

**Archaeological Survey Report
2006/01**

**A site inspection of the
Scamander River mine,
June 2003**

By G. J. Dickens



March 2006

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The site of the Scamander River silver mine is situated within the town of Scamander. The site is located on the south bank of the Scamander River, about 600 metres west of the Tasman Highway bridge (fig. 1, 2).

Map Sheet: 6040, Scamander, 1:25 000 scale
Grid Reference: Scamander River mine (main shaft)
604 710 mE, 5 409 230 mN

The site is accessed by a walking track which follows the river bank, a few metres above high water mark.

The workings come into view prior to crossing a small stream. The site is marked by the prominent bald crown of the main mullock dump approximately 30 m south of the river bank.

Brief history

Metalliferous deposits, which included gold, silver and tin, were known to exist in the area from the early 1880's. There was no mining development until 1886, when John Robert Chaffey obtained a lease to mine silver on private land which was then owned by Michael Steel of Scamander. According to government geologist Gustav Thureau's report of 1886, a tunnel of more than 80 feet in length had been driven into the eastern side of the hill, with other associated surface workings.

Thureau also reported that periodic ore sampling had been assayed at the Mount Bischoff smelter in Launceston. The results ranged from 20 ounces of silver and eight hundredweights of gold, up to 198 ounces of silver and nine hundredweights of gold to a ton of ore⁽¹⁾.

John Chaffey discovered a similar deposit on the northern side of the river, virtually opposite the Scamander River mine. He established a 40 acre lease (fig. 3) which operated from January 1886 to December 1889⁽²⁾.

Little is known of the Scamander River mine's period of operation and its associated production figures. When government geological surveyor Alexander Montgomery paid a visit during June 1893, it appeared that the workings had long been abandoned.

Montgomery was unable to access the underground levels because of flooding and confined his report to the surface workings. He described the main shaft as being 132 feet (40 m) deep and positioned on the higher eastern slopes of the hill. Directly below and a little above river level, a 123 feet (35 m) deep underlay shaft had been sunk, while the main adit was located a short distance to the south (fig. 4). At the time of Montgomery's visit, the then lease-holder, Robert French, was conducting assays of the ore body.

Although the reason for the mine's closure is not officially known, the author believed it was probably due to the constant problem of water flooding the underground workings and to the highly refractory ore, which was difficult to treat metallurgically⁽³⁾. The closure of the Scamander River mine probably occurred towards the end of 1889, when John Chaffey abandoned his other mining lease on the northern side of the river.

According to the 1889-1890 Annual Report of the Secretary of Mines, the company on Mr Steel's private property was wound up⁽⁴⁾. Production from the mine was estimated at 50 tons, averaging 33 ounces of silver per ton⁽⁵⁾.

Site descriptions

LOWER WORKINGS

Underlay Shaft – AMG Reference 604 740 mE , 5 409 236 mN

Located at the end of the access track, about 40 m south of the river bank and 20 m west of the creek crossing, is a cleared area of about 15 square metres.

The area includes a small mullock dump (Plates 1, 6) associated with the filled-in collar of an underlay shaft which is located a few metres to the west (fig. 4).

The shaft had been excavated at the base of a small embankment (Plate 2), while much of the mullock had been levelled and spread in a northerly direction towards the river.

Main Adit –

AMG Reference 604 735 mE, 5 409 227 mN

Situated ten metres southwest of the underlay shaft is the granite portal of the main adit (Plate 3). A small mullock dump associated with the adit is located five metres to the east (fig. 4). According to locals, the tunnel is still accessible, but contains a dangerous winze inside. Therefore, in the interests of public safety, it is recommended that the entrance be steel gated or completely sealed.

UPPER WORKINGS

Open Cut –

AMG Reference 604 710 mE, 5 409 230 mN

A small exploration open cut (Plate 4) is located on higher ground, about ten metres west of the main adit portal. The excavation appears to be following the line of lode towards the main shaft, which is above and close to the crest of the hill (fig. 4).

Main Shaft –

AMG Reference 604 710 mE, 5 409 230 mN

Located about 20 m in elevation above the Scamander River and about 50 m from its southern bank is the main shaft (fig. 4).

The filled-in shaft forms the western boundary of the mine workings. The collar has been destroyed by excavation, subsidence and fallen timber (Plate 8).

A 40 m-long mullock dump (Plate 9) extends both north and south from the shaft (fig. 4).

A spectacular view of the Scamander River can be experienced when looking northeast from the site of the main shaft (Plate 10).

Conclusions

Although the mine has been abandoned for more than a century, the site is still in good condition and is easy to access.

The workings remain as a typical example of the many small mines that existed in Tasmania during the 1880's.

The site is situated in an attractive bush setting with pleasant water views. Because of its close proximity to Scamander, the mixture of mining heritage and natural scenery, this site provides the potential for a popular tourist walk.

References

1. THUREAU, G. 1886. Report on the Scamander silver and gold deposits. *Parliamentary Paper Tasmania 1886/73*, p. 1-2.
2. Records from the Registrar's Office, Mineral Resources Tasmania.
3. MONTGOMERY, A. 1893. Report on the silver-bearing lodes of the Scamander River district, Tasmania. *Report of the Secretary of Mines Tasmania 1892-1893*. p. 1-2.
4. Report of the Secretary of Mines for 1889-90, p. 9.
5. GROVES, D. I. 1972. The zoned mineral deposits of the Scamander-St Helens district. *Bulletin Geological Survey Tasmania 53*, p. 38.

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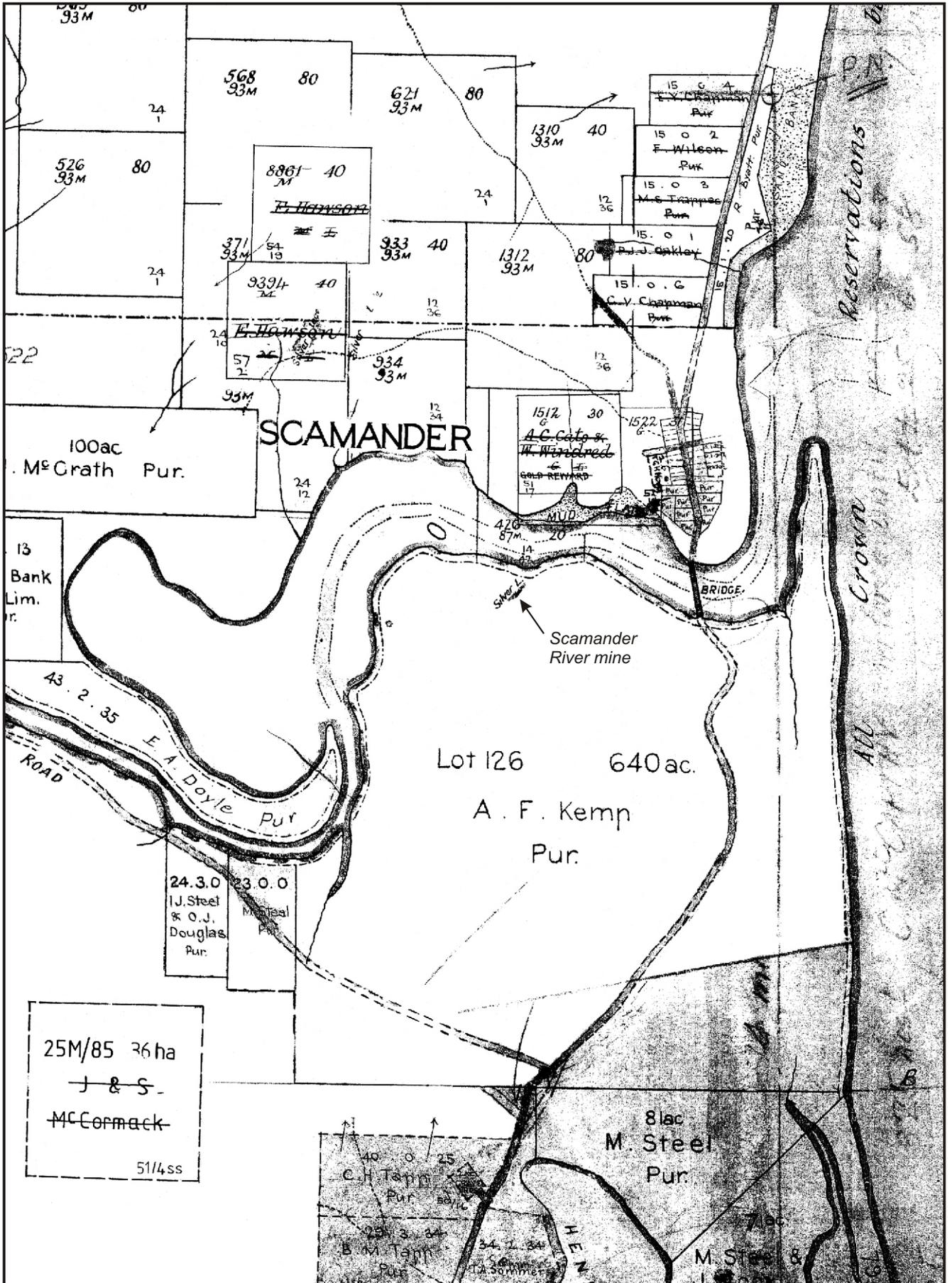


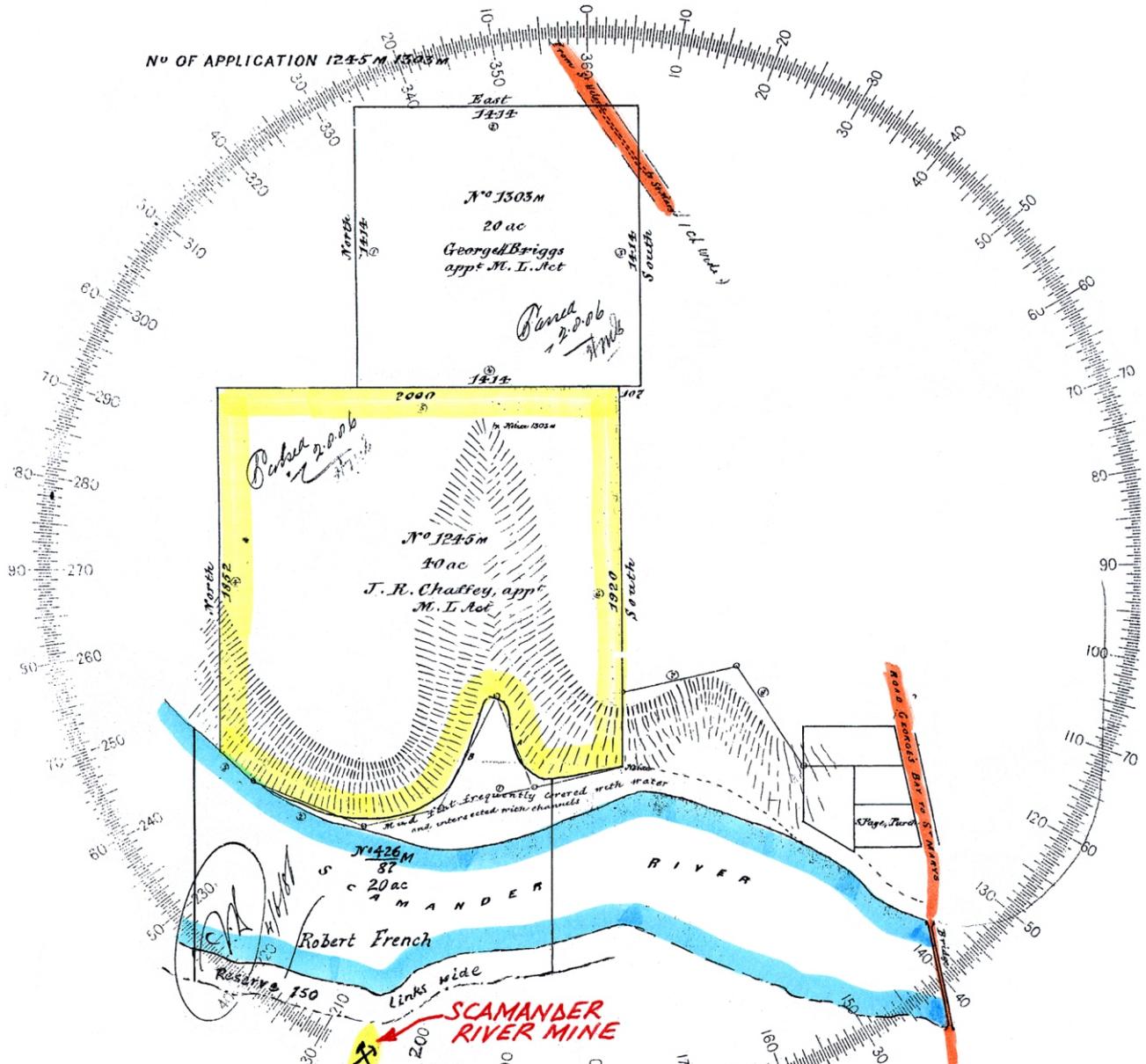
Figure 2
Section of Scamander Mineral Chart.

COUNTY OF CORNWALL

PARISH OF FRAMPTON

Scale 5 chains to an inch.

Town Reserve, Yarmouth.



Date of instructions 1205 m 30/1/86 1520 m 2/2/86
 Survey commenced 5/5/86
 Survey finished 7/5/86

May be acted upon
 Acted upon

Office examination
 Error of close 1 in
 Plotted by } J. G.
 Finally examined by }
 Entered on General Plan by J. G.

Report

27/15/86
 J. G.
 16.06
 2/6/86

George C. Smith.
 District Surveyor

Figure 3
 Mine survey diagram, with position of Scamander River mine marked.

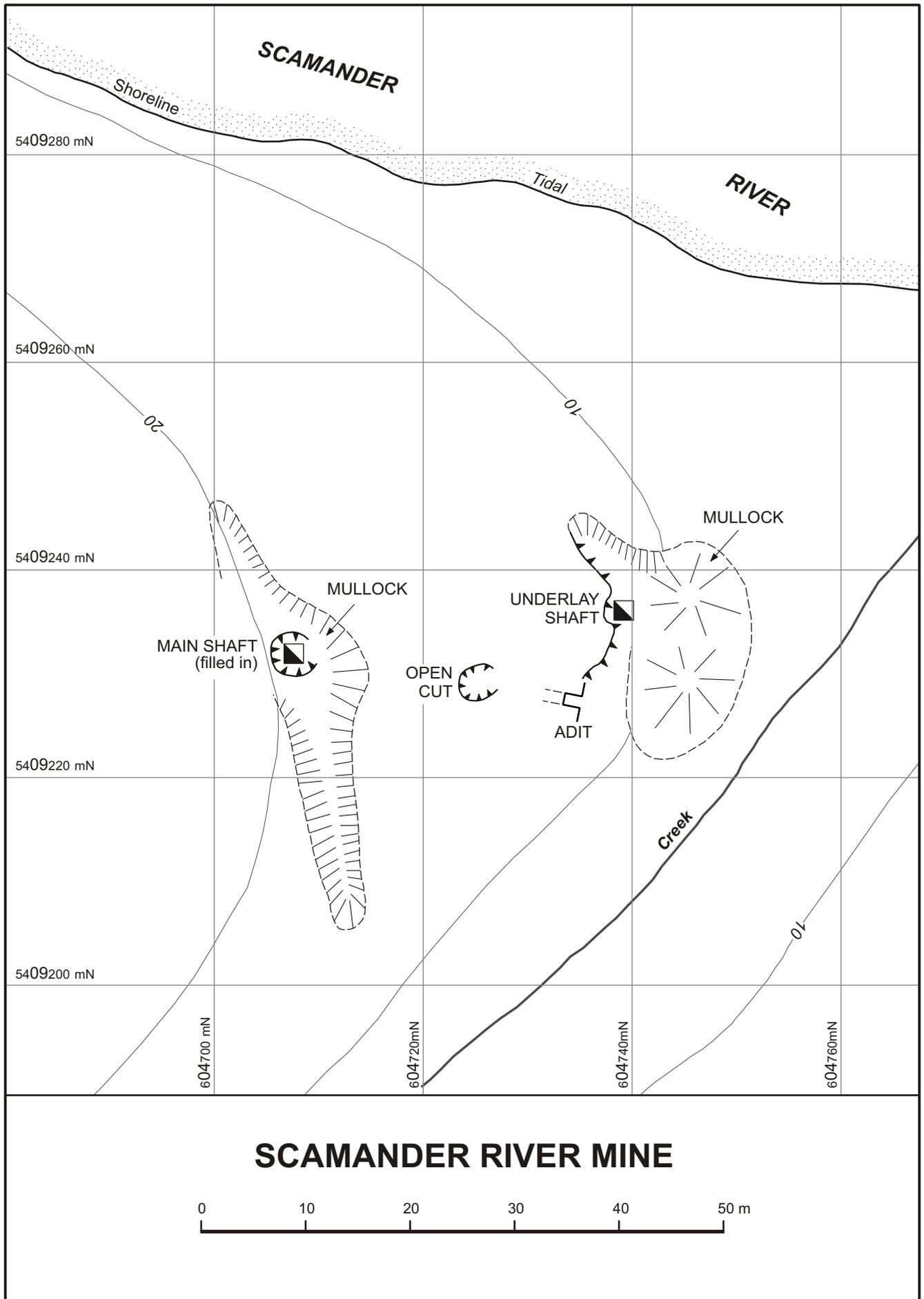


Figure 4



Plate 1

Close-up view of underlay shaft mullock dump, Scamander River mine.



Plate 2

Filled in collar of underlay shaft, Scamander River mine.



Plate 4

General view of exploration open cut, Scamander River mine.



Plate 3

Close-up view of portal of main adit, Scamander River mine.



Plate 5

Inside portal of main adit, Scamander River mine.



Plate 6

Mullock dump, looking south towards main adit, Scamander River mine.



Plate 7

Elevated view of mullock dumps (lower workings) from open cut, Scamander River mine.



Plate 8

General view of main shaft site, Scamander River mine.



Plate 9

Southern section of main shaft mullock dump, Scamander River mine.



Plate 10

Elevated view of river from main shaft site, Scamander River mine.