

KOETONG TIN FIELD

DATE

HISTORY:

Koetong Black Jack

1873: Tin was first worked in the Koetong area in 1873. In June that year, stream tin was being worked on Koetong, Dry Forest, Burrowye (or Burrawa), Pleasant, and Cudgewa Creeks and their branches. Stream tin was worked in much the same way as alluvial gold: the upper soil (called 'stripping') on the creek flats was shovelled away until tin-bearing washdirt was exposed; sluicing was then carried out. Mineral leases were pegged out for several miles from the heads of the creeks¹. The discovery of Black Jack - a heavily mineralised ore which was the despair of gold-miners - gave rise to 'visions of boundless yields' and a frenzy of speculation. But the visions failed to be realised: by September 1873, the ground had been found very patchy and unremunerative, and in 1878 the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* remembered the Koetong field as 'a rank duffer'².

First tin-mining boom

1881-82: Speculators again turned their attention to Koetong, and to Mt Alfred, when tin prices were high in 1881-2. At Mt Alfred the tin was crushed out of the rock from the mountain itself; at Koetong the creeks were worked for alluvial tin.³ The **Mt Alfred mines** were worked by tunnels and shafts about 100 m above the river flats, south-west of the present-day Mt Alfred township on the Murray River Road. The principal mine was that of the **Alfred Co.** which in 1882 had **plant** comprising a 36-hp engine, stone-breaker, and double-roller and Hemely mills, operating the equivalent of 65 stamp-heads. At least 1,000 tons of ore was raised at Mt Alfred, but tin prices slumped again before any had been treated or sold.⁴ Fifty tin miners were working Mt Alfred and Koetong at the end of 1882.⁵

1883: At **Burrowye**, south-west of Mt Alfred, early in 1883 'stripping' for stream tin was being carried on.

Walwa gold & tin

1883-1912: As early as 1856, gold had been found on the Jinjellic pastoral run, on the Victorian side of the Murray (north-west of Corryong).⁶ In 1883, quartz mining was underway at nearby Walwa. The **Walwa Co.** planned to erect a **crushing plant** close to the river, connected by tramway with its mine, about 1.5 km away.⁷ In 1912, tin lodes were being worked, and the **Walwa Tin Mining Co.** erected a 10-head **battery** equipped with concentrating tables.⁸

Koetong revival

1905-07: In 1905, the 'neglected' Koetong tin-mining field was again taken up and the following year the field was booming, with many parties sluicing and sand-pumping. The **Excelsior** was the only company on the field using **steam machinery** in 1907. Tin prices remained high, and parties worked the Koetong Creek deposits by hydraulic sluicing. The **Border Mining Co.**, in 1912, operated three hydraulic nozzles powered by a **network of races and a modern pumping plant**.⁹ Tin was worked by a **pump, sluicing and elevating plant** 1,000 m above sea-level at **Mt Cudgewa**, 20 km south of Koetong, in 1916.¹⁰

Scheelite

1916-37: Mining of **scheelite** (an important source of tungsten) began at Koetong in 1916. The ore was initially treated at the Chiltern State Battery, but before the year was out, the government was erecting a five-head, suction-gas-powered battery and concentration plant at Koetong itself. (The swift installation of the State Battery confirms the metal's importance.) Apart from scheelite, the State Battery treated local tin and wolfram from the Tallangatta Valley.¹¹ The **Koetong State Battery** was still in operation in 1937, when it crushed and treated scheelite ore for just one party of miners. After that date, the battery was idle.¹² (Removed?)

1941-50's: Alluvial tin was worked by the Happy Valley Tin Sluicing Co. at **Shelley**, 10 km east of Koetong, in 1941¹³, and at Koetong during the 1950s by the **Eureka Co.** The latter company treated dirt with a (diesel-powered?) **puddler** in conjunction with a sluice-box.¹⁴

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- 1 Mining Surveyors' Reports, June 1873
 - 2 Mining Surveyors' Reports, September 1873; *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 22/6/1878
(quoted in Philipp, p. 22)
 - 3 Convey, p. 44
 - 4 Convey, p. 44
 - 5 Mining Surveyors' Reports, December 1882
 - 6 Flett, p. 166
 - 7 Mining Surveyors' Reports, March 1883
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 - 10 Department of Mines Annual Report, 1916
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 - 13 *Mining and Geological Journal*, 1941
 - 14 *Mining and Geological Journal*, 1941

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