

*"If you take something from Mother Earth,
she will retaliate"*

LEGENDS FROM THE MT. MULLIGAN COAL MINE DISASTER

by Peter Bell

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This paper will look at the way the process of recording and interpreting history can be distorted by the creation of legends which become mixed with the historical evidence. I propose to comment on the legends which have formed about the Mount Mulligan disaster of 1921, and will preface the paper with a brief description of events at Mount Mulligan.

Mount Mulligan overlooks the Hodgkinson River, about 100km. nearly due west of Cairns. The mountain is an impressive natural spectacle, with miles of vertical sandstone cliffs paralleling the valley. Its discoverer and namesake, James Mulligan, described it as "a mountain once seen, never to be forgotten".¹ The Hodgkinson goldfield had been the scene of significant mining activity in the nineteenth century, but by the early years of this century was in severe decline: tin and copper mining activity had come to dominate the Cairns region.

In 1907 coal deposits were found underlying Mount Mulligan. The discovery was principally of interest to the mining companies of the region, who saw distinct advantages in reducing smelting costs by using locally produced coke. After a period of prospecting and political manoeuvring, the Chillagoe company commenced development work at Mount Mulligan in 1911. A railway was completed in 1914, and the mine commenced large-scale production in 1915.

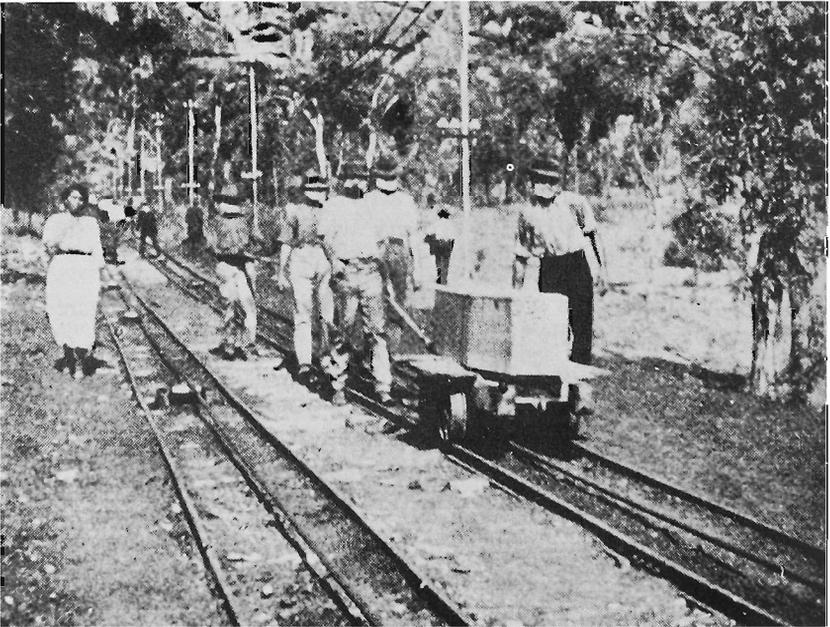
By that time the Chillagoe company was in serious financial difficulty, and had closed the smelters at Chillagoe. Mount Mulligan's coal was used largely for the Cairns district railway market throughout the First World War.

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In 1918, parliament finally accepted a proposal for State acquisition of the Chillagoe mineral enterprise: the company's copper mines, railways and smelters were acquired by the State in 1919, leaving the Mount Mulligan coal mine the sole working asset in the Chillagoe company's control. The mine was developed on modern principles for the time, and with a modest but steadily increasing production of over 20,000 tons of coal per year, had achieved a substantial position in the region's economic activities by 1921.

On the morning of 19 September 1921, just as the town's school children were assembled on parade before beginning the day's lessons, a massive explosion occurred in the Mount Mulligan coal mine. All 75 men working underground were killed; a heroic rescue effort that began within minutes of the explosion and persisted for five days with the assistance of several hundred volunteers from the surrounding district proving quite fruitless.

This was the greatest land disaster Queensland has seen, and its local impact has never been paralleled elsewhere in Australia: the men killed in the explosion were about a quarter of the entire population of the town; about one adult in three; or one adult male in every two. They left about 40 widows and 83 fatherless children.



Wheeling a coffin from the mine.
(North Queensland Register)

In the aftermath the State's mine rescue service was shown to be totally helpless, political controversy flared over the distribution of

relief funds, a Royal Commission exposed wanton neglect of safety regulations in the mine but itself produced a strangely one-sided report, carefully selecting its victims; and the Chillagoe company's utter financial ruin was accomplished. The mine was acquired by the State in 1923, and it achieved further notoriety on the fringe of the Mungana scandal. Mount Mulligan lingered as an unprofitable State enterprise supplying local railway coal until 1957 when the mine closed, the townspeople were moved to Collinsville, and the site was stripped of useful machinery and left to the rubber vine. It will be apparent even from this terse account that the story contains many fruitful seeds from which legends might grow.

FORMING OF LEGENDS

Three years ago I wrote an account of the Mount Mulligan disaster.² During the course of my research I was told many stories about the disaster, and also recalled others I had heard since childhood, purporting to describe the circumstances surrounding the Mount Mulligan explosion. I realised at an early stage of research that many of the stories in circulation were simply not correct – that they deviated to some extent from the events that could be identified in the process of historical enquiry. My initial reaction was to cast such tales aside impatiently, but I found this impossible for two reasons. First, because they were repeated so regularly and consistently that they demonstrated there exists a body of belief which, although inaccurate, is more solidly established in folklore than the events which really occurred; and second, because in reading accounts of other mine disasters at widely separated times and places I found similar stories repeated, showing a universal tendency for legends to form about such events.³

These stories form a historical pattern of their own, distinct from but parallel to the objectively verifiable events of the Mount Mulligan disaster. I believe the historian must accept that there exist two levels of historical reality – there is first the level of what “really” happened, and beyond that the level of what is popularly believed to have happened. The second level must be accepted on very different terms, but in some circumstances its implications for the historian may be just as important as those of the first level.

In describing some of the legends that have arisen from the events of the Mount Mulligan disaster, my interest is in the links that connect the events and the folklore, so I will dissect each in search of its connection with the first level of reality. If I appear to be deflating some of the legends rather cruelly, most of them will rise again in stature toward the end of this paper.

The principal legends may be summarised briefly:

1. the “distance heard” – folklore has seized on the audible range of the Mount Mulligan explosion, and carried it forth to amazing distances;
2. the “fire in the mine” – the story is told that the Mount Mulligan mine was abandoned with vast reserves of coal intact because a raging fire prevented entry after the disaster;
3. the “sole survivor” – one man on his way to work was smitten by foreboding, and returned home on the morning of the disaster;
4. the “numbers on the mountain” – after the disaster the date appeared in mystic numerals on the mountain wall overlooking the town;
5. the “spirit prophesying destruction” – an Aboriginal spirit threatened to destroy the mine in retaliation for interference with the mountain;
6. the “man never found” – one miner was never accounted for after the explosion; in some versions of the story he was the man who caused the disaster, in others his ghost haunts the mine.⁴

The simplest legend, and the one most easily checked against the historical evidence, is the distance from Mount Mulligan at which the explosion was heard. Oral and written sources variously suggest the sound was audible at Thornborough, Kingsborough, Mount Carbine, Mount Molloy, Mareeba, Herberton, Newellton, Cairns and Townsville. I have named these towns in decreasing order of probability – for the explosion to be heard in Townsville, at a distance of over 300km, would involve catastrophic destruction at its source. This version of the legend originates with someone who had only a vague knowledge of the extent of the explosion’s damage.

The more reasonable claims can be compared with first-hand evidence. There can be no doubt that everyone in Mount Mulligan heard the explosion, as did a few people in nearby towns. Several of the witnesses at the subsequent Royal Commission began their evidence by stating where they were at the time of the disaster, and how they first heard of it. Thus: “I was at Thornborough and I heard an explosion”,⁵ and a similar account from Kingsborough.⁶ As Thornborough and Kingsborough were respectively 16 and 19km from Mount Mulligan – the mountain can be seen from the site of Thornborough – it can be accepted that the explosion was heard and correctly identified by people in the open up to 20km away. It was *not* heard by the miners underground at Kingsborough.⁷



The Mount Mulligan mine entrance before 1921.

(Mrs. Mary Wardle)

Further afield at Mareeba, 60km away, there is the evidence of Bill Matthews, a Mount Mulligan coal miner: "I was at Mareeba railway station, and I heard the Mount Mulligan colliery *had been blown up*"⁸ A Mount Mulligan surface worker also in Mareeba that morning "heard *about* the explosion"⁹ These two men above all others might be expected to put the correct interpretation on an explosion distantly heard from the direction of the coal mine. They claimed only second-hand knowledge, and it seems most unlikely the explosion was heard at anywhere near 60km, rendering all more distant claims strongly suspect. Chillagoe is approximately the same distance from Mount Mulligan as Mareeba, in almost the opposite direction, and was in 1921 the most populous town of the district; yet there seem to be no claims of hearing the explosion there. Mount Molloy¹⁰ and Mount Carbine¹¹ both seem improbably distant at about 50km, but unlike Mareeba are more or less in line with the mine entrance with no major topographical obstacle intervening. In the absence of first-hand evidence from either town, I will leave them as unsubstantiated. Further, I am inclined to doubt any claim much beyond 20km, because the noise of the explosion was not of unmistakable magnitude, even at close range.¹²

Several people in the town of Mount Mulligan itself heard the explosion but were not immediately alarmed by it. Doris Watson,

working in the company office 500m from the mine entrance, thought it was the noise of routine blasting until she saw through the window that people outside were running toward the mine.¹³ Bruce Mackey, also indoors about 1000m from the mine at the moment of the explosion, was likewise undisturbed by the sound, believing it to be caused by workmen blasting clay for the brickworks.¹⁴ The one first-hand account I have from a person in the open at the time emphasises the *sight* of the dust cloud erupting from the mine entrance rather than the sound which followed some seconds later.¹⁵ The more fanciful accounts of long-distance audibility may stem from two sources – confusion after the event with the sound of local blasting, an understandable error in any mining town; or a deep-seated urge for vicarious involvement in the disaster.

MINE CLOSED BRIEFLY

The story is also told that the mine closed permanently after the disaster, leaving huge reserves of high-grade coal in the ground; moreover that the explosion ignited a raging fire in the coal-seam, which no-one dared approach closely enough to extinguish. Most of this legend arises from ignorance of local events and of the nature of coal fires. While the Mount Mulligan mine closed briefly as a consequence of the 1921 disaster, it was operating normally within four months, and continued to produce coal until 1957. The story of permanent closure must have its origins after 1957, since it could not have been re-told in the face of the mine's publicly known operation in the intervening 36 years.

The “fire in the mine” variant may be the result of confusing events of 1957 with those of 1921. There was a fire underground at Mount Mulligan after the disaster – a fire in the sense the term has in coal mines; an intensely hot, relatively smokeless smouldering within the coal seam. It was extinguished five days after the explosion, after the bodies of the victims had been removed.¹⁶ There was also spontaneous combustion in the mine in 1957, which was one of the several causes of its final closure.¹⁷ The latter heating was dealt with sensationally by the Brisbane press: “Mystery Fire in State Mine”; “Still Fight Mine Fire”.¹⁸ Newspaper reports frequently serve to reinforce common folklore themes of this kind – after the Box Flat mine explosion of 1972, the *Courier Mail* reported that “millions of tons of coal” were burning underground in the sealed mine,¹⁹ a statement which on a moment's reflection seems both highly improbable and totally unverifiable. The improbable and the unverifiable frequently rub shoulders in folklore, but one is surprised to find them on a newspaper page!!

It is tempting to believe the “fire in the mine” stories arose from combination of the coal-seam fires of 1921 and 1957 into one event, if

legend formation can be assumed to work as simply and logically as that. The added element that huge coal reserves remain under Mount Mulligan has given rise in recent years to rumours that some large unnamed mining company is about to re-open the coal mine. Such talk is endemic in almost every abandoned mining area, and perhaps requires no further examination, except that there are identifiable origins for the tales of vast reserves at Mount Mulligan.

The first thorough geological survey of Mount Mulligan was carried out in 1911 by Assistant Government Geologist L.C. Ball. He estimated the coal reserves by multiplying the cross-sectional area of the exposed seams by the total area of the coal measures, and reported “at least 84,000,000 tons of coal” under the mountain. However, he also pointed out the obvious shortcomings of this rough-and-ready computation: “It is risky, in view of the small amount of prospecting work done, to attempt to estimate the quantity of coal to be depended on . . .”²⁰ People with an interest in promoting the mine were prepared to take that risk. The mine manager, G.B. Stones, rounded Ball’s estimate to the nearest ten million tons upward, informing a *Cairns Post* reporter that the Mount Mulligan reserves were ninety million tons.²¹ The Shire Chairman, William Crowley, raised the bid a month later by predicting production of 600,000 tons annually for 200 years – implying reserves of 120 million tons of coal.²² In fairness to these observers it must be pointed out that they and the *Cairns Post* were doing their best at the time to attract Government funds for a railway to Mount Mulligan. But these exaggerated claims may provide some of the material on which are based the stories of vast untouched coal deposits. These estimates were all grossly excessive. Diamond drill tests at Mount Mulligan in 1951 revealed reserves in the order of 750,000 tons.²³ Total production at Mount Mulligan was 853,000 tons.²⁴ It seems there was never much more than one-and-a-half million tons of usable coal under the mountain.

One of the more romantic legends told after many disasters is that concerning the “sole survivor” who was warned by a premonition not to go to the mine that day. If there was in fact such a person in Mount Mulligan on the morning of the explosion, the problem for the historian lies in determining which of the crowd of “survivors” he was! At least seven miners survived because they were not at work at the time of the disaster; but none of them publicly claimed precognition at the time.

William Westbury and Alfred Leary were in bed suffering from influenza,²⁵ Frederick Larsen had been “off sick for a week”,²⁶ Bill Matthews was “laid up with a bad leg”,²⁷ and another man named

Spiers was at home, ill.²⁸ Albert Jones and Arthur Griffiths had recently been injured in mining accidents: both were in Mareeba hospital.²⁹ In addition there were at least half a dozen people who although not miners might have had reason to be in the mine: James Watson the manager, Jim Harris the engineer and his carpenter brother Jack, Norman Fraser the electrician, George Morrison the tool-sharpener. The “sole survivor” legend may have crystallised around the personal story of any one of these dozen or more men, or it may simply be a more universal theme locally adopted: I find it significant that although I have heard of the “sole survivor” of Mount Mulligan many times, I have never been told his name.

The stories of narrow escapes from destruction seem to have wide appeal. After the Appin colliery disaster in New South Wales last year, the *Brisbane Telegraph* within hours published a large front page photograph of a miner whose newsworthiness lay in the fact that he “came out of the colliery a few minutes before the explosion”.³⁰ The *Courier Mail's* next issue gave similar prominence to a man who had been ill and stayed home from work.³¹ At Mount Kembla, legends of premonition have survived from 1902 until the present, but with an odd variation – the stories there concern miners who went to work and were killed despite forebodings.³² There would be no point in a “sole survivor” legend at Mount Kembla, as over 160 men working underground survived the disaster.

Strangely, there seems to be no folklore attached to the reverse cases at Mount Mulligan – the men who should not have been at work, but were. Sam McColm had been off work for some weeks through illness, and although still unwell, returned to the mine on the morning of the explosion.³³ A retired miner named Bill Cole was standing in for one of the men in hospital.³⁴ Both were killed. Tom Evans, the underground manager, probably had no real need to be in the mine at the time of the disaster, but as a result of going conscientiously to work in his underground office, he was among those killed. While these stories have a poignancy that might be expected to form legends around them, this has not occurred. Perhaps legends attach more readily to good fortune than bad.

NUMERALS ON MOUNTAIN

One folktale can readily be verified by the visitor to Mount Mulligan. The story is told that after the disaster the date “1921” appeared in enormous numerals on the mountain face, and the inscription can still be read with some difficulty. The date is formed by weathered hollows and water marks on the sandstone escarpment, and need not be attributed to any supernatural intervention – it can be seen only when the sun is at the right angle and the viewer is in the correct frame of mind.

It is revealing that this empirically verifiable story is the only one of the Mount Mulligan legends which is told by former residents of the town. The date on the mountain was apparently first noticed in the weeks following the disaster, and subsequently accepted as a local curiosity – the local people did not attach any supernatural significance to the inscription, although outsiders repeating the story often do.



Mount Mulligan at the time of the disaster.
(Qld. Govt. Mining Journal)

In recent years a former resident attempted to provide a mundane explanation for the inscription, by recalling that it had been carved by a visiting circus troupe some months before the disaster.³⁵ His story is in part confirmed by another witness who agrees that the circus painted “King Carnival Co June 1921” on the escarpment, but insists that their inscription was on a much smaller scale, and rapidly disappeared.³⁶ Certainly the present numerals are not the work of man, but the conflict between these two accounts may provide some insight into the ways in which independent but vaguely similar events may with the passage of time emerge as one piece of folklore. Unchallenged, the story might in the future take the form that the hazy date on the mountain is the weathered remains of the work of an extremely energetic circus company.

There is a legend that Mount Mulligan was the home of an evil presence known in Aboriginal belief as Iku. Local Aborigines had warned the early European residents of Mount Mulligan that Iku would exact vengeance if the white men interfered with the mountain, and Iku was seen sitting in trees around the mine a few days before the disaster.

Like most good prophecies, this one was not recorded until after the prophesied event. It first appeared in a paper by Frank Richards, published by the Queensland Museum in 1926.³⁷ Richards was the head-teacher at Mount Mulligan, a member of a prominent local family, and a gentleman-scholar of some ability. His first-hand knowledge of the Hodgkinson Aborigines was unquestionably extensive, but the timing of his publication makes the threat of spiritual retribution untenable in historical evidence.

It is unsurprising, though, that such a story should be repeated, for the idea of an evil spirit in the mine, or retribution by the earth itself, is very ancient among miners and persists to the present. Throughout Europe, where most Mount Mulligan miners were born, there were, until quite recently, traditional beliefs in evil or mischievous beings in the mines – kobolds, knockers, john-o-goblins – who engaged in spiteful pranks or who on occasion brought calamity upon miners. The first modern mining text-book, *De Re Metallica*, by the sixteenth century German engineer and metallurgist Agricola, contains in the middle of an entirely practical chapter on problems encountered in underground mines the startling passage: “In some of our mines . . . there are other pernicious pests. These are demons of ferocious aspect, about which I have spoken in my book *De Animantibus Subterraneis*. Demons of this kind are expelled and put to flight by prayer and fasting”.³⁸ The sense of hostility to the miner’s presence has by no means vanished. After the Kianga disaster of 1975, a miner’s wife commented: “My husband says that if you take something from Mother Earth, she will retaliate”,³⁹ and an almost identical belief was recorded at Appin last year: “Every time you put a hole down in that ground, mother earth sets about filling it in again”.⁴⁰

This ancient fear of retribution by forces beneath the earth is perhaps echoed in the common disaster theme of atonement – the legends of a victim especially singled out in some way. At Mount Mulligan this takes the form of a story that one miner disappeared without trace in the explosion. The “man never found” legend has an obvious basis in fact – there was a man missing after the disaster, as the Royal Commission reported: “If the caval sheets available are correct, there is still one body unrecovered. . .”⁴¹ Until very recent years, the organisation of most mines was so haphazard that in the event of an accident underground, the number of miners involved was rarely known with any precision, and the possibility of bodies remaining undiscovered was very real. Immediately after the Mount Mulligan explosion, estimates of the number of miners underground ranged from 60 to 100.⁴² At the conclusion of the rescue work, it seemed established that 75 men had been killed, but only 74 bodies had been

recovered, as the Royal Commissioners noted. Although an attempt was made to dismiss the discrepancy as an error in counting the dead, the story of the missing miner immediately took firm root in folklore. This story should have had a very brief career, however, for five months after the disaster, when the Mount Mulligan mine had reopened, the remains of the seventy-fifth man were found.⁴³ The story of the “man never found” apparently had too much momentum by that time to be checked by an obscure news item reporting that the missing miner had unexpectedly turned up. As it was perpetuated in legend, the story gained strength from its association with a legend I mentioned earlier – that of the supernatural presence in the mine.

GHOST STORY

In the months following the disaster, these two themes were combined by the new miners at Mount Mulligan into the story of “Morgan’s Ghost”. Edward Morgan was the miner to whom the Royal Commission attributed much of the blame for the Mount Mulligan explosion,⁴⁴ and the belief flourished that Morgan was the missing man – in some variants because his body had been blown into unrecognizable fragments by his proximity to the explosion’s origin. This story is entirely unsatisfactory, and illustrates the remarkable ability of a legend to survive in the face of contradictory evidence. Twelve of the bodies recovered from the Mount Mulligan mine were not identified,⁴⁵ and thus there was no means of establishing the identity of the missing man; and in any case Morgan was one of the most easily identified men in the mine, since he alone was bearded, and his body recognised by that feature.⁴⁶

If Morgan’s body was identified, and his implied responsibility for the explosion not well established, why did folklore make him the spiritual presence haunting the mine? We know of Morgan that he was the only miner at Mount Mulligan who wore a beard. He was also a teetotaller:⁴⁷ not a common attribute in the town, and he was described by the mine manager as “one of the best men in the mine and one of the most careful”.⁴⁸ Without speculating further, for there were other elements of Morgan’s temperament which seem distinctive, but are less well substantiated, we can confidently state that Morgan was *different*, and therefore a suitable scapegoat: if someone had to be singled out, who better than the bearded, conscientious teetotaller? The most interesting aspect of the “Morgan’s Ghost” legend is its demonstration of the need for folklore to single someone out from an anonymous group, and its ability to thrive on intuitive belief, despite firm evidence to the contrary.

All of these Mount Mulligan stories have elements in common. Each on investigation bears some resemblance to verifiable events, the telling of which presumably provided the original basis on which the story grew. Those events have been distorted with the re-telling of the story, but the process of distortion usually follows an identifiable process:

1. The event may simply be exaggerated;
2. Different events at one place may be confused, or events at separate places may be combined into one;
3. A specific event may acquire archetypal overtones as universal themes are added to the original story.

All of these distortions occur as stories circulate in the public domain, through repeated retelling over a period of time, not necessarily very long, and legends arising in these ways will undoubtedly be encountered by historians researching any topic whose evidence has been transmitted wholly or partly by oral means. They should normally be sifted out in the process of historical enquiry, as the historian exercises his critical judgment as to the relative plausibility of different versions of an event. The historian is also expected to make every effort to explore all the available first-hand evidence of an event, an effort which is not demanded of every citizen repeating a folktale.

I do not wish to imply that the historian's task is to pour buckets of cold water over good honest folklore. On the contrary; I believe part of the historian's responsibility is to *preserve* legends, but with proper respect both for the legends and the historical record. Folklore must be recognized and respected for what it is. Having identified a legend, and established that it differs from the objectively verifiable events it alludes to, there are three courses open to the historian:

1. To repeat the legend uncritically. This does the historical record no service – an inaccurate story does not become more true simply by being embalmed in literature. It is in any case rather pointless, since most legends are circulating quite efficiently without the historian's assistance.
2. To report objectively on the verifiable events, and leave out of the record those stories which are found to be wrong. This ensures factual accuracy, but makes for dull history. It also ignores an important aspect of historical events: that what people *believe* happened is often just as important in determining future events as what really did happen. The historian is quite free to disbelieve folklore, but he cannot ignore it as a social force, even when it is wrong.

3. To give both levels of historical memory – the legends and the verifiable events – and explain their discrepancies. This, I think, is the most responsible course. We need to know and understand folklore, but it must be seen in its proper context.

The process of transmitting events into legend can itself provide useful information to the historian. Legends do not evolve around trivial events, and their very existence may point the way to things which require research. At the risk of misusing a medical analogy, I suggest that legends are the scar tissue of history: the legend is not the event itself, but the long-lasting distorted evidence, recording roughly the location and severity of the original wound. The historian must be alert to its presence, but must not allow it to distract him from his larger task.

FOOTNOTES

1. J. V. Mulligan, *Guide to the Palmer River . . .*, Brisbane 1875, p. 24.
2. P. Bell, the Mount Mulligan Coal Mine Disaster 1921, BA(Hons) thesis, James Cook University 1977; published in slightly revised form as *The Mount Mulligan Disaster*, Studies in North Queensland History No. 2, James Cook University 1978.
3. While I have occasionally commented in this paper on other Australian events, I have consciously ignored the vast literature on coal-mining in Britain, and the similar legends which recur there. Interested readers should commence with R. L. Galloway's works, *A History of Coal Mining in Great Britain, 1882*, facsimile Newton Abbot 1969, and *Annals of Coal Mining and the Coal Trade*, 2 Vols. 1898 and 1904, facsimile London 1971; and also sample the 12 *Mining Accidents* volumes of the Irish University Press facsimiles of British Parliamentary Papers.
4. Most of these stories are entirely oral, and still in circulation. Some of them are so commonly heard that they cannot usefully be attributed to individuals. Where I am able to name individuals as sources, I consider it would in most cases be invidious to do so in the context of this paper.
5. Evidence of Constable Robert McClintock, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Mount Mulligan Disaster 1922*, (henceforth R.C.) p. 29.
6. Evidence of James Lovell, R.C. p. 32.
7. R.C. p. 34. All distances given are measured in straight lines.
8. R.C. p. 19. Author's italics.
9. R.C. p. 31. Author's italics.
10. G. Pike, *Pioneers' Country*, Mareeba 1976, p. 176.
11. H. Borland, "Pathways of Yesterday", *Cairns Post*, 17 May 1939.
12. Another Australian coal mine explosion of comparable magnitude is said to have been heard 14km ("nine miles") away: G. Mitchell and S. Piggin, "The Mount Kembla Mine Explosion of 1902", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 1, 1977, p. 52; but this is not an aspect of the Mount Kembla legends investigated in the article cited.
13. Interview with Mrs. Doris Smith, *nee* Watson, Brisbane, 14 May 1976.
14. Interview with Bruce Mackey, Cairns, 4 January 1976.
15. Interview with Mrs. Mary Franklin, Malanda, 14 August 1976.
16. R.C. p. 132.
17. *Annual Report of the Under-Secretary for Mines* (henceforth A.R.) 1957, pp. 57 and 141.

18. *Sunday Mail*, 27 October 1957, *Courier Mail*, 28 October 1957.
19. *Courier Mail*, 2 August 1972.
20. L. C. Ball, *Mount Mulligan Coalfield*, Geological Survey of Queensland publication 237, 1912, p. 16.
21. *Cairns Post*, 19 September 1912.
22. *Cairns Post*, 21 October 1912.
23. Documents in Geological Survey of Queensland correspondence file 4.2.22; Coal – Mt. Mulligan; Mines Department, Brisbane.
24. A.R. 1914–1957, table B.
25. *Cairns Post*, 21 September 1912.
26. R.C. p. 54.
27. R.C. p. 59.
28. Private communication from Rev. G. W. Brown, Smeaton, Vic., 19 March 1980.
29. *Cairns Post*, 22 and 23 September 1921.
30. *Telegraph*, 25 July 1979.
31. *Courier Mail* 26 July 1979.
32. Mitchell and Piggin, “Mount Kembla”, p. 66.
33. Interview with Jim McColm, Ipswich, 17 December 1976.
34. Interview with Mrs. Ivy O’Gorman, Cairns, 5 January 1976.
35. Letter “Mulligan Landmark” by Bruce Mackey, *Cairns Post*, 5 August 1976.
36. Interview with Mrs. Mary Wardle, Ravenshoe, 13 August 1976.
37. F. Richards, “Customs and Language of the Western Hodgkinson Aboriginals”, *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum*, 8, 1926, p. 256.
38. G. Agricola, *De Re Metallica*, 1558 (trans. H.C. and L.H. Hoover, New York 1950), p. 217.
39. *Courier Mail*, 24 September 1975.
40. *Australian*, 26 July 1979.
41. R.C. p. XXXIII.
42. *Cairns Post*, 20 September 1921.
43. *Cairns Post*, 13 February 1922. I am not convinced that this fortuitous balancing of the two counts conclusively establishes the number of dead. A weight of contradictory evidence suggests the number may have been 76.
44. I consider the evidence advanced by the Royal Commission insufficient to establish Morgan’s culpability – the means of initiation of the explosion remain unexplained.
45. R.C. p. 166.
46. R.C. p. 146. I am informed by Stuart Piggin of Wollongong University that Mount Kembla too has a ghost legend, singling out a miner whose body was not recovered.
47. Interview with Mark Morgan, Chillagoe, 27 June 1978.
48. R.C. p. 147.