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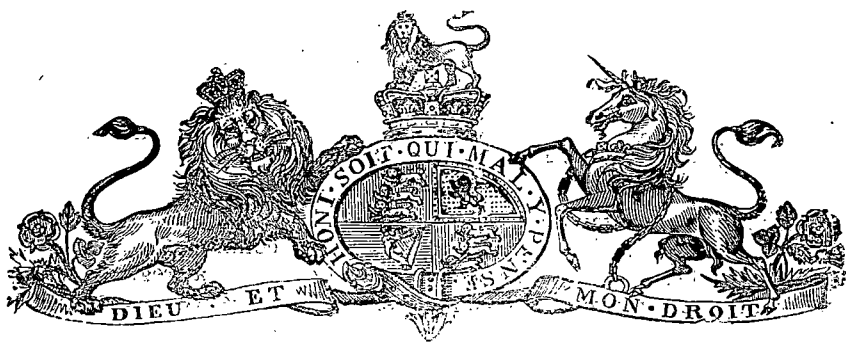
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GOLD FIELDS:

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT.

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Laid upon the Table by the Minister of Lands, and ordered by the House to be printed, September 24, 1879.



Office of Gold-fields, Launceston, 22nd September, 1879.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the following Report upon the general condition of the several Gold-fields in the Colony:—

*Beaconsfield*, known at the date of my last Report as Brandy Creek.—The rich alluvial deposit of gold which was worked with such satisfactory results last year has become almost exhausted, only a few claims remaining in possession of miners. The prospecting for a deep lead, which at one time it was confidently believed existed, has not yet proved successful, and in many claims has been discontinued. In some claims, however, (in the immediate neighbourhood of Cabbage Tree Hill, where the richest shallow deposit was found), which have not been bottomed operations are still continued. Some of the deserted alluvial claims have recently again been taken up for the purpose of mining a conglomerate locally termed cement, which exists in considerable quantity, yielding, under the process of crushing in the ordinary battery, in some cases as much as 10. dwts. to the ton. There are two batteries, of five and ten head respectively, driven by steam, engaged in this work, and others projected and in course of erection. The reef discovered by the Messrs. Dally, and purchased by the Tasmanian Company, continues to be not only the richest yet opened in Tasmania, but one of the richest in the Australias. Since crushing operations were commenced in July, 1878, 6865 tons of quartz have been crushed, yielding 18,832 ozs. of gold, of the value of about £61,000, and the reef maintains its character for size and auriferous wealth. Several other companies holding claims in the vicinity of this reef have procured quartz from reefs of various sizes; but although some trial crushings have been pronounced satisfactory, and in some cases, no doubt, were so, the appliances for keeping the water down were generally insufficient; and that difficulty and other obstacles have tended to check mining enterprise. Considerable sums of money have been and are being expended in the prosecution of the industry in a legitimate manner, and extensive preparations are being made on some of the claims to erect powerful steam engines for pumping and other work. The recently proclaimed town of Beaconsfield is growing into considerable importance, and now consists of four hotels, three churches, six or seven general stores, 262 houses and cottages, and a population of 962.

*Lisle*.—This gold-field has somewhat quickly risen into importance, and as an alluvial field is on a very much larger scale and supports a greater population than any yet opened up in Tasmania. The reported discovery of gold by the Brothers Bessell began to attract attention in January last, since which time the population has increased until it now reaches about 2000. It is impossible to ascertain the quantity of gold procured, but the miners appear generally well satisfied, and numbers have realised very handsome returns. I estimate that at least 22,000 ozs. have been procured since the gold-field was opened. The gold is found in shallow alluvial deposit, is generally fine, no coarse gold having yet been procured, and is of good quality. The area of auriferous country is extensive; in fact gold has been traced from near the foot of Mount Arthur to the Denison, a distance of 10 miles; but the greater part of the mining population is located in the valley of Bessell's Rivulet, for a length of about three or four miles. A range of slate hills in the neighbourhood doubtless contains quartz reefs, but as little or no prospecting has been attempted none have been discovered. The dense forest, while it affords an inexhaustible supply of the best timber for mining purposes and for the erection of substantial huts and cottages, offers a serious obstacle to prospecting, especially in the winter months. I believe the approaching spring and ensuing summer will see a large addition to the mining population of the gold-field.

*Nine Mile Springs*.—Several companies which at the date of my last Report were engaged in prospecting their claims with extensive steam appliances have been unsuccessful, and have ceased work. The New Native Youth line of reef is still the scene of active mining operations; but the result has not, on the whole, been equal to the returns of former years. The mining industry has, however, received considerable impetus within the last month by the discovery of another line of reef, supposed to be a totally distinct body of stone from any other previously found on the gold-field. Trial crushings of a sufficient quantity of quartz to test the value have yielded upwards of 2 ozs. to the ton, and there is every indication of an extensive reef. The total population is about 500.

*Back Creek*.—A limited number of miners—not more than a dozen or twenty—have continued prospecting and working for alluvial gold at intervals; but no regular or systematic mining can be said to be carried on.

*Denison.*—The efforts to develop the auriferous reefs have been unsuccessful, with one exception; the Golconda Reef is in full work with steam battery and all requisite appliances. The yield, although low, is remunerative, and operations are likely to be continued. Some prospecting in the neighbourhood is being prosecuted.

*Waterhouse.*—The recent spirited attempt to develop this gold-field has not, I regret to say, been as successful as could have been wished. Operations are still continued on the Pioneer Reef, but with very discouraging results. I fear it has been proved generally, as regards this gold-field, that improved appliances and a lower rate of wages must exist before the very extensive auriferous reefs can be advantageously mined.

*Fingal.*—The alluvial mining at the Black Boy appears to be practically abandoned, and one battery for crushing quartz is still in use, but with no very encouraging results. The Alpine Reef is generally considered a most promising one, and the proprietors are making preparations on a somewhat extensive scale to test it. I have not had occasion to visit the district for several months.

*Scamander.*—Several leases for quartz mining have been applied for in the neighbourhood of the River Scamander; but no effort to mine beyond mere surface prospecting has been made. A small quantity of gold in alluvial deposit has been found.

*Mount Barrow.*—A prospector's alluvial claim has been taken up, but does not appear to have yielded much gold. Several parties of miners have prospected the district, and all report the existence of gold; but none have found sufficient quantity to attract any attention.

*Boobyulla, near Mount Horror.*—Quite recently the discovery of gold in alluvial deposit has been reported, and a prospector's claim secured; but the prospects are not considered encouraging.

*The West Coast.*—Although gold has been traced through a very considerable extent of this part of the Colony, it appears to have been procured in quantity only in the vicinity of the Pieman River. The discovery of an alluvial deposit in the neighbourhood of the Whyte River, a tributary of the Pieman, by a miner named Brown, followed almost immediately by a similar discovery by Middleton a few miles nearer the coast on another tributary of the same river, caused considerable excitement, and some 250 miners found their way there, many of whom, however, left when the winter set in, announcing their intention of returning in the summer. Those who remained appear to have obtained very satisfactory results, and a considerable quantity of gold of a very superior quality has been brought from there. The absence of roads and tracks of any kind, the dense scrub which covers the country, and the almost inaccessible nature of the place, have greatly retarded prospecting, whilst the scarcity of provisions drove away all but some 70 or 80 men. I have every confidence that the mining prospects of the place will attract a considerable population of practical miners during this spring and the ensuing summer. The Pieman River affords safe and easy navigation for steamers for 20 miles into the heart of the auriferous country; and I shall be greatly disappointed if the district does not almost immediately become the centre of a valuable and extensive gold-field. The distance from the settled districts, and the absence of a track passable for a horse, rendered the recent appointment of a resident Commissioner of Gold-fields and Justice of the Peace an imperative necessity in the interests of justice and for the protection of miners located there.

*Port Cygnet.*—A quartz reef has formed the subject of a dispute; but when I visited it in June last no attempt at mining had been made, nor have I heard of the commencement of operations since. An alluvial deposit of gold on private property has been worked by a few men, but it is apparently extremely limited in area.

The following comparative statement will demonstrate the material improvement in the gold-mining industry since the close of 1878:—

	1878.	1879. To 31st August.
Miners' Rights issued .....	1786	2300
Business Licences .....	42	64
Estimated Number of Men engaged in Gold Mining.....	1050	2000
Quantity of Quartz Gold produced.....	13,787	14,500
Estimated quantity of Alluvial Gold produced.....	11,462	25,000

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

BERNARD SHAW, *Commissioner of Gold-fields.*

*The Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works.*

JAMES BARNARD,  
GOVERNMENT PRINTER, TASMANIA.