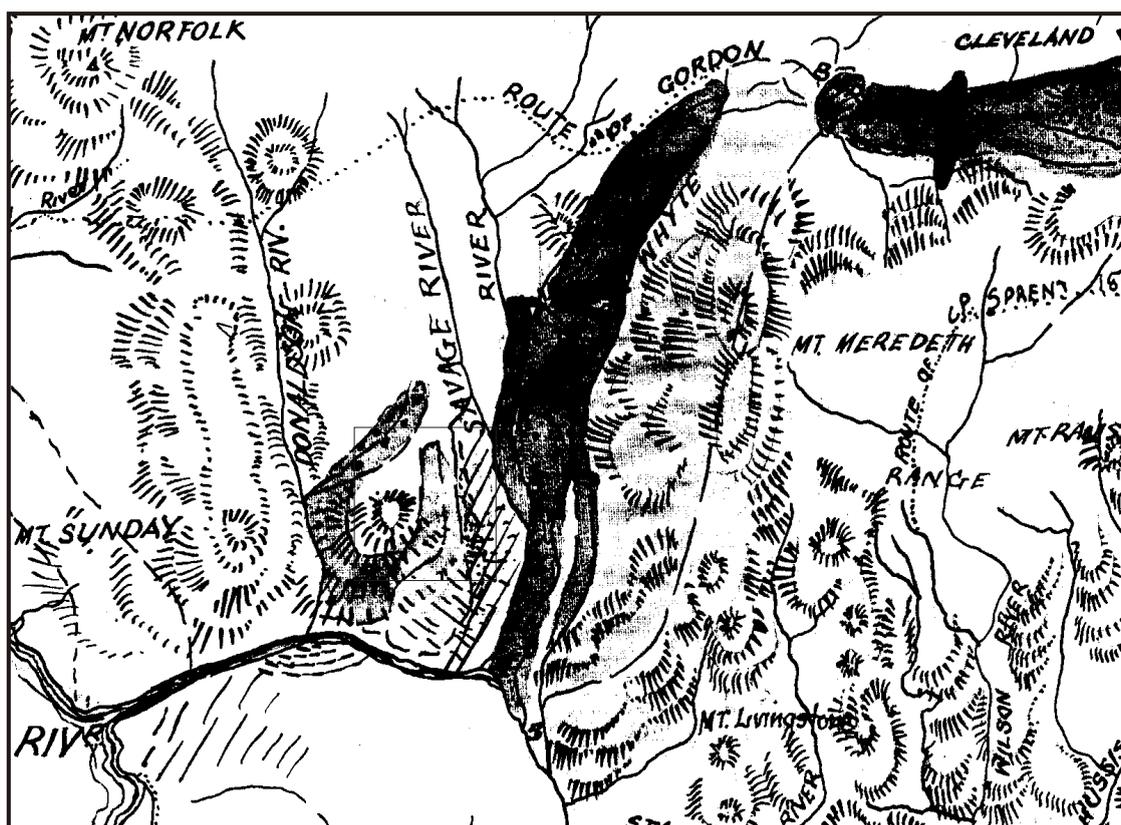


**Archaeological Survey Report
1999/04**

**An archaeological inspection
of the historic alluvial
workings at Burnt Spur**

By Parry Kostoglou





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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
Job Brief	2
Methodology	2
Location of survey area	2
RECOMMENDATIONS	2
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	2
SITE REPORTS	3
Alluvial workings	3
Settlement site	3
Water race	3
REFERENCES	3
APPENDIX	3
Contemporary survey photographs	6
Historic maps	10

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Introduction

Job brief

This archaeological inspection of the historic alluvial mine workings at Burnt Spur was commissioned by Mineral Resources Tasmania in response to a proposed alteration of flow in the Savage River by the resident mining operation. The verbal brief for this assignment called for a visit to the site in order to ascertain its historic extent and vulnerability to the proposed development. A brief inventory of the site's archaeological features was also requested.

Methodology

Field work was undertaken over a half day period on 28 May 1999. The alluvial workings beside the Savage River were examined and all resident archaeological features photographed and inventoried. Half a day was also spent at the MRT library and map rooms in order to compile information on the history of this mine site.

Location of survey area

The alluvial workings described in this report occur on the lower slopes of a steep spur which is surrounded on three sides by the present course of the Savage River. Known as Burnt Spur, this slope is located three kilometres northeast of the Savage River mine, and is marked on the current 1:25 000 scale topographic map of the area.

Statement of significance

The alluvial workings at Burnt Spur are deemed to be of low significance. Although the stone retaining walls along the workings remain in an excellent state of preservation, the physical scale of workings here, in addition to their brevity and historically unremarkable origins, do not recommend special consideration. Far more historically significant minescapes are assumed to survive to some degree at nearby Long Plains for example.

Recommendations

Although the proposed development may raise river levels and therefore flood these historic workings, there are no resident archaeological features of any magnitude or fragility which would be adversely affected by such development. No further action is therefore proposed.

Historical overview

The Savage River area surrounding Burnt Spur was initially prospected in 1878 after the first gold strikes at Browns Plains and Middleton Creek near Corinna. Prospecting activities along Savage River were rewarded in December 1879 when gold was discovered on some button grass flats southeast of the Savage River by Messrs Johnstone and Peever. This new discovery, titled Long Plains, proved to be the most long-lived of the gold finds in the Savage River/Pieman River catchments, and miners were still finding payable gold there well into the 1890s. Other discoveries in the Burnt Spur vicinity included gold at Main Creek in 1881. In the 1890s the Savage River Company employed hydraulic sluicing to recover various minerals before their leases were acquired by the famous Rio Tinto Iron Mines Company (now the site of the current Savage River mine).

Although surrounded by successive and highly publicised mining enterprises, Burnt Spur itself appears to have hosted only one brief mining venture which commenced in August 1919. At this time Messrs Guy William Wood and John Michell Stanton took out a 40 acre gold mining lease on land surrounding Burnt Spur on both sides of Savage River. In 1921 Mr Wood divested his share of the lease to Mr Clay Freeman, before both duly surrendered it to a Mrs Stella Chapman. The final leaseholder, one Mary Chapman, surrendered the 40 acre parcel in February 1924. All archaeological remains described in the site reports section of this report would appear to date from this period.

Site reports

This site consists of two neighbouring but distinct archaeological precincts. All of the mining activity, consisting of both alluvial workings and an adit, occurs beside the south bank of the Savage River. A small settlement site occurs 60 metres further south/uphill on Burnt Spur, while a water race connects both of these sites to a creek further southeast. Reference should be made to Plate 1 which shows the current 1:25 000 scale map of the vicinity.

Alluvial workings

These workings immediately behind the south bank of the Savage River occur over a 50 x 40 metre area. These workings appear to have been hand dug without the aid of hydraulic sluicing equipment. The diggings are shallow, being less than three metres in depth (Class 4), and their principal constituent feature is a 20 metre long drystone retaining wall used to stop the waste workings from collapsing in on the workings. This wall is 1.5 metres in height.

Riverside adit

Located 30 metres east of the alluvial workings is a single adit driven into the river bank. The adit portal measures a modest 1 x 0.8 metres in height, and the interior was not examined.

Settlement site

A small settlement/camp site is situated 60 metres south/uphill of the mine workings. This precinct contains a number of modest features scattered over a 30 x 20 metre area. These scanty remains express a relatively brief occupation in addition to a small resident population.

Domestic artefact scatter

The central feature at this precinct is a scatter of domestic artefactual refuse including glass material from condiment and drink bottles with machine made mould marks, which would date this site to the mid/late 1920s onwards. Several metallic artefacts included a complete camp oven and shoe horn. A leather boot was also found nearby.

Mining material scatter

Several artefacts relating to mining were found around the periphery of the camp site. For example, a three metre long section of rivetted race water pipe and a roll of fence type wire were both found next to the domestic scatter. The metal heads from a pick and shovel were found 20 metres away beside an earthen cutting formerly used to accommodate a water tank (see below).

Water tank site

A 2 x 2 x 1.5 metre high rectangular cutting into the hill slope seems to indicate where a square shaped ships type water tank was once dug in to gather water for the settlement from a water race which runs past the tank site and the encampment.

Water race

An earthen water race measuring up to half a metre in depth and 0.6 metres in width was periodically found on the descent to this site. The race would appear to have supplied the mine with race water from a creek to the southeast. The race is at least 350 metres in length.

References

- BINKS, C. J. 1988. *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast*. Blubber Head Press : Hobart.
- SMITH, J. H. 1897. Geological report on the mineral district between Corinna and Waratah.
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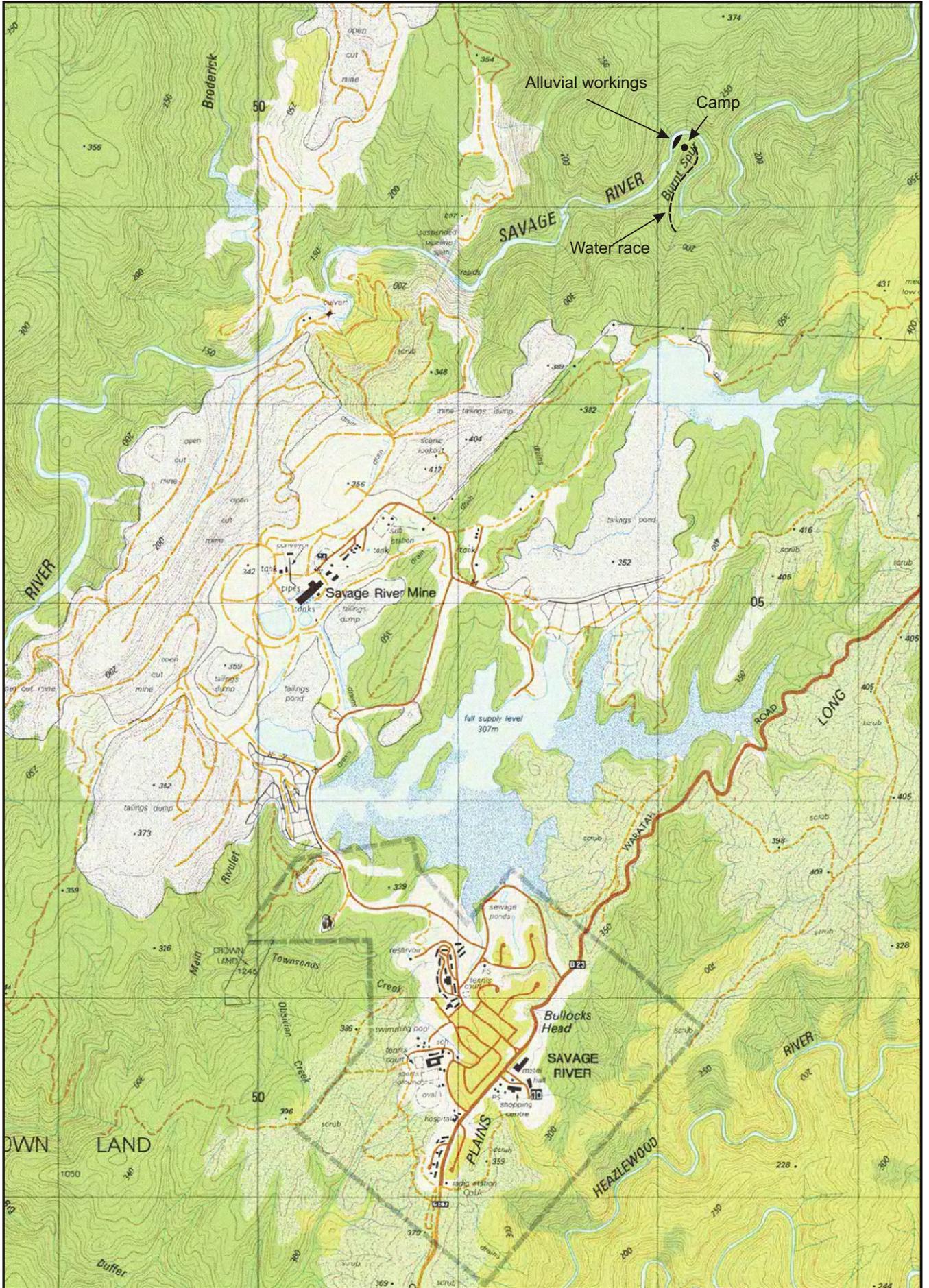


Plate I

Current 1:25 000 scale topographic map showing location and extent of survey area.

APPENDIX

Contemporary survey photographs and historic maps



Plate 2

Contemporary view of drystone retaining wall at workings.



Plate 3

Detail view of drystone wall.



Plate 4

View of discarded camp oven at domestic scatter.



Plate 5

View of shoe horn at domestic scatter.



Plate 6

View showing section of rivetted water pipe.



Plate 7

View showing a typical section of the earthen water race.

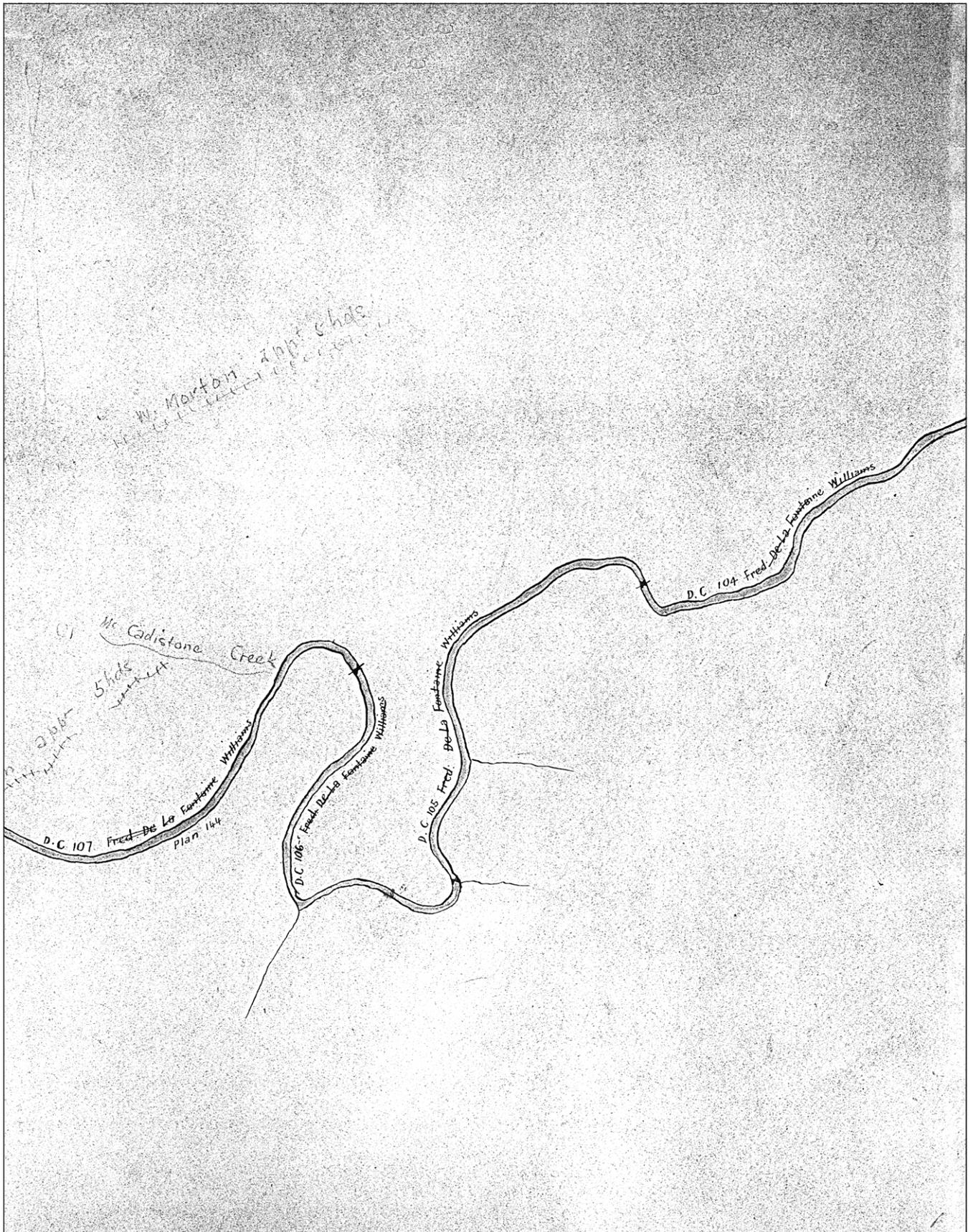


Plate 8

Section of historic lease chart dating from 1894-1898 showing the Burnt Spur area without any resident mining lease. (MRT chart No. 156B)

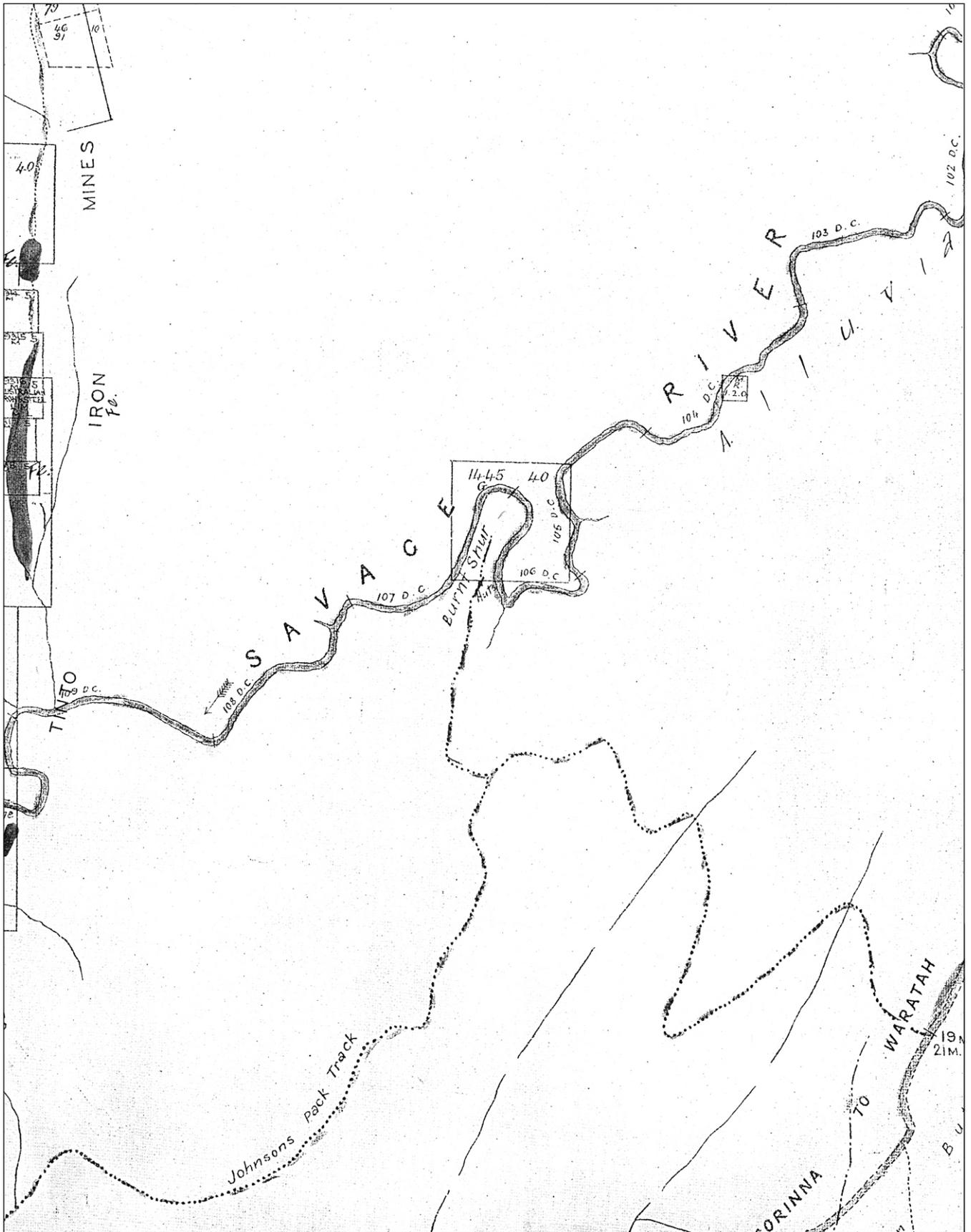


Plate 9

Section of historic lease chart dated 1934 showing the single 40 acre lease surrounding Burnt Spur. (MRT chart No. 156)