‘Many practical men deceived themselves’: the disastrous hydraulic gold craze in Tasmania 1893–1901

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Tasmania is not exactly synonymous with gold mining. Unlike New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia, the island colony received no economic shot in the arm from its own nineteenth-century gold rushes. While its alluvial goldfields were small, some of its nineteenth-century hard rock mines were significant producers. The Tasmania Gold Mine at Beaconsfield worked a deep, narrow orebody which produced 854,000 oz. of gold and paid £773,000 in dividends in the period 1877–1914. The New Golden Gate Mine at Mathinna produced 232,000 oz of gold from 1888 to1904 and paid £355,000 in dividends, with its principal shareholders, the Brock family, holding shares valued at £216,850 in1906.[1] Although primarily producers of copper and zinc respectively, the Mount Lyell Mine and the Rosebery Mine have both rivalled the Tasmania Mine in overall gold production by dint of their longevity. The Tasmania Gold Mine reopened 1999–2012, producing another 923,000 oz. but made only one dividend payment of $2,298,000. In 2010 the mine was known across the world for its miraculous miner escape story but was only the 40th biggest gold producer in Australia annually.[2] Number 42 on that list, the Henty Gold Mine, and no.50, the Rosebery Mine, still operate today, while no. 55, the Mount Lyell Mine, may resume production soon.

However, scarce gold doesn’t mean Tasmania hasn’t had its share of auriferous farce, scandal and skullduggery. Hills were salted, claims were jumped and rich gold strikes concocted or at least spruiked.[3] The sensational report of a gold bonanza at the Mount Lyell Iron Blow in 1886 reverberated around the Australian colonies.[4] The hydraulic gold mining boom in Tasmania in the 1890s even attracted investors as far away as England and Scotland.[5] This was a clear case of buyer beware, as speculator, mining manager and geologist alike predicted a bright future for the colony’s gold-bearing gravel deposits based on experience elsewhere. ‘Many practical men deceived themselves’, one of the mine managers concerned, Mark Ireland, concluded. He referred to the habit of miners of getting excited about small patches of alluvial gold that weren’t representative of the whole field.[6] The part in the debacle played by men far removed from the field and whether that also amounted to deception is worthy of examination.

The rise of hydraulic gold mining in Tasmania

Hydraulic sluicing, a mining technique which was popularised at the California gold rushes in the 1850s, came into vogue in Tasmania decades later for tin mining.[7] It provided a means of working poorer mineral-bearing ground economically and of attacking deep leads (that is, mineral-bearing, buried former river beds). Hydraulic sluicing relied upon being able to bring water to the mine face at high pressure in order to blast away the mineral-bearing alluvium. Usually, races carried the water to a holding

tank above the face, from which narrowing (telescoping) pipes concentrated the pressure on the steep fall down to the mining face. A nozzle or monitor concentrated the water further, blasting the face with a jet of water like a firehose. Lumps of mineral-bearing material were washed into sluice boxes, the heavier minerals settling in the riffles of the box, while the lighter dirt was washed out through a tail race. Although the infrastructure needed for hydraulic sluicing was expensive to install, labour costs were afterwards minimal. One man manipulating the hose effectively replaced many armed with pick and shovel.[8]

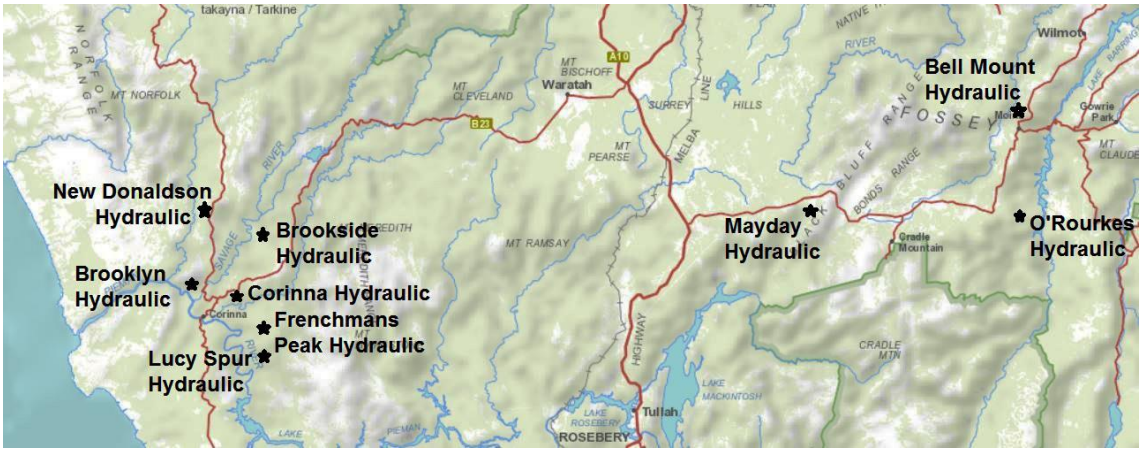
Figure 1: *Hydraulic sluicing at a north-eastern Tasmanian tin mine.*

Source: Stephen Spurling III photo courtesy of Stephen Hiller.

In Tasmania one of the earliest uses of the monitor was at the Mount Bischoff Tin Mine in 1875. Guiding the mine through its infancy, its discoverer and principal shareholder James 'Philosopher' Smith urged adoption of the hydraulic hose on the mine faces after witnessing a demonstration of its use by John Cock at the El Dorado Mine near Beechworth, Victoria.[9] Smith returned to Tasmania with a quantity of hose, but hydraulic sluicing was abandoned by new mine manager Ferd Kayser late in the same year and never resumed. However, as depicted in Figure 1, by 1883 this mining method had a permanent place in the north-eastern tin industry, despite Inspector of Mines Gustav Thureau noting difficulties with both head races and tail races, that is, establishing sufficient water pressure and disposing of waste material. Nozzles that spread the water

rather than concentrating it in a single jet were also a problem. In his report for 1883, Thureau demonstrated improved models of nozzles and hydraulic gravel elevators to address these issues.[10]

Figure 2: *North-western Tasmania, showing location of the hydraulic gold mines.*



Source: Based on ListMap, Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

Thureau recommends hydraulicing the Pieman River goldfield in 1881

The disastrous hydraulicing of Tasmanian alluvial gold fields came later. The Pieman River goldfield on the colony's West Coast had proven unsustainable in its first phase, from 1877, as a digger's field. There might have been enough gold to satisfy small parties, but extracting it was physically taxing and unprofitable except when a regular shipping service operated to the area.[11] Thureau, in his progress report on the field in June 1881, encouraged the miners who had hitherto only worked the creeks to tunnel into the tertiary washes:

> The opening of the 'terraces' as some miners designate the tertiaries, would open a new era of gold mining in Tasmania, and, to judge from indications, promises to be a more permanent and successful undertaking as when the creeks were worked in the last few years.[12]

He pointed out the natural advantages the field possessed for mining:

> an unlimited supply of running water, which can be used both for sluicing (in boxes or hydraulically with hoses and jets) and as a motive power. Besides that an almost inexhaustible supply of useful timber can readily be obtained to work their mines economically and rapidly with fair promises of success.[13]

In 1882 *Launceston Examiner* proprietor Henry Button supported Thureau by stating that the Pieman River terraces 'can only be worked profitably by hydraulic sluicing'.[14] Thureau extended his hydraulic focus to working the tertiary deposits of another alluvial goldfield, the Lisle north-east of Launceston.[15] To accommodate this mining method, the colonial government agreed to issue 20-acre leases and to swap the labour covenant with a requirement of expenditure of £2,500 on infrastructure within two years of taking up the lease.[16]

There were no takers. Hydraulic sluicing was simply not viable within the 20-acre lease usually issued for hard rock gold mining. Large scale mining was needed to offset

low grades and the expense of head race and tail race construction. The failure of the Black Boy (1887–89) and Mathinna (1891) Hydraulic Companies in the Fingal Valley, the Flannigans Flat (1891–92) near Mount Lyell, and of the Carisia Gold Mine near Savage River in 1891–92 would not have encouraged the adoption of hydraulicing on goldfields.

Investor vulnerability during the 1891 depression

It is no coincidence that Tasmanian gold production increased markedly after the economic crash of 1891 (from 23,451 oz. in 1890 to 51,165 oz. in 1895). Because the price of gold was fixed, people turned to it as a safe haven during economic depression when currencies and commodities lost value. Prospectors renewed their search for gold, and old gold mines were reworked at this time. The mid-1890s were also the time of the Western Australian gold rushes, when Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and the Kimberley became household names across the Australian colonies. Gold 'saved' Australia during economic depression, as countless thousands of people journeyed westward looking for work, wiring money back to families in the eastern states.[17] However, anxiety about their economic security may also have made people more vulnerable to gold-inspired 'get rich quick' schemes.

Speculator, sharebroker and mining agent Edward Gaunt (c1838–1904) was one of those who exploited this vulnerability. Gaunt 'had the reputation of being a rather ruthless and opportunistic speculator and promoter'.[18] In 1891 he was spruiking the East Coast Bischoff, one of several tin mines which, far from emulating its distant namesake, failed to send any ore to market. Government Geologist Alexander Montgomery commented that 'a great deal of harm has been done to the claim and the district by wildly extravagant statements about the East Coast Bischoff lode, and it is to be hoped that those concerned in the mine will prevent a repetition of these, and do some more work underground to prove if there is anything payable there'.[19] On one day in September 1892, almost a year after the collapse of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land crippled the Zeehan–Dundas silver field, Gaunt's name was attached to no fewer than eleven advertisements making calls on the shares in various Tasmanian gold, tin and silver mines, including the ill-fated East Coast Bischoff.[20]

The Otago influence

It was wheeler-and-dealer Rudolph Wachsmuth who brought hydraulic gold mining into Gaunt's realm. This potato-growing, piano-tuning, violin-playing former engineer in the Prussian Army set the model for the disastrous boom that followed.[21] Wachsmuth mined gold in four colonies, although whether he ever made a success of it is unknown.[22] What he was certainly successful at was self-promotion. The breakthrough he needed came in June 1893 when he and the other proponents of the Salisbury and Beaconsfield Hydraulic Company persuaded Minister of Mines William Hartnoll to suspend the lease provisions of the *Mining Act 1893* and withdraw 1,000 acres near Beaconsfield for 'a limited period' for the company's purposes.[23] Utilising Victorian capital and his own experience of hydraulic sluicing on the Otago goldfields in New Zealand, Wachsmuth recruited a mine manager, John Watson, and his assistant, John Cormack, across the Tasman for the

Salisbury and Beaconsfield operation.[24] Over the next few years, Otago 'hydraulicers', miners recruited by Wachsmuth and others, would find nearly as much demand in Tasmania as Cornish mine managers had done during the Heemskirk hard rock tin boom of the previous decade.[25]

Figure 3: *Rudolph Wachsmuth*.

Source: Friends of the Launceston Library

In Otago two forms of hydraulic mining in particular, ground sluicing, that is, running water down a working face in order to wash gold-bearing dirt into sluice boxes, and hydraulic elevation, in which a jet of water was used to blow gold-bearing dirt into sluice boxes, have scarred the environment.[26] The extraordinary landscapes of Quartz Reef Point and Bannockburn near Cromwell, Blue Lake at St Bathans, and the Blue Spur at Gabriels Gully, Tuapeka River near Lawrence, among others, attest to the use of these mining techniques in Otago. Surviving photos of the great scaffolding that supported the hydraulic elevators at such mines tell a tale of heavy capitalization.

Wachsmuth chiefly drew inspiration from the Blue Spur. His recruits Watson and Cormack had both worked there, being well acquainted with successful hydraulic mining.[27] However, hydraulic elevation was not attempted in Tasmania during the hydraulic craze. Although one commentator on the Tasmanian debacle claimed that only ground sluicing was used in Tasmania, in fact plying the hydraulic nozzle or monitor was the prevalent method of attacking the tertiary washes.[28]

Montgomery recommends hydraulicing the Pieman River goldfield 1894

The Salisbury and Beaconsfield Hydraulic Company was a failure, but by then Wachsmuth and fellow speculator Robert Symmons had turned their attention to other abandoned goldfields. Following a favourable report on the potential for hydraulic sluicing on the Pieman River goldfield by Alexander Montgomery, formerly director of the School of Mines at Thames, New Zealand, they obtained further extended leases in this area.[29] In August 1894 the Minister of Lands revealed that 4,250 acres of Crown land had been withdrawn from the leasing clauses of the *Mining Act 1893* for up to six months 'in order to facilitate the operations of companies and persons who were engaged in schemes of bringing water at a very considerable expense for hydraulic sluicing purposes …' This included 3,000 acres on the Pieman River and its tributary the Savage River.[30]

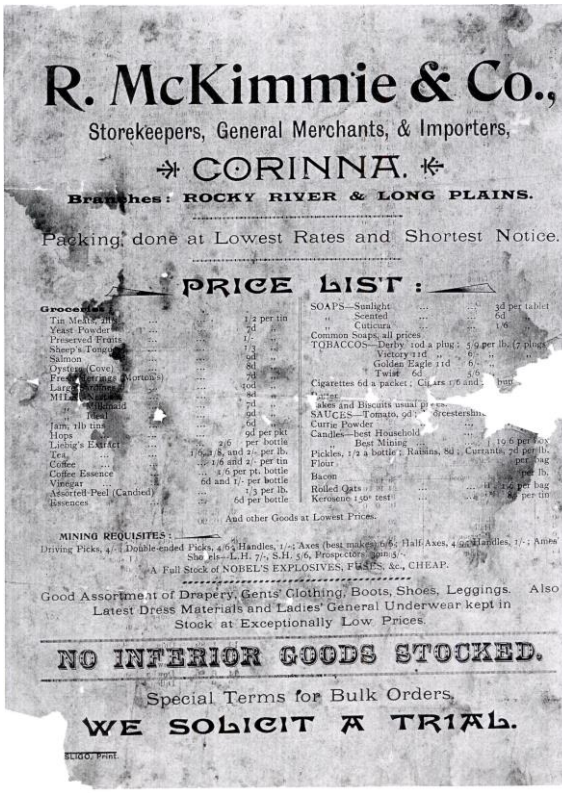
At least thirteen hydraulic companies, some with New Zealand mine managers, were established in the Pieman River district as a result. Edward Gaunt was legal manager for nine of them. Perhaps the most startling of his company prospectuses was that of the New Donaldson Hydraulic Company which boasted that, judging by the returns obtained by hydraulic sluicing in California and New Zealand, shareholders could expect a return

of from 100% to 200% on their investment. The New Donaldson property, it reported, owned everything necessary in a hydraulic operation: 'payable gold, an abundant supply of water, and a good get away for tailings'.[31] Based on his New Zealand experience, mine manager John Cormack calculated that the company's 14-km-long head race would cost £1,190 to construct. This must have seemed an insignificant outlay when he predicted that just one nozzle would return £300 per week in gold![32]

Revival of Corinna on the Pieman River

The hydraulic craze revived the old village of Corinna. Settlement there had begun in the Pieman goldfield's early days, a government store being established at this site about 20 km from the river heads in 1881. The advent of the telegraph line from Waratah in 1882 prompted a permanent post and telegraph office. During the hydraulic boom the proprietors of that establishment, James and Jessie Devlyn, added a dormitory-style boarding house with 'rough-house' rules.[33] The third pillar of Corinna's existence was the Pieman River ferry, a vital part of the West Coast land link in the pre-railway days.

Figure 4: *Advertisement for McKimmie's Store, Corinna.*


R. McKimmie & Co.,
Storekeepers, General Merchants, & Importers,
CORINNA.
Branches: ROCKY RIVER & LONG PLAINS.
Packing done at Lowest Rates and Shortest Notice.
PRICE LIST:
Groceries:
Tin Meat 2lb ... 1/2 per tin
Yeast Powder ... 2d
Preserved Fruits ... 1/-
Sheep's Tongues ... 1/3
Salmon ... 9d
Oysters (Cove) ... 8d
Fresh Herrings (Mortlock) ... 3d
Large Herrings ... 10d
Milk ... 8d
Filleted ... 7d
Veal ... 9d
Jam, 1lb tins ... 6d
Hops ... 9d per pkt
Liebig's Extract ... 2/6 per bottle
Tea ... 1/6, 1/8, and 2/- per lb.
Coffee ... 1/6 and 2/- per tin
Coffee Essence ... 1/6 per pt. bottle
Vinegar ... 6d and 1/- per bottle
Assorted Peel (Candied) ... 1/3 per lb.
Essences ... 6d per bottle
And other Goods at Lowest Prices.
SOAPS—Sunlight ... 3d per tablet
Scented ... 6d
Cuticura ... 1/6
Common Soaps, all prices.
TOBACCOS—Derby 10d a plug; 5/9 per lb. (7 plugs)
Victory 11d ... 6/-
Golden Eagle 11d ... 6/-
Twist 6d ... 5/6
Cigarettes 6d a packet; Cigars 1/6 and
Cakes and Biscuits usual prices.
SAUCES—Tomato, 9d; Worcestershire
Curry Powder
Candles—best Household ... 19/6 per box
Best Mining
Pickles, 1/3 a bottle; Raisins, 8d; Currants, 7d per lb.
Flour ... per bag
Bacon ... per lb.
Rolled Oats ... 1/- per bag
Kerosene 150° test ... 8d per tin
MINING REQUISITES:
Driving Picks, 4/-; Double-ended Picks, 4/6; Handles, 1/-; Axes (best makes) 5/6; Half Axes, 4/6; Handles, 1/-; Ames' Shovels—L.H. 7/-, S.H. 5/6, Prospectors' pans 5/-.
A Full Stock of NOBEL'S EXPLOSIVES, FUSES, &c., CHEAP.
Good Assortment of Drapery, Gents' Clothing, Boots, Shoes, Leggings. Also Latest Dress Materials and Ladies' General Underwear kept in Stock at Exceptionally Low Prices.
NO INFERIOR GOODS STOCKED.
Special Terms for Bulk Orders.
WE SOLICIT A TRIAL.

Source: Judy Buckley.

Now it had a vigorous economy. Huon pine dugout canoes plied the Pieman, serving the various mines and prospects. Legendary bushman Paddy Hartnett demonstrated his prowess in one of these vessels by winning a 6-km-long rowing race from the Nancy Creek Landing downstream to the ferry mooring, pocketing £10 for his effort in trouncing two oarsmen in a rowboat.[34] Jack Finlay kept a butcher's shop where Circular Head sheep and cattle were prepared for the dinner table.[35] Robert McKimmie and W.C. Grubb established stores, the former being the place to procure sheep's tongue, fresh herrings, oysters and 'ladies' general underwear at exceptionally low prices (see Fig. 4). The trade at Grubb's store was just brisk enough to allow its manager George Lightly to pen serialised romances for the *Tasmanian Mail* newspaper.[36]

Old gold diggers Gamaliel Webster and Thomas Davis made hostelry a family affair by marrying sisters. Having dragged much of his old pub back from Trial Harbour, Webster operated the bar and his wife Lydia the accommodation at the Corinna Hotel on the northern side of the river during the 1890s. Thomas and Amy Davis shared duties at John Foster's Star Hotel on the southern side, Thomas also serving as ferryman. Nine

children were fed, clothed and educated at the two pubs. The Star's home brew was potato wine known as Electricity, but the favourite drop on the Pieman was apparently an imported Dutch gin, De Kuyper's Square Face, which put a decided zigzag in the path of the Huon pine canoeists.[37]

Big investment at the Lucy Spur Hydraulic

One of the canoeists, a man named Jack Earle (1865–1932), was a blacksmith for the Lucy Spur Hydraulic, situated high above the Pieman River's middle reaches. A small portable forge possibly used by Earle remains at the Lucy Spur today.[38] He had his work cut out for him, since this company took the palm of biggest spender on the Pieman goldfield. The New Donaldson head race surveyed by civil engineer John Power ended up being 19.4 km long,[39] but the Lucy Spur topped that by cutting 22 km of race, installing timber fluming and a 75-cm-diameter syphon about 50 m long to bring water to the face. There were also 250 m of tunneling along this head race.[40] All the iron for the syphon and the hydraulic plant was boated up the Pieman and then packed up a pack-track that the miner Mark Ireland deemed the worst of his long experience.[41] A dump shaft was cut into the back of the main face which was sluiced, helping in the disposal of overburden.

Collapse of the Pieman River hydraulic mines 1895

However, the story of the Pieman River hydraulic field can be told by the progress of one mine, the Corinna Hydraulic Company. Registered in May 1894, over the next six months the Corinna Hydraulic spent £1,260 on race building, employing 38 men.[42] Its remaining funds of £1,439 were not enough to complete its infrastructure, necessitating calls on share.[43] By March 1895 it was ready to start sluicing—until 40 m of race subsided.[44] Finally, a year after the company was registered, two nozzles demonstrating 'magnificent' pressure set to work on the auriferous gravels.[45]

The Pieman River hydraulic field hit the skids in June 1895, when the Corinna and Brookside Hydraulics cleaned up their sluice boxes, returning only 80 and 34 oz. of gold respectively.[46] Confidence in the field evaporated, some mines being abandoned instantly. The value of Corinna Hydraulic shares dropped from £8 to little over £1 literally overnight. F.C. Brooks, mining manager of the Brooklyn Hydraulic, recalled that

> I had been sluicing just a fortnight, with three shifts, when I received from the legal manager [Edward Gaunt] a wire — 'Clean up at once; the directors want to know the result.' I obtained 16 ozs. of gold, which paid expenses for the actual time of sluicing, and proceeded to Launceston to meet a crestfallen lot of directors. Most of my directors were also directors in the companies that had cleaned up prior to the above wire.[47]

The willingness of new shareholders to buy up forfeited shares enabled a few hydraulic companies to stagger onwards, with the Savage River Hydraulic, for example, making at least eighteen calls on shares over three years.[48] The New Donaldson Hydraulic continued to operate through 1895 while haemorrhaging shares (7,380 being forfeited in one day and another 2,922 a few weeks after that) and threatened with foreclosure by the National Bank. Ignoring the threat, legal manager Edward Gaunt blithely requested a six-

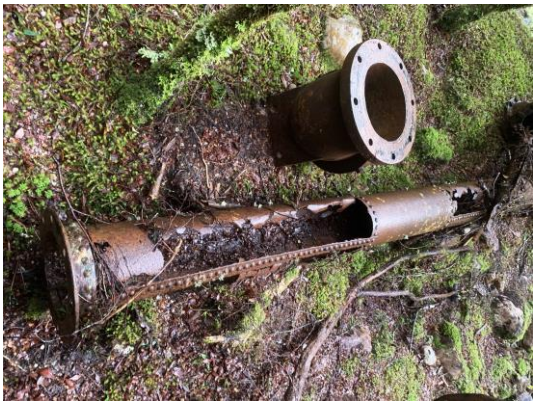
month extension on the company's prospecting area which was never needed.[49] Sadly, after more than a year's infrastructure work, the mine that was going to pay £300 per week was abandoned without its gravels being tested.[50]

It became clear that there were two reasons why the success of hydraulic sluicing on the Otago goldfields was not repeated on the Pieman River system: the high elevation of many of the terraces made it difficult to supply them with high-pressure water; the comparatively small amount of gravel to sluice made the process uneconomical; and, ultimately, there wasn't enough gold.[51]

Figure 5: *Tail race and overburden heap at the Mayday Hydraulic*.

Source: Nic Haygarth.

Figure 6: *Telescoping pipes at the Mayday Hydraulic*.



Source: Nic Haygarth.

A lingering death 1895–1901: the Mayday and the Bell

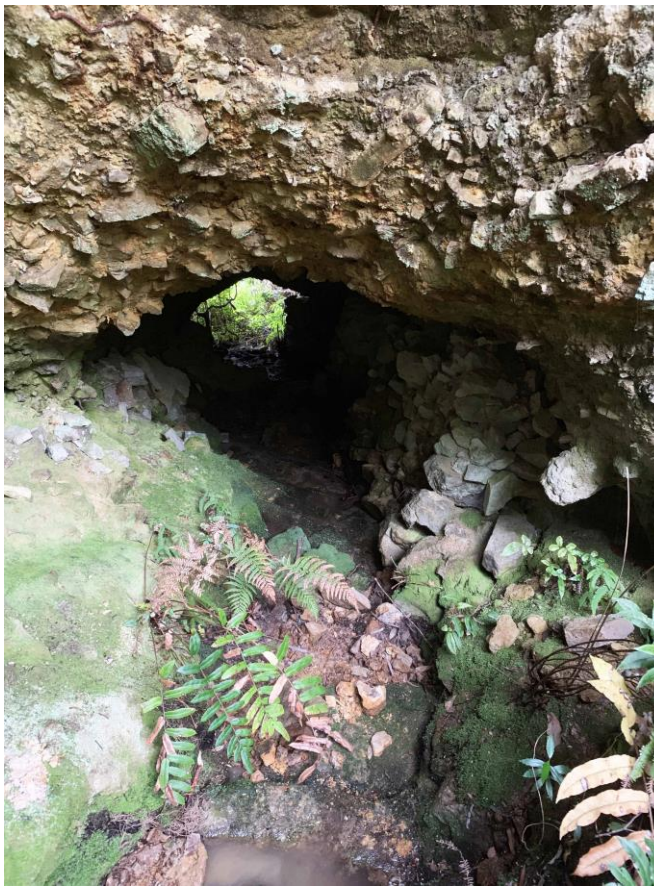
Whether the same problems applied on other small Tasmanian goldfields remained to be seen. Wachsmuth and Symmons examined the gold deposit at the Mayday Plain on the Van Diemen's Land Company's (V.D.L. Co.'s) Surrey Hills block, and in October 1895 the Mayday Gold Mining Company, No Liability, was registered in Launceston, with Gaunt as legal manager and shareholders such as the well-known solicitor and wool-grower Frederick William Grubb.[52]

Spruiking a Tasmanian hydraulic gold mine involved regular glowing manager's reports about the development of the highly efficient infrastructure and the growing anticipation of healthy returns. This would typically be followed by silence which denoted a very disappointing clean-up of the boxes. Perhaps the failure of the Pieman hydraulic mines muted even the promoters' enthusiasm, because the Mayday Hydraulic operated almost anonymously from the start, with just one two-line progress report: 'Simmons [sic] and Wacksmuth's [sic] party, working at the Mayday, likely to be a big thing'.[53] The paid-up capital of only £1,000 must have been exhausted by survey work and race building. Two calls were made on shares in the Mayday Gold Mining Company by December 1895, after which time the company disappeared from the newspapers.[54]

Like its predecessors, the mine is said to have been abandoned after the first clean-up of the sluice boxes.[55] Reporting on the Mayday to the V.D.L. Co. in May 1896, the prospector W.R. Bell wrote that the treatment of several hundred tons of material returned

little more than traces of gold, suggesting that the good assays which prompted the work were obtained from a relatively recent, superficial deposit of limited extent.[56]

Figure 7: *Tunnel through the open cut at O'Rourkes Hydraulic, showing overburden heap.*



Source: Nic Haygarth.

The last roll of the dice for Wachsmuth was the Bell Mount Hydraulic Sluicing Company Limited on the upper Forth River system which was registered in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1900, with Masson Russell and Wachsmuth as mine manager and local agent respectively. The Bell was a small 1892 alluvial field which produced about 4,000 oz. of gold, enough to earn it the celebratory place-names Mosquito Creek and Poverty Gully.[57] In August 1900 the hydraulic company started work on an 8-km-long race from the Iris River and cut through a rock bar to form a tail race. Government Geologist G.A. Waller predicted profitable results, but the company ran out of funds with its head race still 2 km from the mine site, sharing the fate of some of the Pieman gold shows which were likewise abandoned before the hose was put to work.[58] On that ignominious note, Wachsmuth adjourned to Launceston to tune and repair pianos.

A solitary afterlife 1893–c1913: O'Rourkes Hydraulic

Not everyone sluiced to make their fortune in gold. Some were happy to make a subsistence from it. Teddy O'Rourke (c1853–1933), a Tasmanian of Irish convict descent who spoke with a thick Irish brogue, was a 'problem drinker' when within reach of Launceston pubs, frequently testing the patience of magistrates.[59] He served at least six terms in Hobart's Campbell Street Gaol.[60] However, during the hydraulic craze O'Rourke developed an unusual regime of hose, snare and, perhaps, teetotal, which kept him out of trouble for two decades, drying out when the wet winter season brought his mining claim to life. In 1893 O'Rourke took a claim on an old goldfield high up the Forth River and built a hut nearby. He used the hose to open up three creek beds, exposing coarse angular talus in which coarse gold and vein quartz with gold attached were found.[61] Since it was only in the winter wet season that he could get sufficient water to operate the high-pressure hose, he combined hydraulic sluicing with hunting marsupials. April, May and June were the traditional hunting season. Prospectors and miners in the bush generally

snared and shot animals for food anyway, but drying their skins for sale would have enabled O'Rourke to maximise his winters in the bush. A photo of what is probably O'Rourke's hut shows that it was equipped with a skin drying chimney typical of those developed in the Cradle Mountain-Middlesex Plains area for the drying of possum and wallaby skins. The secret to raising capital and maintaining backers was of course constant self-reference in the mining columns of newspapers, a *typical O'Rourke-ism* being 'O'Rourkes Hydraulic showing gold freely in the face'.[62] The faces of O'Rourke's personal rehab clinic are now choked with *Bauera rubioides* ('dog rose' as it is known as a garden shrub) but the workings are nonetheless impressive.

Figure 8: *Huntingdon Roller Mill at the Lucy Spur hard rock workings*.

Source: Nic Haygarth.

Conclusion

The willingness of new shareholders to buy forfeited shares in an apparently failed gold mine is testament to the extraordinary allure of gold in the 1890s. Despite this, the only Pieman mine to survive the hydraulic debacle was the failed Lucy Spur, which was briefly reinvented as a hard rock mine after the discovery of a gold-bearing dyke. In the years 1898–1901 the company drove several adits and tried to crush the stone.[63] A 10-head stamper battery was hauled up the dreaded pack-track in 1898, but by the following year a now rare Huntingdon centrifugal roller quartz mill (still in situ) was in place, being driven by a Pelton wheel.[64] Other appliances on the site today include a jaw crusher. The presence of the Huntingdon mill may only be due to Edward Gaunt's 'predilection for scavenging and recycling outdated and often ill-suited equipment', that is, it may have been a cheap but inadequate response to the problem of processing the ore.[65]

Corinna followed the Lucy Spur and all its compatriots into oblivion. In 1907 the prospector and track cutter T.B. Moore found the village to be a terrestrial version of the Mary Celeste, the 25 deserted houses and stores and the two deserted pubs still equipped with beds, pots and cooking utensils, with the abandoned orchards, vegetable and flower gardens threatening to overwhelm the place. The publicans, Webster and Davis, were in the cemetery. Taking his pick of buildings, Moore camped the night in the redundant post and telegraph office.[66] The village site has now been reinvented as the Corinna Wilderness Experience eco-tourism resort.

Near the Experience, the main race of the Corinna Hydraulic can still be found tunnelled beneath the Corinna Highway, while the New Donaldson's unutilized 19.4-km-

long channel puzzles drivers on the Western Explorer Road as it snakes across the foothills of Mount Donaldson. The Western Explorer, opened down the western coastal strip in 1996, is known colloquially as the 'Road to Nowhere'—and this is the race to nowhere. However, the Mayday Mine under the Black Bluff Range remains the best preserved of Tasmania's hydraulic gold claims, with its head races, telescoping pipe system and monitor still in place and the working face, operations area and tail race easy to interpret. The overgrown, isolated Lucy Spur site also tells a tale. Although not a financial success, this mine can be said to have served the West Coast of Tasmania well. Its blacksmith Jack Earle developed an interest in politics while working there, representing the district at a mining conference.[67] In 1906 the then Zeehan unionist won the West Coast state seat of Waratah, and he served as the first Labor Premier of Tasmania for a week in 1909, returning to that office in the years 1914–16. Earle was eventually vilified by the Labor Party as a 'rat',[68] but his intervention to stop Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd mining the Gordon River's so-called 'Marble Cliffs' for smelting flux in 1914 suggests that Tasmania's West Coast meant more to him than just jobs and resource exploitation. Perhaps his days in a Huon pine skiff on the spectacular reaches of the middle Pieman River had worked on his soul.[69]

Units
1 inch = 25.4 mm, 1 foot = 0.3048 m, 1 mile = 1.609 km, 1 acre = 0.4047 hectares.
1 troy oz (the standard measure of gold and silver) = 20 dwt = 31.10348 g; 1 dwt = 1.555 g.
1 pound (lb) = 0.454 kg, 1 ton (long) = 2,240 pounds (lbs) = 1.01604 tonnes.

Pre-decimal currency
£1 (pound) = 20s (shillings) and 1 shilling = 12d (pence)

Endnotes

[1] K.J. Finucane, *The Mathinna and Tower Hill Goldfields*, Geological Survey Bulletin, no. 43, Department of Mines (Tas.), Hobart, 1935, p. 3, https://www.mrt.tas.gov.au/mrtdoc/dominfo/download/GSB43/GSB43.pdf, accessed 10 June 2022; 'The Late H.J. Brock's Will', *Mercury*, 19 September 1906, p. 2.
[2] G. Mudd, D. Guiro, S. Mohr, L. Mason, *Gold Resources and Production: Australia in a Global Context*, CSIRO Minerals Down Under National Research Flagship, 2012, p. 38, http://cfsites1.uts.edu.au/find/isf/publications/muddetal2012goldresourcesproduction.pdf, accessed 10 June 2022.
[3] For a concocted gold field and tin mine, see the letters between James 'Philosopher' Smith, Alfred Field and others regarding the claims of supposed mineral discoverer John Darling Polkey, January 1883 to January 1884, NS234/3/12, NS234/3/13, NS234/2/1/9 and NS234/2/1/10 (Tasmanian Archives Office, afterwards TA).
[4] The sensational report about Mount Lyell gold came from Inspector of Mines Gustav Thureau, who believed its gold deposits 'practically inexhaustible' and compared the Mount Lyell Iron Blow to the famous gold deposits of Mount Morgan in Queensland. See Gustav Thureau, *The Linda Goldfield: its Auriferous and other Mineral Deposits*, Department of Mines, Launceston, October 1886, pp. 1–3.
[5] The Frenchmans Peak Gold Mining Company Limited, which operated near Corinna, was registered in London, the Bell Mount Hydraulic Sluicing Company Limited in Edinburgh, Scotland.
[6] Mark Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East and West Coasts of Tasmania from 1876 to 1913*, the author, Launceston, 1915?, p. 36.
[7] William S. Greever, *The Bonanza West: the Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848–1900*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963, pp. 50 and 54.
[8] Ion L. Idriess, *Prospecting for Gold, other Minerals and Precious Stones*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1931, pp. 112–48.
[9] James Smith to W.M. Crosby, 3 June and 16 June 1875, NS234/2/1/2 (TA).

[10] Gustav Thureau, *Report of Inspector of Mines for 1883*, Legislative Council Paper 60/1884, pp. 8–10.
[11] See Nic Haygarth, 'An "Island" within an Island: the Maritime/Riverine Culture of Tasmania's Pieman River Goldfield 1877–85', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 10, October 2012, pp. 55–71.
[12] Gustav Thureau, *West Coast*, Legislative Council Paper, no. 77/1882, p. 7.
[13] Gustav Thureau, *West Coast*, p. 9.
[14] Editorial, *Launceston Examiner*, 7 November 1882, p 2.
[15] Gustav Thureau, *Report on the Mineral Resources and on the Permanency of the Lisle Gold Field*, House of Assembly Paper 46/1882, p. 1.
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[17] Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, 5th ed., Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 2003 (first published 1963), pp. 185–86 and 193–94.
[18] Back-Tracks Heritage Consultants, *Lucy Spur Goldfield, North-West Tasmania: Historic Heritage Assessment*, Archaeological Survey Report, no. 97/01, Mineral Resources Tasmania, Hobart, 1997, p. 15.
[19] Alexander Montgomery, 'Report on the Tin Mines of the Blue Tier, County of Dorset', Department of Mines, Tasmania, 1893, p. 13, https://www.mrt.tas.gov.au/mrtdoc/dominfo/download/OS_101/OS_101.pdf, accessed 4 June 2022.
[20] See *Launceston Examiner*, 3 September 1892, p. 1.
[21] Advert, *Cornwall Chronicle* (Launceston), 25 January 1878, p. 1; 'A Merry Party', *Launceston Examiner*, 29 February 1892, p. 4; 'From Paradise to Beulah', *Launceston Examiner*, 1 March 1893, p. 3.
[22] 'Items of News', *Mount Alexander Mail*, 21 October 1873, p. 2; 'Sluicing the Bendigo Creek', *Bendigo Advertiser*, 1 April 1893, p. 4; 'Sweet Marie', *Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 5 November 1896, p. 10.
[23] 'A Mining Deputation', *Mercury* (Hobart), 30 June 1893, p. 3.
[24] 'Social Gathering at Tuapeka West', *Tuapeka Times*, 20 May 1891, p. 3; 'Mining News', *Tuapeka Times*, 17 June 1891, p. 3; 'Mining Notes', *Tuapeka Times*, 11 January 1893, p. 5; 'Mining Notes', *Tuapeka Times*, 27 June 1894, p. 3; 'The Rise and Shine Co.'s Claim, Pomahoka', *Otago Witness*, 18 May 1892, p. 3; 'Hydraulic Sluicing in Tasmania', *Launceston Examiner*, 12 December 1892, p. 3 and 10 February 1894, p. 8.
[25] See Nic Haygarth, '"Cornwall of the Antipodes": the "Cornish" Tin Boom at Mount Heemskirk, Tasmania, 1881–84', *Journal of Australasian Mining History*, vol. 15, October 2017, pp. 65–80.
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[27] 'Social Gathering at Tuapeka West', *Tuapeka Times*, 20 May 1891, p. 3; untitled article, *Tuapeka Times*, 27 June 1894, p. 3.
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