

Tasmanian Geological Survey Record 2013/10

A Tasmanian mining history timeline

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Introduction

This report presents a brief timeline of Tasmanian mining history from the start of European settlement through to 2010. It records the major events which occurred during this time which have influenced the history of the Tasmanian mining and mineral processing industry.

More detail of the history of coal mining in Tasmania is given in Geological Survey Bulletin 64 (Bacon, C. A. 1991. The coal resources of Tasmania. *Bulletin Geological Survey Tasmania 64*).

[25 September 2013]

YEAR	MINERAL DISCOVERIES	MINES/WORKS OPENED	MINES/WORKS CLOSED	EVENTS/PEOPLE
1642				Dutch navigator Abel Janszoon Tasman reaches the west coast of Tasmania where his compass indicates an iron (magnetite) mass ashore.
1793	Coal outcrop in cliffs at South Cape Bay by French explorers Bruni D'Entrecasteaux and Labillardière.			
1803	James Meehan discovered coal at Richmond.			Settlement at Risdon Cove established by Lt John Bowen.
1805	Coal collected from the Coal River by the household of Robert Knopwood. Iron ore collected by Colonel Patterson from the Ironstone Hills near Beaconsfield (Mt Vulcan and Scotts Hill)			
1816	Captain James Kelly discovered brown coal at Macquarie Harbour.			
1822		Coal mine at Sarah Island, Macquarie Harbour, worked by convicts.		
1833	Coal at Saltwater River			
1834		Saltwater River coal mine worked by convicts from Port Arthur.		
1840		Venture by Charles Swanston (one of two Attorneys-General) into coal mining near Southport. Outcrop of coal opened by James Bonney at Richmond.		
1841		James Clarke discovers coal near Jerusalem (Colebrook) and was employed by the government to sink a shaft.		Steam driven pump engine installed at the Saltwater River coal mines.
1842	Coal at Southport.		Swanston's venture collapsed, owing the government £4,316.	
1843	Coal, south of the Douglas River by the Garlands. Coal at Schouten Island.	Jesse and Isaac Garland granted a lease to mine coal on Schouten Island.		
1844		Jerusalem coal mine expanded, but poor quality of coal caused closure the same year.		
1847	Gold-bearing quartz at Blyth Creek near Beaconsfield by John Gardner.			

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1848		Company headed by Swanston starts mining coal on Schouten Island. Lease granted for 21 years.		
1849	Coal at Denison Rivulet.	Dr Joseph Milligan establishes the Douglas River Coal Company. Tramway built to Bicheno.		
1850	Coal at Bott Gorge, Don River and New Town.	Coal discovered in the Bott Gorge, leading to development of a number of small mines in the Mersey–Don coalfield. Coal mines opened in New Town area; all short lived.		
1851				Milligan inspects oil shale in Mersey area (called the shale 'dysodile').
1852	Alluvial gold at Mangana by James Grant; started a minor rush to the area. Coal at Coal Hill.			
1855	Coal at Triabunna.	Selwyn inspects oil shale, now called 'yellow coal'. Alfred, Denison, Don and Nook coal mines.		
1858	Gold in the upper reaches of the Forth River by James 'Philosopher' Smith.		Douglas River Coal Company collapsed.	
1859		First lode gold mine (Sovereign) established at Mangana.		
1860				Exploratory work on oil shale near Latrobe.
1861		Coal mine, Seymour. Efforts made to retort a kerosene-like substance from waste coal. Sherwood and Mersey coal mines.		Company formed in Hobart to manufacture 'parafine oil' from the oil shale; plans did not eventuate.
1863		Seymour coal mine.		
1864	J Lamont discovers a coal seam in the headwaters of Storys Creek.	Gordon (Rookwood) coal mine at Cygnet, Merrywood coal mine at Avoca.		
1865	Coal at Tugrah (Mersey district).			
1866	Iron deposits near Beaconsfield by Charles Gould.			
1867		Russel coal mine (Mersey district).		
1868	Gold near Nine Mile Springs (Lefroy) by Samuel Richards.			
1869	Gold at Back Creek and Waterhouse.			

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1870	Reef gold at the Blue Bell near Rushy Lagoon.			
1871	The massive tin deposit at Mt Bischoff by James Smith			
1872	Alluvial gold discovered at the Denison and Golconda fields	Ilfracombe iron mine and smelter opened at Burkes Hill, Tasmanian Charcoal Iron Company opens mine at Mt Vulcan near Beaconsfield. Efforts made to smelt iron. New Town coal mine.		
1873				Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company established.
1874	Alluvial tin in the Boobyalla River near Little Mt Horror by George Bell.			
1875				Mount Bishcoff Company's tin smelter opened in Launceston.
1876	Charles Sprent found tin and gold near Mt Heemskirk and osmiridium in the Wilson River.	Briseis tin mine at Derby. Coal mining started at Kaoota/Sandfly.		Albert and Herman Koglin first tin miners at Coles Bay. Chinese tin miners arrive in northeast Tasmania.
1877	Heemskirk tin field found by Charles Donnelly, T. B. Moore and the Meredith brothers. T. B. Moore discovered copper pyrites at Mt Read. Charles Sprent discovered iron ore at Savage River. William and David Dally discovered the Tasmania Reef at Beaconsfield.	Alluvial gold diggings at Corinna.	Saltwater River coal mine.	
1878	Lisle goldfield by the Bessell brothers.	Tasmania gold mine, Beaconsfield.	Seymour coal mine.	
1879		W. Zschachner mines coal at Adventure Bay, Bruny Island. Rockwood coal mine at Gordon by a Mr Abbot. Jerusalem coal mine at Colebrook.		
1880		Gold discovered at Gladstone, more than a dozen mines opened. Mt Claude silver-lead mine.		
1881	Gold at Lynchford (later the King River mine) by Cornelius Lynch.	Coal mining at Cygnet. Hard-rock tin mines operating on the Blue Tier.		Trial Harbour established as the port for the West Coast. Mines Act passed by Parliament.

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1882	Silver-lead at Zeehan by Frank Long. Gold at Mt Victoria by Robert Wilson. Tin discovered at Cape Barren Island and Flinders Island.	Anchor tin mine, Blue Tier. R. Stevenson dug an adit into the coal seam in the headwaters of Storys Creek and transported the coal by packhorse to Avoca. Mt Cameron water race system built for the Mt Cameron Hydraulic Mining Company Company. The race was taken over by the government and used to supply water to small mines in the Gladstone area.		Department of Mines established, with the State divided into five districts. Within each of these, mining activities were administered by a Commissioner for Mines and Goldfields.
1883	First gold reef on west coast found at Specimen Creek. Gold discovered at Warrentinna. The 'Iron Blow' gold deposit at Gormanston by McDonough brothers and Johannes Karlson.	Coal mine at York Plains.		
1885	The Heazlewood silver-lead ore body by William Bell and James Smith.			
1886	Mt Lyell copper deposits.	Cornwall coal mine near St Marys, the first major mine in the Fingal Valley.		Fingal Valley railway to St Marys opened.
1887	Silver Queen lode at Zeehan by George Bell.	New Golden Gate mine at Mathinna re-opened. Dalmaine coal mine.		Tasmanian Government establishes the Mt Cameron Water Race Board.
1888		Mt Nicholas coal mine.		
1889		John Dally granted a Tin Reward at Balfour, the start of extensive tin mining for the following 10 years.		
1890	Tin at North Dundas (Renison Bell) by George Bell. Tin discovered at Roys Hill and Brookstead in the St Pauls Valley.	Great Republic tin mine at Gipps Creek.		Mt Cameron Water Race (53 km) completed and officially opened.
1891	Magnet silver lode by William Bell. Lead-zinc sulphides at Mt Read. Tin deposits discovered at Cox Bight by Glover and Foley. Wolfram deposits north of Pieman Heads.	Tin mines at Storys Creek and Rex Hill. Great Caledonian, the first gold mine at the Five Mile Rise.		
1892	Alluvial Bell Mount goldfield by Malcolm Campbell.	Coal mines at Ida Bay, Bayntons (Colebrook).		Zeehan School of Mines and Metallurgy opened. Zeehan to Strahan, Zeehan to Dundas railway lines completed.
1893	Cecil Thomas (Tom) McDonald discovered the complex Rosebery zinc-lead ore body. Tin-tungsten lode at Moina by Thomas Shepherd and Thomas Murphy.	Rosebery		The Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Company Ltd (MLM&RC) established.

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1894	Hercules zinc-lead-silver ore body at Mt Read by Joseph Will.	Magnet Silver Mining Company was established to work the Magnet silver-lead lode.		Construction of the Mt Lyell railway commenced.
1896	Pats River tinfield, the largest deposit on Flinders Island, discovered by Charles Officer. Mt Farrell silver-lead deposits. Chester iron sulphide ore body by Kershaw and Sanderson.	Mt Lyell copper smelter commenced operation.		
1897	Silver-lead-zinc deposits discovered near Mt Farrell (Tullah).	Jubilee coal mine (St Marys).		James Crotty establishes the North Lyell Copper Company.
1898	Mt Cleveland tin deposit discovered by prospectors panning for gold.			North East Dundas Tramway (Zeehan to Williamsford) completed.
1899		Alluvial mining of osmiridium began at Savage River and Nineteen Mile Creek. Tasmanian Smelting Company's works opened at Zeehan.		Mt Lyell Railway (Queenstown to Regatta Point) completed. Hercules mine haulage constructed.
1900		Rosebery mine reached full production, the ore being transported by the Emu Bay Railway to the Zeehan smelters for processing. Magnet silver-lead mine reached full production. Coal discovered at Catamaran. The field was worked by a number of companies until 1939.		Rail link between Guildford and Zeehan completed, Zeehan became the largest rail centre in Tasmania. North Lyell Company's railway to Kelly Basin opened.
1901	Murray brothers discovered copper at Balfour (Murrays Reward mine). Coal at Preolenna. Gold at Jane River.	Alluvial mining of osmiridium at Bald Hill. Mining of oil shale at Latrobe. Cardiff coal mine.		Briseis water race (50 km) completed. School of Mines opened in Zeehan and Beaconsfield.
1902		Spreyton No. 1 coal mine.		North Lyell Company's smelter opened at Crotty. Robert Sticht using pyritic smelting of copper ore at Mt Lyell. Magnet tramway (from Waratah) completed.
1903		Mount Farrell silver-lead-zinc mine reached full production. Spreyton No. 2, Preolenna, Marialva, Illamatha and Glen Leith coal mines.		Mt Lyell and North Lyell companies amalgamated.
1904	Scheelite discovered on King Island by Thomas Farrell. Coal found on slopes of Mt Christie.	Spreyton No. 3 coal mine.		

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1905		Buena Vista, Brightburn, York Plains and Douglas River coal mines.		
1906		Shepherd and Murphy mine, Moina (tin/tungsten).		An elaborate tramway constructed from Kaoota to Margate, crossing ten wooden bridges.
1907		Michael 'Paddy' O'Dea opened the Boulder tin mine at Renison Bell. Mt Claude silver-lead mine reopened after a 23 year closure.		Hydro-electric power station erected at Waratah for the Mt Bischoff Company.
1908	Coal discoveries at Strathblane.	Chester mine (open cut). Cleveland tin mine.		Frome Dam and Moorina power station completed for the Pioneer Tin Mining Company.
1909		Spreyton No. 4.	First of the Zeehan mines close. Zeehan smelters closed.	Farrell tramway completed, and became Tullah's only outside link for 50 years.
1910				Tasmanian Shale & Oil Co. NL erects four retorts on Latrobe–Railton oil shale field.
1911		Royal George Tin Mining Company established, the mine began large scale production.		Balfour to Temma tramway completed.
1912				North Lyell mine disaster which claimed the lives of 42 men. The collapse of the Balfour copper boom.
1913			Hercules and Rosebery mines. Chester mine.	Zeehan smelters closed.
1914		Bald Hill osmiridium deposits discovered, mining commenced at Caudrey's mine.	Cleveland tin mine. Tasmania gold mine at Beaconsfield closed after producing almost 850,000 ounces. Blue Tier hard-rock tin mines.	Four vertical and two horizontal retorts in operation in Latrobe area. Lake Margaret Power Scheme opened. Carbide production began at Electrona. Dalmaine Colliery Company builds an aerial ropeway from Dalmaine to the coast, and opens a small mine. Closes 1918.
1915				Proposal for Government assistance to the oil shale industry; an enquiry held; debated in Parliament; defeated in the Legislative Council.
1916	Cassiterite discovered in Aberfoyle Rivulet at Rossarden.	Storys Creek mine reopened.		Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Company acquired the Hercules and Rosebery mines.
1917		King Island scheelite mine at Grassy.		
1918		Preolenna coal mine (underground). Electrolytic Zinc Company's works at Risdon commissioned.		

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1920		Fingal Coal Prospecting Syndicate's Fingal coal mine at Fingal. Jubilee Colliery, Mt Nicholas re-opened.	King Island Scheelite mine due to limited post-war demand for tungsten.	Hercules and Rosebery mines acquired by the Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australasia Limited. EZ Co. purchased and refurbished the Zeehan smelters in order to process the complex Rosebery and Mt Read ores. Endurance Tin Mining Company established to upgrade the Endurance mine. Mt Lyell flotation plant commissioned.
1923		Second attempt at coal mining at Seymour. This lasted until 1931. Excelsior (Stanhope) Colliery opens on slopes of Mt Christie.	Mt Claude silver-lead mine closed after 3000 ounces of silver produced over the previous 15 years.	
1924	Osmiridium discovered at Adams River.		Preolenna coal mine. Murrays Reward, the last copper mine at Balfour, is abandoned. Shepherd and Murphy mine.	National Portland Cement Company (established 1920) began cement production on Maria Island.
1925		Osmiridium 'rush' at Adamsfield. Meunna coal mine.	North Lyell Railway closure.	
1926		Aberfoyle Tin NL established to develop the Rossarden mine, and acquired Storeys Creek mine. Federation Tin Mines Ltd reopened the old Cumberland workings at Trial Harbour. Coal mines at Strathblane and Catamaran. Goliath Portland Cement Co. commences at Railton.		First cement production at Railton.
1928			Royal George tin mine closed after producing 900 tonnes of concentrates.	
1929			Briseis tin mine closed and Cascade dam at Derby destroyed by April floods.	Mining Act 1929 comes into use. Completion of the new concentrating mill at the Rosebery mine. Mt Bischoff Tin Mining Company's smelter at Launceston is closed due to a lack of customers. April floods closed northeast mines.
1930			National Portland Cement Ltd closed its Maria Island works.	
1931		Aberfoyle tin mine at Rossarden began tin production.	Meunna coal mine.	Shale Oil Committee established.
1932			North Farrell mine. New Golden Gate mine.	North East Dundas Tramway closed.

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1933			Strathblane coal mine.	
1934	Tin at Melaleuca.	New North Farrell mine commenced production at Tullah.	Pioneer tin mine.	Renison Associated Tin Mines NL established to take over mine at Renison Bell.
1935	Robert Warne 'rediscovered' the Jane River goldfield and a reward lease granted.			The Crozier retort ceased operation on the Latrobe oil shale field. This was the last of the retorts to close.
1936		Melaleuca tin mine.		
1937		King Island Scheelite mine reopened. Briseis tin mine reopened.		
1939		Dalmayne Colliery reopened. Continued until 1953.	Ringarooma United at Alberton, the last of the northeast gold mines.	
1940			Magnet mine closed and Magnet township auctioned and dismantled.	
1941		Star Hill Syndicate reopened the old Garfield tin mine at Gladstone.		
1944		Dorset tin dredge commenced operations on the Dorset Flats at South Mt Cameron.		
1945		Merrywood coal mine at Royal George (open cut). Duncan coal mine at Fingal.		
1947		King Island Scheelite (1947) Limited, a new company, upgraded the Grassy mine.	Mt Bischoff Tin Mining Company closed its Waratah mine after 74 years of operation. Coal mining ceases at York Plains.	
1948				Titanium dioxide produced from imported ilmenite at Heybridge. Zeehan smelters closure.
1950			Anchor tin mine.	
1953		Moina Tungsten & Tin Mining Company NL reopened the former Shepherd and Murphy mine.	Dalmayne Colliery.	
1954				
1955		Duncan Colliery near Fingal partly mechanised.		Aluminium production commenced at Bell Bay.
1956			Briseis tin mine.	
1957		New Stanhope mine opens and continues until 1973.	Moina tungsten-tin mine. Stanhope Colliery.	
1958		Musselroe tin mine reopened near Pioneer.	Mt Nicholas coal mine.	

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1959		Third attempt at coal mining at Seymour; the mine was closed in 1964.		
1960		Coal washing plant opened at Duncan Siding at Fingal.	Oceana silver-lead mine closure, the last operating mine on the Zeehan field. Jubilee Colliery, Mt Nicholas.	
1962			Illamatha-2, the last coal mine in Mersey field closed; owned by Bound brothers.	
1964		Pioneer tin mine reopened by Vern Wood.	Cornwall coal mine.	
1965			Fingal coal mine.	TEMCO silica plant opened at Bell Bay.
1967		Cleveland tin mine.		
1968		Savage River iron-ore mine commenced operations. Renison mine redeveloped to increase production.		
1969		Fingal Colliery reopened; workings incorporated with the Duncan Colliery.		
1971		Rosebery mine installed a new shaft in order to double output.	Dorset tin dredge. The last coal mine in the Kaoota/Sandfly field closes.	
1973		King Island Scheelite – underground development of the Dolphin mine (beneath Bass Strait) commenced.		
1974	Que River zinc-lead ore body discovered.			
1975		Tonganah Clay commenced production.		
1977		Tasminex NL commenced mining magnetite and scheelite at Kara.		
1980		Cornwall Coal Company opened the Blackwood coal mine near St Marys.		
1981		Que River mine commenced production.	Storeys Creek mine closure.	Aberfoyle sold its Rossarden mine to Rossarden Mines Ltd.
1982			Pioneer tin mine. Aberfoyle tin mine at Rossarden.	
1983	Hellyer zinc-silver-lead-gold ore body.		Star Hill tin mine.	
1984	Henty gold prospect.	Tasmania Mines NL commenced mining of scheelite and magnetite at Kara.	Musselroe tin mine.	
1985				Collapse of the International Tin Council.

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1986			Cleveland tin mine, with concentrating mill converted to treat Hellyer ore.	
1987		Pioneer Silicon Industries ferro-silicon furnace at Electrona.		
1988		Hellyer mine commenced production. Silica flour plant by MK Silica at Heybridge.		
1989		Merrywood coal mine reopened.		Department of Mines becomes Division of Mines in the Department of Mines and Mineral Resources.
1990			King Island Scheelite mine.	
1991			Que River mine. Pioneer Silicon Industries ferro-silicon furnace at Electrona.	
1992				Department of Mines re-established in February.
1993		Henty gold mine development commenced.		Department of Mines becomes Division of Mines in the Department of State Development and Resources, then becomes Tasmania – Development and Resources. With this last change the Division of Mines becomes Mineral Resources Tasmania.
1994		Renison mine, development of the 'Rendeep' ore body. Rosebery mine, development of deeper ore body.	Duncan coal mine, later reopened. Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Company closed its copper mine after 101 years of operation.	Hyphen removed from Tasmania Development and Resources. Mineral Resources Tasmania becomes part of Industry Safety and Mines Division of Tasmania Development and Resources.
1995		Anchor Tin Mine reopened by Mancala Pty Ltd. Copper Mines of Tasmania reopened the Mt Lyell mine. Beaconsfield gold mine development — Hart Shaft dewatered and underground pump-station commissioned.		Mineral Resources Development Act 1995 comes into force.
1996		Henty gold mine officially opened in July. Mining resumed at Hercules.	Anchor tin mine closed. Mining at Savage River ceased. Tioxide plant at Heybridge closed in July.	June — Industry Safety and Mines split into component parts. The 'mines' section becomes Mineral Resources Tasmania.
1997		Mining at Savage River recommenced by Australian Bulk Minerals in November. Open cut coal mine at Stanhope.	Operations at Tonganah clay mine scaled down. Merrywood coal mine in April.	Renison tin mine sold to Murchison United NL.

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1998			Stanhope coal mine closed in December.	Aberfoyle Limited taken over by Western Metals Resources Limited. Ownership of Mt Lyell mine sold to Indian owned company Copper Mines of Tasmania.
1999		Kimbolton coal mine opened. Beaconsfield gold mine officially reopened.	Mining ceased at Hercules in November.	
2000	Substantial gas resource in Otway Basin identified by Thylacine I exploration well.		Mining ceased at Hellyer in June. Tonganah clay mine closed.	
2001	Allegiance Mining define a resource of nickel at Avebury.			Construction of Tasmanian Gas Pipeline commenced in December.
2002				
2003		Kimbolton mine purchased by Cornwall Coal with operations commencing in March.	Mining at Renison suspended in May.	Australian Cement Holdings and Queensland Cement and Lime merge to form Cement Australia.
2004		Construction of Avebury mine commenced in March. Rehabilitation of Renison mine commenced in April.		Rosebery mine and Risdon smelter become part of Zinifex Ltd in April. Renison mine purchased by Bluestone Nominees.
2005		Tin production recommences at Renison in February.	Operations at Renison suspended in October.	
2006		Production of gas from the Yolla field commenced in October. Underground mining commences at Avebury in December.		
2007		First shipment of concentrate from the Hellyer tailings project in January. Bass Metals commences mining at Que River in August. Production of gas from the Thylacine field commenced in September. Tin mining at Mt Bischoff commences.		Rosebery mine sold to OZ Minerals and Risdon smelter to Nyrstar.
2008		First production of nickel concentrate at Avebury in July. Renison mine reopened in July. Trial mining of alluvial tin at Scotia commenced.	Hellyer tailings project closed in August. Avebury mine placed on care and maintenance in December.	Avebury mine sold to OZ Minerals in July.

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2009	Inferred resource announced for Mt Lindsay deposit.			Scotia tin mine ceased operation in February. Avebury processing plant ceases production in March. Australian Bulk Minerals merged with Grange Resources Ltd.
2010		Development of Fossey deposit commences in January.		OZ Minerals operations sold to Chinese interests in June, operating as MMG. Henty mine acquired by Bendigo Mining in July. Tin mining at Mt Bischoff ceases in July. Mining at Que River ceases in October.