

*Celebrating the
Life of
William Leo Chapman*



11th May 1928 - 7th April 2010

"Gone prospecting"

LEO CHAPMAN'S LIFE11th May 1928 to 7th April 2010.

William Leo Chapman was born in Wollongong the son of Charles and Mona Chapman (nee Hennessy).

His father, Charles (Rudd), was born in Parkes and mother, Mona, in Cadia.

Leo was educated for 2 years at St Francis Xavier Convent, Wollongong, followed by some years at Christian Brothers College. After leaving school in 1943, he sought work at Australian Iron & Steel and commenced in 1944 as an apprentice boilermaker. By 1949 Leo was a qualified boilermaker.

John Hennessy, Leo's maternal grandfather who worked in a gold mine at Cadia, stirred in him a life long interest in gold mining.

With his grandfather's inspiration still fresh in his mind Leo pegged out his first claim at Yalwal in 1954 and commenced mining for gold. By 1958 Leo had put his boiler making skills to good use with the completion of an automatic crushing plant that would operate unattended for up to 4 hours.

It was unfortunate that Leo and the other miners at Yalwal were told the valley was to be dammed and all miners had moved out by the late 1960s.

Moving onto Nerriga Leo purchased a farm of 1200 acres on the Endrick River where he ran sheep. By 1971 he sold the farm and bought the Nerriga Hotel. The hotel, a single storey wooden country pub, had a 5 room accommodation with a dining room and bar. Many alterations were undertaken during Leo's time.

After the hotel was sold in 1975 Leo did not move far away, only about 100 yards, where he purchased 2.5 acres on which he installed some petrol bowsers and a small shop. After completion he developed the rest of the site as a caravan park with space for 13 vans.

In 1981 he sold out and moved to White Cliffs commencing work in the opal fields. In the afternoon, before leaving to work his claim, he would light a hurricane lamp and hung it in the front of his van. From wherever he was he could see the light to guide him home. Mining opal was not as successful as the gold fields as Leo could only work for 9 months of the year. For the hottest part of the summer months he returned to Wollongong to escape the heat at White Cliffs. He joined the White Cliffs Sporting Club where he reached the position of treasurer. He held this position for 13 years.

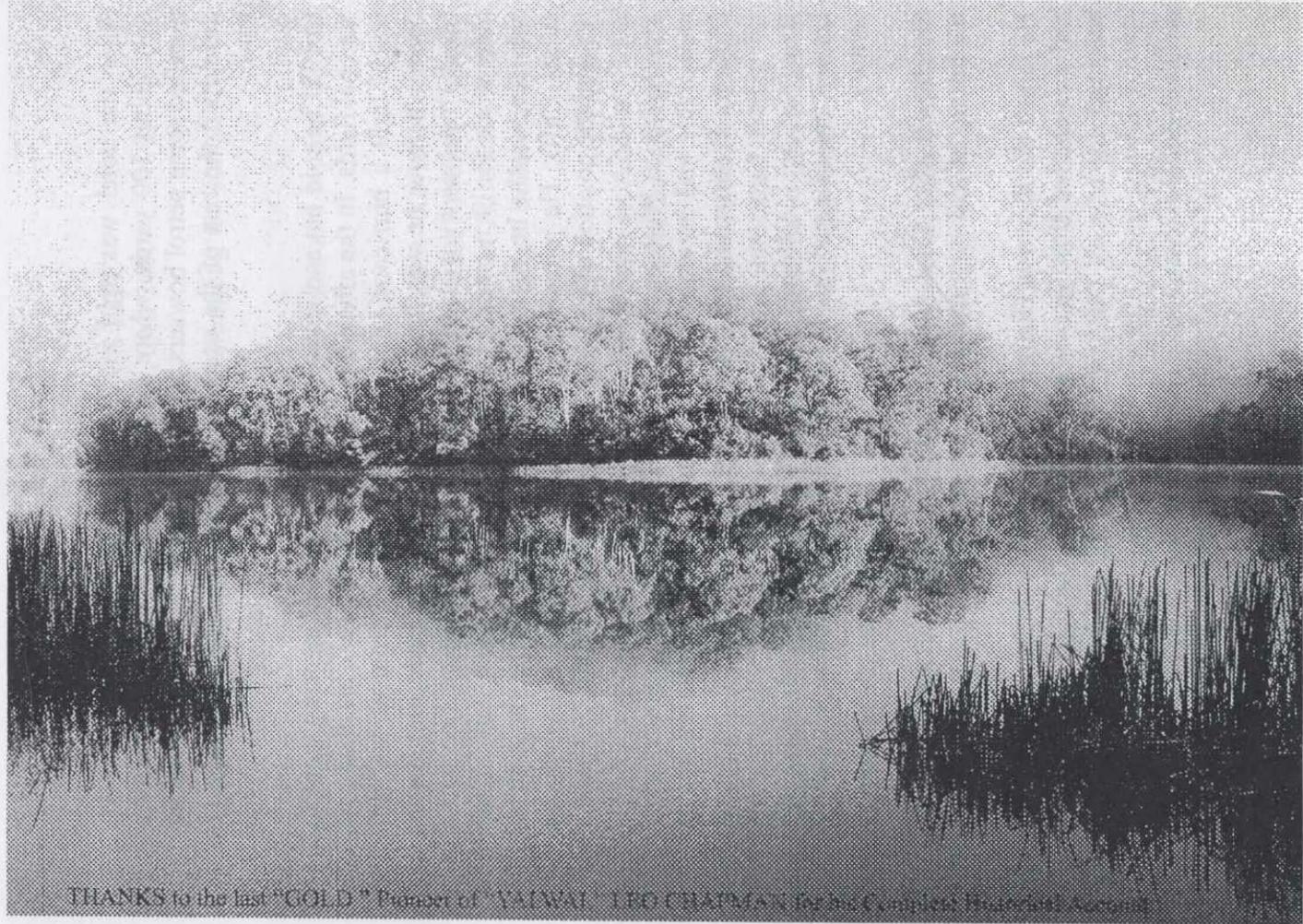
The trips from Wollongong to White Cliffs and return were his most memorable and he enjoyed that journey every time. He left White Cliffs for Wollongong for good in 1991.

Being an avid collector of metalliferous mining and geological history, he amassed an excellent library dating back for over a century.

Shoalhaven City Council was grateful for Leo's documentation of the history of Yalwal mines and its pioneers.

He joined the Illawarra Historical Society in Wollongong mid 1990s and was elected Hon. Treasurer in 1998 a position he held until his passing.

Compiled as a mark of respect for an esteemed Life Member and Honorary Treasurer of the Illawarra Historical Society Inc.



THANKS to the last "GOLD" Project of "YAIWAI" LEO CHAPMAN for his Complete Beautified Account