

REPORT ON THE DORSET RIVER FLATS
MINERAL BANKS ESTATE, RINGAROOMA.

The lower portion of these flats are situated about 3 miles north of the township of Ringarooma by road, by the same route six miles from the North East Railway line at Ledgerwood station.

The Dorset is a tributary of the Ringarooma River junctioning at a short distance to the south west of the township of that name. It takes a south westerly course along the southerly base of a range of hills extending in that direction from Mt. Victoria. The valley of the Dorset has been subject to considerable filling of rubble material consisting of rounded wash intermixed with the fine gravel and clay shed from the hillsides to the north.

The flat itself presents a very level surface extending over a length of a few miles. It varies in width from a few chains to a quarter of a mile or more.

On the hill slopes lying to the north of the valley shallow deposits of alluvial ground which occur there have at various periods been sluiced for tin.

The slope of the hill from the valley is slight being just about sufficient to give the requisite fall needed for a tailings discharge channel. As the higher ground is approached the slopes become relatively steeper.

At the points worked which extend along the hillside at intervals over a mile or more the drift material ranges from three to six feet in depth consisting of fairly heavy ground resting on soft granite bottom.

The larger pieces of wash which range up to a foot or more in diameter as a rule are well waterworn. The drift is composed of a mixture of various sized boulders of granitoid, slate and sandstone rocks intermixed with fine gravel and clay.

As a rule the alluvium is covered with a layer of sandy loam overburden to a depth of 2 to 3 feet.

In the several places where the ground has been worked, sluicing operations have been confined to a comparatively narrow channel of about a chain in width. These channels in one or two instances have been extended towards the higher ground a considerable distance without reaching the limits of the deposits.

From the manner in which these have been worked it must be concluded that the lateral extensions beyond the point worked to was not payable under the conditions of operation.

As a rough estimate fully half the drift material is made up of stone varying from two inches to a foot in diameter. The remaining portion being a mixture of fine gravel, sand and clay.

Although well consolidated the drift is entirely free of any cementing tendency.

The contained tin oxide which is fairly evenly distributed through the wash varies considerably in the size of the particles.

No fine tin was observed in the samples tested, it ranged in size from that of coarse grained sugar to pieces as large as walnuts. Mr. Raymond who is working a paddock of ground at the present time informed me that it was not an uncommon occurrence to find pieces of clean oxide several pounds in weight.

The colour of the tin also varies considerably, from crystal white, in varying shades of brown to black. The larger lumps being invariably black and well water worn.

The only work in progress at the present time is that being carried out by Mr. E. Raymond who is working a face of drift single handed. The place he is operating on is similar to the average run of wash exposed. He is well acquainted with the locality and the writer is much indebted to him for information supplied and assistance given in pointing out the various places in which work has been carried out in former years and the examination of the area generally.

The methods adopted in working the ground are not conducive to the best results being obtained, the drift being broken down by hand to the sluice channel, the oversize being removed and stacked by hand, the forkings from the boxes being thrown out in the usual manner.

The estimated quantity of tin in the drift would not exceed one pound per cubic yard.

The deposit is too shallow to work on a comprehensive scale by hydraulic sluicing. Under certain conditions it is suitable for working by individuals miners or small parties of men who, with improved working conditions, should make good wages.

Dorset River Flats

The quality and general condition of the material deposited in these flats will be governed by that shed from the higher ground lying to the north of the River and that carried along its course by flood waters from the direction of its source. The present bed of the River is somewhat sinuous but on the average is several chains distant from the foot of the hill from which any tin contained in its drifts has been derived. Indications point to the fact that it followed a course much closer to the hillside than it at present does.

There is nothing to show exactly the nature of the material composing the River flat proper which is meadow land practically free of bush.

On the higher ground adjacent to the flats quite a number of pits have been sunk to test the quality of the drift. These shafts some of which are still open are not accessible and there is nothing to indicate whether or not the drift has been bottomed. It is many years since this work has been done, apparently the prospects obtained were not encouraging.

There is no doubt that the River drift will contain tin also that the former will consist of similar heavy material to that occurring on the higher ground lying to the north, already referred to.

The present bed of the stream consists of fairly coarse shingle. This River deposit bears no resemblance to the ordinary tin bearing drifts of the East coast which represent the waste material of weathered granite, usually in a more or less fine granular state, with concentrations of tin oxide in the form of bedded layers through the drift.

The heavy shingle of the Dorset flats would be very disadvantageous to work compared to fine drift material, if it carried tin values in proportion to compensate for it that would to a great extent offset the additional cost of treatment. There is however nothing to indicate that the drift will be richer than the average East Coast deposit. The probabilities are that it will be relatively poorer owing to the inclusion of such a high proportion of heavy stone.

The deposit which is extensive, however, warrants the sinking of a few scout holes which would give sufficient information as to whether the prospects warranted further investigation.

The only method to test the drift is by shaft sinking, boring owing to the heavy nature of the wash would be quite unsuitable.

If shaft sinking provision should be made to cope with water as it is highly improbable that the drift will be free of seepage from the River.

Should prospects warrant this bed of drift the general conditions, including an adequate water supply and fuel are very good.

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