee for the intended Company (hereinafter referred to of the other part WHEREAS the said The Mount Victoria Timber and Metal Syndicate being the owners of or entitled to the -- Mineral Leases hereinafter mentioned are desirous of forming a company to be registered under the provisions of the Company's Act 1899-1919 having for one of its objects the acquisition of the said Leases with a nominal capital of ~~Twenty~~ *Thirty* thousand pounds divided into ~~Twenty~~ *Thirty* thousand shares of One pound each NOW IT IS HEREBY AGREED AND DECLARED as follows:—

SRNSW: NRS 12951, Company Packets, items; Chert Road Metal and Timber Co Ltd, No 8222, [17/5539]. (Agreement, p1, reduced to 50%).

7 March 1906. He and others were appointed on 9 June 1906 to hold office until the first council elections which were held on 24 November 1906. The Shire was renamed Blue Mountains Shire on 23 January 1907.<sup>2)</sup>

By 1914 the Blue Mountains Shire Council was looking for good road metal. I propose to tell the story of their chert venture in a second volume. In October 1914 *The Nepean Times* reported that "The engineer (Mr Harley Cox) recommended the obtaining of a more durable road metal than the present brown ironstone metal now being used. He stated that if a more permanent material were obtainable at even 20 to 30 per cent increase of first cost, it would be good economy in the long run, as regards the firmness and durability given to the road. Localities in the vicinity of Medlow Bath and Mt Victoria were instanced, but it was stated that perhaps an electric or aerial tramway would probably be required for haulage in either place."<sup>3)</sup>

*The Sydney Morning Herald* of Saturday 30 December 1922, in a small section headed "Company News", reported the registration of several companies, including:

"Chert Road Metal and Timber Company, Ltd. Capital £30,000. Potters, dealers in cement, lime, plasters, whiting, artificial stone, etc. First directors, G. H. Taubman, E. A. Williamson, E. H. Bishop, W. P. Lister, F. Pontey."<sup>4)</sup> (See side panel.)

The shares were £1 each. The capital of £30,000 was a substantial amount in those days. In this article there is no mention in the company's purpose of either chert road metal or timber.

However, the report is not completely accurate. The sentence "Potters, dealers in cement, lime, plasters, whiting, artificial stone, etc." is only a fragment of paragraph (c) in the company's objects.

The archives of the New South Wales Government are held at State Records in Kingswood. Many company records are held, including those of the Chert Road Metal and Timber Company, Limited.<sup>5)</sup> The file contains records held by the "Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, Sydney". It appears that the company was not very good at fulfilling its reporting obligations but there's enough information to give a clear picture of the company, its origins and its directors and shareholders.

### Memorandum of Association

One of the documents in the file is the "Memorandum of Association of Chert Road Metal and Timber Company, Limited" which lists numerous "objects for which the company is established". Most of them are very general but the first four relate directly to the chert business:

(a) To acquire and take over two Mineral Leases dated the 22nd February 1922 of property in the Parish of Hartley County of Cook standing in the name of Ernest Alfred Williamson and with a view thereto to adopt an agreement dated the 22nd day of September one thousand nine hundred and

<sup>2)</sup> <http://investigator.records.nsw.gov.au/Entity.aspx?Path=Organisation/165>.

<sup>3)</sup> *The Nepean Times*, Saturday 24 October 1914, p6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article86164140>. (Harley Cox was a descendant of William Cox who built the first road over the Blue Mountains.)

<sup>4)</sup> *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 30 December 1922, p13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16038080>.

<sup>5)</sup> State Records NSW: NRS 12951, Company Packets, items; Chert Road Metal and Timber Co Ltd, No 8222, [17/5539].