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BAUXITE IN AUSTRALIA

by

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BAUXITE IN AUSTRALIA

Potentially commercial deposits of bauxite, the ore from which aluminium is produced, are known in all States except South Australia. No worthwhile occurrences of bauxite have been reported in the Territories of New Guinea and Papua or the Northern Territory. The most important Australian deposits occur in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales.

Recently the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments agreed to establish a plant for the production of ingot aluminium as a joint enterprise of the two Governments; legislation implementing this agreement has been passed and the Australian Aluminium Production Commission has been formed.

The Commission is now investigating bauxite deposits in Tasmania in furtherance of the exploratory work started by the State Government, the testing operations being supervised by the Commonwealth Mineral Resources Survey.

Prior to 1941, bauxite was not known in Tasmania but since then many discoveries have been reported and groups of deposits are known at eight separate localities in the eastern half of the State and at one place in the northwest. Of the eight localities mentioned, only one (viz. Ouse) has been subjected to systematic testing, and the northwestern area has been explored by scout boring which has indicated the presence of commercial bauxite near Myalla. It is probable that the most important of the deposits are those at Ouse and at Rosevale, near Launceston, but in the absence of exploratory work it is not possible to assess the potentialities of any deposits other than those at Ouse where the testing programme indicates the existence of about three-quarters of a million tons of bauxite. Other Tasmanian deposits include those at Rosevale (which will be tested in the near future), Campbell Town, Swansea, Conara and St. Leonards. It will not be possible to give the quantities in each locality until the testing is completed.

Extensive testing by drilling and shaft sinking has been conducted on the principal deposits in Victoria which lie near Mirboo North and Boolarra in South Gippsland. This work was conducted in 1942-43 before the establishment of the Australian Aluminium Production Commission. Some of the testing was done by private companies and some by the Commonwealth and State Governments and resulted in proving or indicating over 700,000 tons of bauxite of higher grade than that at Ouse, Tasmania. In addition to those bauxite deposits which were tested, others are known in South Gippsland.

The principal bauxite deposits of New South Wales are in the New England district and near Bundanoon and Wingello, and have been investigated by the New South Wales Government. Eleven deposits in the New England district which offer some advantage in ease of access or working conditions have been surveyed and it is considered that reserves amounting to 14 million tons have been proved. The grade is comparable to that of the Ouse bauxite. Reserves at Bundanoon-Wingello amount to over 4 million tons of relatively low grade bauxite. Other and smaller deposits of lower grade bauxite are known in the Bungonia-Windellama area and near Trundle.

In Queensland, bauxite occurs on the Tamborine Plateau and has been reported from the Cairns hinterland. Some testing of the Tamborine deposits has been made by the Queensland Government and indicates only a small tonnage.

Lateritic bauxite containing up to 50 per cent alumina occurs in the Darling Ranges, Western Australia. There has been no systematic testing and consequently details of reserves are not known.

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