

GOLD MINING IN TASMANIA

The gold mining industry of this State for many years past has shown very little activity due probably to attention being diverted to the wider scope and more attractive possibilities of base metal deposits.

The fall however in the market value of the latter to unprecedented levels has caused a serious decline of output as well as a disinclination on the part of investors to exploit and develop deposits other than gold.

At present there is no regular production of gold in the State excepting that recovered in the copper smelting operations of the Mt. Lyell Company where gold occurs as an accessory constituent of the ore.

This State possesses extensive areas of possible gold bearing country which in past years were a constant source of wealth, as well as giving employment to large numbers of men who were the sole support of prosperous communities, such as Mathinna, Alberton (Mt. Victoria), Lefroy, Beaconsfield, Mangana and to a lesser extent Warrentinna, Lyndhurst, Waterhouse, Golconda and Denison.

These fields today so far as productive mining work is concerned present a deserted appearance.

Taking into consideration the very large areas of country similar to and offering the same inducements for investigation as prescribed in days prior to them yielding what wealth they have contributed, it cannot be said that the possibilities of locating similar rich deposits are too remote to deserve further attention.

The exploited portions of the various fields represent but an infinitesimal part thereof.

Mathinna.

This field embraces a very favourable zone of gold bearing country containing as already proved, in the case of the Golden Gate Mine, quartz reefs which do not outcrop, that is concealed or hidden reefs.

The Golden Gate Mine referred to, up to the year 1913 yielded 246,000 ounces of gold from 290,000 tons of stone of a value of £950,000 of which £365,000 was paid in dividends.

Four main reefs were located in this mine none of which outcropped at the surface.

The field for this feature alone offers every inducement for the search of similar concealed reef occurrences.

In pursuance of the policy of the Department a detailed Geological survey of all the gold fields of the State is now being conducted to determine the geological structure and relation of the quartz veins to the structural features by that means obtaining data to serve as a guide to indicate the most favourable points for the occurrence of gold bearing reefs.

In the absence of surface indications of reefs it is not expected that extensive prospecting operations would be undertaken by private enterprise and as a matter of fact ordinary prospecting operations are totally unsuitable, hence the obvious necessity for some less costly and more

4  
expeditious method of testing selected area.

This alone can be accomplished by use of the Diamond Drill in localities selected as a result of the geological surveys.

Mt. Victoria (Alberton)

This field represents the northerly extension of the Mathinna series of rocks. The hilly nature of the country facilitated the development of reefs by adits. The exploitation of the field was therefore limited to comparatively shallow workings. No work to speak of in testing the numerous reefs occurring here has been undertaken below adit levels. The northern part of the field at the termination of hilly country at New River valley a series of promising reef outcrops occur. In this vicinity extensive deposits of gold bearing alluvial ground were worked many years ago yielding very considerable quantities of gold. The reefs nearby have not been tested at depths more than 40 feet below the surface. Satisfactory yields of gold have been obtained from trial crushings of the stone.

Diamond drilling could with advantage be undertaken here to test these reefs at moderate depths. The facilities for drilling are most favourable. The southern part of this field could with advantage be tested by drilling at points determined as a result of the geological survey.

The investigation of the other fields referred to such as Beaconsfield and Lefroy would follow in due course. The scope of the work depending upon the results of the detailed geological examination now proceeding.

The Beaconsfield district alone yielded 854,600 ozs. of gold which at present day values represents approximately £5,750,000.

The Lefroy field contributed a similar output of gold.

Nearly the whole expenditure in diamond drilling is absorbed in wages. A full drilling crew for continuous work requires seven men and two wood cutters.

The Department is in possession of a modern diamond drilling plant of the most efficient type, designed to drill to a depth of 2000 feet. This machine with diamonds exceeded a cost to the State of £2000.

It has been out of commission for some months past for the reason that no funds are available to keep it in operation. In view of the high premium now being paid for gold it is to be deplored that some organised effort is not being made that would tend to lead to the rehabilitation of gold mining in the State on a scale commensurate with the importance of the industry.

Numerous enquiries are being received for information respecting gold mining properties by accredited representatives of capital. In this connection no further obligation in the matter of the development of any deposit located would be imposed on the Department other than that of drilling.

The Department alone is in the position, providing funds are available, to initiate a drilling campaign on the lines advocated herein. It is beyond the scope of private enterprise to undertake the work owing to difficulties likely to be met with regarding tenure of the various areas involved in a general scheme of investigation.

Summarising the fore-going brief statement concerning the gold mining industry in Tasmania, it is submitted, that recognising its undoubted importance to the welfare of the community some special effort should be made to resuscitate it.

1. The possibilities likely to accrue as a result of an organised effort to explore the gold fields of the State by drilling on the lines as suggested herein might result in the re-establishment of the industry which more than any other would tend to relieve unemployment, as well as have a far-reaching beneficial effect on the industrial position of the State generally.
2. The Department has the necessary drilling plant, and a trained crew is available to carry out the work.
3. The Mines Department is unable to proceed with any policy so far as exploratory drilling work is concerned unless adequate funds are available to follow up the investigational work of the Geological Survey of the gold fields of the State now in progress.

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