Latrobe River Tin Mines: An 1870s Mining Scam

By ROBIN BAILEY

An old miner once defined a mine, as a hole in the ground owned by a liar. This definition well defines an episode in the 1870’s when two very prominent members of the Victorian Parliament, John Woods and Louis Lawrence Smith, aware of publicity surrounding early discoveries of tin at Mount Bischoff in Tasmania, decided to get into the act. One of the pair having previously heard of abandoned tin prospects in heavily timbered mountainous country 80 kilometers east of Melbourne, in the Upper Latrobe River, saw an opportunity not to be missed. As the locality was so remote and difficult to access, there was little chance of any investigation into the viability of the mining leases at the time. Subsequently, they formally took out mining leases using the old lease plans and then attempted to sell these worthless leases in London for £100,000. This is the story of incompetence and of their mining scam.

The Early Discoveries

In the 1860s parties of prospectors were working in the Upper Goulburn River, culminating in the major gold field discoveries of Woods Point, Matlock, Jordan and later Walhalla. Supply lines for the many thousands of miners working in the mountainous country were very long, and the cost of packing provisions and equipment in from Jamieson and later Sale was very great. Much time and money was spent in developing the Yarra Track through Healesville and Marysville to Matlock and Woods Point, and the effort of keeping it trafficable in winter proved beyond the maintenance resources of the day.1

From the south, in 1862, a track was cut from Drouin, effectively following the course of the present road through Neerim to Noojee, then up the Loch River to the Yarra – Latrobe Divide near Mt. Horsfall, down into the Yarra valley, then up onto the Yarra Track near Shaws. This track, called Reid’s Track, was never really popular because of the density of the scrub and the general roughness of the country.

Mrs Bowmans Track

Closer to Melbourne, at Berwick on the horse track to Melbourne, a Mrs Bowman kept a hotel. During the latter part of 1864 and into 1865 Mrs Bowman, with considerable energy and perseverance, cut her own track. The route effectively followed the divide between the streams running into the Yarra and those into the Latrobe and Tarago Rivers in West Gippsland. She had great and fanciful hopes for her track, and even went to the trouble of having it surveyed in 1864 by a surveyor from the Roads and Bridges Department and a contract surveyor from the Surveyor General’s Department.

In 1865, Frederick Farrell of the Roads and Bridges Department published a report on the track2 and commented:
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Looked on as a basis for a dray track, I consider Mrs Bowman’s to present little difficulty for about the first fifteen miles from its commencement, after that, and notably up to the neighbourhood of the “tin mines”, the country becomes more difficult, comprising heavy timber, scrub, huge granite boulders, soft and boggy places, and some excessively steep ascents and descents say from one in three to ten, which, although improvable by deviation from the present direction, siding etc., could only, I consider, be made available for dray traffic at a very heavy expense.

Although Mrs Bowman’s track proved to be of no value to those who wanted an easy route to the Jordan Diggings, it did have an interesting side effect – the opening up of the Little Yarra River valley and the Upper Latrobe River valley. After meandering around the headwaters of the Bunyip River and by Mt. Beenak, the track dropped down to what was later called The Bump at the head of the Latrobe and Little Yarra Rivers, before climbing again to Starling’s Gap and northwards and eastwards along the Yarra River divide, before meeting Hughes track near where it dropped down into the Upper Yarra, it then went steeply down near the Yarra Falls and up onto the Yarra Track; this was a route obviously only for the most hardened people, there was no record of the track being used for access to the Yarra Track.

The tin mine discoveries
Near the end of 1864, two surveyors, Robert Henry Shakespeare and Harding, travelled the track, Shakespeare had been engaged to carry out a survey of the track after a deputation to the Surveyor General. Although finding little gold, they did find in the Upper Latrobe, and later in the Little Yarra River, deposits of stream tin. A number of mineral leases were staked out in the alluvial deposits, and some mining companies were formed to develop them. The Mines Department then arranged for these leases to be formally surveyed by a mining surveyor located in Eltham, far away to the west from the Latrobe River. The mining surveyor had great difficulty in locating the lease pegs because of the dense bush surrounding the Upper Latrobe River, but this was eventually achieved and a plan showing the various leases produced (the plans have survived and have been used recently to place the various leases on current mining plans).

As Bowman’s track proved rather impracticable, a further track was cut along the Little Yarra River to provide access to the claims through Lilydale and the Yarra. It was up this recently cut track that the author of a series of five articles in the Argus travelled in June 1865. His account of his journey gives a very good picture of travel in the area before the days of modern roads and vehicles. The following are just a few extracts from this series of articles.

The distance from the Launching Place to Hathaway, our destination at the head of the Latrobe River, is reputed to be about 18 miles … Following the bush road we turned off a little south of east by a slight track that kept us on the high ground, and proceeded up the valley of the Yarra Rivulet (sometimes called the Little Yarra), through a country almost unexplored and entirely unsurveyed … The bridle track we were on was cut by Messrs. Shakespeare and Harding, in conjunction with Messrs. Martin and Horner, who had claims applied for below.
the Latrobe Company. For nearly three miles the track is through tangled scrub of the densest kind. The big trees seem ancient, and in nearly every instance decaying … Parasites of every kind and character stretch across from one to the other, now catching your hat, grasping at your feet on one side or the other, occasionally springing back from the person of the man in front to the astonishment of your own or horses nerves. … The track crosses altogether fourteen creeks, all roughly bridged with saplings and the stems of the fern-tree…we continued up a spur a distance of between two and three miles, reaching the little town of “Hathaway”.

After a detailed description of the claims and the methods of alluvial tin mining, the reporter continued down the river:

The track, if it could be called one, was of a dreadful savage and rough character. Fallen timber, rotting giants of past generations, lay across our way, hidden in ferns whose feather like branches his the morning sun and filled in the spaces left by trees of larger growth, obscuring everything in advance and supplying rather more moisture than was welcome. … We struggled on after our active leader, sometimes sinking a foot deep in unexpectedly boggy places, now climbing over fallen a great slippery monster of a dead tree, fording shallow creeks, and after a fall or two reached a point rather difficult to get over, and halted for the time … As we got lower down, the valley began to widen out a little, and the scrub was not so thick … We reached the Shenandoah claim, hot fatigued and hungry, There was little time to examine anything, … we determined on a sharp march back to Hathaway and then Melbourne.

Map 1: Covering the leases referred to in this paper.

Source: Department of Primary Sources, Victoria, LaTrobe Detail near Knotts-1, printed on 28 October 2010 22.02.24
While the above description illustrates the difficulties involved in accessing the area, the Mining Lease Books held in the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV) show the rather dispiriting state of the tin mining in the area. One of the first prospects was the *Latrobe Tin Mining Company* applied for by Robert Henry Shakespeare on 20 January 1865.\(^6\) This Lease was abandoned in February 1866 and on 9 June the 1866 Register entry says ‘Remove Posts’. Similar lease applications followed suit, as there appeared to be no possibility of a financial return and there was also the extreme difficulty of sluicing in the virgin bush surrounding the Latrobe River. In all there were four separate registered applications for leases on the Latrobe River. None of these lasted beyond June 1867.

**Enter John Woods and L.L. Smith**

John Woods was an engineer deeply involved in various engineering and mining projects, he was also a member of the Victorian Parliament at various times.\(^7\) Of concern was Woods’ involvement in the Malmsbury reservoir where he worked with surveyor Shakespeare, and where there were cracked outlet pipes from the reservoir, which they concealed by the simple expedient of using a *tar brush*. After the discovery of this deceit Woods and Shakespeare lost their jobs, and forever afterwards Woods was always referred to in Parliament as *Tar Brush*.\(^8\) It was in this period with his association with Shakespeare that Woods learnt about Shakespeare’s surveying and sluicing in the Upper Latrobe River and the abandoned tin mining leases.

Woods soon became the Member for Crowlands (Ararat), and was closely associated with the prominent member Louis Lawrence Smith.\(^9\) Between Woods and Smith, a scheme was concocted to take up the abandoned Mineral Leases on the Latrobe River and then to sell them for £100,000, with the help of Smith’s father in London.

To achieve their aim, they took out Mineral Leases on the Latrobe River,\(^10\) which were essentially the same Leases taken out and abandoned in the 1860s. (There is no evidence that the Mining Registrar formally surveyed the leases). Smith’s father then approached contacts in London, and negotiations commenced with an investment syndicate. Whilst negotiations were still underway the process of *spin* commenced, with various articles in Victorian newspapers extolling the rich tin fields of the Latrobe River. Typical of these articles is a report in the *Argus* of 31 October 1873:

> Even with the primitive appliances we had, we obtained an excellent prospect of tin ore which on analysis was afterwards proved to contain upwards of 65% of tin. The evident spread of tin over the flat, owing to the frequent diversion of the river from natural causes, the ample and continuous supply of water, the nearness of the ore to the surface, and the fall obtainable for sluicing and water power, all combine to render these “diggings” extremely valuable in a commercial point of view.

In addition to the publicity, influence was brought to bear upon the mining registration and survey machinery by the two parliamentarians, and when Woods became Minister for Railways in the first Berry Government, references appeared in
various articles of the imminent construction of a railway, a track and to a road being built into the locality.

Woods and Smith formally registered their mineral leases on 29 September 1873 and on 5 February 1874, advertised the formation of *The Victoria Stream Tin Company*.\(^\text{11}\) The Prospectus of the Company stated that:

Quantities of ore have been obtained and submitted for assay locally and in England. The assay made by Mr. Chapman of the Colonial Bank Melbourne yielded 51 per cent of pure metal.

In London, Smith’s father managed to create a private company, which dispatched from London a Captain William Eddy, ‘an experienced Cornish tin miner’, to report to them as to the genuineness of the enterprise.\(^\text{12}\)

**Captain William Eddy and Jacob Braché**

Jacob Braché, a mining consultant, was the representative of Woods and Smith directed to help Captain Eddy by showing him the Latrobe River area together with Mining Department documentation, when he arrived in Victoria.\(^\text{13}\) Eddy arrived in June 1875 and after visiting the leases and examining the Mines Department records and maps prepared a report for London. Braché’s report was published in the *Argus* and described his adventures with Captain Eddy:

We started in midwinter from Cannibal Creek, 50 miles from Melbourne, on the Gippsland road, by what is called Harding's track, for the Latrobe River. Men had been forewarned in advance to clear the track for us. We had to walk the journey, a pack-horse carrying our blankets and some provisions. After surveying and prospecting with Captain Eddy for a week, we were driven back for want of provisions, and Mr. Eddy and myself will ever remember the journey back on foot to the Gipps Land road (30 miles), drenched to the skin, and ascending and descending the ranges between the Latrobe and Tarwin (about 1,500 ft. in height) having subsisted for the last two days on the stewed kangaroo rat; and on the morning of our return journey breakfasted on the last piece of bread (about two ounces each) to help us over a track of 30 miles. Captain Eddy, who had but a few days previous enjoyed the saloon table of the overland mail steamer, had thus been plunged suddenly into the roughest Australian bush life. After this we prepared for a second start to prospect the Latrobe Valley, and for this purpose dispatched five men who were employed for four weeks in cutting tracks in order to prospect about eight miles along the Latrobe. We proceeded the second time in August 1875, and tested the depth of the alluvial deposits with boring rods. We stayed a fortnight on the Latrobe, and so far as circumstances would permit came to the conclusion that with sufficient capital and making use of the great falls of the Latrobe River as a starting-point, and the site of the main tail race for hydraulic sluicing works on a large scale, there was every reason to believe in the success of the enterprise. Captain Eddy fully approved of the scheme, and reported accordingly to his principal in London, which resulted in the formation of the Victoria Tin Company, nominal capital, £80,000, in £5 shares; and it was agreed that if the affair proved a success the promoters were to receive £5,000 cash and £20,000 in paid-up shares. The Victorian promoters act only as a board
of supervision. Captain Eddy has sole control of the funds and works of the company, and the company is managed by a board of directors in London, with Mr. Henry Chalón as secretary, offices, 25 Bucklebury, London, E.C. The promoters here, beyond having received the sum of £2,000, on account of £5,000 to cover part preliminary expenses.\textsuperscript{14}

Captain Eddy’s report was published in \textit{The Mining Journal} in November 1875\textsuperscript{15}, it was noted that

Captain Eddy was sent out last May to make a thorough investigation and to see how much truth there was in previous reports by Colonial surveyors and the result is that he finds these reports have not been overstated the extraordinary richness of the valley of the Latrobe River.

The tin mines on the Latrobe River are reached by a pack track 30 miles from Cannibal Creek on the Gippsland Coach road. I arrived here on July 3 last with a staff of miners. Our first work was to put in order two huts formerly used, and to cut tracks through a dense scrub on the leas. The surveys I have examined at the offices of the Mining Department, and the lease pegs on the ground correspond with the same. The leases adjoin and extend about six miles on each side of the Latrobe River. In prospecting these leases I find stream tin deposited, varying in depth from six feet to thirty feet from the surface and from six inches to three foot thick all over the flat, embracing an area of from 500 to 1,000 foot across the valley. The average assay of the tin raised is 65%.

Having made a careful examination of the property extending over six weeks, I have come to the conclusion that the leases contain continuous and large payable deposits of stream tin, and that from the deepest parts of the flat sufficient gold will be found to pay working expenses. The Latrobe River affords an abundant supply of water all the year around and an immense amount of valuable timber covers the slopes of the Latrobe valley, affording an inexhaustible supply of building timber, wood for smelting …

The waterfalls on the leases form a most valuable engineering feature, these falls are about 50 foot roughly estimated, and will completely command the streaming operations. A tail race constructed from these falls will, in my opinion afford the most ready means for laying bare the tin deposits…

The mines will be shortly accessible by a dray road and railway now being constructed by the Government of the Colony. The dray road will not exceed 20 miles to the railway station and the distance by rail will be 60 miles to Melbourne. The estimated capital cost will be 6,000 pounds.

Following this glowing report by Eddy, \textit{The Victoria Stream Tin Company} was floated in London.\textsuperscript{16} By end of January 1876 the Company became the owner of Mineral Leases 368 and 369 on the Latrobe River.\textsuperscript{17} What was the payment to Woods and Smith from the sale of the leases was not disclosed.

From April 1876 onwards, regular reports appeared in the Victorian press and also in the Mines Department records. To quote from the Argus:

In April, fair progress in cutting the main tail race through solid granite country, fair samples of tin have been met with associated gold and small rubies. Several miles of tracks through dense scrub and timber cut, huts for the miners in course of completion, Government track from Buln Buln to the mines has been made accessible for drays … 70 men employed.\textsuperscript{18}
By 14 September Mining Registrar Grainger who was located far to the west of
the mines and who rarely, if ever, visited them, reported:

Cutting made in 3 sections:
- 300 x 10 x 12 ft.; 600 x 10 x 12 ft.; 600 x 10 x 40 ft.
Race cut ¾ mile long, 8 ft. Wide, 3 ft. Deep.
- 20 miles bush track cut; 30 huts, store and office erected; 20 men
  employed

With all these glowing reports on the mines, in London *The Mining Journal*
published an article in December 1876 reprinted in *The Argus by Queenslander*, which
called into question the whole economics of the affair.19 A long article in the *Argus*,
followed, where Melbourne mining consultant Braché gave a long description of the
venture and his involvement.

On 30 December 1876 the *Argus* devoted a long article regarding the morals of
the financial arrangements of the whole affair, concluding that:

The price asked for it was altogether without warrant in the previous history of the
ground, and is only explicable on the theory that some London financial agency
went in for making a good thing out of it ... we hope that the gentlemen will do
well out of it. But we must protest against the system that under which Victorian
mines are offered to the British public at a price ten times their real value.20

**The Great Bursting Up**

In his election campaign of early 1877, Woods used as his main talking point the
*Bursting Up* of the large estates of the *monopolists*, so that they could be made available
to small settlers. At the same time he was holding mining leases on the Latrobe River,
which amounted to about 900 acres.

Woods original electoral locality, Crowlands, had been expanded and embraced
the towns of Stawell and Ararat. At some early period during his election campaign the
following appeared in the *Ararat Advertiser* and was reprinted in the *Argus*:

Some cleverly executed cartoons are to be seen posted in the hotels of Ararat,
having reference to the tin mining company, with which it is asserted the Hon.
John Woods is so closely connected." They are called The Great Bursting up
Victorian Stream Tin Mining Company, capital £100,000, to pur-
chase above
property, belonging to the Hon. J, Woods, Minister of Railways, Victoria, for
£88,000.” The first picture represents Mr. Woods seated on a pipe waving a tar
brush. He has one foot on a bag labeled £88,000, and seated against a tree upon
which is nailed a sign board labeled “Latrobe.” Near the board a laughing jackass
is perched on a rotten branch, sending forth its note at a party of English
speculators, dressed in John Bull fashion, who are trying to wash a “tin” prospect
out of a dish; the faces of the Englishmen express much dissatisfaction. The
surroundings of the landscape are remarkably well done, while the portrait of. Mr.
Woods is unmistakable [see Fig. 1].

The second picture [see Fig. 2] shows Mr Woods rising from the pipe, the tar-
brush on the ground, and the bag of £88,000 under his arm, taking the direction of
Europe. In this drawing the faces of the unfortunate speculators express the
Figure 1: *The Great Bursting Up.*

Source: State Library of Victoria, Picture Collection, H29368, available on line.

Figure 2: *The Great Bursting Up*

Source: State Library of Victoria, Picture Collection, H81.39/13, available on line.
bitterest disappointment, if not despair. Some are kneeling on the ground looking for tin with eye-glasses, others tearing their hair. The whole group is drawn with force and humour. In this second picture, also, the laughing jackasses are making merry.

In Notes of Current Events by a Vagabond in the Melbourne Punch issue of 29 March 1877, were listed six leases in the Latrobe River and McCrae’s Creek amounting to 906 acres and comment that cynically asked:

Who is this Mr. John Woods whose name is associated with one L.L. Smith in holding leases or licenses from the Mining Department of Victoria for the following large tracts of auriferous and staniferous land in Gippsland.

I suppose this is not Mr. John Woods who is candidate for Stawell, not this working man’s friend, not the enemy of monopoly, not the advocate of the “Bursting-up process” O dear me, no! Nor is it the John Woods alluded to in the Mining Journal of the 30th September last as asking for £88,000 for his interest in the Victorian Stream Tin Company, and as 80 lbs. weight of tin ore per cubic yard can be taken out of these 900 acres. For if this were so, any labouring man with a wheel barrow and shovel could earn £14.10s a day, without capital and without machinery. Consequently it cannot be the Stawell patriot who is putting this sweet scheme on the London market, because we may be certain, that with his overflowing love for “the people” his first impulse would be to recommend to every miner who is out of work in his own district to make tracks for Latrobe River and McCrae’s Creek, there to knock out a comfortable living of two pounds a day … But one would like to know who this Mr. John Woods, of the Victorian Stream Tin Company, really is. And I have no doubt the working miners of Stawell would be glad of a little authentic information on the same subject, too.

The Melbourne Punch of 19 April 1877 followed this up with an imaginary meeting between Messrs. Berry, W.G. Smith, Lalor and Woods, all members of the Berry Ministry in the Victorian Parliament:

Woods - Look at me, I thought that my seat for Stawell was safe as the bank; and here is a working miner coming forward, who will very likely knock me into a cocked hat.

Lalor - serves you right for letting that affair of the Victorian Stream Tin Company get wind.

Woods - O, come on, this is too much a joke. The idea of Peter Lalor playing the censor, where a little mining swindle is a-foot! If that isn’t Satan rebuking sin, I should like to know what is.

Lalor - Ah! But I always work underground, you know. You wouldn’t catch me letting the public into the source of my back-stairs transactions with the Department of Mines. No sir-ree. Tell me Woods, what is the exact amount of river frontage which you and L.L. Smith and one or two others hold on the Latrobe and McCrae’s Creek; and how much of the £88,000 to be paid to the promoters would have gone into your own pockets, eh?

Woods - Drop it will you? I am no worse than you … Besides, what do we go into the Assembly for, but to work our little “swindles.

By late 1877 into 1878, even the mining lease administration was feeling that they needed a formal report on the status of the Latrobe leases, they commissioned Alfred Howitt to make an examination of the issues. Howitt was the Gippsland Mining Warden based in Sale, and certainly the Upper Latrobe area came under his jurisdiction,
although for convenience the Mining Registrar was located outside his jurisdiction. No copy of Howitt’s report has been located, but the entries in the Mineral Lease register books indicate that this report was instrumental in the final entry in the register instruction to the Mining Registrar ‘Remove the Posts’.

The status of the affair of the Tin Mines is well described in the *Gippsland Times* of 15 May 1878:

We learn that the working of these mines has been suspended since April 1877 in accordance with a report made by Mr. Braché, C.E. to the London directors. Mr. Braché condemned the tail race, on which some £6,000 had been spent by Captain Eddy, as utterly worthless. It will be remembered that Captain Eddy was sent as manager by the London proprietors with full powers to conduct these mines. He started cutting the tail race without any plan or levels and the result was that the tail race made did not command the tin deposits higher up the stream above the falls. As soon as the failure became known in London, Mr. Braché was appointed consulting engineer by the London Board of Directors. He reported that to carry on the works would be too expensive to warrant adequate returns to the company, and no mine could be made successful unless the fresh timber that would have to be cleared was made marketable, which however could not be done.

With all the adverse publicity that the Tin Mines were receiving, the promoters in London must have realised that their investment was turning sour. By May 1878 a Mr Clark arrived from London on the *Alhambra*. He apparently visited the mines and agreed that it was ‘not advisable to expend any more capital on the enterprise, as none of the work done by Eddy is available’.21

So ended the 1870s Latrobe River Tin Mines saga. Woods and Smith managed to offload their interest in the mines well before the final denouement, how much money they made was never disclosed but it could have been significant. Certainly there is no record of them ever visiting the locality or taking a significant interest in it other than one of making money with little effort on their part.

The Upper Latrobe River went back to sleep again until the next burst of mining enthusiasm in the 1890s, when many mining tracks were cut through the Warburton Ranges, heralding the discovery of tin in the Mississippi Creek and the Ada River by Starling in 1903–4, followed soon after by the rapid incursion of the timber tramlines into practically every valley.

With all the timber milling, the presence of tin in the district received no attention until 1927 when the Collins Brothers found a small quantity of tin in Bennie’s Creek upstream from the Latrobe River. The Collins Brothers had a number of timber mills in the valley and presumably the tin was found during their timber extraction operations. Sluicing of a small area was carried out but did not prove economical.

In 1971 the Victorian Mines Department published *Tin Deposits of Victoria*.22 The section of the publication covering the Upper Latrobe River Field was not very well researched and could not be relied on in view of the previous research above, however, it did spark some very significant work by large exploration companies.

In 1974 after completing stream sediment samples and soil sampling programs, Freeport of Australia closed operations in Australia. A joint venture between
Electrolytic Zinc (EZ) and Freeport was negotiated whereby EZ became operators of Freeport licenses. EZ could not repeat the results of Freeport and they withdrew from the venture. BP Minerals was then approached, but after carrying out sampling, with due diligence, they withdrew from further discussions.  

The area covered by these exploration licences (EL 544 and EL 586) was essentially the headwaters of the Latrobe and Upper Yarra Rivers, running down the Latrobe River beyond that covered in all the previous mining localities. In all, 828 stream and soil samples were taken and were duly laboratory examined. Although some anomalies were further examined, the final conclusion of the exploration partners was that ‘this area is not sufficiently attractive to warrant further work’; so the exploration licences were cancelled. Further comments were that ‘the likelihood of economic mineralisation was considered to be low’, and ‘no cassiterite mineralisation of economic significance is present’.

Later investigations
The Forestry Officer at the nearby Powlltown Forest Office, who knew the country intimately, and in contradiction to Eddy’s statement in the The Mining Journal in November 1875, said that there are no 50 foot falls on the Latrobe River. All that is present are small rapids near the river gauging station.

In 2013, when exploring the country on foot, there was no evidence of any water races, or cuttings of the size quoted in Mining Registrars Report of 19 September 1876, quoted above, and cuttings of this size could not possibly disappear in this country. In addition, the locality is a popular bushwalking area near Melbourne; a track following an old timber tramline follows the Latrobe River, no waterfalls are seen along the river.

Summary
The whole picture is one of Woods and Smith trying to induce speculators in London to part with their money without investigating deeply the actual site of their investment. The London investors naturally sent out their own man, Eddy, to look into the possible investment. This tin miner when he arrived in Victoria, found a prospect in the densest Australian bush and with the help of a Victorian mining consultant Braché took the easy way out, he was persuaded or deceived by Woods, Smith and Braché and provided glowing reports to his principals in London. Unfortunately for them all, there were contradictory reports in the press which were fed back to London, followed by a further representative sent out by the London principals, who could find no evidence of the work reported by Eddy, resulting in the whole project being abandoned by the London investors.

The amount of money made by Woods and Smith is unknown, it may not have been what they had hoped for. How they ever even considered that the London investors would consider their proposals without investigation is quite hard to believe.

Today there is no evidence on the ground of their supposed activities, and while there may be a small amount of stream tin, it certainly does not even come near a profitable amount.
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Shakespeare died in 1888, Woods in 1892, and Smith in 1910. What happened to Eddy, little is known, though he did not return to England from Victoria. It appears that the whole exercise conducted by the two Victorian parliamentarians, John Woods and Louis Lawrence Smith, was a scam.

Acknowledgment
This paper would not have been possible without the material researched and collected by the State Library of Victoria and the availability of the two illustrations.25

Endnotes
2 The Argus, 2 February 1865.
3 Traverse of Mrs. Bowman’s Track, R. Shakespeare, January 1865, T/166, Field Book 914G, Public Record Office of Victoria (hereafter PROV).
4 To any hardy bushwalker who has been in this country off defined tracks and roads, this account is still a very good description of the bush in the Upper Latrobe valley.
5 ‘The Tin Mines of the Latrobe Valley’, Argus, five articles, 4, 8, 10, 15, 31 July 1865.
6 Victorian Public Record Series (VPRS), Lease Book VPRS 7843 P1, Mineral Lease 154, PROV.
8 The Argus, 9 May 1872.
10 VPRS 7843/P1 Mineral Leases 368 and 369 of 3 March 1873, PROV.
11 Argus, 5 February 1874.
12 Ibid., 14 January 1877.
13 ‘Helen Morris, Braché, Jacob (1827-1905)’, ADB 2006.
14 Argus, 25 December 1875.
16 Argus, 14 January 1876.
17 Mineral Lease 369, PROV.
18 Argus, 11 April 1876.
20 Argus, 30 December 1876.
21 Ibid., 2 July 1878.
24 ‘Helen Morris, Braché, Jacob (1827-1905)’, ADB 2006.