

## Gryphon Minerals Could Have an African Lion by the Tail at Banfora

By Charles Wyatt

Mel Ashton and Steve Parsons, chairman and chief executive respectively of Australian-listed Gryphon Minerals, had time for a beer when in London recently to bring Minews up to date with progress in Burkina Faso. This land-locked country just north of Ghana is becoming a destination of choice for many a gold miner as the Birimian greenstone belts of West Africa have no respect for country borders. Gryphon has been there since 2005 so has first-mover advantage. Its current focus is on the Banfora project in the southwest of the country, close to the borders with Mali and Cote D'Ivoire in a gold producing district that hosts deposits such as Randgold's Tongon and Resolute Mining's Syama.

The conversation with Mel and Steve ranged over the recent Test series against New Zealand and the upcoming rugby tour against the All Blacks, but Banfora was top of the agenda. Steve mentioned in passing that they had hit some lamprophyre dykes during deep drilling and that these appeared to be associated with mafic dykes, but said that not enough information was yet available. Encouraging, even so, and it's worth noting that though lamprophyres occur throughout all geologic eras, Archaean examples are commonly associated with lode gold. Also Archaean in origin are the prolific greenstone belts of the world like Abitibi in Canada, Tianshan in south east Asia and Barberton in South Africa.

As yet comparatively little work has been carried out on the Birimian greenstone belts of Burkina Faso which are a bit younger. But the drilling results being obtained by Gryphon are fascinating. Investors are clearly impressed by the achievements to date as the company recently raised A\$10 million to fund exploration for the rest of this year. No easy task in current market conditions, although it must help to have top rate shareholders such as Newmont Mining, Macquarie Bank and Genesis Fund.

The Banfora project consists of contiguous exploration licences covering an area of about 1,150 sq kilometers, and encapsulates the entire Loumana Birimian greenstone belt within Burkina Faso. The town of Banfora is close, and there is grid power about 30 kilometres from the eastern boundary of the project. Initially the focus has been on the Nogbele prospect near the Tongon shear, where an initial resource estimate of 6.1 million tonnes at 2.10 grammes per tonne and giving 410,000 ounces of gold was delivered last September at a discovery cost of US\$10 per ounce. Mineralization remains open in all directions. The majority of this oxide material is at a depth of less than 100 metres so it could be open pit, and the grades already look sufficiently good to take this option forward.

Steve reckons the current drilling programme could have boosted the resource to around 1 million ounces by the end of this year, as it's targeting all obvious extensions to Nogbele. The next prospects to be drilled are Nangolo, is on the northern extension, and Fourkoura where some drilling has already been carried out. In conjunction with the drilling programme, some of which will go significantly deeper than 100 metres, regional soil sampling has also been taking place. Soil sampling has now covered about half of the total project area and more than 50 soil anomalies have been identified, some of which are larger than a square kilometre.

The latest news comes from RAB drilling and rock chip sampling at Gryphon's Muddi prospect, which lies in a previously untested area 12 kilometres east of Nogbele. The drilling was shallow, but it targeted the intersection of two major regional shears and mineralization was found to be open along strike on two separate mineralised zones. It's usually fatal to make early predictions after results such as this, but Steve Parsons was clearly pretty excited about it. The drill results included 24 metres at 2.52 grammes per tonne gold from surface, while the rock chips assayed as high as 150 grammes per tonne gold. In fact it's worth pointing out that the company has some reasonably high grade intersections under its belt already, including 13 metres at Nangolo grading 4.6 grammes per tonne. Drilling at Banfora will now accelerate thanks to the recent funding.

The Gryphon Minerals directors have wisely kept some Australian projects under the company's belt, though analysts don't seem to think that any value is ascribed to them in the share price. If one of them came good, it could make a big impact, but no one should bet their life on it happening. Among them are the Collurabbie and Mt Rankin projects in Western Australia, where Minara Resources is earning a 70 per cent interest by spending A\$5 million over four years exploring for nickel sulphides. Then there's the Mt Windarra project close to where Poseidon ran its successful operations in the 1960s, the Radio project which contains the historic Radio gold mine near Southern Cross, and the Mt Isa project where Steve and Mel reckon they may be on the track of uranium. Gold, however, is really what Gryphon is about, and large quantities of it. The potential of Banfora is growing steadily and the company could have an African lion by the tail.