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RECORDS

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REPORT ON ALLEGED PITCHBLENDE OCCURRENCE WYNDHAM AREA, W.A.

by

R. S. Matheson.

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REPORT ON ALLEGED PITCHBLENDE OCCURRENCE WYNDHAM AREA, W.A.

During the period 29th September to 2nd October 1950, the writer and geologist N. McKay, investigated the area near Wyndham, in which Mr. N. Orchard claims to have obtained a pitchblende sample in 1919.

From a study of the correspondence with Mr. Orchard which was forwarded from Canberra for perusal, there is little doubt that the well Mr. Orchard refers to is that at the old Choomuli Stock Camp (now burnt down) which is close to a large boabob tree marked "Choomuli". The Andrew Hill locality seems to be based on erroneous early advice and an incorrect interpretation that the old meat works Bore was the well Mr. Orchard referred to. Andrew Hill was not visited because of the boggy nature of the tidal flats surrounding it.

From Choomuli Stock Camp, a 60 degree sector of Wedge Hills, extending from approximately north to east northeast, was covered by several traverses. This sector should embrace Mr. Orchard's reported locality, and the traverses were extended to the top of the ridge nearly on Hovas Climb. The hills are composed of sandstones, grits, quartzites and pebble beds, and are presumably porch of the Wyndham Group of Proterozoic rocks. The general strike is northwest - southeast and the general dip 10-15° southwest. The sandstones are well jointed and secondary silicification is abundant only joint and bedding planes in some places. Ripple marking is well shown in some of the sandstones. No igneous rocks or intrusive quartz veins were noted in the sector examined, and the alledged pitchblende lode was not encountered.

It is only fair to point out that a lode 12 inches to 18 inches wide as referred to by Mr. Orchard would be difficult to find amongst the innuumerable scattered boulders on these hills. Unless the area can be localised further the chances are comparable with those of looking for a needle in a haystack.

(See Photo 5040 Cambridge Gulf Run 7 for area examined and localities).

Following the examination of the area referred to by Mr. Orchard, an examination was made of a supposed radioactive deposit reported by Mr. E. Crocker of Wyndham.

This proved to be in the Choomuli area also but an examination proved to be a silicified bariferous lode with no radio-active properties (as determined by Geiger-Muller counter).

The lode occurs on the edge of the tidal north and the bearing from it to Anrew Hill is 340 degrees.

The lode strike N10°E and dip vertically to very steep westerly. The lode outcrops for a length of 450 feet, and has a maximum width of about 8 feet and an average width of probably 5 feet.

The lode occurs on flat southeasterly dipping shales of the Wyndham Group. In addition to its chief consistuents barytes, silica and fragments of country rock, some small crystals of galena were noted in the barytes in the lode channel on a few places.

If galena can occur so can probably sphalerite (zinc blende). It is possible that Orchard's assey report in 1919 might have mentioned blende, which over the course of years become confused with pitchblende.

Other barytes occurrences are reported to be present in the Wyndham area.

6th October 1950.

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Copy to:

The Deputy Director
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