

KING RIVER MINE

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

It was during February 1862, while government geologist Charles Gould and his prospecting party were exploring the area between the Eldon Range and Macquarie Harbour, that the first traces of gold were recorded from Western Tasmania. His 1863 report was the catalyst for future exploration. He recommended the King River and its tributaries as a possible source of gold deposits.

The first genuine attempt to find gold in this area was December 1877 by a party of three Irish prospectors led by Cornelius Lynch. The other members of the group were Tom Currie, a close friend and S J Lenahan. However, only a few traces of gold were found in the King and Queen Rivers and the expedition was abandoned.

1881 saw a second attempt by Lynch and Currie, this time prospecting for a Hobart syndicate and this time near the confluence of the Queen and King Rivers, where a reward claim was pegged in a creek, which was later known as Lynch Creek.

The Hobart syndicate which financed Lynch's discovery, began working the claim in 1882 under the banner of the King River Prospecting and Gold Mining Association.

Although known as the King River Mine, it is located on Lynch Creek, a tributary of the Queen River and six kilometres north of the King River.

In 1887, almost £20,000 was spent installing machinery which included a 10 head stamper battery and waterwheel. The battery was reported to be the first on the West Coast to crush gold-bearing quartz.

However, an April 1890 report by government geologist Alexander Montgomery had mentioned the cessation of operations, while a subsequent report of July 1894 referred to the mine being worked by tributors.

A further report was released six years later when according to government geologist William Twelvetrees in 1900, several tunnels had been driven over a period of time with only one (the main tunnel) in operation. This tunnel, which was estimated to be between 400 and 500 feet long, was being worked on tribute by a party of four.

During its operating life, the mine was worked intermittently over twenty years by different companies while experiencing very few productive periods. There appears to be little serious mining after 1890 with no recorded activity beyond 1900, even though a mining lease over the area had been continuously maintained until 1960.

However, the mine's historical significance far outweighs its importance as a gold producer as it is the site of the first established mine in the Mt Lyell district. Its discovery had enticed the McDonough brothers and Karlson to the area, who later discovered gold at the Iron Blow which ultimately led to the establishment of the famous Mt Lyell Mine.



Greg Dickens
TENEMENT MANAGEMENT OFFICER