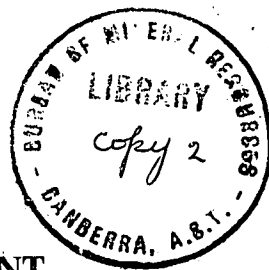


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DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.  
BUREAU OF MINERAL RESOURCES  
GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS.

RECORDS.

1942/5

THE MOUNT BISCHOFF TIN MINE

by

M.A. Mawby & P.B. Nye

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1942/5

THE MOUNT BISCHOFF TIN MINE,  
WARATAH, TASMANIA.

The Mount Bischoff Mine is situated at Waratah in the north-western part of Tasmania. Waratah is connected with the part of Burnie on the north coast by both rail and road.

The mine is being operated by the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, Registered.

The position in regard to the production of tin from the above company was indicated in a letter dated 28/2/42 from Mr. T.G. Traynor, Manager of the Company to Mr. J. Malcolm Newman, Controller of Minerals production thus --

"The history of the operations for the past three years has been --

<u>Year</u> <u>Ending.</u>	<u>Output:</u>	<u>Nett Profit</u> <u>on Mining.</u>
31st Dec., 1939	200 tons	988
31st Dec., 1940	193 "	403
31st Dec., 1941	136 "	812 (loss)

The drop in output is due to a fall in grade of ore reserves, and reduction in manpower available to work the better deposits.

The mine is worked on the tribute system and has at present 13 parties working, the Company providing, plant, power, water, supervision, etc. The total number working - 101 being a drop of 15 from 1940 figures.

To enable the tributers to average reasonable wages, say on a basis of 100/- per week, the Company to make £10 per ton oxide or otherwise to continue producing, the price of Tin in Australia would require to be £380A less £31 returning charges.

With additional manpower of 40, half of them skilled, we could increase the annual output by 50 to 60 tons oxide at this price.

There are still large quantities of low grade ore in the mine, but a substantial increase in the present price of metal must be obtained before they could be worked.

Housing. There is very little accommodation for married men and it would be necessary to build huts. Board is available, but lodging is very scarce."

In the above statement the output refers to tin concentrates with a metallic tin content of 68 to 70 per cent.

The directors and manager of the Company were interviewed in Launceston on 10th April, 1942. This Company has produced to the end of 1941, 82,489 tons of tin oxide containing 57,713.3 tons of metallic tin. The field is at present operated by a system of tributing, the Company providing all mining and treatment plant, power and water supply. The Company operates a ten-head battery complete with concentrating equipment for the treatment of ore from small tribute parties, and provides three five-head batteries and concentrating equipment which are rented to the larger tribute parties at a cost of £2.10. 0 per week plus 5/- per week for additional tables.

The Company treats the concentrates produced by a roasting and retabing process. Marketing arrangements are in the hands of the Company.

During the past year the Company's operations have resulted in a loss and the tributors have not averaged the basic wage. The Tasmanian Government are introducing regulations to ensure that each tributor receives at least the ruling basic wage. The Company has replied that due to the increased expenditure involved they would be forced to cease operations or alternatively to seek a Government grant to cover the increased costs.

The mine has been operating since 1870 and numerous deposits have been exhausted but a few remaining deposits are still being worked; the principal being the Valley Lode. The directors state that ore reserves principally in the Valley lode are sufficient for three years at normal working rate with a further three years of probable reserves. The alluvial deposits along the Waratah River average 3-lb. tin oxide per cubic yard and are still being worked, although they do not lend themselves to cheap sluicing methods on account of a high boulder content.

The directors appear to be sincere in their efforts to maintain, and even increase, production in a patriotic effort, and the working arrangements appear to be generally satisfactory. It is obvious that some assistance must be given to ensure maintenance of production without financial loss to the Company.

To maintain present production with the payment of the basic wage minimum to all tributors, the Company suggests that the price of tin be increased to £380A. less £31 returning charges. On a production equivalent to last year's figure of 92.75 tons metallic tin, this suggested increase would be equal to £5,565. Of this, the Company's share would be approximately £1,400 the balance being distributed to the tributors and would approximately provide for the increase in tributors' earnings to the basic wage minimum. Under an arrangement whereby the tributor receives the basic wage, a satisfactory system of time-keeping and supervision of the tributing operations should be enforced, and no doubt both the tributors and the Company would co-operate in this matter. As the Company's operating loss for last year was £812 the above proposal would only result in a conversion of this loss to a profit of about £600 per annum.

Further to this proposal for continuance of present production rate, the Company states that, granted the above increased price of tin and given another 40 men, the output of tin oxide could be further increased by 50 to 60 tons which would require an additional £2,310. Additional housing and accommodation would have to be provided and this is estimated to cost £1,500, making a total assistance of £3,810.

Summarising the Company's proposals:

- (1) The present production rate of 92.75 tons of metallic tin would require £5,565 per annum.
- (2) The increased production rate of 38.50 tons of metallic tin would require £3,810 for the first year (including increased price for tin and cost of housing).
- (3) The maximum production rate of 131.25 tons of metallic tin would require £9,375 for the first year and £7,875 for each successive year.

#### Recommendation.

The Company's proposal includes the payment of the basic wage to all tributors and any recommendation is contingent on the Company guaranteeing to institute an efficient system of time-keeping, and supervision of the tribute operations.

The continuation of the present production and possible increased production can be achieved by - .

- (1) Accepting the Company's proposal for an increase in the price of tin to £380A less £31 returning charges. Such increase to be referable to the output of the Mount Bischoff field

or

- (2) A financial grant to the Company determined on the same basis viz. £60A per ton metallic tin produced.

For the increased production 40 men would be required. These men are not available in the West Coast Mining district and could only be supplied by arrangement with the manpower authorities.

We are not conversant with the present position as regards production and possibilities of increased production of the many similar tin producing fields of Australia, and in the case of Mount Bischoff we have presented the facts and the cost of maintaining and increasing production. Whether the cost is justified and if so the means of granting the relief to the Company must be left to the decision of the Controller of Minerals Production.

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