

Heritage Article

Samuel Turrell's Home Movies
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When assessing archival material at the AusIMM Melbourne office some years ago, the Heritage Committee found a box containing twenty old 8mm home movies marked “*My 1936 jaunt around the world*”. There was no note to say who had created them. In the absence of a suitable projector, the Committee decided to have them digitized commercially and then to assess them.

Once the movies could be viewed (using a closed YouTube link), research began. By searching old newspaper records and AusIMM records the following story emerged.

Samuel George Turrell was born in 1880 and moved to Kalgoorlie, where his father was a well-known contractor, as a young man. He worked the office of the London and Hamburg Company, under Dr. Diehl, for four and a half years, then enrolled himself as a student at the Ballarat School of Mines. He topped the exams there in 1904 and graduated as a metallurgist. His first job in 1905 was as metallurgist on the Great Ophir at Davyhurst, after which he worked as accountant, surveyor and metallurgist on goldfields mines. He married Lillian Jeffrey at Norseman in 1911 and set up as an assayer in Kalgoorlie.

By 1921 he was Secretary of the WA Institute of Mining Surveyors and Secretary of the Kalgoorlie branch of AusIMM, while operating his business on the Boulder road. He travelled to Melbourne for the AusIMM meeting in 1924 (which was granted a civic reception by the Lord Mayor) and in 1925 he attended the AusIMM meeting in Broken Hill, where he spoke about the state of mining in WA. By 1929 he had become a travelling representative for the American Cyanamid Company, a job that he did for the remainder of his life. This job, based in Melbourne, took him around the world several times and he made repeated visits to mines in the Philippines, Malaya and Australasia. He began making movies of his travels and editing them for use in his AusIMM talks, as illustrated by this March 1935 AusIMM announcement:

The principal speaker will be Mr. S. G. Turrell, whose address on. 'Metallurgical Experiences' will be illustrated with films showing modern practice.

Turrell died suddenly in 1940, at the age of 60, during a visit to Mount Morgan. We presume that his movies then found their way to the AusIMM Archives. His replacement at the Cyanamid Company was G.B. O'Malley.

The Heritage Committee has prepared an index of the films, listing the mines, locations and people appearing in them. The locations include mines in Burma, the Philippines, Malaya, USA, Australia, Canada and Fiji. Typically, they begin with a slow panoramic sweep showing the entire operation. The film quality varies, and most of the colour films are quite faded.