

Mining the Van Diemen's Land Company holdings 1851–1899: a case of bad luck and clever adaptation

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The Van Diemen's Land Company (V.D.L. Co.) might be forgiven for cursing its luck when it came to mining, for decades of searching for minerals on its own lands in north-western Van Diemen's Land (known as Tasmania from 1856) proved fruitless. Its major holding, the 150,000-acre Surrey Hills block, was just outside the rich Mount Read Volcanics zone and capped with basalt which obstructed prospecting,¹ while the Mount Bischoff tin deposits, discovered in 1871, were four kilometres outside its boundaries—and that was not the company's only near miss. For years its prospector W.R. Bell (see Fig. 1) scratched away at mineralisation on the edge of the rich scheelite and magnetite skarn deposit which in the twentieth century was opened up as the Kara mine. This was also situated a few kilometres outside V.D.L. Co. boundaries, and only commenced operation long after the company withdrew from the area.² Similarly, modern exploration techniques revealed the valuable Hellyer ore body opened up in 1989 in the Mount Read Volcanic belt, only four kilometres south of the V.D.L. Co.'s former Surrey Hills block.

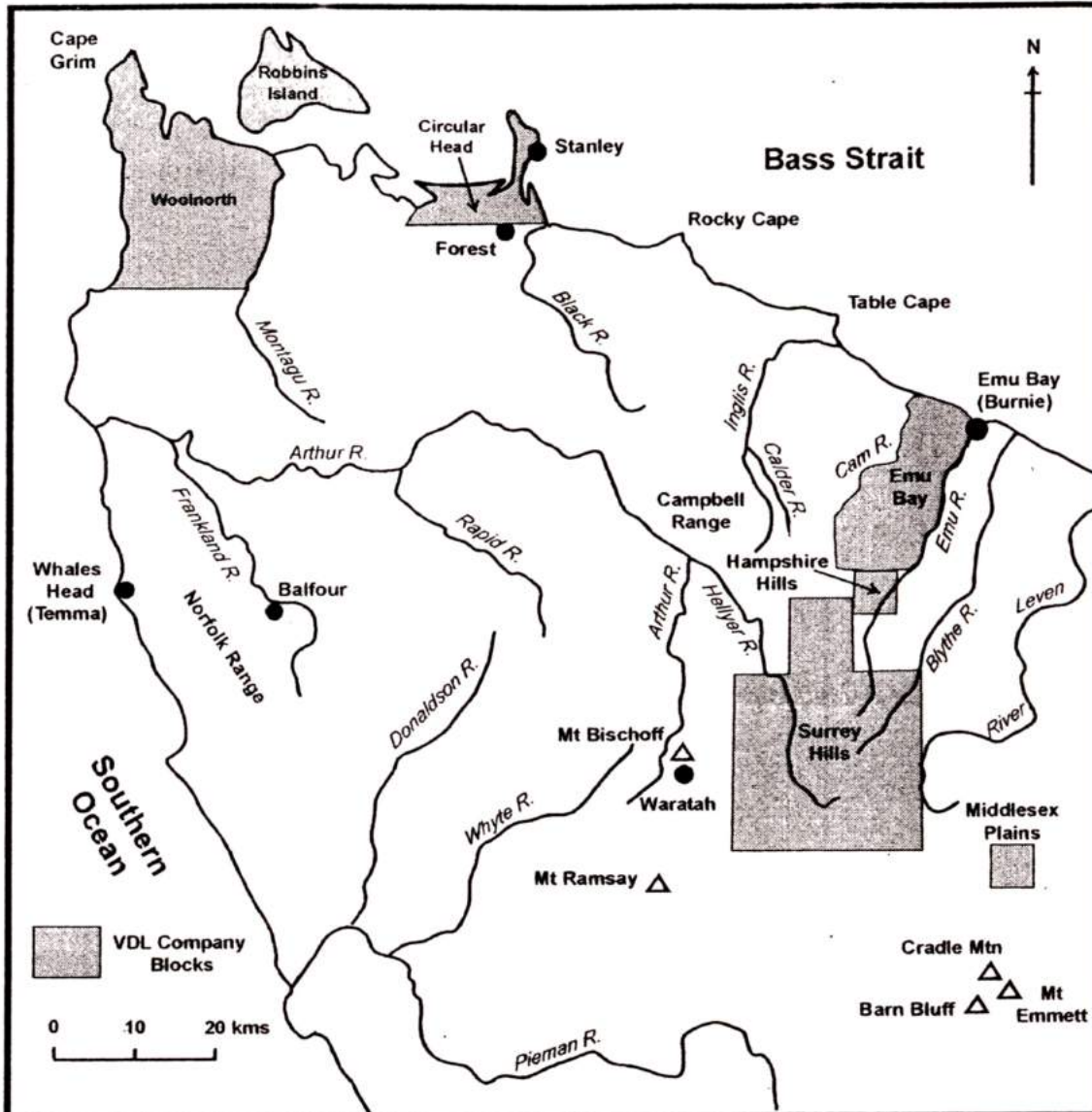
Yet mining was the company's making. The near miss at Mount Bischoff actually enabled it to turn around its fortunes. The V.D.L. Co. struggled for survival for almost half a century as primarily a wool-growing concern before this landmark mineral discovery was made, and while the company owned no shares in the Mount Bischoff tin mine, it did own the nearest convenient deep water port site, Emu Bay (Burnie), and nearly all the intervening land, enabling it to monopolise the Mount Bischoff trade. Further mineral discoveries sparked by Mount Bischoff also benefited the company. The tram/rail system which, through subsidiary companies, the V.D.L. Co. extended south to Zeehan, enabled it to not only to exploit West Coast trade but to subdivide and sell its finally accessible inland holdings and to develop its own trade in fat beef cattle to the mining centres. Thus the company's efforts to diversify its income stream and mitigate its slow start as a grazier by turning to mining can ultimately be seen as vindicated.

Establishing the V.D.L. Co. in Tasmania

The royal charter granted to the V.D.L. Co. in London in 1825 activated the ambitions of a group of businessmen who wanted to grow fine wool in the colonies for the British market.³ Van Diemen's Land was chosen as the site of operations largely because of the description of this colony in a book written by Sheffield-born businessman Edward Curr, whom the company subsequently appointed its local agent in Van Diemen's Land.⁴ The V.D.L. Co.'s timing was unlucky, as when the company's officers arrived in the colony in 1826, Curr discovered that most of the good pastoral land had already

been granted to woolgrowers. To find an allocation of 250,000 acres (101,171 ha.), the company now needed to look in the far north-west, which was remote from settlement and in places heavily forested.⁵

Map 1: North-western Tasmania, showing V.D.L. Co. holdings.



Source: the late Glyn Roberts

Aside from Curr, however, the company lacked experience of Tasmanian conditions. In choosing its inland holdings it failed to recognise that the ‘park-like’ grasslands it encountered were unnatural, shaped as hunting grounds by thousands of years of Aboriginal firestick farming, and far too cold for grazing in winter. The V.D.L. Co. selected coastal land at Emu Bay (about 50,000 acres), Circular Head (about 20,000 acres) and Cape Grim (Woolnorth, about 100,000 acres); Robbins, Walker and Trefoil Islands (about 26,000 acres) in the far north-west; major inland holdings at the Hampshire Hills (about 10,000 acres) and the Surrey Hills (about 150,000 acres), plus the approximately 10,000-acre Middlesex Plains block as a staging post on its stock route to the settled districts and markets.⁶ This amounted to something like 366,000

acres (148,115 ha.), a 46 percent expansion of its original allocation, since an allowance was made for the inconvenience of operating on separate blocks of non-contiguous land.

It has been claimed that Tasmania's Cradle Mountain was named thus in 1827 because of its resemblance to a miner's cradle—more than two decades before the Californian gold rushes brought that device to worldwide attention.⁷ This seems unlikely; the mountain was christened by a young Englishman, V.D.L. Co. surveyor Joseph Fossey, and neither Fossey nor the company's principal surveyor Henry Hellyer is known to have had mining experience or geological expertise.

Certainly Hellyer and Fossey found little in the way of minerals while leading the V.D.L. Co.'s search for wool-growing pasture. Hellyer identified a slate deposit on the Arthur River during his exploration work, but he also scrambled through the horizontal scrub on the slopes of Mount Bischoff without discovering its rich tin deposits. As a result of his assessment of there being good grazing land at the Surrey Hills east of that mountain, his wool-growing employer set the boundary of its largest holding in a position which excluded the undiscovered tin deposits by a mere four kilometres. The V.D.L. Co.'s charter did not grant it mineral rights to its own lands anyway: these belonged to the Crown, to whom the company would have needed to apply for a mining lease.⁸

The search for gold in the wake of the New South Wales and Victorian rushes

After disastrous sheep losses at the Hampshire and Surrey Hills, the company's fortunes dipped even further during the depressed 1840s.⁹ In 1850, 510 shares in the company were forfeited, and in 1851 it was said to be incurring 'extraordinary and ruinous' expenditure.¹⁰ Consequently it was decided to abandon farming, withdrawing all stock and effectively becoming an absentee landlord in Tasmania¹¹ but maintaining a local agent, James Gibson, and offering its land to graziers for rent. The company also sought consolation in the beneficial trade effects of gold, which had already helped to raise the price of agricultural produce.¹² However, expectations of increased rental prices resulting from the gold rushes across Bass Strait were soon disappointed—and no payable gold discovery would ever be made on V.D.L. Co. property.¹³

The main stimulus to mining in Tasmania came from local prospectors returning home from the Victorian goldfields, but the island's gold search was characteristically ill-directed.¹⁴ Through the 1850s and early 1860s there were many reports of rich strikes, from the South Esk River in the north, to the Inglis River in the north-west, and more ambitious yet, the claim that a goldfield stretched from Macquarie Harbour in the west to the Surrey Hills south of latter-day Burnie.¹⁵ V.D.L. Co. investigations of alleged gold discoveries included testing quartz on its property at Black River in the far north-west—in the mistaken belief that all quartz contained gold.¹⁶ Through the 1860s Circular Head prospector Skelton Buckley (S.B) Emmett's (see Fig.2) petitions about gold prospecting near its properties tantalised the V.D.L. Co. directors in London.¹⁷ The *Reward for Discovery of a Profitable Goldfield Act* (1863) made parliamentary provision for a reward of up to £5,000 for finding a payable gold in Tasmania. In addition, until 1869 the V.D.L. Co. offered a £500 reward for the discovery of payable

gold on its north-western property—claiming of which depended upon first gaining the government reward.¹⁸

Figure 1: *William Robert (W.R.) Bell, principal prospector of the V.D.L. Co. lands.*



Source: Richard McGuffie photo, from *Cyclopaedia of Tasmania* (1900).

Samples of auriferous black sand obtained on the Arthur River catchment on separate trips by prospectors Emmett, W.R. Bell and Louis von Bibra persuaded the V.D.L. Co. to sponsor a new, shorter Arthur River access track from its Circular Head blocks in 1863.¹⁹ The company also paid for twenty hundredweight (about 1,020 kg.) of black sand to be packed out and shipped to England for assaying. It returned about 7 oz. of fine gold and 3 oz. of silver per ton, but no Arthur River gold matrix would ever be found.²⁰ A visitor to the V.D.L. Co.'s London office witnessed the new optimism:

‘they appeared to think that [Circular Head, the location of two major V.D.L. Co. properties] will become a great place yet when the goaldfields [sic] are opened up as expected, Shortly. [sic] Mr Emmett gives them great encouragement in the matter ...’²¹

In 1865 Edward Hammond Hargraves, the self-proclaimed discoverer of gold in New South Wales was brought to Tasmania by public subscription in the hope of turning around the colony's fortunes. Much abuse was directed at Hargraves during his visit at a time when his credibility had been brought into question,²² and this peaked when he neglected to travel thirteen kilometres out of his way to inspect the Calder River gold diggings. His examination of the Arthur River reputedly only took place after Emmett spent a week opening up a bridle track. Having ridden the whole way to the river, the great man reputedly did not alight from his horse even then, gold samples having to be carried to him.²³

Hargraves recommended damming the Arthur River to work its bed for gold, and expenditure of about £300 for prospecting the area under Emmett's leadership.²⁴ When the Hargraves subscription committee demurred, Emmett again supplicated the V.D.L. Co. in London, securing a promise of £50 towards his prospecting costs, providing the Circular Head community put up the same amount.²⁵ That was the limit of the company's forbearance with locals.

In 1866 former Tasmanian Government Geologist Charles Gould was turned down when he offered to conduct a mineral survey of the company's lands, and in the

following year a local prospector, James ‘Philosopher’ Smith, received no answer when he asked what terms the company would offer for a mineral discovery on its property.²⁶

Figure 2: *Skelton Buckley (S.B.) Emmett, mineral prospector based at Forest, near Stanley.*



Source: Margaret Wilkinson.

A ‘rabbit hutch on wheels’: the Mount Bischoff Tramway²⁷

In 1869, after seventeen years as an absentee landlord, the acquisition of an enterprising young Scotsman, James Norton Smith, as its local agent enabled the V.D.L. Co. to return to vigorous operations in Tasmania.²⁸ He turned out to be a huge asset to the company, and it would soon experience a second stroke of good luck—the discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff in December 1871. Although the tin was four kilometres outside its property, the company owned the nearest convenient port site, Emu Bay (Burnie), and virtually all the intervening land. It should have embraced wholeheartedly the opportunity to exploit the Mount Bischoff mining traffic, but instead

balked at the opportunity by building an inefficient 74-kilometre-long wooden, horse-drawn tramway that stopped short of its target and soon needed replacement.

Its initial prospecting operations were equally myopic. Mount Bischoff was just outside V.D.L. Co. land—but was there another Mount Bischoff on its land? The prospect of tin in granite outcrops nearby satisfied the Cornish tradition, and it was to a Cornish prospector that the company turned. In 1872, to prospect its holdings, it engaged John Hunt, one of the men who had tested Emmett’s black sand in England. Hunt demonstrated a similar level of commitment to Hargraves—and was about his equal as a bushman. He refused to start on one trip without a bottle of sherry, and got lost, as he claimed, ‘without food or water’ at the Montagu River within 20 metres of that stream.²⁹

Although dismissive of Emmett, Norton Smith reckoned James ‘Philosopher’ Smith, the discoverer of the Mount Bischoff tin, the only prospector worth the company’s attention.³⁰ Yet Smith, who was then looking to make a gold discovery that would finance opening up the Mount Bischoff tin, still could not secure terms from the V.D.L. Co. about making a mineral discovery on its property,³¹ clearly frustrating Norton Smith, who wanted the directors to offer a reward for discovery of a payable mine.³²

Despite producing fantastically rich ore samples, the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company (Mount Bischoff Co.) struggled for survival for more than four years. The main problem was transport, that is, getting its ore out and supplies and equipment in. Bogs, fallen trees and the Wey and Hellyer River fords restricted carting to dry summer months, when broken drays and spilled loads signposted the way, and in the dreaded, sunless Nine-Mile Forest, Dead Horse Gully earned its name. Horse and bullock teams strained not with their loads but with the digestive apparatus of the mires.

As early as March 1874 one of the V.D.L. Co. directors, Horatio Bland, ruled out a railway as too expensive.³³ Tasmania's first railway, the 83-kilometre long, 5-foot-3-inches gauge Launceston and Western Railway, had opened in 1871, and probably served to caution the company about a fully-fledged rail system. The line, built by a private company using both private subscription and Tasmanian government debentures, had cost more than £400,000, with the South Esk River Bridge at Longford alone accounting for £34,000.³⁴ The Launceston and Western Line crossed flat land with easy grades, little forest to clear and only one major river to bridge. The similar distance between Emu Bay and Mount Bischoff presented more challenges, with major bridgework needed at the Hellyer River, long hills to climb and the so-called Nine-Mile Forest to penetrate. James Smith, a director of and major shareholder in the Mount Bischoff Co., expressed disappointment at the V.D.L. Co. directors' decision to build a wooden-railed Mount Bischoff tramway, not a railway, in August 1874 but, being so far removed from the action in London, their cautious approach is understandable.³⁵

Figure 3: *The V.D.L. Co.'s timber tramway operating in the Nine Mile Forest south of Burnie. This horse-drawn tram working on wooden rails shows the technology used on the Mount Bischoff Tramway.*



Source: Burnie Regional Museum.

Smith was understandably anxious that the V.D.L. Co. expedite its Mount Bischoff connector, whatever form it took, and realised that a mineral discovery on its own lands might push the process along. Smith and Norton Smith came to what they saw as a mutual agreement to have the experienced Tasmanian prospector W.R. Bell examine the V.D.L. Co. lands.³⁶ Bell, who had returned to the island after years prospecting on the mainland, obliged by discovering silver on the Hampshire Hills block and scheelite and barytes at the Two Hummocks on the Surrey Hills block in 1875.³⁷ Additional pressure to make haste with the tramway came from the solicitor William Ritchie, who as well as serving the V.D.L. Co. was a shareholder in the Mount Bischoff Co.³⁸

Bell would be the principal prospector of the company's estate and practically the only one to make promising mineral discoveries: not just the silver, scheelite and barytes, but lodges of manganese and iron just off the Hampshire Hills block at the Little Mount (Highwood Hill), close to the site of the latter-day Kara scheelite and magnetite mine.³⁹ In June 1876, German mining engineer Georg Ulrich, who had been brought to Tasmania to examine the Mount Bischoff tin mine, reported that samples from the Hampshire silver mine suggested 'there being rich silver in store'.⁴⁰ Trenches, shafts and adits were sunk and driven into the banks of the Emu River, and workers' huts were built on the western side of the river, which was spanned by a bridge.

Still, there was no immediate return and, having spent £2,000 on mineral prospecting, in 1877 the V.D.L. Co. returned to a reactive mining policy, hoping that private syndicates would work their land and thereby stimulate commerce. The cost of the tramway, now complete as far as the Hampshire Hills, stood at £30,000. The company saw the tramway as the means of not only capturing the mining traffic but increasing the value of its own lands. However, deterioration of the gum and myrtle rails in the harsh climate of highland Tasmania soon revealed the tramway to be a false economy.⁴¹ The V.D.L. Co.'s refusal to buy the private land of Rouse's Camp—which meant terminating its tramway three kilometres from its intended destination, Waratah (Mount Bischoff)—was equally short sighted. Nor was the tram service comfortable, being described as 'a rabbit hutch on wheels, which would be condemned by the R.S.P.C.A.' (see Fig. 3). This was not an objection to the behaviour of the driver, Leach, who, removed from whipping distance of the leading nag in the trio, kept a supply of stones which he lobbed at this animal to urge it to greater effort: 'Gee up, you hoss there!'⁴² No, it referred to the spine-breaking experience of sitting on cushion-less boxes shored up by sharp diagonal bars and apparently designed to seat infants. His was not the only discomfort, for passenger car compartments were separated by walls high enough to ensure that human heads impeded the draught shooting through the vehicle. The roof and canvas side-flaps remained weatherproof so long as the weather behaved, and only a dirty rope lashed breast-high across the back prevented those in the rear compartment being pitched out onto the tracks at any eager response from Leach's volleys.⁴³

Many hours of shivering in this 'missing link' between the stagecoach and the train lodged the traveller at a siding dubbed 'Pleasant Banks' (Rouse's Camp, near the later site of Waratah's pioneer cemetery), where he was passed to the Mount Bischoff

Co.'s own tram. Here two shillings won him or her, possession of a straw-filled sack on a dirty, open tramcar, from the back of which a driver dressed like a lighthouse keeper lashed the poor beast leading the way through the Bischoff mist for the final three kilometres into Waratah.

When it became apparent that its tramway had limited scope for profit, the V.D.L. Co. agreed to upgrade it as an iron-railed, steam-driven railway, which was extended into Waratah in 1884. Cuttings and embankments on the tramway were widened and strengthened respectively. The gauge was increased from three feet to three feet six inches, Tasmania's future standard gauge.⁴⁴ Rails were secured to sawn or split stringybark sleepers by dog spikes on the straights, and fang bolts, with clips, on the curves. Machine-broken basalt was used for ballast.⁴⁵ A Beyer Peacock and two coal-burning Hunslet steam locomotives, unsuited to the steep grades, were the line's initial standard-bearers.⁴⁶ The V.D.L. Co. had now spent £82,000 on top of £48,000 for the original tramway, but the expenditure was still well below that of the Launceston and Western Railway Company Ltd for its line of similar length.⁴⁷

The Van Diemen's Land Minerals Company (V.D.L.M. Co.) (1882–92)

The West Coast mining field was now opening up in the wake of tin mining at Mount Bischoff. In 1881 a Mount Heemskirk lode tin mining boom followed Inspector of Mines, Gustav Thureau's, spruiking of that region.⁴⁸ More significantly for the V.D.L. Co., in December 1881, Ulrich returned to the Hampshire silver mine, a crushing from which had returned only a miniscule amount of silver.⁴⁹ Paradoxically, Ulrich now stated that he had 'more faith in it than ever' and that he would 'strongly recommend immediate steps to be taken to open it up'.⁵⁰

Frustrated by local investors, in 1882 the V.D.L. Co. floated the subsidiary V.D.L.M. Co. in England. The V.D.L.M. Co. was granted sole right to prospect the parent company's land for five years, but had paid-up capital of only £6,262.⁵¹ A prospector with Victorian experience, George R. Hodgkinson, was engaged to examine the company's land and work the Hampshire silver mine.⁵² Unfortunately, like John Hunt, he proved more interested in the bottle than the geological pick.⁵³ While sober, Hodgkinson managed to establish a sail to increase the flow of air in the silver mine's lower adit, where a candle would not burn. He also installed a forge, a blacksmith's shop, charcoal kiln and a brick assay furnace.⁵⁴ By 1883 four paling huts and two log huts housed the workers.⁵⁵

The company's original agreement with the V.D.L.M. Co. involved only the Hampshire and Surrey Hills, but in 1883 it was extended to all its Tasmanian properties.⁵⁶ When Hodgkinson was dismissed, Norton Smith tried to engage Bell, but he was prospecting the Barrier Ranges in outback New South Wales.⁵⁷ Instead, in 1884 Cornish miner James Rowe was engaged by the V.D.L.M. Co. for twelve months to report on its prospects. Rowe actually spent nearly two years on the V.D.L. Co. estate, going for months at a time without contact. After recommending expenditure of £500 at the silver mine and £860 on a full trial of the Two Hummocks barytes, he brought in an unfavourable report suggesting no further outlay on prospecting.⁵⁸

These disappointing results were magnified by the phenomenal profits now being generated by the nearby Mount Bischoff tin mine. By 1880 Mount Bischoff Co. shares that at one time had been worth less than £3 were fetching £50. Mine manager Ferd (Heinrich Wilhelm Ferdinand) Kayser having opened up the heart of the mine, the Brown Face, the 1880s were boom time for the mine, as the market price soared and the Brown Face, like Norman Lindsay's Magic Pudding, seemed inexhaustible.⁵⁹ By 1890 the Mount Bischoff Co. chalked up its first million in dividends, only the second Australian base-metal mine (after South Australia's Wallaroo and Moonta Mining and Smelting Company) to achieve this.⁶⁰

The V.D.L. Co. still aspired to its own mining boom. In 1886 both W.R. Bell and Inspector of Mines Gustav Thureau made the controversial claim that the gold-bearing schists or slates of the Mount Lyell Iron Blow about 50 kilometres south of Mount Bischoff were volcanic muds thrown up by hydrothermal action.⁶¹ Like Thureau, Bell compared the Mount Lyell Iron Blow to the famous gold deposits of Mount Morgan in Queensland.⁶² Thureau's October 1886 prediction of 'practically inexhaustible' gold deposits at Mount Lyell made iron blows (pyritic iron lodes) the flavour of the moment across Tasmania,⁶³ and the V.D.L.M. Co. believed it had at least two iron blows of its own. There were pyritic iron lodes at the Hampshire Hills, and both Thureau and Bell in their reports about Mount Lyell mentioned that its auriferous formation was associated with barytes.⁶⁴ Was there another Mount Lyell at the Surrey Hills? The V.D.L.M. Co.'s English mineral adviser, R.J. Frecheville, urged further work, however, Bell's pyritic iron lode contained no gold or tungstate of iron.⁶⁵ By the time Bell was re-engaged by the V.D.L.M. Co., further investigation at Mount Lyell had convinced him that the hydrothermal theory was wrong, and that it had caused 'wild or indiscriminate speculation' to prevail over 'practical scientific inquiry'.⁶⁶

In 1887 the V.D.L. Co. granted the V.D.L.M. Co. a two-year extension of the existing agreement. A horse whim was installed at the silver mine to pump out the lower level, which extended below the level of the adjacent river.⁶⁷ However, the V.D.L.M. Co. ceased work in 1889 without making any additional mineral discoveries, and it was liquidated in 1892.⁶⁸

Perhaps the final test of gold on V.D.L. Co. land came in 1895 when a private company, the Mayday Gold Mining Company, No Liability, was formed to hydraulically sluice extensive, allegedly auriferous, drift deposits in the south-eastern corner of the Surrey Hills block. Treatment of several hundred tons of material returned little more than traces of gold, suggesting that the good prospects which prompted the work were obtained from a more recent, superficial deposit of limited extent.⁶⁹

Mount Bischoff tourism on the Emu Bay Railway

While mining its own land proved fruitless, the V.D.L. Co. was assured of mining traffic on its Mount Bischoff railway, since there was no road that enabled competition. The company's monopoly on transport between Burnie and Mount Bischoff allowed it to milk not just the Mount Bischoff Co., but the people of Waratah and all the smaller

mines in the district—or so claimed Mount Bischoff Co. mine manager Ferd Kayser., who complained bitterly about the freight price.⁷⁰

Figure 4: *The Mount Bischoff tin mine and Waratah, c.1887.*



Source: Probably a Stephen Spurling III photo, courtesy of John Shepherd.

In 1887 the V.D.L. Co. formed the Emu Bay and Mount Bischoff Railway Company to separate its railway undertakings from its general business,⁷¹ and this company continued to monopolise Mount Bischoff passenger and freight services through the tin mine's most productive years. Meanwhile, the V.D.L. Co. directors pondered extending their railway further south to capture more mining freight. The Queensland Smelting Company's proposal to establish a sampling and purchasing depot at Burnie to deal with Tasmanian silver ores, signalled confidence that the Zeehan-Dundas silver field would recover from the financial crisis of 1891.⁷²

Efforts were also made to exploit the tourism appeal of what was regarded as the greatest tin mine in the world. Not only was the Mount Bischoff mine (see Fig. 4) a technological wonder, but it had been carved out of ancient rainforest, containing enormous tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*). This was at the time of 'pteridomania' ('fern fever') across the British Empire, a 'disease' exacerbated in the Australian colonies by the 'tropical' size of local ferns.⁷³ An 1886 almanac had advertised Mount Bischoff as an 'excellent field' for botanists, boasting that its gullies and creeks owned 'an almost endless variety of small plants, ferns, and moss', including the 'Gordon Lily' (*Blandfordia marginata*) and native laurel (*Anopterus glandulosus*). The author found

beauty and variety where selectors found relentless obstacles, praising the vista from Mount Bischoff as 'one of the grandest sights in the colony...'⁷⁴

Railway provided the first form of pleasure travel for the Australian working class.⁷⁵ However, the Mount Bischoff excursions arranged on its railway by the V.D.L. Co. from 1887 were not day trips but overnights, excluding those without access to leisure time. Excursionists travelled from Launceston to Devonport by a Tasmanian Government Railways (T.G.R.) service, then steamed to Burnie before joining the private rail service to Mount Bischoff. A guided tour of the mine and dressing sheds was undertaken, but excursionists also had time to experience primeval nature. For some this was their first experience of temperate rainforest—a type of tourism rarely today associated with the mining industry. Hobart trains were synchronised in order to accommodate southern excursionists,⁷⁶ and Launceston photographer Stephen Spurling II, who returned with the best-known images of the Mount Bischoff mine in its peak period, accompanied the 1887 excursion party.⁷⁷

From 1888 Norton Smith worked with steamship companies to bring Melbournians across Bass Strait to north-western Tasmania every Easter and Christmas, adding waterfalls and other side-trips to the Mount Bischoff excursion.⁷⁸ Patronage increased until 140 crossed the Strait for Easter 1892.⁷⁹ At Easter 1893 excursionists from Hobart and Launceston arrived on the Friday, departed Burnie for Mount Bischoff on the Saturday 8am train, returning on a 5pm service.⁸⁰ The cost from Hobart return was £3.⁸¹ It was a great success, with some delighted excursionists calling for another trip in winter.⁸² For Easter 1894 a Bass Strait service from Melbourne to Burnie and return was added, allowing Victorians to arrive on Good Friday and visit the waterfalls, then take an all-day trip to Mount Bischoff on the Saturday, arriving back in Melbourne on Sunday morning.⁸³ Promotion was assisted by a well-known Melbourne journalist, 'The Vagabond' (John Stanley James, aka Julian Thomas), who took the train to Mount Bischoff in October 1894:

Down in the gorges, primal forest clothes the banks of the streams; lovely myrtle covers the slopes ... The great attraction is in the magnificence of the surroundings, making this the most beautifully located mine in the world ... Returning to Burnie, I conclude that to those interested in mining and machinery, and to those like myself only interested in the picturesque, a journey to Mount Bischoff cannot fail to be one of great enjoyment.⁸⁴

The Emu Bay and Mount Bischoff Railway Company received £17,337 from its railway in 1894–95, which included mineral freight of £9,651, livestock freight of £14 (sic), ordinary freight of £4,319, passenger transport amounting to £2,395 and £400 from the mail contract. Operating expenses amounted to £5,761, leaving the company £11,576 ahead.⁸⁵ Yet with Mount Bischoff production apparently having peaked, the company looked to railway extension to the Zeehan–Dundas silver fields as the means to increase freight and passenger revenue.⁸⁶ At the time of Tasmania's so-called 'Railway War', when government was dominated by private interests, the *Van Diemen's Land Company's Waratah and Zeehan Railway Act* (1895) authorised construction of a railway from the existing Waratah line to within one mile of Leslie

Junction, on the Mount Dundas and Zeehan Railway.⁸⁷ Significantly, it also authorised the construction of branch lines, with the Emu Bay Railway Company (E.B.R. Co.) being floated to take advantage of this clause by building a line as far as Zeehan itself.

The trade in meat to the mining fields

The true economic impact of the Mount Bischoff tin mine can be measured in the mining discoveries it stimulated further south, such as the Zeehan–Dundas silver-lead field and the Mount Lyell copper mine. In 1901 Queenstown (5,051 people) and Zeehan (5,014) were the third- and fourth-largest Tasmanian centres. One in every seven Tasmanians lived on the mining fields, about 22,000 of them on the West Coast, where there was little pastureland for grazing.⁸⁸

The West Coast cattle trade began in the mid 1870s with the supply of meat to Mount Bischoff, with stock being slaughtered on the mountain itself, giving one of the mine's quarries the name Slaughteryard Gully Face. In 1879 'starving' miners on the Pieman River goldfield demanded a stock track down the West Coast from Circular Head, with Norton Smith receiving a request to supply 200 fat sheep.⁸⁹

The heyday of the cattle trade to the mines was from the late 1880s to the late 1890s.⁹⁰ As early as 1887 one of the V.D.L. Co.'s London directors, C.G. Hale, heralded the company's consequent 'greatly improved position and ... the success that had attended the livestock operations at Woolnorth ...'⁹¹ Cattle bred at Woolnorth were fattened at the Green Hills (Circular Head) in the far north-west and at Ridgley, which was conveniently located on the railway line south of Burnie, making it easy to rail them firstly to Mount Bischoff (Waratah) and later to Zeehan as well. In 1891 Norton Smith sold fat cattle to his brother-in-law Charles Tasman Ford, who drove them to Zeehan via the West Coast track for the butcher David Nicholas.⁹² The initial trade slowed when the collapse of the Bank of Van Diemen's Land in October 1891 plunged the Zeehan silver-lead field into depression for several years.⁹³ However, a cheaper food and produce supply for Zeehan was one of the major arguments made in favour of the *Van Diemen's Land Company's Waratah and Zeehan Railway Act* (1895) with, for example, M.H.A. Charles 'Benny' Fenton stating that

He knew of no other place in Tasmania where it took 12 days to drive fat cattle to market—cattle which lost, on an average, a hundredweight per head in the process. He knew of no other place where chaff cost so much ... So it was in the case of almost everything used at Zeehan.⁹⁴

The most intense period of West Coast cattle trading for the V.D.L. Co. came during the railway building. In the late 1890s, Gormanston butcher Frank Gaffney teamed up with Deloraine drover James Leach to enter the contest of supplying beef to the people of Mount Lyell (Queenstown) and Zeehan. It was during this period, with instructions being exchanged on a daily basis, that the telegraph became a vital form of communication for V.D.L. Co. agent Norton Smith and the various West Coast butchers, including not just Gaffney & Leach, but Thomas Davey (of West Coast Meat Supply, Zeehan) and Ryan brothers of Zeehan.⁹⁵ James Leach was so particular about

his beef cattle that in September 1897 he travelled to the remote Woolnorth property to make his selection.⁹⁶ In the year 1899 more than 1,100 cattle were driven from northern Tasmania to the Gaffney & Leach butcheries at Gormanston and Zeehan, about half the stock travelling via the Central Plateau (to Gormanston) and the other half down the West Coast Track (to Zeehan).⁹⁷ Instructions to suppliers had to be prompt and exact. In March 1899 Leach wired from Gormanston: 'Can cattle be trained over the Pieman River have you got any cattle for sale', then on the same day advised that he would take 'sixty cows twenty seven & six per cwt'.⁹⁸ In July of that year he again wired from Gormanston: 'Please send fifteen cattle Monday dont [sic] send any wild cattle cut the tails reply Gormanston'.⁹⁹ These were intended for Gaffney & Leach's Zeehan butchery, with another telegram on the same day advising that consignment was needed to the Pieman River where, presumably, Leach's drover would take over.¹⁰⁰

The advent of the Emu Bay Railway extension to Zeehan, coupled with the government railway line from Zeehan to Strahan and the Mount Lyell Company's Abt Railway from Queenstown to Strahan put paid to much of the droving: as of December 1900, livestock could be freighted from Burnie to Queenstown in few hours.¹⁰¹ The V.D.L. Co. continued to drive cattle to the Balfour tin and copper field south of Woolnorth, and cattle and potatoes produced on that property fed Balfour miners and residents, the potatoes being shipped to the small West Coast port of Temma.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Despite its best efforts, the V.D.L. Co. never became a profitable miner in Tasmania. Lackadaisical work continued at the Hampshire silver mine until 1913, when the experienced former Zeehan mine manager John Craze described it as 'worthless', and advised the company to suspend operations.¹⁰³ By then the V.D.L. Co. had diversified into timber and brick production and was selling off its so far, mostly unproductive land. The Hampshire Hills block that included the silver mine was later sold for eucalypt production. The Mount Bischoff tin mine, revived briefly in 2008, the ongoing Kara scheelite and magnetite mine, and the now sporadically worked Hellyer gold, silver, lead and zinc mine are reminders of what might have been had the V.D.L. Co. been more fortunate in its land selection.

However, mining was the making of the V.D.L. Co. On its own account and with a breakaway company it captured much of Tasmania's mining freight. It also captured a share of the West Coast meat trade, enabling it to turn around its fortunes as a grazier. Building the railway helped the V.D.L. Co. to improve its financial position further by selling off land that was consequently made more accessible. In the period 1912–34 it sold 189,698 acres of land for £519,598, including 122,837 acres of the 150,000-acre Surrey Hills block.¹⁰⁴ The development of the paper and pulp industry at Burnie absorbed another 61,461 acres of mostly unproductive V.D.L. Co. land by 1936.¹⁰⁵ The only original holding retained by the company throughout the twentieth century was Woolnorth, at Cape Grim in the far north-west.

Even in recent years when its majority shareholder has been, firstly, the New Plymouth District Council (New Zealand) and, presently, Moon Lake Investments

(China), the V.D.L. Co. could be seen as one of the longest-lasting British colonial enterprises.¹⁰⁶ Woolnorth was selected as a wool-growing property almost two centuries ago. It later excelled as a beef and potato producer, but today Woolnorth is said to be Australia's largest dairy operation, demonstrating the flexibility which helped bring the V.D.L. Co. such longevity.¹⁰⁷

Endnotes

¹ For the basalt capping, see Alexander Montgomery, Government Geological Surveyor, to James Norton Smith, 30 September 1895, VDL22/1/26, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Hobart [hereafter TAHO].

² Despite W.R. Bell's discovery of iron pyrites nearby, the scheelite and magnetite of the Kara mine were only opened up in the 1970s, long after the V.D.L. Co. sold its adjoining land. By 2006 the mine had produced 5,200,000 tonnes of iron at a grade of 30%, see D.B. Seymour, G.R. Green and C.R. Calver, *The Geology and Mineral Deposits of Tasmania: a Summary*, Geological Survey Bulletin, no. 72, Mineral Resources Tasmania, Hobart, 2006, p. 9.

³ H.J.W. Stokes, 'The Settlement and Development of the Van Diemen's Land Company's Grants in North-western Van Diemen's Land, 1824–1860', BA (Hons.) thesis, Department of History, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 1964, pp. 1–7.

⁴ Stokes, 'The Settlement and Development', pp. 6–7. See Edward Curr, *An Account of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land Principally Designed for the Use of Emigrants*, George Cowie, London, 1824.

⁵ Stokes, 'The Settlement and Development', pp. 7–21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷ See, for example, 'James Oddman (Charles Whitham), 'The Great Vision of the Guarded Mount', *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, 6 May 1920, p. 4.

⁸ Section 10 of the V.D.L. Co. charter stated that 'With respect to the operations of mining, it may be necessary to remark that the Crown has always reserved to itself, upon the grant of waste lands in the colonies, all mines and minerals beneath the surface. A similar reservation will be made in the grant which may be issued in favour of the proposed company. Permission, however, will be given to the company to accept leases or grants of mines from His Majesty within the island of Van Diemen's Land, and to employ their capital in raising minerals, and in all other expenses ordinarily incident to that operation. It will, however, be clearly understood that the company is not to engage in any mining concerns, except upon such lands as may be demised or granted to them by the Crown for that purpose; and that such grants or leases will prescribe such conditions as may from time to time appear necessary to His Majesty, for preventing the capital of the company from being engaged in these undertakings to an unreasonable extent, or in an improvident manner. It is scarcely necessary to add, that it will altogether be optional with the Crown to make or withhold such grants or leases, and that without an express grant or lease the company will not be at liberty to engage in mining operations, even upon their own lands. The ordinary operations of quarrying, or raising lime, clay, or other materials for buildings, do not fall within the meaning of this prohibitory rule.' (The charter is reproduced in Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the Colonies of the British Empire in the West Indies, South America, North America, Asia, Austral-Asia, Africa, and Europe ... from the Official Records*, London, W.H. Allen and George Routledge, 1843, p. 229.)

⁹ 'Eighteenth Annual Report of the Van Diemen's Land Company', *Courier*, 22 September 1843, p. 4. In its efforts to establish tenant farmers on its property, in 1844 the V.D.L. Co. agreed to buy their produce at a fixed price for seven years, see 'Van Diemen's Land Company', *Courier*, 9 January 1850, p. 4. This became a financial disaster when prices dropped, making the produce unsaleable. Much of it was reputedly dumped.

¹⁰ 'Van Diemen's Land Company', *Courier* (Hobart), 9 January 1850, p. 4; 'Van Diemen's Land Company', *Courier*, 18 August 1852, p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The V.D.L. Co. directors asked Gibson to negotiate favourable terms with the Tasmanian government for 'free mining' on its land, because of 'the great loss they have experienced during the last 25 years' in occupying a remote part of the island', Inward Despatch no. 258, 28 May 1852, VDL1/1/6 [TAHO].

¹³ James Gibson, Outward Despatch no. 211, 13 November 1851; Inward Despatches no. 256, 23 May 1852; no. 258, 28 May 1852; no. 260, 31 May 1852, VDL1/1/6 (TAHO).

¹⁴ See, for example, W.R. Bell, 'Gold in Quartz, and Quartz Reefs', *Launceston Examiner*, 8 March 1860, p. 2.

¹⁵ Inward Despatch, un-numbered, 16 May 1857; Inward Despatch no. 289, 16 September 1857; Inward Despatch no. 274, 7 March 1855, VDL1/1/6 (TAHO).

¹⁶ Alleged gold discoveries at Cattley Plain and the Hampshire Hills as well as a slate deposit were also tested. See Inward Despatch no. 260, 31 August 1852, VDL1/6; James Gibson, Outward Despatches no. 306, 10 April 1858; no. 312, 8 July 1858; no. 325, 10 January 1859; and no. 329, 9 May 1859, VDL175/1/4 (TAHO). Details of prospecting and assaying can be found in letters to the V.D.L. Co. agent, VDL22/1/2 (TAHO).

¹⁷ For Emmett, see Nic Haygarth, 'S.B. Emmett: a Pioneer Tasmanian Prospector, from Bendigo to Balfour', *Circular Head Local History Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1, December 2004, pp. 36–69.

¹⁸ V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors to Charles Nichols, Inward Despatch no. 16, 26 October 1860, VDL1/6 (TAHO).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; 'Black Sand', *Launceston Examiner*, 13 September 1862, p. 5; 'Black Sand', *Launceston Examiner*, 18 September 1862, p. 5; 'Black Sand from the Hellyer', *Launceston Examiner*, 30 September 1862, p. 5; S.B. Emmett, 'Gold on the Hellyer', *Launceston Examiner*, 14 February 1863, p. 2. For W.R. Bell, see Nic Haygarth, 'Richness and Prosperity: the Life of W.R. Bell, Tasmanian Mineral Prospector', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 57, no. 3, December 2010, pp. 203–35.

²⁰ V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors to Emmett, 26 July 1863, VDL1/1/6 (TAHO).

²¹ Peter Smith to T.A. Murray, 15 August 1863, Sanderson papers (QVMAG).

²² One of Hargraves' harshest critics was John Lette, a fellow ex-Californian digger. See 'Mr Hargraves', *Launceston Examiner*, 4 July 1865, p. 3; 'Mr Hargraves: no. 2', *Launceston Examiner*, 1 August 1865, p. 3; and 'Mr Hargraves: no. 3', *Launceston Examiner*, 5 September 1865, p. 2.

²³ 'Mr Hargraves', *Launceston Examiner*, 13 April 1865, p. 4.

²⁴ E.H. Hargraves, 'Mr. Hargraves' Gold-Prospecting Tour', *Launceston Examiner*, 13 May 1865, p. 5.

²⁵ Inward Despatch no. 73, 26 November 1865, VDL1/6 (TAHO).

²⁶ R.C. Gunn to H. Cattley, 21 February 1867, VDL 1/6 (TAHO). Gunn, the V.D.L. Co.'s local agent, recommended offering a liberal reward to a deserving discoverer, thereby leaving the discovery itself to the company. For Smith, see Nic Haygarth, *Baron Bischoff: Philosopher Smith and the Birth of Tasmanian Mining*, the author, Perth, Tasmania, 2004.

²⁷ For the Mount Bischoff Tramway and the Emu Bay Railway generally, see Lou Rae, *The Emu Bay Railway, V.D.L. Co. to Pasmenco*, the author, Hobart, 1991.

²⁸ 'Van Diemen's Land Company', *Mercury* (Hobart), 15 May 1869, p. 2.

²⁹ James Norton Smith to V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, Outward Despatch no. 42, 9 April 1872, VDL175/1/5 (TAHO). The V.D.L. Co. also used a Victorian prospector, Francis Jolly, to prospect its land, unsuccessfully, during 1871 (James Norton Smith, Outward Despatch no. 22, 9 May 1871, VDL 175/1/5 [TAHO]). Hunt first approached the V.D.L. Co. with an offer to inspect its land in 1868 while visiting Melbourne (Inward Despatch no. 106, 14 August 1868, VDL1/1/6). In his notes, James Smith recalled joining Hunt at the Montagu River in early 1872, shortly after finding tin at Mount Bischoff. Ignorant that Smith had just made the greatest find of tin then known to man, Hunt boasted to Smith that he could teach him how to find tin. Since Hunt had made disparaging remarks about Tasmanians, Smith decided not to show him the sample of Mount Bischoff tin in his pocket, 'Exploring', NS234/14/1/3 [TAHO]).

³⁰ James Norton Smith to V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, Outward Despatch no. 5, 27 January 1870, VDL175/1/5; James Norton Smith to V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, Outward Despatch no. 42, 9 April 1872, VDL175/1/5 (TAHO).

³¹ James Norton Smith to James Smith, no. 372, 26 January 1872, VDL47/1/1; James Smith to James Norton Smith, 31 July 1871 and 24 February 1872, VDL197/1/1. Terms for prospectors working on V.D.L. Co. lands were probably not settled until one of the directors, Horatio Bland, visited the colony in 1873 (see Horatio Bland to the V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, 16 May 1873, VDL197/1/1 [TAHO]).

³² James Norton Smith, Outward Despatch no. 5, 27 January 1870, VDL 175/1/5 (TAHO). James Norton Smith to V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, Outward Despatch no. 42, 9 April 1872, VDL 175/1/5 (TAHO). Yet Norton Smith also offered Fields' alcoholic Surrey Hills stockman Charles Drury a reward if he could find payable gold, probably the result of his discovery of indications of gold at Cattley Plain in 1857 or 1858, see W.R. Bell, 'Report on the Hydraulic Gold Workings at Lower Mayday Plain ...', 14 May 1896, EBR13/1/2 [TAHO]. See James Norton Smith to Charles Drury, no. 493, 12 June 1872, VDL175/1/5; James Norton Smith, Outward Despatch no. 39, 12 June 1872, VDL47/1/1 (TAHO).

³³ Horatio Bland to James Norton Smith, 16 March 1874, VDL22/1/5 (TAHO).

- ³⁴ See Brian R. Chamberlain, *The Launceston and Western Railway Company Ltd, 1867–1904*, the author, Launceston, 1985. By 1874 the Launceston and Western Railway had also turned into a political fiasco, with the Tasmanian government recouping its money from northern landowners and occupiers.
- ³⁵ J.W. Beckwith to James Norton Smith, 9 September 1874; James Smith to James Norton Smith, 2 September 1874, VDL22/1/5 (TAHO).
- ³⁶ James Norton Smith to James Smith, no. 629, 16/7/1875, NS234/3/4 (TAHO).
- ³⁷ W.R. Bell to James Smith, no. 405, 9 July 1875, NS234/3/1/4; James Smith to Ritchie & Parker, 10 July 1875, VDL197/1/1 (TAHO). Indications of the barytes at the Two Hummocks may have been discovered by Martin Garrett (aka Garrett Martin), a Field brothers stockman at the Surrey Hills. Prospector Frank Lempriere claimed to have also seen ‘heavy spar’ at the same location, James Smith to Ritchie and Parker, 10 July 1875, no. 327. Bell reported discovering tungstate of lime and barytes in a letter to James Smith, no. 436, 9 September 1875 NS234/3/1/4 (TAHO).
- ³⁸ See William Ritchie to James Norton Smith, 10 July 1875, VDL197/1/1 (TAHO).
- ³⁹ Bell reported tracing a ‘bismuth’ lode at the Emu River in a letter to James Smith, 27 March 1876, no. 85, NS234/3/1/5. For Bell’s report of manganese and iron at Highwood Hill, see W.R. Bell to James Smith, 12 October 1875, no. 452, NS234/3/1/4. Bell made a further discovery of manganese and iron at Highwood Hill in 1879, W.R. Bell to James Smith, 10 November 1879, no. 360, NS234/3/1/8 [TAHO].
- ⁴⁰ Georg Ulrich to James Smith, 25 June 1876, NS234/3/1/5 (TAHO).
- ⁴¹ ‘The Van Diemen’s Land Company’, *Mercury*, 29 May 1877, p. 3. For comparison of the durability of gum and myrtle rails, see James Norton Smith to the V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, Outward Despatch no. 119, 1 August 1878, VDL7/1/4 (TAHO).
- ⁴² ‘Sicnarf Gink’ (Francis King), ‘Mount Bischoff Tramway’, *Launceston Examiner*, 11 September 1879, p. 3.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Rae, *The Emu Bay Railway*, pp. 25–33.
- ⁴⁵ ‘Tasmanian Railways: Emu Bay and Mount Bischoff’, *Tasmanian Mail* (Hobart), 10 May 1884, p. 20.
- ⁴⁶ Rae, *The Emu Bay Railway*, pp. 30–32.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20 & 33.
- ⁴⁸ Gustav Thureau, *West Coast*, Legislative Council Paper 77/1882, p. 27. For the Heemskirk tin lode boom, 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.
- ⁴⁹ John Tredinnick to R.A. Murray, 5 February and 3 March 1880, VDL22/1/8; Cosmo Newberry to Lyell and Gowan, 28 July 1881, VDL22/1/9 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁰ R.A. Murray to James Norton Smith, 22 December 1881, VDL22/1/9 (TAHO).
- ⁵¹ R Brookes to unknown, no. 308, 20 November 1890, VDM2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵² For details of work done by Hodgkinson, see letters to James Norton Smith in VDL22/1/10 and VDL22/1/11 (TAHO).
- ⁵³ W. Brookes to Joseph H. Aston, Westminster, no. 161, 6 August 1885, VDL2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁴ George Hodgkinson to James Norton Smith, 17 October and 10 November 1882, VDL22/1/10; and 20 October 1882, VDL1/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁵ George Hodgkinson to James Norton Smith, 14 July 1883, VDM22/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁶ See W. Brookes to Messrs. Bircham & Co., no. 73, 17 June 1884, VDL2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁷ W. Brookes to James Norton Smith, no. 62, 25 January 1884, VDL2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁸ ‘Report of Captain James Rowe’, 1886, VDL334/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁵⁹ Norman Lindsay’s picaresque novel *The Magic Pudding: Being the Adventures of Bunyip Bluegum and Sam Sawnoff*, first published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney, in 1918, features a living, inexhaustible pudding that immediately replaces any slice eaten.
- ⁶⁰ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (first published 1963), p. 247.
- ⁶¹ W.R. Bell, ‘The Linda Goldfield and its Surroundings’, *Launceston Examiner*, 6 September 1886, p. 3; Gustav Thureau, *The Linda Goldfield: its Auriferous and Other Mineral Deposits*, Department of Mines (Tas.), Launceston, October 1886, pp. 1–3.
- ⁶² W.R. Bell, ‘The Linda Goldfield and its surroundings’.
- ⁶³ Gustav Thureau, *The Linda Goldfield*. For other iron blows see, for example, ‘Comet’ Johnson’s Tasman Iron Blow at Mount Sedgwick ‘Gold’, *Launceston Examiner*, 7 December 1886, p. 3; Litchfield’s Iron Blow at Mount Claude near Sheffield, *Launceston Examiner*, 11 October 1887, p. 2, or W.T. Bell and Hall’s Big Blow near Mount Lyell, ‘West Coast Silver Field: no. 8: on the Field’, *Launceston Examiner*, 10 October 1888, p. 3.

- ⁶⁴ W.R. Bell, 'The Linda Goldfield and its Surroundings'; R.J. Frecheville to V.D.L.M. Co., January or February 1887, VDM2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁶⁵ W. Brookes to James Norton Smith, no. 255, 23 September 1887, VDL2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁶⁶ W.R. Bell to James Norton Smith, March 1887, VDM1/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁶⁷ Report by James Rowe, 31 January 1888, VDM2/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁶⁸ Minutes of V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, 17 November 1887, VDL201/1/10 (TAHO).
- ⁶⁹ See the company prospectus, *Mercury*, 22 October 1895, p. 4; W.R. Bell, 'Report on the Hydraulic Gold Workings at Lower Mayday Plain ...'.
- ⁷⁰ Ferd Kayser to James Norton Smith, 27 January 1885, VDL22/1/13 (TAHO).
- ⁷¹ Minutes of special meeting of V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, 7 January 1887, VDL201/1/10 (TAHO).
- ⁷² Arthur R. Browne to James Norton Smith, 31 May and 13 June 1892, VDL22/1/22. See also Browne to Norton Smith, 24 January 1893, VDL22/1/23 (TAHO).
- ⁷³ Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, Melbourne University Press, 2000, pp. 102–12.
- ⁷⁴ *Walch's Almanac*, Hobart, 1886, p. 285.
- ⁷⁵ C.A. Morris (Christine Milne), 'In Pursuit of the Travelling Man: a Study of Tasmanian Tourism to 1905', B.A. (Hons.) thesis, Department of History, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 1974, p. vi.
- ⁷⁶ 'Government notices', *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston), 20 April 1887, p. 4; 'Waratah', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 April 1887, p. 2.
- ⁷⁷ 'Excursion to Mount Bischoff', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1887, p. 3. Spurling's offer to take photos for the Mount Bischoff Company was declined, but he took the photos anyway, see Minutes of directors' meetings of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, 17 March and 24 March 1887, NS911/1/5 [TAHO].
- ⁷⁸ 'Shipping', *Age* (Melbourne), 22 March 1888, p. 1; Thomas Allan to James Norton Smith, 5 and 10 April 1889, VDL22/1/18 (TAHO); 'Tasmanian Steam Navigation Co.', *Argus* (Melbourne), 13 December 1889, p. 1; editorial, *Argus*, 30 March 1892, p. 5.
- ⁷⁹ 'Easter excursion to Tasmania', *Age*, 21 April 1892, p. 7.
- ⁸⁰ Fred Back, Tasmanian Government Railways, to James Norton Smith, 27 February 1893, VDL22/1/23 (TAHO).
- ⁸¹ 'Hobart to Mount Bischoff and Back', *Wellington Times and Agricultural and Mining Gazette* (Burnie), 4 April 1893, p. 2. Two meals were omitted from that tab.
- ⁸² W. Horne, Tasmanian Government Railways, to James Norton Smith, 23 May 1893, VDL22/1/23 (TAHO).
- ⁸³ James Murray, Union Steamship Co., to James Norton Smith, 26 February 1894, VDL22/1/24 (TAHO).
- ⁸⁴ 'The Vagabond' (John Stanley James), 'Mount Bischoff', *Age*, 27 October 1894, p. 11.
- ⁸⁵ Railway traffic account from 1st November 1884 to 31st October 1885, VDL234/1/1 (TAHO).
- ⁸⁶ James Norton Smith to the V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, 6 January 1896, EBR4/1/2 (TAHO).
- ⁸⁷ Rae, *The Emu Bay Railway*, p. 68.
- ⁸⁸ Geoffrey Blainey, 'Population Movements in Tasmania, 1870–1901', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 3, no. 4, June 1954, p. 69.
- ⁸⁹ Mathew Ollington, Pieman River, to James Norton Smith, 24 September 1879, VDL22/1/7 (TAHO).
- ⁹⁰ Tim Jetson, 'It's a Different Country Down There': a History of Droving in Western Tasmania, Circular Head Bicentenary Project Team, Smithton, 2004, p. 82.
- ⁹¹ Minutes of VDL Co Court of Directors 25 October 1887, VDL201/1/10, Archives Office of Tasmania.
- ⁹² Charles Tasman Ford to James Norton Smith, 26 February, 28 June, 2 July, 10 July and 3 August 1891, VDL22/1/21 (TAHO).
- ⁹³ See, for example, Charles Tasman Ford to James Norton Smith, 29 August 1892, VDL22/1/22 (TAHO).
- ⁹⁴ Charles Fenton, House of Assembly member for Wellington, quoted in 'House of Assembly', *Mercury*, 15 August 1895, p. 4.
- ⁹⁵ V.D.L. Co. cattle for Davey were driven down the West Coast from Green Point in November 1899, see Charles Button to James Norton Smith, 22 November 1899, VDL22/1/29, (TAHO).
- ⁹⁶ Woolnorth farm diary, 25 September 1897, VDL277/1/23 (TAHO).
- ⁹⁷ Editorial, *Zeehan and Dundas Herald*, 1 December 1899, p. 2.
- ⁹⁸ James Leach to James Norton Smith, 11 March 1899, VDL22/1/29 (TAHO).
- ⁹⁹ James Leach to James Norton Smith, 6 July 1899, VDL22/1/29 (TAHO).
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1899.
- ¹⁰¹ The Abt railway system, devised by Carl Roman Abt for steep grades, features a toothed rack rail between the main rails for extra traction.

¹⁰² For cattle being driven to Balfour, see Frank Gaffney to A.K. McGaw, 6 August 1906, VDL22/1/37; and Woolnorth farm diary, 16–20 December 1912, VDL277/1/41. For potatoes going to Balfour, see Woolnorth farm diary, 31 January 1911, VDL277/1/40 (TAHO).

¹⁰³ Minutes of V.D.L. Co. Court of Directors, 3 September 1913, VDL201/1/13 (TAHO).

¹⁰⁴ V.D.L. Co. Annual Report 1934, VDL334/1/1 (TAHO).

¹⁰⁵ V.D.L. Co. Annual Report 1936, VDL334/1/1 (TAHO).

¹⁰⁶ Comparable British colonial enterprises include the East India Company, which operated 1600–1874, acting as a de facto British colonial government in India for part of that time. The Hudson Bay Company, founded in 1670 to exploit the Canadian fur trade, still operates as a ‘global diversified retailer’ in North America known as HBC - see its website, <http://www3.hbc.com/hbc/about-us/>, accessed 11 January 2018. The Australian Agricultural Company, established under royal charter in 1824, still operates in New South Wales, calling itself ‘Australia’s largest beef producer’, see Australian Agricultural Company website, <https://aaco.com.au/about-us/our-history>, accessed 11 January 2018.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Laura Beavis, ‘Australia’s Largest Dairy Firm Van Diemen’s Land Company Sold to Chinese Buyer’, 1 April 2016, ABC News website, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-01/chinese-buyer-celebrates-sale-completion-vdl-dairy-company/7290442>, accessed 11 January 2018.