

Golden Times

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The official newsletter of the
World Goldpanning Association

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The 1999 World Champions
Team Slovak Republic

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Message from the President



2000 years have passed from the beginning of our calendar. But how many thousands of years have passed from the first gold discovery? No one knows that for sure. But we do know that gold is probably the first metal which people used. As gold has to be dug up before use, gold panning might well be the first profession in the world. Or would gold panning be a hobby for the first panners?

So gold has been panned already thousands of years. It has meant a livelihood for countless of people and still does. At the end of this

pan for gold in order to get their livelihood anymore, but use their free time for panning. To try and experience the feelings which gold prospectors in those big gold rushes felt, or to gain geological experiences and knowledge. For some people gold panning is like a lottery, they wish the first prize, that big nugget!

Near the end of the millennium, a unique international co-operation between gold prospectors from around the world has been born. Every year goldpanners gather together in countless places to join in friendly competition events in which the World Goldpanning Championships are the most important. At these events one can see the strong "competition instinct" in people which makes them gather together. However, at these events we can also feel strongly the friendship and international co-operation. This is

continue to grow in the beginning of following millennium.

The World Goldpanning Championships is the most important event to the members of our association. We have experienced great world events during the past twenty years, such as last year in Kocaba. To the organising committee, thank you very much for the well-arranged championships in the Czech Republic. Let's hope that in the future, the World Championships will be as well organised. By holding National Championships over many years, experience is gained that make the challenge hosting the World's all the easier. We hope our new member countries will work hard to continue the standard that has been set so far.

Golden Millennium for all goldpanners around the world.

Kauko Launonen

Treasurer's Report



I am pleased to report that, in a very short time, we have made good progress to improve the World Goldpanning Association's financial situation. We have had the situation for many years where we relied on the generous support of Tankavaara to always give extra money when there was not enough. We could not let this continue and I asked for your ideas to raise money. I received many good suggestions which I took to the WGA committee meeting in California for a vote. I have taken the results of the vote and went to the WGA meeting in the Czech Republic with proposals on how we could make a little more money, and spend a little less money. The WGA committee

discussed the proposals, improved them a little and voted to accept them.

Editors note: See report on the WGA meeting

I like money!! It gives us choice on what we will do in the future. Thanks to your help, when I leave this job, the WGA will be in a better and stronger financial position.

It does take time to agree new ideas, but what we are doing will be to all our benefit for very many years.

A special thanks must go to the Czech Republic and Italy who did a little extra fund raising and made voluntary contributions to our fund.

A last note to the representatives who attend the annual WGA committee meeting. If possible, please have the right money with you and in US dollars. This helps greatly to speed up the correct payment of annual voting fees.

To the rest of you, as my friend Mike Gossage says, "May your pan always glitter!"

Vincent Thurkettle
WGA Treasurer

Editorial

It seems long ago now that we said our goodbyes in the Kocaba valley. After an editors meeting while watching the competition in the rain, we decided the format and who would do what. Then we waited for the articles to arrive. Now finally a little later than planned and after a lot of chasing we have an overfull issue. We are sorry if your article does not appear in this issue, but rest assured it will be in the next. Please please, let us have anything you have done as soon as possible to help us prepare rather than be frantic at the last minute! Look forward to seeing you in the next millennium!!!!!!



Pirjo



Inkeri



Paul

Two Golden Nuggets United



(Paul, Vince (best man) and the Groom Mike)

We had been invited to a wedding, but this one was going to be a wedding with a difference! The President of the British Goldpanners Association Mike Gossage was to marry his bride Lin Strong.

And so on the 7th of August 1999 goldpanners and relations travelled many miles from all over the country to the small church in Leadhills in Scotland where the wedding was to take place. (Editors Note: Leadhills and Wanlockhead was the site of the British World Goldpanning Championships in 1991).

The sound of the Bagpipes echoed through the village as the piper led the bride and her retinue up to the church. Mike wore Highland dress and looked splendid in his *Pride of Scotland* tartan kilt.

Mr. Munro the Minister conducted the service. Mike and Lin exchanged rings made of Mick's Scottish Gold. Then as the bridal pair came out of the church the bagpipes played and they walked under a avenue of shovels held high by members of the goldpanning fraternity.

It would not have been Leadhills without a little rain to wish us all well, so with this we made for the village hall, where we had refreshments and a toast was made to the married couple. Many of Mike and Lin's relations had never

the mine. Then all the children and many adults had goldpanning lessons and we made sure they all went home with a golden sample of this memorable day – maybe some were touched by gold fever – it certainly seemed like it – we will be watching out at next years championships. Then back at Leadhills for supper, and the sound of the bagpipes was heard once more. Later together with friends from the villages we went to the Village Hall for a Ceilidh everyone joined in young and old alike. Vincent and Paul Thurkettle both wearing kilts, joined in and danced the various Scottish reels – it was quite a sight to see those tartans swirl !! I wonder why so many people wanted to sit down for these dances?

At around midnight we strolled up the candle lit drive to the home of friends Greta and Charlie Clark's. Jeanie played the squeeze box and we watched a magnificent firework display, a golden end to a golden day.

And where did Mike and Lin go for their honeymoon? Well the caravan was last seen going north, and we noticed lots of panning gear had been loaded!

We wish Mike and Lin all the very best for a long and happy future together.

Barbara Copley

Reports on the 1999 Goldpanning Championships

Italian Open Goldpanning Championship **Ovada 12-13 July 1999**

In spite of the concomitant Europa's polling, the 1999 Italian Open was successful. Little more than one hundred competitors came from all Italy, and some from France, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria (see the World Champion Josef Stokl). Very remarkable also was the participation to the 1st International Mineral and Fossils Market, with the participation of expositors coming from France, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Romania, and many parts of Italy, with samples from all over the world.

The event was followed by many newspapers and by national and regional televisions.

These the results of the main competitions:

Men:

1. Franco Ruggeri (4,56)
2. Pierino Angoli (7,29)
3. Mimmo Trerotola (7,31)

Women:

1. Liliana Claut (5,53)
2. Rosangela Milanese (6,40)
3. Franca kAssandri (10,26)

Veterans:

1. Franca Assandri (4,36)
2. Giancarlo Formenti (4,39)
3. Walter Schmitt (6,30)

During the year the Italian Federation organise the Regional Competitions too: The Piemonte Championships (S. Damiano di Carisio, Elvo river 23/5/99), the Liguria Championship (Pontinvea, Erro river 8/8/99) and the Lombardia Champinship (Bereguarado, Ticino river 10/10/99). These competitions are available for the Italy Cup 1999 Next Italian Open Championships will have place in Ovada too, but in the center of the town, along the Stura river, the 22 and 23 July 2000..

South African Championships

The South African Gold Panning Association in conjunction with the Pilgrim's Rest Museum successfully hosted the third South African National Gold Panning Championships

in Pilgrim's Rest over the weekend of the 13 and 14 November. This year a hundred and fourteen entries were received in all the various categories. Although this is still a long way off the 639 entries at the World Championships in Kocaba in the Czech Republic this year it is an encouraging sign as it is yet again an increase on last year.

The Championships as usual kicked off with the Alec "Wheelbarrow" Patterson race which was won under controversial circumstances by the team from the Royal Hotel. After some demanding and challenging heats on

Saturday the competitors moved onto the finals on Sunday the 14 November. The gravel used this year conformed to international standards and provided some of the entries with headaches, not all of which was due to the material being used or the size of the gold. For the second year in a row the Pikkies and Juniors section was won by the girls. It seems that they are the better diggers. This annual event is gaining in popularity and will be presented again next year after the World Championships in Poland, where we hope to be successful in our bid to host the 2004 World Championships. Entries from as far as Canada were received this year. The results are as follows:

Pikkies (under 6 years)

1. Anja v d Westhuizen - Gauteng (4 yrs)
- 2 Rayna Schultz - Pilgrim's Rest
- 3 Christopher Pringle - Pilgrim's Rest

Juniors (6 - 16 years)

1. Kaitlyn Robertson - Pilgrim's Rest
(see picture)



2. Jenna Schmidt - Pilgrim's Rest
3. Amore Schmidt - Pilgrim's Rest

Beginners Ladies

1. Michelle van Wyk - Pilgrim's

2. Elmarie v d Berg - Gauteng
3. Mary Anne Smith - Pilgrim's Rest

Beginners Men

1. Peter Versveld - Graskop
2. Peter Lindeque - Gauteng
3. Sydney Mashile - Gauteng

Proficient Ladies

1. Rene Reinders - Pilgrim's Rest
2. Christine Rowe - Pilgrim's Rest
3. Elaine Watson - Gauteng

Proficient Men

1. David Kahts - Pilgrim's Rest (picture)



2. Eugene Swanepoel - Pilgrim's Rest
3. Elmon Nkosi - Pilgrim's Rest

Veterans

1. Jan Hatting - Pilgrim's Rest
2. Pieter Oosthuizen - Pilgrim's Rest
3. Vic Neilson - Gauteng

Jokers

1. E Swanepoel - Pilgrim's Rest
2. David Kahts - Pilgrim's Rest
3. Tommy Gyori - Pilgrim's Rest

Team Competition (Panning)

1. Royal Hotel - Pilgrim's Rest
2. Moonshine Panners - Pilgrim's Rest
3. Pilgrim's Rest Museum - Pilgrim's Rest

The South African Gold Panning Association invites any one interested to join to contact them and partake in various fun and social activities throughout the year. The contact person is Eugene Swanepoel at (013) 7681296

A few observations from the Australian National Championships

I visited Australia in October to see the national championships held in Maryborough as the 2001 World Goldpanning Championships will take place there. I also visited in 1997.

The first thing I noticed was that the competition arrangements was similar to two years ago. There were competition pools for 15 competitors. About

Our next National Competition will be held during November 2000

Kind Regards
Eugene

1999 Australasian Championships

The 1999 Australasian Gold Panning Championships were a wonderful success once again as gold panners, prospectors and miners showed their skills in getting their gold in record time.

As the years go by, more and more States of Australia are hosting this unique event. For the second time, the Pine Creek Gold Rush Festival has won the Brolog Award for Northern Territory. This event has a gold panning championship and is held in May each year. The inaugural Queensland gold panning titles were held as part of the Gympie Gold Rush Festival in mid October. Five of their members travelled to Victoria to be part of our weekend.

The Australian Goldpanning Association won the prestigious Goldfields Tourism Award for Significant Events and Festivals this year and we feel this is a wonderful milestone for all gold panners, prospectors and small miners.

Minelab and Coiltek donated fabulous prizes and the lucky winner was local prospector Andy Ayres (ticket no 0027)

The overall panning champion was Martin Marks of Sydney who recorded an extremely fast time with perfect recovery. Martin fabricates prospecting equipment and his famous new design certainly lives up to expectation. It is a hybrid flat deep pan with down current side walls. He will represent Australia at the World Championships in Poland in 2000 and no doubt there will be great interest in his unique design.

Fred Olsson

one hundred spectators followed the championships and there was no room for any more.

During the championships the international rules accepted by the WGA were not followed since the main organisers as well as the judge participated in the competition. This seemed to cause amazement among the other competitors as well since it is against the rules.

When talking with the chief justice, I also noticed a lack of experience in judging these types of competitions. The panning troughs which competitors need were defective which, however, worked quite well in this small event, but I would expect better preparing for the World Championships in this matter.

I had a conversation with a mayor and some other quarters involved with the event and they were also not satisfied with the organising committee. I also discussed this with Fred Olsson and underlined that World Championships demand a totally different kind of layout and better organisation. I informed them that their preliminary championships to the World Championships should be arranged in

Maryborough in 2000 where all the building and layout should be ready for the world event. Furthermore the judge should have more knowledge of the competition and the international rules, which should be followed.

I asked for confirmation as soon as possible, that these matters would be taken care of so that we can inform our members.

I hope my worries about the success of World Goldpanning Championships in 2001 will be groundless.

Kauko Launonen
President of the WGA

OR ALP 2 – SECOND MEETING OF ALPINE GOLDPANNERS.

The annual meeting which Italian and French goldpanners organise over the weekend of May 1st at a mountain venue, is now well on its way to becoming an annual tradition.

The second edition, organised in Italy by the Biella Goldprospectors' Association, was held in Alagna Valsesia, a picturesque mountain village which is characterised by the presence of the Walser civilisation – that is to say a corner of Germany within one of the most beautiful valleys of the Piedmont region. The scene which greeted our friends of Orpailleurs de l'Est and Rhon'Or from France was one of characteristic wooden houses and Monte Rosa (Europe's second highest peak), as they made their way to the local campsite and to a welcome from their Italian friends.

About a hundred goldpanners, a good number of whom were students from the local school in Alagna, searched for gold in the Sesia river, in a fairly restricted zone found over previous weeks by the organisers from Biella, following a series of prospecting ventures. In fact, the upper Sesia valley, for all its beauty, is not at all famous for alluvial gold but rather for its mines; thus, the placer where we worked is quite a rarity. Lucky for the participants who were able to take advantage of this.

The main characteristic of this event, which sprang from an idea on the part of the three presidents of the organising associations, is that the event must be held only in an Alpine locality which is at least a little auriferous; there should be a campsite locally and above all a good restaurant for Saturday evening's dinner! In this way, gold becomes the excuse for friends to meet – friends who have in their hearts the search for gold, and in their thoughts the desire to spend time happily together.

The spectacle on Friday night, for anyone still roaming about the campsite, (☺) was a fantastic full moon which painted with silver the mountains that were still clad in the last snowfall of the season. A magnificent scenario in terms of grandeur and colour.

Saturday was the day entirely dedicated to the search for gold, and some people reluctantly left the stream barely in time to take a shower and get to the restaurant chosen for the usual evening get-together. At the end of the dinner which was attended also by the local authorities, the president of the Pro Loco, Mr. Marco Pozzi, presented the three organising associations with a copy each of the book about the Alagna mines where interesting news can be found regarding the digging of the auriferous veins of the old days in the Upper Sesia Valley. The exhausted mines are now shut down, but at the bottom of the valley one can find the remains of some mills which were used in grinding the quartz for the extraction of gold with the use of mercury. These could become interesting places of visit during an anthological tour of Alpine goldprospecting.

On Sunday morning a small team competition was held, one for each of the organising associations, and this was a moment of merriment for all, with each one cheering on his own team.

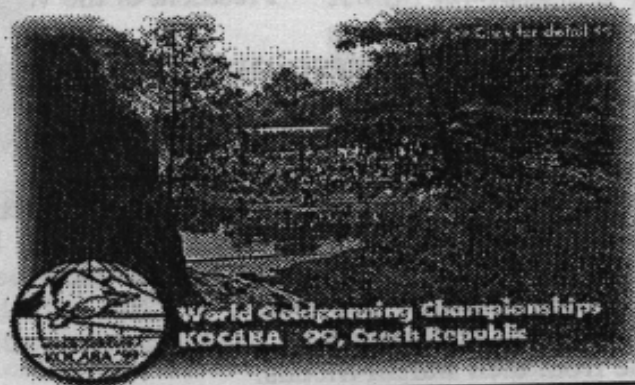
The three-day Gold event drew to a close with the presentation of certificates of participation to the expert goldpanners and a special "Alpine Goldpanner's Diploma" to all the boys and girls who took part in the "Rush" under the guidance of Gottardo Deon.

Some refreshments to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Rhon'Or and a farewell until the next edition, the third, to be held once again in France as agreed on an alternation basis.

But the news comes at the very end. During the World Championships of Kokaba, the three organisers (Arturo Ramella - Biella, Jacques Brest - Rhon'Or and Gilles Gautier - O.R.E.) were contacted by the Swiss Association under the new presidency of Frederich Grundbacher, expressing a desire on the part of these Helvetian neighbours to participate in the next edition and to take part in the organisation of a future edition: this will mean that the Franco-Italian "golden triangle" will become a quadrangle from 2001 thanks to our Swiss friends! Let's put out a provocative challenge to our Austrian friends also: the Alps reach that far, - why don't you join us?

Arturo Ramella - Biella Goldprospectors' Association of Italy, with the very big help in translation into English by Geraldine Mc Crossan Lacchia (Official English interpreter for Euro 2001).

Special reports on the 1999 World Goldpanning Championships



Report 1 – Paul Therkettle

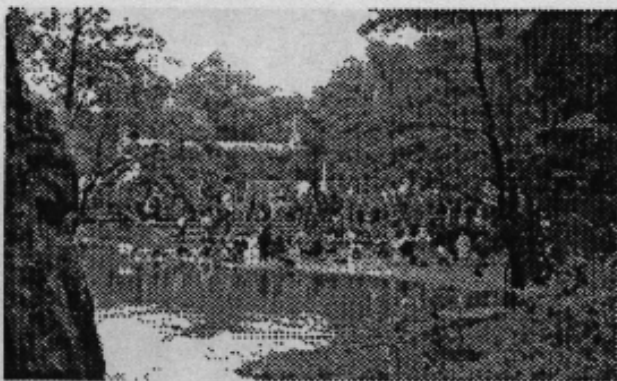
Ahoy!! From the welcoming cry from Dr Pavel Lhotsky, the championship chairman to the closing "Ahoy song" from GWA President, Kauko Launonen the Czech hosted World Goldpanning championships were a well organised successful event.

Taking place August 23 –29 in the beautiful Kocaba valley between the small villages of Mala Lecice and Velka Lecice about 1 hour SE of Prague, the Czech Republic hosted the largest World Championship ever with 637 Individual contestants from 18 countries. This daunting number did not faze Dr Pavel Lhotsky or Veronica Stedra who had promoted the event very successfully in years before and had given a very enjoyable evening in Coloma in 1998 at the Worlds. Indeed that evening of food and music, set the standard for this year's event which will be remembered for good competition, good facilities and good music.



(Tent City – The camping area)

The site was well prepared and consisted of areas for camping, parking, competition, vendors with food and gold/items for sale and one which included a long "death slide" "The Flying Fox" where my sister in law Jeannie and nephew Ralph screamed their way to the bottom! The competition area took advantage of a natural gully, where water collected to form a small lake. Here they had built the 30 troughs and constructed a seating area for spectators.



(Looking into the panning area)

Planning was excellent in this area, as they had designed the competition area so that the judges and volunteers could work undisturbed from spectators and give both a perfect view of the panners. The small number of minor protests raised gives credit to the layout and quality of the competition staff. From our spectator's view, the whole event seemed to go with very few hitches, results were published within 30 minutes, and considering the number of contestants and heats the planned schedule was kept to.



(The music and presentation Stage)

The evenings were filled with live music presented from a huge stage constructed in the food and vendors field along with two large marquees for shelter from the sun or rain (They became very popular for the latter reason!) From traditional folk to modern country the stage was always alive with two to three bands each evening. In fact the event became almost a concert site such was the quality of the productions. My personal remembrance will be a catchy short tune played between announcements that I am still humming. This music along with spit roasted chickens; sausages and very strong beer provided excellent evening entertainment with some evenings continuing in the campsite to the early hours. On one of those evenings, sampling the local homemade brews caused the British and Australians hangovers in the morning!

The gold week started with an optional three-day tour, which took goldpanners around the Czech Republic to see mines and geological sites. Arriving back on the Wednesday, the responses to questions on the trip were "excellent", "very enjoyable and informative" and "well planned and excellent guide". Wednesday also saw many panners have a day into Prague, which with hot sunshine and beautiful scenery produced a memorable day.

And so into the competition!



(Children line up for the judges)

Thursday afternoon saw the international parade march down into the valley to start the proceedings, with medieval knights, bands, cowboys and goldpanners it was a sight to see. After welcomes from local dignitaries and the organising committee, the atmosphere changed rapidly as the 1st of 10 men's skilled heats began. With 289 skilled men to beat the odds of going through the heats were bad and it showed as panners used tactics as well as skill to ensure they got through their rounds. Each round saw faster times with in some cases a competitor having to find all his chips in a fast time to go through. The excellent weather that had stayed up till now departed and light to heavy rain set in for the rest of the weekend. Apart from mud and everything damp nothing else was affected, and once again I have to congratulate the volunteers, who stayed at their posts all through the day regardless of conditions.



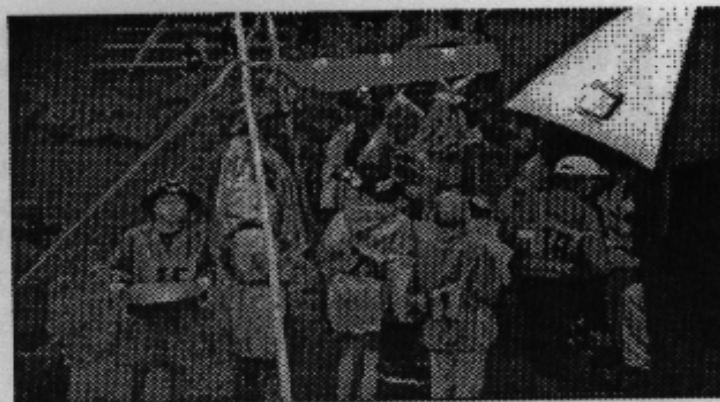
(End of a 'wet' heat)

As the heats for all categories progressed over Friday and Saturday, Switzerland were happy having won their bid to host the 2003 championships and Poland presented their promotional evening on the Friday to encourage panners for the 2000 championships in Zlotoryja. Along with some excellent music and food information was passed and many promises to attend were given.

Saturday evening hosted the panners banquet, which due to weather was re-staged in the marquee making it a little cramped. Pavel learned to his horror that panners are hungry as he opened the buffet and was swamped by the rush! But after good food and beer it became a jolly event and was enjoyed by all.

Sunday dawned still damp but no one was bothered it was the finals!

As each final event took place the crowd cheered their fellow countrymen with the Fins being conducted by Pentti (Hongisto), it was a noisy and exciting place to be.



("How many Nuggets did you find?")

Still on immaculate schedule after lunch the VIPs panned and then to the presentations. Set again on the huge sound stage each category was called and the wet and muddy contestant went up to receive their prize amidst cheering from their country. By three-o clock it was over and after an uncharacteristic song from Kauko and closing remarks from Pavel the panners said their goodbye and promised to see each other next year.

From the registration tent to the bucket seeders, the volunteers (over a 100 of them) deserve the praise. In all weathers they performed their duties well and produced an excellent championships which will be long remembered. Well Done!

Report 2 – Eugene Swanepoel:



Two South Africans managed to once again attend a World Gold Panning Championships This time in the Kocaba Valley in the Czech Republic. After a cramped journey in a mini bus from Berlin, the bus company managed to overbook the bus and arriving at the last minute did not help matters. Arriving in Prague one was overwhelmed by the aura and the beauty of the city. No wonder it is known as one of the most beautiful cities in the world and is termed as the "Golden City" and the

"Crown of the World". The friendly atmosphere was definitely a sign of things to come.

After a train trip in the early hours of the morning and a 4 km walk that felt more like twenty we arrived at the competition area and were made to feel very welcome by the organizers. We then departed on a highly informative and interesting three day excursion. The excursion was led by several highly qualified and knowledgeable experts. As is usual with the events that I have attended once friend were made and old ones refreshed. The excursion was devoted to the long history of gold and silver mining in the central and south western part of the Czech Republic. We had the opportunity to experience such famous Royal Mining Towns as Jilove, Poibram and Kutna Hora, the pearl of Gothic Architecture. Two of the largest gold deposits at Mokrsko and Kasperski Hory, ancient Celtic workings along the Otava river and several mining museums including the medieval underground gallery at Kutna Hora was also included in the itinerary. Dr Petr Moravek and his associates certainly excelled themselves and left a lasting

impression on all of us. The scenery and the ambience certainly compares with the best in the world. It is a pity that not more of the delegates participated.

We arrived back at Kocaba on the Wednesday and after celebrating Sven Bergstrom's birthday pitched our tents and started to settle in for the Championships. It did not take long before the spirit of the event took over and old acquaintances from all over the world was renewed. What a wonderful feeling to stand amongst the competitors waiting for the first heat to hear one's name being called and to turn around and being wished well by some friends from Italy or to walk into the beer tent for some refreshment to be greeted by the ever friendly Finnish friends. After the opening of the new Gold Museum in Novy Knin and the traditional

International Parade it was down to the serious business of panning.

Although I did not manage to get past the first round at least we had a finalist in the Beginners Ladies. Marlene Stuart did exceptionally well to finish fourth.

As is usual and although we did not win any medals many more medals were won in reaffirming friendships and making new ones. Also of course there was the old saying "Next year in Poland it will be my turn" To all the good friends all over the world best wishes from South Africa and a very blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year and millennium. See you all in Poland and hopefully soon in South Africa. To the organizers in Kocaba well done and thank you for your kindness and hospitality

1999 World Goldpanning Championships Results

Men's Skilled:



- 1 KANA II, Richard Slovensko 3.42
- 2 PASQUALINI Luca Italy 3.58
- 3 WALLIN Hans Sweden 4.53

Women's Skilled:



- 1 MASTOMAKI Lempi Finland 4.51
- 2 HAJKOVA Sarka Czech Rep 5.01
- 3 KLIMESOVA Anna Czech Rep 5.26

Juniors:



- 1 PERTL Martin Czech Rep 9.36
- 2 KRIVOHLAVEK Pavel Czech Rep 11.11
- 3 HUTTUNEN Sami Finland 11.23

National teams:

- 1 Slovak Republic 24.44
- 2 Sweden 27.18 27.18
- 3 Austria 30.29

Veterans:



- 1 PATALA Anita Finland 8.58
- 2 VACCHINI Giuseppina Italy 10.47
- 3 PFANDER Peter Switzerla 10.57

Beginners Ladies:



- 1 POVAZANOVA Andrea Slovensko 11 8.49
- 2 SJOLIN Lena Sweden 10 13.21
- 3 BLAZKOVA Irena Czech Rep 10 13.56

Beginners Men:

- 1 KARHU Juhani Finland 11 5.25
- 2 FURST Jiri Czech Rep 11 5.50
3. MIKUS Tomas Slovensko 11 8.43

Children:

- 1 KLAUDY Stanislav Czech Rep 12 7.40
- 2 DEUTSCHOVA Linda Czech Rep 10 14.46
- 3 PRUZEK Branislav Slovensko 11 15.28

Report from the 1999 WGA Meeting

The annual meeting of the WGA took place in the new school building at Nový Knín.. There were 38 representatives from 18 nations. President and Chairman Kauko Launonen opened the meeting at 8:00pm The annual report was presented outlining the events over the last year. It was noted that "Golden Times" is the best source for gold events in our association.

1. The treasurer presented his report that outlined our income did not match our expenses. Finland had supplemented the cost of publishing "Golden Times". The committee discussed various options with the following proposals:
 - The editors of "Golden Times" would look into reducing the publishing/postage costs.
 - The fee per country would remain at USD \$25 per vote (minimum two votes maximum USD \$125)
 - From 2004 a country must pay USD \$100 to bid to host the World championships. Upon winning the vote a balance of USD \$400 would be paid. Country's that have already won the bid have the option to pay the fee
2. The chairman outlined the applications for hosting championships with;
 - Two bids have been received to host the 2002 championships, but in the true spirit of gentlemen Austria had withdrawn to allow Switzerland the honour of hosting a championships. It was unanimously agreed that Switzerland should host the championships.

- The Association Limousine d'Orpailage in France submitted their application to host the European Championships in 2002. It was agreed by all, and the chairman thanked France for the invitation.
- The decision made by the WGA to hold the Europeans in Italy in 2001 was questioned. After discussion it was decided that the decision still stands and the committee urged our friends from Italy to resolve their disagreement.
- 3. Three proposals were submitted during "any other business" and after discussion the following were approved:
 - If a competitor finds too many pieces of gold (at a world championship) three times in a two year period, then they must suffer a one-year ban.
 - Competition fees for the skilled heats should be between USD \$10-25.
 - The sub-committee for Rules should be adjusted, as some members were no longer present.
 - A handbook to aid in organising a World championship would be produced by Kauko Launonen.
 - The results from World Championships would be collected and maintained by the WGA committee
- 4. The chairman thanked the committee and closed the meeting at 9:30pm

Representatives present:

Australia – Fred Olsson, Gloria Olsson
 Austria – Sepp Haslinger, Helmut Koch
 Canada – Arthur Sailer, Noreen Sailer
 CZ Rep – Pavel Lhotsky, V. Stedra
 Finland – K. Launonen, Inkeri Syrjänen
 France – Serge Nenert, Anne Serre
 Germany – G. Veitz, H. Stützing
 GB – Mick Gossage, B Copley
 Italy – A. Pasqualini, A Ramella

Japan – Makoto Okada, H Nishimoto
 NL – H de Kreek, K Schoenmaker
 Poland – K. Maciejak, Z Herba
 Slovak Rep – M. Urbánek, R Kana
 S. Africa – E Swanepoel, M Stuart
 Spain – C S Pérez, A M S Menéndez
 Sweden – Anneli & Sten Bergström
 Switzerland – P Pfander, E Gruudbacher
 USA – Kathleen Percy, Paul Thurkettle

Las Medulas and gold of North Spain by Inkeri Syrjänen

Inkeri Syrjänen and Kauko Launonen visits gold fields of Spain in May 1999



Gold field of Las Medulas resembles moonscapes. Mountains are full of the tunnels. (Photo: Kauko Launonen)

In the provinces of *Leon* and *Asturias* in the mountainous area of North Spain are interesting gold areas where earlier we had only seen pictures and read about in books. The most remarkable from a historic point of view is the mining area "Las Medulas" which is located south westwards from the city of *Ponferrada* at the end of the small side-road. From the lookout spot named "*Orellan*" one can see a strange view which resembles the tops of the Alps or a surface of a uninhabited planet. A proper "*La Medulas*" area can only be reached by walking the roads and paths which are many kilometres long.

The Romans have grubbed here too. Their engineering has left massive marks in the mountains which Plinius has written about in the first century as follows: "*Only the one who stands on the top of the mountain waiting and watching over the mountain to be crushed, knows how it feels. A supervisor watches collapsing mountain*

and shouts warning to the workers and hurries fast to be safe himself. With a great racket the mountain falls down causing an enormous rumbling and a hard wind which human mind is not able to understand. The dumfounded winners stares how the forces of nature crashed."

Above Pliny has described the mining technique where tunnels were dug through the mountains in which a great mass of water was forced crashing the mountain. That's how they were able to get the auriferous gravel for the sluicing and panning. The name of the method "*ruina montium*" means "collapsing the mountain". Water was taken to the channels from the rivers and their tributaries of the area. Total length of the channels may have been over 300 kilometres. All the mountains in the area had been dug full of tunnels. The amount of slaves had to be enormous so that all the work could have been done. It is estimated that together some 10.000-15.000 people worked over

the 200 years. Some of the tunnels can still be seen and one can climb there if one dares. Red sandstone is slippery and you can even get lost in those labyrinth tunnels, since the longest one is 650 metres.

It is estimated that the Romans got almost one million during the exploration of 200 years. According to some researcher there has been 3 grams of gold in one ton. In 1931 "*Las Medulas*" was declared to be as a national monument and some archaeological excavations have been done in the area.

Another interesting gold area "*Navelgas*" is further north, only 30 kilometres southwards from the seaside town of *Luarca*. Some gold panning activities for the visitors is arranged there. Furthermore the local goldpanners' association has organized the gold panning competitions in the area. You can find old mine shafts, rich gold rivers and great history of gold in the area. The Goldpanners' association is going to restore a dwelling place inside the round

fence which is related to the gold history. Building culture was interesting in the area. There were many old farmhouses still left and especially the kind of "statue granary" was typical for the area. The granaries were placed in the top of the high pillar so that it's impossible for the mice and other animals to get in. The pillars are from four to eight feet depending on the size of the granaries, which were whittled alike. We were told that the granaries are protected and therefore you were able to see so many of them in the area.

The National Goldpanning Championships took place on the 23rd-25th of July in the nearby town of *Tineo*. All the members of the goldpanners' association (*Asociación de Bateadores de Oro "Barciaecus"*) as well as local people are very nice, friendly and helpful. A few times we had some minor problems with languages but many specially the young people, speaks English. In town there is a good selection of restaurants and accommodation.

"Gold Fever in Lapland is a film about the eternal dream of a better life"

Åke Lindman, a well-known director, producer and actor in Finland, has realized his dream of almost forty years. The premiere of a film *Gold Fever of Lapland* took place in September 1999 and is one of the biggest and costly films ever made in Finland.



The dream came true - Åke Lindman made a film Gold Fever of Lapland

Gold Fever in Lapland is a film about a unique period in European history: the gold rush in Lapland. When the first gold discoveries were

made in Northern Finland in the year of famine in 1868, hundreds of gold prospectors, Finnish and foreign, swarmed into the region. *Gold Fever in Lapland* is the story of these gold seekers. The film is partly based on true events and real-life characters.

Two sailors and former gold diggers in America, Jacob Ervast and Nils Lepistö learn about gold finds in Lapland. They eagerly seize the opportunity and set off to look for a better future. In Lapland they strike gold. Soon the gold rush is full swing. All kinds of people gather around the gold fields: hard workers, swindlers, entertainers, fortune-hunters. Ervast and Lepistö get swindled and start a tenacious fight against the injustice.

Gold Fever in Lapland is a film about hope and tenacity that make dreams come true. The strong succeed, the less lucky lose everything. In extreme conditions, where human greediness

meets the cruel nature of Lapland, also friendship is put to the test.

Gold Fever in Lapland was mainly shot along the river Ivalojoiki, near Kuttura village where a copy of Kultala was built, situated about 13 kilometres away from the original Kultala Crown Station. "Only the real inhabitants of the riverside were skilled enough for safe travelling. The boat drivers of Kuttura and Tolonen were an irreplaceable help to the crew throughout the summer. In some miraculous way they managed to take care of the transportation, even when there was almost no water in the river. The bottoms of the boats were scratching against the rocks but they just stood with their hands on the gas, a cigarette hanging from the side of their mouth and smirky smiles on their faces."

Director Åke Lindman describes the production: "My long-term dream came true in May 1998 when the shootings of *Gold Fever in Lapland* finally began. History has always been important to me and film is a great tool to concretely revive past ways of life. Also this film aims at reconstructing the spirit of the late 19th century through accurate costume, set design and props.

The shootings took place in Lapland on the grounds of three communes: Inari, Kittilä and Sodankylä. We knew right from the start that the production was going to be tough and strenuous. It's easy to film outdoors when you can drive a car to the shooting location, but we had to travel by small river boats 4-6 kilometres along the River Ivalojoiki almost every day.

In March 1998 we started building our own Kultala Crown Station. The building material and device was transported to the location with sledges. The snow rose up to two metres so the men of Kuttura really had a difficult task ahead. In addition to the Kultala main building they constructed a barack, a tavern, a bakery and four cabins in this vicinity. Shootings were to begin early June, and somehow the local constructors managed, under supervision of the set designer, to finish everything in time.

Knowing the circumstance one must say it was an outstanding performance!

We used 8-10 river boats plus one jet rubber boat to transport all stuff, food and people daily to the shooting location. In early summer there was only 10-15 cm water and the boats were scratching against the rocks at the bottom of the river. On worst days we could only use the rubber boat so the crew, actors in their costumes and the extras had to walk for several kilometres along the rocky riverbed. Due to this kind of transportation problems the working days grew very long - especially those days when, say, 200 extras were needed in the shootings.

During my long career I have seen all kinds of things but I must say I have never experienced anything like this. The local boat drivers, constructors, extras, actors and, before all, the crew dedicated themselves to this project totally. No rebellion insight, teaming up in good spirit to achieve the best possible result".

The crew, extras and supporting actors were recruited in May 1998 and over 400 contracts were signed. Simultaneously, the big construction projects started in Kultala: close to 90 m3 of timber was delivered to the location 5 kilometres from the nearest highway. The tailors worked day in day out making costumes from the 1860.

Gold Fever in Lapland was filmed during different seasons in different parts of Lapland, mainly in the wilderness. Not only is this very expensive, but it also requires numerous insurance and various inventive organizational strategies. When tens of famous actors and more than 200 extras have to be dressed up in epoch clothing, fed and made up, when set design has to be accurate and when the crew is known to very ambitious, creativity certainly is put to the test as to finding ways to fund the project. Åke Lindman had encouraged several big Finnish companies and communes to take part in the project. Without their support it wouldn't have been possible to realize a film project of this extent with just Finnish funding.

Producer Hanna Hemilä stated: "The project has demanded both humour and a strong stomach: when a train of this size sets off, problems of all kinds are encountered that have to be solved in been incomparable. Both the actors and the members of the crew have been real professionals and it has been a pleasure working their contribution to the project has been extremely making of this extraordinary film that in such a significant way enriches the Finnish cultural tradition".

With *Gold Fever of Lapland* it is even expected that a new gold rush will take place in Lapland. At least it will arise an interest to the history of Ivalojoiki gold rush and an outstanding landscapes in the film encourages people visits the shooting places in the wilderness.

nanoseconds. Working with Åke Lindman has been interesting and educative. His experience, charisma and patience in crisis situations have

with them. A great number of less known, but nevertheless interesting and affable people have also worked for *Gold Fever of Lapland*, and

The Gold Rush that was bigger than California

The Victorian gold rush of 1851 eclipsed the earlier gold rush to California in 1848-49. The new colony of Victoria was swamped in the tidal wave of humanity from every corner of the globe, Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, Charles LaTrobe, considered that "The Whole population is in fact gold mad. There are many signs of disorder and disturbance and opposition to authority showing themselves at the workings".

LaTrobe pleaded for military forces to guard the port of Melbourne, and had to garrison "the goldfields". Retired British soldiers who had settled in Tasmania were recruited to form a "Corps of Enrolled Pensioners". These men in their blue frocked coats with non-commission officers distinguished by sashes were sent to "the goldfields" where they served with detachments of the Native Police Corps. The chaos at Melbourne was bad enough. The town was virtually empty of men, and services were at a standstill. On the goldfields, the situation was becoming unmanageable. A large force of police, soldiers and Gold Commissioners were needed to administer them.

A license was required to work the diggings. These could be bought for periods up to a year. Most diggers could barely afford the monthly fee of 30 shillings. When the miners started to evade buying licences, it contributed to a looming economic crisis.

Authorities took increasingly strong action including the infamous "licence hunts", to stamp out unlicensed mining.

The Licence Hunts

Whenever a squad of police was seen approaching, the word "Joe" would be passed around from one end of the gulley to the other, all of the unlicensed men would vanish down their holes like rabbits, and of course those who stopped on top had a licence, or if not, had to march off with a bayonet at their back. By 1854, smaller goldfields like Avoca and Maldon were losing revenue at an incalculable rate. At Avoca, the ratio of police to miners was 1 to a 1000. It was impossible to catch all offenders.

The American Influence

In April 1854, LaTrobe privately rebuked Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Valiant of the 40th regiment for allowing the regimental band to take part in a procession of Americans through the streets of Melbourne, a display of American national feeling that pandered to the "democratic or revolutionary tendencies of the multitude". Referring to the tunes played during the parade, LaTrobe wrote, "I say nothing about Yankee Doodle, about which tastes differ but the Marseillaise (the French Republican Anthem) is very striking and stirring tune, and

the associations connected with it are equally so".

LaTrobe's worries proved correct when he was succeeded by Governor Hotham. Several Americans were captured at the Eureka Stockade on December 3 in 1854. This rebellion at Ballarat proved costly in human terms – all told 35 miners and soldiers died, but it led to great democratic reforms.

The licensing system was abolished being replaced by the much cheaper Miner's Right. Elected Warden's Courts replaced the feared police force, and parliamentary representation for the miners was instituted.

The Change to Company Mining

By the early 1860's, surface and most of the open cut gold had been found. There was plenty underground but this required considerable capital. Companies were formed to fund these risky ventures. Another innovation was the gold exchanges which sprang up in every major gold town. Gold shares and mining claims were bartered, bought and sold. Gradually the old adventurous life lifestyle of lone prospectors, or parties of mates prepared to share the hazards of bush life, began to fade.

Thousands now worked the company mines but for low wages that often could barely support a family. Yet, the bonanza continued. In 1903, Australia was the world's largest exporter of gold. 90% of the gold during Australia's early gold rush period was mined in Victoria and although the gold was found elsewhere in the colony, the two most productive fields were Ballarat and Bendigo.

The Twenty Second Thrill of Finding Nuggets!

Just sometimes, when I'm not earning money as a forester or competing in goldpanning championships, I go gold prospecting! My first love is finding little nuggets, so much better than dust. As a nugget comes into view I get a surge of excitement, about twenty seconds of pure pleasure. I think this, for me, is what prospecting is all about!

At Ballarat by 1871, there was one hotel for every 100 people in the population – 477 hotels for its population of 48,000. By the mid 1880's established goldfields like Bendigo had transformed the countryside. Hills had been cut away while new ones made of "tailings" or rubbish formed nearby. Mines now operated 24 hours a day except Sundays. The sudden silence of the machinery meant people living nearby could not sleep.

At one time Bendigo boasted the deepest gold mines in the world. These included the Victorian Quartz (4593 feet or about 1.4km deep). And the New Chum Railway Mine at Golden Square with 31 levels to about 1.3 Km. These mines closed about 90 years ago.

Today, the goldfields area offers a galaxy of attractions. One such famous attraction is the world famous Eureka Flag, captured when the Eureka Stockade was stormed in 1854, was donated to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in 1895. It has been on public display since 1974. Perhaps the best attraction of all is simply soaking in the atmosphere recalling the days when – if fortune smiled – fabulous riches were within the reach of everyone who was prepared "to have a go".

Anne Doran – Australia

"From the land Down Under"

The nuggets in Britain are not big, not by Australian or American standards, but they are a real challenge to find. I went to stay with Fred Olsson in Australia a year ago, had a wonderful time down there, Victoria is a truly beautiful place and the people are truly welcoming - I look forward to going back in 2001 when they host the World Championships. Anyway, while I was there I bought a Minelab SD 2200 detector. I found seven small pieces with it in Australia and

couldn't wait to try it back in Britain. I waited for cold weather and the river water-level to fall and then set off to try out my new detector on the banks of a Welsh river.

Within an hour I had two little 0.5 gram nuggets and found more over the next two days, then it went quiet. For three days I dug good signals only to find little pieces of wire and fishing weights. It was very cold and dreary and I began to feel that the river had given me all the gold I was going to get. Then, twenty minutes before I had decided to leave, a signal. I was not in the least excited and set about digging for what I thought would be another piece of wire. Numbed by three days of failure, even when I realized that the signal came from a crack in the bedrock just under some gravel I was barely interested. I took my excellent Australian pick and whacked it. Then reached to pick up the loose, freezing muck and gravel. I opened my hand and idly spread the dirt and there was the brightest Welsh nugget. A flat 3.4 grams of gleaming metal - and my twenty seconds of utter delight!

My preferred prospecting technique is what the Americans call 'sniping' and this summer, just before going to the Czech Republic, I had three weeks sniping in Scotland. I spent time preparing a range of little hooks, tweezers and sniffers to pull gold pieces and nuggets from little holes and cracks in the bedrock. I also bought a new drysuit - even in high summer the water is cold up here. The small river I was working was absolutely beautiful, moss covered trees and bushes hanging from the steep valley sides. The first crack I worked was in a bed of quartzite rock and yielded 18 grams in one day! This is a very special river! Two weeks of work later I had a very good 'sample' of gold, but nothing bigger than about 1.6 gram. I decided that the gold had formed in small blobs in the mother vein and that there were no bigger pieces in this river.

Late one afternoon I started work on a crack that had formed at the contact joint between two different rock types. I found some gold, but it was clear that someone else had been there before me, and hadn't missed much. There was a large boulder over part of the crack and, knowing that it would also have been worked, I wondered if it was worth doing. I decided that quitting never found any gold so put my hood, face-mask and snorkel back on, I also took out my underwater torch as it would be dark under the boulder. I lay in the water looking under the rock and, with cold gloved hands, tried to turn the torch on. It flicked on, I was dazzled, I noted that my eyes were not used to the light as the stone in front of me shone like gold! Then, as my eyes did get used to the light, it still shone like gold! I scrabbled to pick it up all the time telling myself not to get excited as everything is magnified underwater and it might not be gold anyway. I surfaced gripping it tightly, pulled off my mask and slowly opened my hand. And there on my dark glove lay a 4.6 gram beauty. Shining so brightly, fresh and wet from the river. After so many days and so many little ones I probably got more than twenty seconds of thrill from that one! I love the company of prospectors, the music, the jokes, the friendship - but by God I love finding gold!



("More than a 20 Second thrill!")

Vincent Thirkettle
British Prospector

Dates for your Diary...

14th International German Open Goldpanning Championships 7-9 July 2000 in Goldkronach

The 14th German Open Goldpanning Championships will take place in Goldkronach; they are organised by the German Goldpanning Association. The championships will be held at the Festival Ground of Goldkronach. There is enough space for the whole competition, as well as an Adequate camping ground for tents or caravans (free of charge - as always). The "Golden Weekend" starts on the Friday evening with the international meeting for the goldpanners in the marquee. Breakfast is available for everyone on Saturday morning before the Opening Ceremony and the start of the championships at 10.00. In the afternoon all goldpanners are encouraged to participate in the famous Canadian Triathlon consisting of archery, "wood sawing" and goldpanning. While the heats are in progress, the "Goldpanning Jackpot" is also available for everyone. Just as important as the contest are the celebrations; the dance group "Caramella" with their western dance show and western music invite all goldpanners to sing, dance and celebrate. All finals will start on Sunday morning, and the Competition will end at about 2.00 p.m. with the Closing Ceremonies. Prizes of goldnuggets will be given in all categories.

For further information in Germany please contact:

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German Goldpanning Assc.
Hans Stuetzinger

Yukon Goldpanning Championship

1st July 2000 Dawson City, Yukon, Canada
Information: Klondike Visitors Association,
Box 389, Dawson City, Yukon, Canada, YOB
1G0, tel. +1-867-9935575, fax. +1-867-
9936415, email. Kva@dawson.net

Swedish Open Championship

15th-16th July 2000, Kiruna

Information:

- Per-Olof & Margareta Sandström,
Idrottsvägen 20, S-98139 Kiruna, Tel&Fax
+46-980-17207, cellular. +46-70-2257160
- Anders Fors, Gästisvägen 9, S-98010
Vittangi, Tel. +46-980-66520, fax. +46-
980-66521, cellular. +46-70-5871395,
email. Fobbe@vittangi.com

Italian Open Championship

22nd-23rd July 2000, Stura River, Ovada
Information: Federazione Italiana Cercatori
D'Oro, Museo Storico dell'Oro Italiano,
15077 Predosa (AL), Italy. Tel +39-143-
873176 (Dr. G. Pipino)

Finnish Open Championship

4th-6th August 2000 Tankavaara
Information: Goldpanning Finnish Open
2000, 99695 Tankavaara, Finland, tel. +358-
16-626171, fax. +358-16-626271,
email: *. *@kultamuseo.inet.fi

*

World Golpanning Championship

27th August – 3rd September 2000 Zlotoryja,
Poland
Information: Polskie Bractwo Kopaczy Zlota,
ul. Zeromskiego 15 A, 59-500 Zlotoryja, tel.
+48-76-8785599, tel/fax +48-76-8786565,
email. pbkz@pro.onet.pl,
<http://www.gold2000.pro.onet.pl>

The Golden Beer Of Lapland

LAPIN KULTA OLUT

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