CROCOITE

Margaret Woodward
A rock board, a rock pick and the philosopher’s stone. In the presence of all that is absent, these are the objects with which this search begins.
H was always attracted to the ‘ologies’. Geology, archaeology, minerology. She found these words in the museum and on the bookshelf, to be quite thrilling. For her eleventh birthday she asked for a geologist’s pick so that she could go crystal hunting, fossicking, prospecting. She’d seen one in the local hardware store, under a thick glass-topped counter and knew that this was going to be the tool for her to navigate the world. She held the weighty gravity of it, felt its pull towards the earth’s crust and registered instinctively the promise that it held. This was her opportunity to really know the world.

Her father had a rock collection himself, kept in a box that might have once held cigars or chocolate. Its wooden dividers carefully walling the world. She too wanted to fill that box with precious specimens, to sit each one on a small mattress of cotton wool, to fill its compartments with his pride in her discoveries and keep the absences at bay. With her rock pick she dug and pried, punctured, dragged and sifted the earth’s crust through her fingers, felt its texture and grit. Chip chipping away at crystals on east coast granite, the rock pick ricocheting crazily off boulders, and jarring her wrists and hands. She spent her childhood sorting and classifying the world into her own muse-eology.
Mineral
When H saw the rock board in the local tip shop, she knew she had to have it.

IGNEOUS, SEDIMENTARY, FOSSILS, METAMORPHIC and MINERALS, its 52 specimens displayed in five taxonomic groups, each labelled with red DYMO tape. These were the labels of a carefully arranged mineralogical landscape, the force fields of its specimens tamed and framed. With two gold coins she purchases the rock board, brings home this trophy of small losses and lives with it. She could not have known the hand that had brought these samples, these fragments, together but like so many others circulating the globe, this dispersed collection carries with it the zeal of a geological education – a portable landscape of Tasmania’s idiosyncratic terrain.
Even with 40 of its 52 specimens missing, there is something irresistible in what it leaves behind. The board resonates with promise and loss. Its rocks knocked off and scattered in the moves between classroom, office and tip face. The best bits, the fossils and petrified wood, the silver and crystal bone, already gone. Picked and pocketed by other scavengers, H sets about filling these absences, to recover what is lost.

Under the label MINERALS there are spaces for three specimens of crocoite, two are missing, leaving in their place, rock shaped ruptures of perishing particle board. One specimen of ‘crocoite’ remains intact, a smooth reddish solid glassy lump. With a glance she knows this specimen to be a fake, a substitute for crocoite’s much rarer, crystalline shards of ‘red lead’, the finest examples of which are said to be found in the West Coast of Tasmania.

**Group – Chromates**
**Composition – PbCrO₄**
**Hardness – 2.5 - 3**
**Specific Gravity – 6.0**
**Cleavage – Distinct prismatic**
**Fracture – Conchoidal to uneven**

Sitting silently in a large glass case, in the inner sanctum of the Zeehan School of Mines and Metallurgy, there’s a spectacular specimen, thought perhaps to be the best in the world. She’s astounded by this exceptionally large mineral mass, its brittle red spines thrusting outwards,
but it’s the accompanying text that grips her. It reads: ‘around 1895 James (Philosopher) Smith and W.R. Bell make the first Tasmanian discovery of crocoite at Heazlewood, near Savage River’. A splinter of red lead recognition. A single sentence that joins her family name Heazlewood, the mineral crocoite and the legendary prospector Philosopher Smith.

Crocoite. Lead chromate. Red lead. Crocosite. Here, Tasmania’s mineral emblem grafts its identity to the roots of her family tree. Consulting her mineralogical catalogues, none of them do it justice. She reads about its hardness, specific gravity and cleavage and how to test it in a flame. This exquisite mineral was once found in such quantities in the surrounding hills that it was used as flux in the smelters of Zeehan. She notes the colour of its streak, its vitreous to adamantine lustre, its massive habit and the way its slender prismatic crystals form slowly underground.

H pauses at the thick glass cabinet for a long time, re-reads the label and then looks again at the crystalline mass. She has to find a way underground.

It’s he who finds her in the pub, a miner, writer, thinker and artist who speaks the language of meta-physics. He is lanky with a long moustache like a prospector from the museum’s old photographs. His workroom is part office, part library. Ground up minerals from the earth’s
The outdoors is his studio. In the rain his artworks sit, forged from monumental events and the daily moments of a miner’s life. His knowledge accrues like the geological record, spanning time, material and space. Every single fragment is accounted for, catalogued with a story. She asks him about crocoite, and he shows her an entry in his 1910 copy of W.F. Petterd’s Catalogue of the Minerals of Tasmania. A hundred years since its publication and there is still no greater authority. As they leave his studio he gives her a small specimen of crocoite which she pockets immediately. Tomorrow he will take her to a seam of red lead underground.

She is ready.

H joins the others where the bush road meets a sign pointing to ‘High Street’. The track carves its way up through the bush, the scent of tea tree rising from the hills of Dundas, a township long since retaken by the bush. Small traces of a settlement, a miner’s hut and a residence surrounded by lilac studded boulders, green Stichtite serpentine mined from beneath her feet sit steady in the rain.

Following the miner’s truck up ahead, the track winds further and higher through the bush. Fully charged with adrenaline and only just able to focus on navigating the few visible feet ahead of her through the rain, H is convinced she could never find this place again. Leaving the vehicle they walk on to reach the adit, the mine’s
CROCOITE

steady, kind voices quell her rising anxiety as the light on her borrowed hard hat is already fading. In the dark she keeps close to the warm voices ahead and the banter of encouragement from her guides as they calmly lead the party on. H can tell they want to share their underworld, and she knows she has to rise to this occasion.

Up front, the procession’s lights disappear and turn a corner, and momentarily the darkness engulfs her while her sense of smell and sound loom larger. H sees small bobbing facets of the tunnel wall appear again ahead, as the lanterns nod and illuminate white pendulous sacs hanging from the stopes of the mine. As she turns another corner and the miners’ contagious excitement overtakes her sense of claustrophobic panic. Keep breathing. Keep focused.

‘Take your torch and head up there, you will see something amazing,’ they say. And they are right.

A small cleft overhead, encrusted with red and orange crystalline spines, glimmers in the weakening head-lamp light. To H it’s a scene from her childhood stories, of caves studded with jewels, lamp genies and Arabian nights. She is mesmerized by this seam of chromium oxide,
only opened up the day before to human eyes. H cannot yet adjust to its seductive brilliance. It strikes her that this crystalline red mass is upside down, enfolded in darkness. So different from the crocoite specimens that sit upright surrounded by glass and light and cotton wool, defying the specific gravity of their collections. All this inverted redness, the dark feeding its massive habit.

Another surge of adrenaline fleetingly kicks in, just enough for H to absorb this pocket lined with subterranean spines. Momentarily distracted by this fissure of red, a collective tremor of relief mixed with terror resurfaces again, and one by one the party’s courage ebbs away. It’s too much and too hard to concentrate on this moment, this glimpse of what lies below. They file back out the way they came in. H, now courageous, chatters excitedly to her guides and her collaborators.

Outside again in the dripping green world, H and her companions laugh, their collective hysteria infused with the soft amnesia of this enveloping red-lead world. She takes a chance and asks the miners if they know of Heazlewood, the place where crocoite first came to light. The town, they say, has left little trace. It’s the mineral *Heazlewoodite*, appearing as bronzy yellow metallic patches in serpentine (and meteors), that carries the district’s name into the geological record.
H grew up with her father’s stories of the West Coast, of panning for osmiridium and epic walks through the bush with other artists and naturalists. The best childhood outings she remembers were looking for flecks of gold and finding serpentine in the beds of local gorges. Her father told stories of politicians turned prospectors and a string of characters searching for the elusive and valuable metal osmiridium. Ernie Bond, the hermit of Gordonvale, had tried his hand at prospecting ‘ossie’ in the long abandoned town of Adamsfield. H finds traces of him in her father’s library. Visiting Ernie at Gordonvale as a student in the 1940s, her father described an oasis carved out of the bush. Ernie, a giant of a man with a moody bull, kept bees and made honey mead for those who had walked the long journey to his home.

Her father went missing during an ocean swim. His body was never found. H has never found a way to recover this loss. Her restless searching becomes habit. A prospecting of absent relations.

Long after he is gone, she finds a woodblock in her father’s studio in which he has carved, in reverse, an image of the inside of Ernie’s house. The frame is filled by a giant fireplace and chimney of the oven where Ernie baked his famous strawberry pies served with cream.
On one side of her family, H descends from a line of prospectors, artists and artisans. Her forbears were carpenters, cabinet makers and blacksmiths, people who worked wood and forged metal. Their family name, Heazlewood, was for generations entwined with the roots and branches of the hazel tree. In the 1820s, two brothers from Asfordby, a small village in Leicestershire, England, emigrated to Van Diemen’s Land, to build, make and carve out a new life in the Norfolk Plains around Longford. The lineage of wood and work remained strong in the Heazlewood descendants. At night H sleeps in a blackwood bed, handmade for her grandparents by her father’s brother, a cabinet-maker by trade. Here in Tasmania the family ruptured, branched and forked again as the people of wood became prospectors and diviners, connecting branches of hazel and mineral and water. They were artisans who knew how to read the land for faults and folds, pay attention to the subtle shifts in the vegetation or the way a creek bed mirrors its source.

Following in the footsteps of her father’s family, H picks up the skills of a modern-day prospector. She knows how to work the hand tools and the wash, and how to survive in the bush with optimism, toughness, and a nose for the promise of something good. She works the blood lines, inherits the thrill of the search. After a day of prospecting she carefully lays out her finds and re-arranges them, sorting, sieving and holding each one in turn. This ritual eventually allows her to reconnect the finds. It’s a restless form of
searching and re-searching. She’s always making notes, scratching down precious fragments of what might be useful, trying to piece together something of these absences. H knows what it is like to search for a body of ore at a depth – she’s become an expert at what this absence feels like.

Whether she’s searching for tracks, relatives or an elusive document in the library, she knows how to recognise an opportunity. A stone deliberately left unturned keeps the search alive. And all the time, while she records another loss or gain, water percolates through lead and another red crystal splinters underground. A brittle matrix set in place to detect the vibration of absence.

In Hobart’s Archive History Room, H begins her search. She finds prospectors, surveyors, geologists, naturalists, agents, solicitors and politicians, all entangled with each other. The same names reoccur. The world of the past is a small one, a gentleman’s club. In the dim glow of the microfilm she recognises their salutations, handwriting, letterheads and signatures – the surveyor Gordon Burgess; Charles Gould, geologist and son of the famous artists and ornithologists; and James ‘Philosopher’ Smith, prospector, farmer and one-time politician. H catalogues these names, files them away for later on and keeps searching.

The circle of names finally spirals onto her own, Heazlewood. In 1864, prospectors and track-cutters Frederick Heazlewood and Job Savage accompany the surveyor Burgess to cut a prospector’s track. They start at Knole Plain, making slow progress through the thickets of horizontal and bauera that blanket the west coast. According to the records, Heazlewood turns back on the 9th of April while Savage and Burgess battle on. Eventually, they dissect a spine through the notoriously dense bush reaching the coast nineteen days later. On that journey Burgess names two mineral-bearing rivers after his companions, Heazlewood and Savage.

It’s all here in black and white. The Burgess Track opens a much needed route for future
expeditions of prospectors, surveyors, geologists and artists. In 1871, Philosopher Smith uses the same track to reach a stream in which he finds tin. Tracing it upstream to Mt Bischoff — later to become the biggest tin mine in the world — Smith unwittingly becomes the hero of the west. Paths cross, and luck kicks in. Right time, right place for a prospector.

The mineral boom in Western Tasmania reverberates outwards. In the hope of repeating Philosopher’s luck, he and Charles Gould stage another expedition to the land south of Bischoff.

On October 19, 1873, Fred Heazlewood is requested to lead this expedition ‘likely to last three or four months... The pay to be twenty five shillings per week and an interest in any discovery made during your employment’.

There, in a box of letters from Smith and Gould to Heazlewood, she finds details of maps, equipment and instructions of how to communicate any discoveries. This was highly secretive work in which the prospector was to trust no one. She’s on a scent now, certain if letters were written to Heazlewood, then he must have written back.

It takes a while but she finds it. Adressed to Smith, a letter written from Mount Bischoff in a spindly hand on green notepaper and signed F. Heazlewood. Now she has the prize, the evidence of her prospecting relation. Smith. Heazlewood. Crocoite.

The search for galena, gold and osmiridium widens and between 1891–1913 the town of Heazlewood comes to life, attracting a population of prospectors and their kin. A hotel, a telegraph office, shops, a progress association, a cricket team and a cluster of mines:

*The Bell’s Reward Silver Mining Company*
*The Godkin Silver Mining Company*
*North Heazlewood Silver Mining Company*
*Mt Zeehan & Heazlewood Prospecting Association*
*Heazlewood Extended Silver Lead Mining Company*
*Heazlewood No.1 Silver Mining Company*
In the library, H requests to see the application for the Heazlewood Silver Lead Mining Company. This is, after all, where crocoite first announced itself, where the conditions were right for a billion red crystals to form underground from hydrothermal percolations. When the original hand written document arrives, she notes that the red sealing wax is the colour of crocoite. She scans the names of the company’s shareholders. J. Smith and W.R. Bell of Forth are there, recorded in cursive script with the largest shares, plus a long list of shareholders, each placing great store in the Philosopher’s luck – spinster, farmers, shipwrights, policemen, drapers and married ladies. She also notes that a Mr H.J. Heazlewood, a farmer from Leven, takes 25 shares, perhaps investing in a namesake for good fortune.

Heazlewood. Now a town without a trace. In all her searching no photographic record appears, but that doesn’t stop her – she wants to, needs to find it. H realises that she is prospecting her own geological heritage, looking for the blood lines that branch and flow through her life’s mineralogy. In her sights are two prospectors, a town, a river and a mineral.

On Tuesday December 4 her prospecting licence number PL 2957 arrives in the mail. In her mother’s garage, she finds her girlhood prospector’s pick buried in a box. Its neck is splintered but still usable. At the outdoor shop she chooses a hi-vis waterproof jacket. This reassures her. Her brother has caught wind of her expedition and for Christmas gives her a pair of sturdy cotton coveralls. With a stack of old geological maps, hand-written directions gleaned from a library book, a divining rod and a will, she goes in search of Heazlewood.
Trace
October 19, 1873
October 19 1873

Hobart Town

Mr F Heazlewood

Sir, If you have arrived by the Pioneer, you will receive this by tomorrow Monday morning.

I can offer you employment likely to last three or four months. The pay to be twenty five shillings per week and an interest in any discovery made during your employment marrying with the no. of men acting with you. Probably only yourself and another will be employed in which case you will each receive one sixteenth.

The duty will be to prospect a line of country under the occasional supervision of Mr James Smith who will make all provision for rationing you and see to your being paid in case of my absence. If you decide on going you will have to leave by the Pioneer on Tuesday next, (if that is her first day of sailing) you will have to pledge yourself to the mosn reticent silence with regard to who employs you and where you are going and to communicate all discoveries immediately to Mr James Smith or to any agent whom he may appoint.

You will send a telegram to me tomorrow Monday morning stating whether you can or cannot go. And I will then forward one to you instructing you who to call on to draw the money necessary for your passage and any small outfit you may require. It would be well to take a second pick like that you purchased before. Your passage back to Launceston will be paid at the expiration of your service.

You will proceed to Emu Bay and camp near the Township until the arrival of Mr James Smith from whom you will receive all instructions. Should Mr Smith have preceded you and be on the road to the mines you must follow after him. The great point is to get to work as promptly as possible as there are other parties starting. You will carefully avoid giving any rival parties the slightest correct information.

Obediently yours

Charles Gould
October 20th 1873
Hobart Town

My Dear Smith
I have so far arranged our prospecting arrangements that we have six good names, enough to commence with — the others we shall have no difficulty in getting in a day or two. We shall have a meeting tomorrow after which I shall write you a specific letter authorizing you to engage men and incur necessary expenditure. Meanwhile I have dispatched Heazlewood by Pioneer Steamship this morning with instructions to wait for you at Emu Bay if not already arrived, or to follow you up the road if you have preceded him. Get him and Harmon to work as soon as you can and commence at the little hill we spoke of: Best let them draw rations at the mines till we can get a supply up also provide for the transmission of any message from there instantly to you or Morton Allport. I have secured all the Mt Ramsay ground so that can stand over a little. I will by another post forward you with a tracing of Burgess’ track with all the applications entered on it. And all general information useful and desirable. N.B. Do not forget to sink on the lode I told you and develop it. I have not told another soul of it yet let the first news be a few tons of copper. I will write longer tomorrow. Old Hunt has returned to Launceston,

Yours faithfully

Charles Gould
October 23, 1873
October 23 1873
Hobart Town

My Dear Smith
We had a meeting of prospectors yesterday at which the scheme I sketched out was discussed and accepted. £70 was subscribed at once the rest we can get.

When I have charts from the survey office showing positions of lots selected on Burgess tract etc. I will write you a long and detailed letter. In the meanwhile send Harmon and Heazlewood out to thoroughly prospect the little hill we spoke of and the country South of Bischoff. By next Pioneer we will forward knapsacks, a tent, compass and other necessaries addressed to you at Emu Bay

Yours very faithfully

Charles Gould

Mr Hunt as I hear says there is no lode at Bischoff. I have given you the key, see that you use it.
CROCOITE Trace

October 30, 1873
October 30th 1873
Hobart Town

My Dear Smith,
Finding that a variety of applications had been preferred for land on the Burgess track, I have procured from the Surry Offices a chart with the exact position of all excepting one which the Minister has pledged himself shall be defined very shortly, and which we will inform you of, it is a vague one near Wombat Hill. I will forward the tracing to Heazlewood so that he may not trespass. I should have addressed it to you had I been certain that you would remain at Mt Bischoff and receive it promptly.

I have now only to inform you that under the terms of agreement, you and I are each to receive one sixteenth interest paid up in any discovery made, the men employed are to have the same amount (i.e. one eight between them) in other words one fourth paid up interest is made over to you, me and the men — if there are two of these latter, each of them will receive one sixteenth, if four one thirty second etc.)

Men engaged for a week or two would of course only participate in any discovery assisted in by them and made during their engagement. In return you are to furnish any general information as to the country in the neighbourhood of Bischoff also to the North and West of it. — Such general supervision or direction as you can from time to time afford and such assistance by arrangement for their being rationed from the mine (we pay all costs) as you can manage.

We constitute you in fact our managing agent or director on the coast. Please arrange that in the event of any discovery being made either one or the other of the two men can proceed instantly down the coast to acquaint you (if you are at the Forth) or continuing on to Launceston if of sufficient importance communicating from there with A.G. Webster Esq. Old Wharf Hobart Town.

To ensure speed it may be well to arrange with Munce or with Wireman to furnish either of them with a home if required or also with an order for accommodation at Atkinsons at Latrobe and East of Deloraine.

Should no great haste be necessary then a letter may be sent from Emu Bay addressed to A.G. Webster Esq. Old Wharf Hobart Town. Containing all information as to any discovery and particulars by which applications for licenses may be sufficiently described.

Should by any chance an undoubtedly valuable discovery be made, the utmost speed must be used, and the telegraph employed from Deloraine with these precautions:

1. No message must be sent through to or through the Launceston Office — I would not risk it myself and absolutely prohibit trusting it on account of others.
Message from Deloraine to Hobart Town during office hours to A.G. Webster or if he’s absent one or other of the following gentlemen may be asked for and may be fully trusted
Morton Allport
Dr Agnew
W.S Hammond (of firm of Hughes and Hammond)
(I put his name last, although he is our treasurer — as he proposes being absent some weeks)

The message should be one requesting attendance at the telegraph office, and on their presence being notified and not till then, a message must be sent describing the land which it is desirable to take up in such general terms as may be approximately define it for instance

“on a track turning N. or S. or E. or W. as the case may be from such and such point on Burgess track etc. distant so far, the spot being marked by a deep cross X cut-on a tree thus etc etc”

If further information is requisite the discoverer could receive an order by telegram...and proceed to Hobart Town by train and coach.

If the discoverer arrives after office hours he may if the case is sufficiently urgent telegraph to one of the gentlemen (W. Webster is the nearest) and at discretion forward full information or have his attendance at the telegraph office

a few minutes before ten o’clock the following morning
On the whole I think Harmon would be the most active to travel back, and you can guarantee his trustworthiness — you might arrange for him to do all this in case its becoming needful.

I do not wish to interfere with any instructions you may have given the men and shall therefore only write provisionally to Heazlewood — You will of course not send them out to Mt Ramsay, that land being taken up by ourselves must be further prospected at a fitting season at our own cost.

My own view is that they should first overhaul the little hill we spoke of south of Bischoff and afterwards try Wombat hill but of this more length in another. Fit them out as well as you can at present, our own tools can be handed over to them (at a valuation) we will forward knapsack and compass by next boat.

More tomorrow
Yours very faithfully

Charles Gould

P.S Send me word how the lode is looking.
Have you such as I suggested
January 9, 1874
Mrs Church
Launceston 9th January 1874

Messrs Heazlewood and Harmon

Dear Sirs
Since I last wrote to you I have tested the sand which you sent in the matchbox. It is nearly all tin ore.

Amongst the small pieces of spar in the little bag I find there are particles of galena (lead ore). If the land where you found these samples is not already taken it will be important to search it carefully where you found these samples.

COPY
January 12, 1874
Mount Bischoff  
January 12 1874  

James Smith Esq  

Dear Sir  
Mr Ritchie kindly takes charge of the samples and specimens herewith forwarded. The Tin is from different parts of the South Side of the... and they would have sent such before if we had known how to send them. For the future will leave them with Mr Crosby. We have been away South and S East to the Coldstream and thereabouts since I last wrote to you, we started for a hill to the S W but it got to be quartzite Country and so went S E. do not find anything as yet it is nearly all slaty country. We start in the same direction on Monday.  

The white sparrey stone in the larger sample of tin is full of small tin crystals.  

If at all convenient would be glad to hear from you and know when you are likely to be at Bischoff  

Trusting you are well and I remain Sir  

Yours obediently  

F Heazlewood
April 4, 1874
Mount Bischoff
April 4th 74

James Smith Esq
Dear Sir
I only received yours of the 28th and in reply beg to say that for a time we have been and are prospecting for Mr. Scott I do not know for how long but for a short time only. The creek from which (you said nearly all tin) that sample came is the one that runs through Mr. Scott's and Mr. Allport's sections it occurs in the granite we find it in fair quantities in the drift of the creek in some places near a quarter of the dish. And also find it in some of the granite boulders in the creek but have not yet been able to find where it comes from. I think it only occurs in patches in the granite it is in that Bluish tourmaline granite. Mr Scott got some nice specimens of the stone. The first we get again I will forward for your inspection. Mr Scott will put matters straight when he gets back to Hobartown for there has been a good deal of blundering in the charts Mr H Hammond sent me. Mr Gould and Mr Alport take the place of Mr Scott and Mr Evans and Mr Scott's is farther West and Mr Evans South.

On the chart sent me Mr Gould and Mr Alport ford across the river to the East, in fact they were all wrong but Mr Scott says it does not matter. Luckily I can make up a time account and that is all that is necessary.

I do not know if you noticed from the small pieces of a red sparry mineral in any of the small lots I forwarded. If not I will forward a small sample by first opportunity. I cannot make out what it is, it occurs in the drift down the hill on Mr Gould's section. You will no doubt have heard from Mr. Scott and he will explain matters.

I expect to hear from him next time we come in to the mines for if the weather keeps as it is it will not be much use stopping up at Mount Ramsay.

I hope you are well and remain Sir
Yours obediently

F Heazlewood
April 27, 1874
Mount Bischoff
April 27th 74

James Smith Esq

Dear Sir,
I duly received yours of the 4th and 7th also the specimens of antimony. We came in from the Ramsay yesterday and brought in the tent and tools and thinking to go Cleveland way. But on arrival of the mail today, by Mr Beecroft find by a letter from Mr Scott, that we have to return to Ramsay. He states he will write you of our proceedings. We shall therefore return and fulfil his instructions and then take a trip to Cleveland. I should much like to hear when you are likely to be up to the mines. We find tin in some of the... Granite stones in the creek through Mr Scott's lot but cannot find where the stones come from as yet. There is also a vein of iron ore through Mr Gould's below the bismuth or rather further down the creek. It is a strange place altogether. I will write when we come in again and write you if there is anything fresh. We have been trying to trace the tin up the mountain on Mr Scott's lot for some time. From a tracing Mr Scott sends me there are several lots applied for that will be no good at all, but I will let you know more of that when we return. Till then I remain Dear Sir

Yours Obediently

F Heazlewood
May 19, 1874
May 19th 74

Mr Crosby

Dear Sir

Any amount you think fit to charge for our accommodation at various times please make out a memo and give or forward to Mr James Smith who will attend to it.

With sincere thanks for your many acts of kindness, I remain dear Sir

Yours truly

F Heazlewood
April 27, 1887
Hampshire Hills
27th April 1887

Dear Mr Smith,

I am in receipt of yours of the 23rd and will take the grass seed to the Heazlewood next trip and do with it as you wish. It's a very good idea — as is also your suggestion to keep the work going for a week or two longer than the first named time. I went out to the Heazlewood on Saturday last and was much pleased with the work done by G Vertigan & Fuller, they have opened several trenches near the camp and on the large outcrop on your section with good results at both places. At the camp three lodes have been determined as carrying ores of lead or silver and a similar number on your section. Captain Patterson will send you some samples of oxide of lead and what I believe to be chromic lead these ores occur at both places with galena there is also a sample of metal from the third lode at the camp altogether I think our prospects are very encouraging and am sending out drills and explosives to enable our men to get deeper into the lodes than they otherwise could.

I propose going to the Heazlewood again on Saturday week

Trusting you are all well

With kind regards

Yours Truly

W R Bell
Wood
H is standing in a graveyard in Asfordby, Leicestershire. The church, flanked by several imposing hazel trees, is shut and the graveyard overgrown. She fossicks around at the base of the hazels, where they send out shoots, excellent for weaving baskets. She’s on her knees parting the switches to make out the engraving on the headstones. She’s looking for the source, the one single relative ‘Old Henry’ from whom her Tasmanian kin descended. In 1823, the family tree ruptures, branches and forks again as two brothers emigrate to follow their prospects in Van Diemen’s Land. Beneath the sprouting hazels there are generations of carpenters, wood workers, cabinet and coffin makers, all buried here in this small village. Their wives and children’s lives are marked by exquisitely engraved stones, whose carved borders and lettering draw admiration from the most skilled stonemasons.

Among the tangle of switches, branches, twigs and trunks, her new found skills pay off. Poised on damp earth and wedged between headstone and tree trunk, H prunes the foliage, brushes snails from his grave. Here she claims her find. The grave of ‘Old Henry’, who died after five more of his eighteen children followed their siblings’ prospects in Tasmania.
Somewhere, H has heard that hazel branches make excellent divining rods. When carpenters become prospectors and prospectors become diviners, she knows it is because their family tree is still ancienly ingrained with the wood of the hazel. A deep tap root of a memory surfaces. Her great grandfather, George Edgar Heazelwood of Mt Hicks, Tasmania was a geomancer, a diviner of sorts. Returning broken from World War One he spent the rest of his days prospecting and divining in Beaconsfield, channelling what optimism he had left into other people’s fortunes.

Each branch of a divining rod senses new opportunity. She knows that to activate luck’s force field, to draw its strength, she needs to be in and of the world. To be deliberate. To deliberate. To divine.
West of Waratah, not far from The Burgess Track, the road sweeps alongside Thirteen Mile Creek. Finally, H enters the forest. Following a corduroy track, mossy underfoot, all around is green, sassafrass, dogwood, and myrtle. Fallen trees block her way but she scrambles around them, up and over their mighty trunks.

In the absence of hazel, she selects a piece of dogwood and whittles herself a divining rod, like the one she saw in the museum, but bigger. She knows she will need a longer reach to sense this place.

She thinks about the crystalline structures underground, snapping and reforming in the dark, about truncated branches and honour boards with missing names. How to honour their lives, these elusive people who were at home with minerals, water and wood. She camps where they might have camped, in this sea of green, underneath which is all that brittle red.

This is who we are.
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TRACEr

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West Coast Heritage Centre Archives, Zeehan.

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James Smith’s Miner’s Right
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Crocoite (I) is one of forty mineral recompositions commissioned by A Published Event for Lost Rocks (2017–21).


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H realises that she is prospecting her own geological heritage, looking for the blood lines that branch and flow through her life’s mineralogy. In her sights are two prospectors, a town, a river and a mineral.