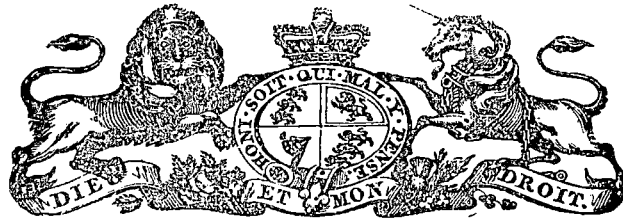


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1881.

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

GOLD FIELDS OF THE COLONY:

COMMISSIONER SHAW'S REPORT FOR 1880-1.

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
August 4, 1881.



REPORT ON GOLD FIELDS OF TASMANIA, 1881.

Office of Mines and Gold Fields, Launceston,
30th July, 1881.

SIR,

In compliance with your instructions I have the honor to submit the following Report upon the several Gold Fields of the Colony.

Since I furnished my last Report on the 3rd September, 1880, a very extraordinary state of excitement has prevailed in mining circles. Although there has been much unwholesome speculation, with an almost incredible recklessness, in investing in shares in many of the mining ventures put before the public, yet a very considerable area of waste lands of the Crown has been and is still being thoroughly prospected, and much capital judiciously expended in the legitimate prosecution of the industry in many parts of the Colony. A number of miners—experienced practical men—are engaged in searching for gold in all accessible parts of the Island where auriferous indications are to be seen.

I will give a brief sketch of the condition of each Gold Field.

Beaconsfield.—Since the date of my last Report the population of this Gold Field has very greatly increased. At the time the Census was taken it numbered 1433, of whom 867 were men, and now cannot be less than 1600. Mining operations have been carried on with vigour, and are still prosecuted with steadiness and success. The Tasmania line of reef continues to yield magnificent returns. The battery used in crushing for this reef has been increased to fifty heads of stampers, and has been continuously employed. There are now on the field nine batteries, numbering together 118 heads of stampers. Eight are driven by steam and one by water power. The smaller batteries are engaged crushing an alluvial deposit of cement, loose quartz, and other auriferous stuff taken principally from the ground where rich alluvial deposits were mined in 1878-9. Although one reef claim only, the Tasmania, has yielded any very large returns, a number of other claims have been proved to contain auriferous reefs, several of which have yielded fair returns at trial and other crushings. A large area of land has been taken up under the leasing clauses. The town has spread considerably, and some very substantial and commodious buildings have been erected. At a recent land sale lots in a good position sold at the rate of £500 an acre. At the Blue Tier, the southern portion of the Gold Field, the yield of alluvial gold has somewhat fallen off, but several most promising reefs have been discovered, and a crushing plant has recently been erected.

Lefroy, formerly known as the Nine Mile Springs.—The rich returns from the New Chum line of reef have given great impetus to mining operations at this Gold Field. The Prospector's claim and the claim adjoining, known as the West New Chum, are both highly remunerative. Numerous leases have been taken up on the supposed line of reef, and the claims are being thoroughly tested. Prospecting operations are very extensively carried on over a considerable width of country. The New Native Youth reef is still the scene of active mining operations. Several trial crushings from various reefs in the neighbourhood have given encouraging results. The population has largely increased. At the time of the Census it was 927, of whom 596 were men; and it has now doubtless reached more than 1000. A battery of ten heads of stampers has been erected on the West New Chum claim, making a total of sixty stampers on the Gold Field. A plant for treating pyrites has also been constructed, and has commenced operations.

Lisle.—The yield of alluvial gold has greatly fallen off, and does not now exceed an average of eighty ounces a week. Most of the shallow deposits in the creeks have been worked out, and the principal mining now in process is on the higher ground, where an abundant supply of water allows ground sluicing. Several prospecting parties are searching for reefs, but without as yet any better success than the discovery of small leaders, loose quartz, and other promising indications. The population at the time the Census was taken was 350, of whom 185 were men. The number has since decreased. The discovery of reefs is confidently looked forward to by those engaged in the search.

Denison, including Golconda.—Great activity has prevailed for some time past. A number of reefs have been discovered, all affording more or less indication of wealth. Several trial crushings have given satisfactory results, whilst others have shown the reverse. There has not been sufficient time to apply a conclusive test to the most promising since their discovery. Very extensive prospecting operations are being prosecuted in the surrounding country.

Waterhouse.—Another attempt has been made to open a mine in another part of this Gold Field, but apparently without success. I can only repeat my statement made in previous reports, that the numerous auriferous reefs known to exist are not sufficiently rich to be profitably worked with present mining appliances, and during the continuance of the present high rate of wages.

Mount Barrow.—A few miners are obtaining small quantities of gold in alluvial deposit. Recently auriferous reefs have been found, but no satisfactory test has yet been possible.

Back Creek.—Until quite recently this Gold Field was only known to contain gold in alluvial deposit, and a limited number of miners have worked there for some years. Now, however, auriferous reefs have been discovered, some giving a very fair promise of remunerative returns; but no opportunity has yet been afforded of testing any one of them on a sufficiently large scale to establish its actual value. A considerable quantity of alluvial gold has recently been taken from the field. A large area of land known to be auriferous is leased under "The Mineral Lands Act" for the purpose of quarrying slate, which, under the present state of the law, seriously interferes with the progress of the gold mining industry in the neighbourhood. The population at the time of the Census was less than 100, but it has since increased.

Gladstone, Mount Cameron.—In my last report I said, "within the last month an auriferous reef, unusually large, has been found, and a prospector's claim taken up. Time has not yet allowed a practical test of the value of the discovery to be made." The reef referred to is now known as the Royal Tasman, and I regret to say the practical test has not yet been applied, although the result of the crushing of two tons of quartz sent to Victoria, and innumerable assays and crushings of small pieces by hand, have led to an almost unanimous opinion amongst mining men that the reef is one of extraordinary richness. A powerful crushing plant is in course of erection, and will shortly be completed. Several reefs of promise have been discovered in the vicinity, and extensive preparations are being made to test them. Many legitimate mining companies and co-partnerships have been formed, and are steadily and systematically at work; whilst, in the case of some others, the most extravagant anticipations are indulged in and reckless speculation entered upon. This place cannot yet be pronounced to be a profitable Gold Field, but many persons competent to form an opinion do not hesitate to express the utmost confidence in its future success and importance. The existence in the neighbourhood of the most promising reefs of large areas leased under "The Mineral Lands Act" for tin mining purposes, and now known to be auriferous, has, as in the case of the Back Creek, proved a great obstacle to the prospector. I venture to hope practical legislation will, during the present Session of Parliament, remove this very serious drawback to the progress of Gold mining. The Town of Gladstone already contains many substantial and commodious buildings, and the land at recent Government land sales realised high prices,—in some cases at the rate of £496 an acre. The population at the time of the Census was 200, but it has more than doubled since that date.

Mussel Roe.—Several claims taken up in 1870 and almost immediately abandoned, as well as a number of others, have recently been applied for. Several auriferous reefs have been discovered, and a battery is in course of erection. Very promising indications exist, and a large extent of ground is being prospected by practical men.

Scamander.—A number of claims taken under lease and abandoned have been again applied for, and preparations are, I understand, being made for practically testing the value of the reefs.

Fingal.—There appears to be no change in the nature or extent of mining operations in this district. I have not been called upon to visit it since 1878.

River Cam.—A limited number of miners still continue to work alluvial claims. No fresh discoveries have been reported.

Minnow.—Prospecting operations have been carried on rather extensively in this part of the Colony, and auriferous quartz discovered over a considerable area. A number of claims have been secured under lease, but very little appears to have been done to test their value. I have not visited the place.

West Coast.—A limited number of miners appear to find remunerative employment in taking gold from shallow alluvial deposit, and others are engaged prospecting for reefs. The same drawbacks to the development of the industry in the district—the inaccessibility of the greater part of the lands, the absence of a settled population, and the want of roads or tracks—still continue to operate. Mr. Thureau, recently commissioned by the Government to visit the West Coast, will

doubtless furnish his report immediately, and it will contain full information on the subject of the mining prospects of the place. The Census showed a population of 74 men, many of whom were engaged in tin mining. The number has since considerably increased.

Port Cygnet.—A small quantity of alluvial gold is still found. The recent discovery of quartz reefs on private property adjoining Crown lands has attracted some attention.

Prospectors' protection orders have been issued to search in the vicinity of the following places, traces and indications of the existence of auriferous reefs having been found:—Latrobe, Mount Magog, Franklin Rivulet, Lobster Rivulet (Devon), Low's Ridge, Kentishbury, River Cam, Bradford (Devon), Mount Claude, Lisle, Moorina, Camden River, Weldborough, West Mount Cameron, Mount Horror, Pattersonia Road, Hall's Track, Mount Barrow, Little Forester River, River Brid, Turner's Marsh, Black Sugar Loaf, River O'Plain Creek (Morven), Aberfoyle, Ben Lomond, St. Helen's, George's River, St. Patrick's Head, Gould's Country, Mount Weld (Buckingham), Risdon, Mount King William, Freycinet's Peninsula, Mount Peter (Glamorgan), River Apsley, Lake Meander, Broad Marsh, Whyte River, and Savage River.

The following comparative statement will afford some information as to the progress of the gold mining industry since the close of 1880. It will be observed that alluvial mining, always uncertain, has greatly fallen off since the shallow and rich deposits at Beaconsfield and Lisle were discovered and worked in 1878-9, but quartz mining, well known to be an industry of a more permanent character, has greatly increased. My estimate of the yield of gold for the last half-year is slightly in excess of the quantity entered at the Customs for export:—

	1878.	1879.	1880.	1881, to 30th June.
Area applied for under Lease—Acres	755	378	1752	3420
Number of Miners' Rights issued	1786	2690	1771	1799
Number of Companies registered	18	11	35	43
Fees and Rents collected.....	£2351	£2070	£4354	£5450
Estimated value of Alluvial Gold	£45,750	£146,500	£70,675	£30,000
Value of Gold taken from Quartz.....	£54,250	£84,395	£130,622	£98,500
Entered at Customs for export, including Alluvial Gold	£125,913

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.