

## **Tasmania's Mount Bischoff Tin Mine: Dolcoath of the Antipodes?**

Nic Haygarth

Australia

### **Abstract**

The Mount Bischoff tin mine, at Waratah, Tasmania, discovered by prospector James 'Philosopher' Smith in 1871, was recently reopened by Bluestone Mines Tasmania. The mine has now operated in three centuries, perhaps confirming early predictions that it would emulate the longevity of contemporary Cornish mines like the Dolcoath. Cornish mines and Cornishmen were the guiding lights through the infancy of Tasmanian tin mining. Yet the Mount Bischoff tin mine became a battleground between German and Cornish mining cultures, even as huge dividends were paid. The German-born mine manager 1875-1907, Ferd Kayser, who deplored what he saw as antiquated Cornish mining methods, used comparisons with the Dolcoath mine to prove his own efficiency. Such comparisons were nonsense, however, since Mount Bischoff then exploited great natural advantages which the Dolcoath could not: water for motive power and enormously rich surface deposits which could be worked very cheaply. Cornish tin dressers who 'tin streamed' ore out of the Waratah River after it had escaped from the Mount Bischoff Company's dressing sheds also cast doubts upon Kayser's performance.

Kayser nevertheless shared the expectation that the Mount Bischoff mine would 'live down' like a Cornish lode mine, and this bred the complacency that prematurely closed an apparently exhausted mine in 1947. Insufficient underground exploration was done, with profits being paid out as dividends. Does the present open-cut operation on the old lower workings of Mount Bischoff confirm the old Mount Bischoff Company's profligacy?