

Sir Samuel – the township

Sir Samuel is an abandoned township in the Mid West region of Western Australia, to the east of the Goldfields Highway between Leinster and Wiluna. However the highway and the towns did not come into existence until later.

The explorer, Lawrence Wells, named Mount Sir Samuel in 1892. He noticed evidence of gold and this was actually discovered in 1895. Officials lobbied for a townsite to be created in 1896 following the realisation that the area was becoming an important mining centre.. The mining warden suggested several names but the area was already well known as Mount Sir Samuel so the Mount was dropped and the town became Sir Samuel.

The townsite was gazetted in 1897. A police station camp was opened in the town in 1899 which consisted of tents and brush shelters. The camp was later burnt down in 1901. Tenders were called for to build a new station in 1902 that was completed in 1903 but then closed down in 1910 and the building removed to Youanmi in 1911. (ref : Wikipedia)

A newspaper article in 1938 describes what the town was like at its prime. Apparently locals called it 'The Mount' rather than the official 'Sir Samuel'. *"Thirty years ago the Mount was a place of thriving industry. It had township consisting of two pubs, three banks, PO, school, police station, several shops of various kinds, rifle range and racecourse and 4,000 people. The Bellevue mine was working at top pressure and using 100 head of stamps. It was one of the best gold producers in the State. There are 450,000 tons of sands estimated at 12 to 15 dwts per ton as a momento of its production, together with a heart breaking sight of a large quantity of plant rusting to pieces and the old workings full of water."* The article goes on to describe what it was like in 1938. *"Now the township is one pub, one cottage, the old road board office from Lawlers, the remains of one wall and part of the oven of the baker's shop, several holes in the ground which were the cellars and cooling chambers of the stores of 30 years ago and an out of date State battery which breaks down every time it is used; also there are several prospectors and old-aged pensioners' camps, mostly built from scrap materials of the dead buildings. Buildings are attached to the battery and the Westralian Tailings Retreatment Co new plant to treat the Bellevue sands. The Vanguard is also working; also three or four other small prospecting shows returning from 6dwts to about 15. The population is floating and numbers about 30. ... The common at the Mount now provides grazing for the pub's cows. Once it was a common sight to see 200 or 300 horses on it, also camels and bullocks."* (ref : article by Skipper of Wiluna published in the Western Mail – 16th June 1938, p 11).

Most signs of the thriving community were gone by the 1940s?. In 2016, over a century since its hay days, there is xxxnothingxxx to be seen – about 20? km on left of the Goldfields Highway ,north of Leinster .

SIR SAMUEL

LOCATION = Latitude 27° 38' south by Longitude 120° 33' east.⁴³ South of the present town of Wiluna.

INDUSTRY - Gold mining.

HISTORY = Gold was first discovered in this area around 1895. By 1896 the area was regarded as likely to become an important mining centre, and a request was made to survey a townsite. Following the selection of a site for the townsite, the Mining Warden for the area, A. G. CLIFTON suggested three possible names, CLIFTON after himself, Herberton after HERBERT'S the original finder of gold in the area and Newmanton, after A. W. NEWMAN, the surveyor. The Lands Department felt that the area was already too well known as Mount Sir Samuel, but decided that the Mount part of the name could be dropped. This was agreed to, and the townsite of Sir Samuel was gazetted in 1897. It takes it's name from the nearby feature of Mount Sir Samuel, which was named by the explorer Lawrence Wells in February 1892. Wells was the surveyor in the Elder Exploring Expedition which had left from Adelaide the previous year, and he named Mount Sir Samuel after Sir Samuel James Way, Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor of South Australia.⁴⁴

POLICE & COURTS - A Police Station was opened there in January 1899. This camp was apparently just a collection of tents and brush buildings and was burnt down on the night of the 13th of July 1901. Two sets of tracks were followed from the scene, but no apprehensions were made. Tenders for the rebuilding were called in 1902 on Bizant Street. The station was closed in November 1910 and the buildings were removed to Youanmi in 1911.⁴⁵

POLICE OFFICERS

BOND, [Constable] = He is known to be stationed there from April to May 1902.⁴⁶

PITMAN, [Constable/ No.425] = He was the original Officer in Charge in January 1899.⁴⁷

HOTELS & ACCOMMODATION

BELLEVUE HOTEL = A room in a hotel by this name was used as the police quarters and office following the burning down of the Police camp in 1901.⁴⁸

SIR SAMUEL HOTEL = George WESTON is listed there in the 1898 postal directory.⁴⁹ In about 1946 Alan WHITE moved with his new wife to manage the hotel, which included the telephone exchange and post office. They left in 1951.⁵⁰

OTHER BUSINESSES

BLACKSMITH = John HEIN is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁵¹

BUTCHER & STORE = Joseph Digby [Joe] WILLIS had started a butchery business and store by 1900.⁵² Advertising in January 1901 states that this was in partnership with Bill MORRIS and William RUTLEDGE and that the men had also opened a similar business and store in Kathleen Valley.⁵³ They were advertising this as the Pioneering butchery of Sir Samuel & Lawler's by February 1901.⁵⁴ RUTLEDGE returned to run the store after marrying in 1904, but on one evening in 1906 the shop was completely destroyed by fire and never rebuilt.⁵⁵

CARPENTER = E. PETERSEN is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁵⁶

CARTER = Thomas TOWNSEND is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁵⁷

ENGINEER = E. DODD is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁵⁸

STOREKEEPER 1 = Hugh MURRAY is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁵⁹

STOREKEEPER 2 = Arthur O'CONNOR is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁶⁰

STOREKEEPER 3 = Sydney PARKER is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁶¹

STOREKEEPER 4 = Frank STACEY is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁶²

STOREKEEPER 5 = T. TOOHEY is listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁶³

STONEMASON = Robert BELOW was listed in the 1898 postal directory.⁶⁴

SIR SAMUEL

Latitude 27° 38' S Longitude 120° 33' E

The abandoned goldfields townsite of Sir Samuel is located 1011 km north east of Perth and about 40 km north north west of Leinster. Gold was first discovered in this area around 1895, and by 1896 it was regarded as likely to become an important mining centre, and a request was made to survey a townsite. Following the selection of a site for the townsite, the Mining Warden for the area, A G Clifton suggested 3 possible names, Clifton after himself; Herberton after Herberts the original finder of gold in the area and Newmanton, after A W Newman, the surveyor. The Lands Department felt that the area was already too well known as Mt Sir Samuel, but the Mt. could be dropped from the name. This was agreed to, and the townsite of Sir Samuel was gazetted in 1897.

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