Coal Mine Sites Identification
1 Definitions

Imperial/Metric Measurements and Quantities

In this Coal Heritage Study, measurements and quantities have been stated in imperial notation, i.e. inches, feet, chains, miles, acres, tons, etc. with respect to exploration and mining activities through to the mid 1970s. From that time, usage of metric parameters was legislated by the Commonwealth Government and became prevalent in recorded documentation. For some specific activities continuing post the mid 1970s metric notation has been used when quoted directly from sourced documentation. Where activities pre- and post- the mid 1970s are tabulated or compared, conversion of imperial notation to metric has generally been adopted.

Brown Coal/Lignite Nomenclature

"Until 1889, (the year of commencement of the Royal Commission on Coal in Victoria), all the Tertiary (era) coals of Victoria were classed as lignite." In 1889, RAF Murray, Mines Department Geologist, had noted that the term ‘brown coal’ could be widely applied across the distinct woody structure of lignite through to deposits in which the woody structure is largely obliterated.2

"In the USA, the term ‘brown coal’ is applied to the unconsolidated type of lignitic coal as differentiated from true lignite which is consolidated due to deeper burial and folding". In Germany and neighbouring countries in Europe all coals of Tertiary age are designated as brown coals – this classification includes common brown coal, earthy brown coal and lignite." Thomas and Baragwanath (1949) state "The variability of Victorian brown coal in colour, texture, degree of consolidation, water, ash, and sulphur content is great and the view has been adopted that the Tertiary coals of Victoria are better included in the general term ‘brown coal’."3

In this Coal Mining Heritage Study, no conscious attempt has been made to distinguish between the terminology ‘lignite’ and the more general terminology ‘brown coal’ on the basis of coal quality parameters.

Black Coal Nomenclature

The nomenclature ‘black coal’ has been used in this Coal Heritage Study for all coals of higher calorific value than that classified as lignite within the American ASTM (1979) classification system i.e with Net Wet Specific Energy greater than 19.3 MJ/kg.4
2 South West Gippsland Early Black Coal Mines

Drawing 2.1/1 Map of Coal streams on shore line in the Cape Paterson Area. Copyright State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries.
2.1 Cape Paterson Black Coal – Early Scattered Discoveries

Map Reference: 8020-4-3 Cape Paterson, at Hovell Monument 3764 57201
Municipality: Shire of Bass Coast
Land Use/Status: Mainly private

Site History

In December 1826, William Hovell, on an exploration mission from the military settlement at Red Point (near the present township of Corinella) on Western Port as instructed by the camp commander, Captain Samuel Wright, found thin black coal seams exposed on the shore of Bass Strait at the west of Cape Paterson.\(^5\) (Cape Paterson had been named by Lieutenant Grant in 1801 in honour of Lt. Colonel William Paterson, second in command of the Botany Bay (Sydney) battalion.) These seams were in later years rediscovered and subsequently named the Queen and the Rock seams.

Hovell took samples of the coal which were then dispatched in December 1826 from the Western Port settlement in a vessel in the charge of Captain Weatherall to Governor Darling in Sydney. No further history of this sample has been traced. This was probably the first ‘mining’ of coal in what was later called the Colony of Victoria.

In 1837, about two years after the first settlement on the Yarra River, Samuel Anderson and Robert Massie, occupants of land near the present township of Bass on Western Port, found thin black coal seams exposed on the shore of Bass Strait at the west of Cape Paterson.\(^5\) (Cape Paterson had been named by Lieutenant Grant in 1801 in honour of Lt. Colonel William Paterson, second in command of the Botany Bay (Sydney) battalion.) These seams were in later years rediscovered and subsequently named the Queen and the Rock seams.

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In 1837, about two years after the first settlement on the Yarra River, Samuel Anderson and Robert Massie, occupants of land near the present township of Bass on Western Port since September 1835, rediscovered the coal seams originally discovered by Hovell. In early 1838, they told Captain Lonsdale, the initial Commandant of the Melbourne District from 1 October 1836, of the existence of abundant coal in the South West Gippsland area and asked permission to extract coal from this area. No official reply to this request has been traced.\(^6\)

In mid 1839, Charles La Trobe, recently appointed Superintendent of the Melbourne District, ‘instructed Captain Moore and Robert Hoddle to carry out a survey of coal deposits along the southern coastline’. Their search was largely unsuccessful although on the shoreline at Western Port, south of the Bass River, they found a thin seam of coal. They did not investigate further east due to refusal of the local land occupiers to disclose the locations of their continuing coal finds.\(^7\) Perhaps stimulated by this refusal, La Trobe with Captain Lonsdale visited Anderson and Massie at the Bass River and elicited information and inspected coal finds known to them at that time. Anderson and Massie again requested permission to mine coal from the South West Gippsland area. Instead, La Trobe encouraged H. Cameron to inspect and report on the coal seams in the area. After an inspection and report by Cameron, a company was formed which in late 1841 appointed William Watson to commence a mining operation in the known coal seams near Cape Paterson.\(^8\) However in October 1841 although a small mining operation commenced with Watson and two miners, problems arose with Aborigines in the area, the mining crew withdrew and the mine closed down without excavating any coal.\(^9\)

In 1840, Captain Cole mined a few tonnes of coal from the cliffs between San Remo and Kilcunda and sent it to Melbourne for appraisal.\(^10\)

About 1843/4 Richard Davis had carried a sack of coal from the beach at Coal Creek about 2.2 miles north west of Cape Paterson to La Trobe in Melbourne. This was some nine years previous to the proclamation of the availability of a reward of £1000 for discovery of a workable black coal field within the Colony of Victoria.\(^11\) Davis subsequently received £400 from the Government.\(^12\)

In 1847, the Cape Patterson Coal Proprietary Association was formed to bore and mine coal\(^13\) but no production eventuated. This venture was probably that shown on Drawing 2.1/1 as Lease Number 400 ML to the Cape Paterson Coal Company located just to the east of the Queen and Rock Seams outcrops.

In 1853, when Crown land was sold in the Cape Paterson to Griffiths Point area, many allotments were marked as ‘to search for coal’ indicating the Government awareness of the undeveloped coal resource in this area.

In 1858, Richard Davis sank a shaft 85 feet deep about 460 feet inland from coal seam outcrops on the shoreline at Cape Paterson. This shaft intersected the Queen and Rock Seams outcrops.
coal seams. (See Drawing 2.1/3 showing a section through the Davis shaft.) He was subsequently paid a small bonus of £110 from the Government for this effort. This shaft was deepened in 1864 by Thomas Bury, lessee of land surrounding the shaft. Bury's investigations continued to 1867 but evidence of a third seam was inconclusive and not accepted by the Mines Department. Bores installed in the lease area indicated that the seams may decrease in thickness inland from the shore and may also be subject to faulting and intrusions. At 1869, the Queen Seam was assessed as from 3 feet 6 inches to four feet in thickness; and the Rock Seam as about 3 feet 6 inches at their respective outcrops. In 1858, Alfred Selwyn, Government geologist, found coal when boring by hand about 5 miles north of Cape Paterson indicating the possibility of a widespread occurrence of coal in the area. This location (now the Wonthaggi Golf Course) on the northern outskirts of the present township of Wonthaggi was later mined by the State Coal Mine from 1910.
The Victorian Coal Company operated at Cape Paterson from 1859 to 1864 on Mineral Lease No 756 (as stated by Knight 1951, p.40), (probably also on Mineral Lease No 229 as depicted in Drawing 2.1/3). The location of the Victorian Coal Company shaft was about one mile south east of Davis’ shaft and about one mile north west of Cape Paterson.17 This company raised about 2000 tons of coal which was delivered to Melbourne. Initially ‘the coal was taken from the pithead to the beach by bullock team, loaded into whale boats and transhipped into larger boats anchored in deep water off the Cape’. The mining operations were confined to a strip of land close to the beach. A tramway was subsequently laid from the mine to the loading point at shore. However the VCC could not obtain insurance cover at reasonable rates, found the coal seam thinner than expected and ceased mining in 1864. The leases were retained by the original lessee until 1907.18 In 1866/67, this company sank two further bores to 400 feet on their lease area without intersecting coal.19 This company was the first to achieve a commercial output of black coal in the Colony of Victoria.

(The Western Port Coal Company was formed in 1865 to work a seam of coal at Kilcunda. From this time black coal mining ventures spread further afield from Cape Paterson. These other locations are reported elsewhere in this study.)

At 1864, there were four leases of land granted for coal mining purposes and over 30 licences issued for coal searching between Cape Paterson and Griffiths Point.20

On a lease block near Cape Paterson and west of Coal Creek, the lessees at 1864 had sunk a shaft 100 feet deep and had installed ‘a horse whim, poppet heads, a windlass and iron buckets’. However it was reported that only 6 to 10 tons of coal were raised previous to 1864 and none in 1864 or in 1865.21

Mines Department Statistics show a total quantity of 1933 tons of coal had been raised by all lessees at Cape Paterson by 31 December 1864.22

By 1865 coal mining interest turned westwards to the San Remo area and much later to the Kilcunda area and the Powlett River flats.
Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance
The black coal seams at Cape Paterson were found prior to the occurrence of a permanent civilian settlement at the potential ports on the south east coast of mainland Australia. Successful commercial development of black coal resources at the north and south of Sydney had been readily achieved. By 1851, at the establishment of Victoria as a separate colony from NSW, the known black coal seams at Cape Paterson and further finds in the area westwards to Western Port Bay presented anticipation of Victorian independence from NSW coal supplies.

Discovery of gold in Victoria through the 1850s diverted labour and investment to gold exploration and mining and diverted investment away from exploration and mining of coal.

Nevertheless, the Victorian Coal Company from 1859 to 1864 at Cape Paterson, as the first black coal mining operation in Victoria to reach a commercial output, indicated that supply of coal to the Melbourne market was potentially feasible from the Cape Paterson to Griffiths Point coal seams. This company struggled with the difficulties and costs of overland and shipping transport demonstrating the need for government support in the provision of transport infrastructure.

Scientific Significance
Until about 1870 there was little interest in Victoria relating to utilisation of black coal other than as a fuel. From that time, other coal finds in Victoria were more economic than the thin seams at Cape Paterson. No specific scientific investigations or outcomes for coal conversion occurred with respect to Cape Paterson coal.

Economic Significance
Exploration for black coal in the Cape Paterson area was spasmodic from the 1840s with shallow hand boring and shallow shaft sinking indicating thin and broken seams with low economic prospects for commercial ventures.

In retrospect, the opportunity for interpretation of substantial black coal resources adjacent to Cape Paterson in the Powlett River flat lands was not taken up by private industry. It was not until about 1905 that extensive drilling by the Mines Department proved the Powlett Coalfield and lead to its mining by the State Coal Mine which mined this coal for nearly 60 years.

Social Significance
The quantity of black coal recovered from the embryo mining activities at Cape Paterson was insufficient to make inroads to established black coal distribution in Victoria from NSW. From the early 1950s for at least 20 years, the attention of mining entrepreneurs and potential mining explorers and mine workers was directed almost exclusively to gold. In this climate, exploration and mining in the South West Gippsland area west of Cape Paterson did not receive investment funding until about the 1880s by which time other coal fields were in competition for development investment.

Mine Infrastructure Features
Tramlines on the beach out-loading point, Cape Paterson.
Queen and Rock Seams on the beach west of Cape Paterson.
Remains of Victoria Coal Company Mine at Cape Paterson.
Monument to Hovell near the shoreline west of Cape Paterson.

References
Brough Smyth, R. ‘Goldfields and Mineral Districts’, Carboniferous Rocks, 1869
Knight, JL ‘The Story of Black Coal in Victoria’, Mining and Geological Journal Vol. 4 No. 4, 1951
Mineral Statistics, Mines Department, 1864
Royal Commission on Coal, 18 December 1891
Selwyn, A, Cape Patterson Coal Fields, Mines Department, 1867

Note: An 1893 depiction, attributed to James Stirling, of the Cape Paterson Coal Seams is available via the Victorian Department of Primary Industries in a map labelled as the Kilcunda Coal Fields, Parish of Woolamai, Geological Survey of Victoria.
2.2 Bass Region Black Coal Early Scattered Discoveries

Map Reference: 7921-2-2 Corinella

Municipality: Shire of Bass Coast

Land Use/Status: Private

Site History

At 1867, at Corinella and at Queens Ferry, both on the eastern shore of Western Port Bay, boring and sinking of shafts had been undertaken by the Mines Department ‘to test seams discovered by the Geological Survey in 1859’. ‘All the evidence shows that the seams are, as was supposed, not of workable thickness.’23 At 1867, the Corinella Coal Mining Company also (or in conjunction with the Mines Department) sank shafts and bores but did not undertake a commercial mining operation.

In 1874, a seam of coal reported to be two feet thick at its outcrop was discovered at Lang Lang located about seven miles from the proposed South Gippsland Railway.24 In 1875, a shaft at this location was visited by RAF Murray who found four seams from 9 to 11 inches thick. Murray pronounced these seams and other Lang Lang seams as not likely to be profitable.25 He correlated these seams with others being found in outcrops in the valleys of creeks and tributaries in the area.26

In 1897, the Great Victoria Colliery Company began a VicRail (VR) gauge line from Queensferry Jetty to a point near the Woolamai rail station using rails recovered from the Kilcunda to San Remo tramway. However the venture did not succeed and no coal was carried over this route to Queensferry jetty.27

In Progress Report Number 10, 1899, Report on the Brown Coals and Lignites of Victoria, Government Geologist J Stirling, reporting on the occurrence of thin coal outcrops on the Bass River about three miles east of Queensferry, classified these outcrops as brown coal. He also assessed that these beds were unlikely to exist over a wide area but were likely to be confined to separate basins. This report appears to have eliminated further speculation of the existence of economic black or brown coal seams in the Corinella/Bass onshore area.

(In the 1955 Annual Report of the Mines Department, a black coal mine is mentioned as being worked at Glen Forbes, a hamlet on the Bass River and some 16 kilometres south easterly of Corinella. No statistics are stated. The mine is not mentioned in earlier or subsequent Annual Reports.)

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

Some early writers have stated that coal outcrops were mined on the Bass River by the Anderson family, initial occupiers of land in that area from 1836, and that small quantities were used by them for domestic and foundry purposes. There was early anticipation from the 1840s that the Bass River area and the coastline plains around Corinella to Lang Lang would contain profitably mineable seams of coal. Over the ensuing years, these hopes were not fulfilled.

Drawing 2.2/1 shows sections of lignite beds in the Bass River Valley as depicted in 1899. By this time the coal seams in the Bass Valley had been classified as brown coal. As the sections in Drawing 2.2/1 show the seams were thin and declared to be uneconomical to mine.

Scientific Significance

No specific scientific significance is associated with the small coal resource scattered through the Corinella / Bass area. Basic analyses of samples were carried out in the mid to late 1800s but no other scientific investigations were undertaken.

Economic Significance

Hopes were high from the 1830s to about 1900 that the black coal outcrops discovered in the Corinella/Bass area indicated the possibility of economically mineable black coal seams at depth. These hopes had been somewhat offset by adverse results of drilling by 1859. However the advent of the VR rail line into the area in the 1880s improved the economic prospects of coal from the area although the seams were by then classified as brown coal. Subsequent discoveries of black coal outcrops renewed hopes from time to time but no commercial scale black coal mine eventuated.
Drawing. 2.2/1 Bass River Valley Sections of Lignite Beds (Copy of Plate Number 11, Geological Survey Progress Report No 10, 1899 by J Stirling).
Social Significance

No significant employment was associated with the spasmodic discovery and subsequent investigations of the coal seams in this area. Some landholders may have envisaged successful coal mining as being more lucrative than agricultural usage of their land but no significant investment in coal mining or introduction of skilled miners occurred to alter the social fabric of the Bass/Corinella area.

Mine Infrastructure Features

Queens Ferry Jetty Site Coal outloading site.

References


*Mineral Statistics*, Mines Department, 1874

*Mineral Statistics*, Mines Department, 1875

Murray, RAF, *Report on the Geology and Mineral Resources of South West Gippsland*, Mines Department, 1875

Selwyn, Alfred, *Report on Coal Seams, Cape Patterson*, Mines Department, 1867

2.3 Kilcunda/San Remo

Map Reference: For Kilcunda Mines, see 7920-1-1 Kilcunda 3660, 57322

For San Remo/Griffiths Point Mines, see 7921 Spec. Philip Island 3573, 57344

Municipality: Shire of Bass Coast

Land Use/Status: Mainly Private

Site History

2.3.1 Initial Coal Extraction at Griffiths Point

About 1864, (J Coglan says 1867), several tons of coal were dug from a shallow pit (on Allotment 10) at about three kilometres east of Griffiths Point. (See Drawing 2.3.2/1). This embryo mining venture did not progress further ‘due to the patchy and irregular character of the seam’. The person involved has not been ascertained in this study. (However this find and the evidence of numerous outcrops of black coal in thin seams on the coastline from Griffiths Point to Cape Paterson drew attention to the probability that the earlier coal finds at Cape Paterson were part of a much wider occurrence of black coal in South West Gippsland.) A small mining operation at San Remo (Griffiths Point) took place in 1906 reputedly producing 220 tons.

2.3.2 The Western Port Coal Mining Company at Kilcunda, 1870–1883. Shaft at 3662, 57322; Adit at 3659, 57321

In 1870, the Western Port Coal Mining Company was formed to mine coal at Kilcunda (at about six kilometres east of the present road junction of the Bass Highway and Phillip Island Road). At about 0.4 kilometres inland, a shaft was sunk to a depth of 30 metres into a seam which outcropped on the cliff face at one metre thick.

Initial supply was by bullock wagons to Griffiths Point over an unmade route of about 13 km. In November 1871, construction of a private rail track was approved by Government. By 1872, a 10 tonne sample of coal was sent to Melbourne for exhibition. At 1873, 500 tons of coal had been mined but was stored at
By 1874, a tramway using timber rails was in service. An adit and a third shaft were installed with the seam thickness being 20 to 31 inches. By early 1875, about 8,000 tons of coal had been shipped from Griffiths Point to Melbourne.

In 1878, the WPCMC suspended mining operations due to financial difficulties including the non-receipt of a £5000 Government Bonus for the first person to deliver 5000 tons of Victorian coal to Melbourne. In mid-1879, the company was revived with additional capital. The mine was dewatered. The VR loaned steel rails. A small steam loco and larger wagons were brought from Tasmania.

In 1883, the Western Port Coal Mining Company again ceased operations. It is reported in some references that this company had mined 15,000 tons of coal since its inception (some references state that 15,000 tons was achieved by 1877) but only 7,000 tons were recorded in the Mines Department Annual Reports. The WPCMC remained in existence to at least 1895 in dispute with the VR and local landholders over the haulage route easement and other matters. The company sought the Government offer of £5,000 on several occasions. Apparently this was never paid. By 1899, all steel rails on the haulage route had been removed.

### 2.3.3 The Kilcunda Coal Association; Kilcunda Coal Mining; Kilcunda Cooperative Colliery; Victoria Coal and Coke Company; Outtrim-Howitt at British Consolidated; South Gippsland Coal Company; Kilcunda Coal Mining Company

Several small mining operations at Kilcunda some bearing the Kilcunda nomenclature occurred. Their precise location and proven recorded output have not been definitively ascertained in this Coal Heritage Study. Among these were the following:

In 1873, the Kilcunda Coal Association sank a shaft but found only thin seams up to 3 inches thick. In 1874 this operation ceased.
From 1908 to 1914, a venture named Kilcunda Coal Mining produced 6938 tons of coal. This mine was about one mile west of the Kilcunda township where a VR rail siding had been established in 1913.

The (Kilcunda) Co-operative Colliery Ltd. operated from 1910 to 1914 producing 4172 tons of coal.

The Outtrim-Howitt & British Consolidated Coal Mining Company purchased the Kilcunda Coal Mining Coy (Mitchell’s) in 1913, closed its mining operation at Outtrim and transferred workforce and plant to an operation at Kilcunda producing about 2000 tons of coal between 1914 and 1921.

The South Gippsland Coal Company worked a tunnel operation at Kilcunda from 1921–1931 producing 78,236 tons of coal. Its workings were later further developed by the Victorian Coal Company (see below).

A venture named Kilcunda Coal Mining Company commenced operation in the late 1920s, probably 1927. This operation produced about 130,000 tons with low output after 1935. It ceased operation in September 1946 ‘taking out all available coal’. Its plant was sold and its employees transferred to the Victorian Coal Company (see below).

Mining at a small area south of the Kilcunda Coal mine workings and recovery of coal from other previous workings of the coal seam at Kilcunda/San Remo have not been identified in this study.

2.3.4 The Victorian Coal Mine, Kilcunda 1932–1951

The Victorian Coal Mine, Kilcunda (in some documentation listed as the Victorian Coal Company) in 1932 commenced a mining operation by dewatering and reconditioning the former South Gippsland Mine Tunnel (Thompson’s Tunnel?). By September 1946 it drove a tunnel to connect with these old workings and mined a two foot six inch seam at the west of the previous workings. At 1946, reserves were estimated at less than 100,000 tons.

At December 1946, its output was averaging 108 tons weekly from a longwall operation. In 1948, annual output was 6,480 tons using 28 mine workers. At March 1950, it drove a new tunnel on the north of its workings but encountered faults.

For the 1951 calendar year, output was 5578 tons, and 5487 tons in 1952. The company finally found the fault conditions uneconomical and somewhat unpredictable.

The Victorian Coal Mine, Kilcunda, ceased operation in June 1953 having excavated 1725 tons in that part year. Lifetime output was over 170,000 tons.

2.3.5 The Coast Coal Mine at Kilcunda 1948–1966

At 1947, Coast Coal Kilcunda was mining a 24 to 30 inch coal seam in a small area to the south of the old Kilcunda Company’s workings. It was mining at the rate of 30 tons per week. By 1948, it drove through into the old workings and began developing by the longwall method on the north side of its tunnel. Output was suspended in 1949, the mine output being 2,634 tons.

In 1952, the Coast Coal Mine, Woolamai/Kilcunda, was reopened by the Mabilia Bros., who continued mining on Mineral Lease Number 7313 in Allotment 97, Parish of Woolamai. A main tunnel was driven at a dip of about 1 in 6 north westerly from the outcrop of a seam 20 to 27 inches thick. At September 1952, output was at 20 tons per week while expenditure was applied to access roads, screening and loading bins and mine development. For the 1954 year production was 5432 tons.

At May 1957, coal had been worked along the strike for some 700 feet. The longwall system had been used exclusively, with production over the five years to the end of 1956 totalling 17,207 tons. Minor faults were encountered but faults of 60 and 100 feet were indicated ahead. Boring was carried out to determine the future direction of development. Drawing 2.3 5/1 shows the development at 1957 with westward development from the adit having extended to over 900 feet.

Mining continued at an annual rate averaging about 4,500 tons until 1960 and then declining gradually to 1234 tons in the 1966 year. The Coast Coal mine closed in November 1966. Total production from the mine situated in Allotment 97F, Parish of Woolamai from 1952 to 1966 was (recorded as) 52,544 tons. At 1964, the Coal Coast mine was the only operating black coal mine in Victoria except for the State Coal mines at Wonthaggi.

Other mines of low or nil output referred to in some references but possibly associated with the mining ventures outlined above included:

- The Bass Valley Coal Company from 1908–1914 with 163 tons produced.
- The Woolamai Collieries in 1910 with no production.
- Woolamai Proprietary in 1927 with 63 tons produced.
The Mines Department Annual Report 1965 p.7 commented ‘Production of black coal for industrial power generation and transportation purposes from Wonthaggi and Woolamai coal resources has ceased to be economical in competition with brown coal briquettes and fuel oils, a contributing factor being the faulted nature of the black coal measures which inhibit mechanisation for low cost production.’ The availability of natural gas competitively taking over the market of the gas manufacturing plant at Morwell from 1969 was also a major factor leading to final closure of commercial scale black coal production in Victoria.

Total coal output from the Kilcunda/Woolamai area to 1966 was about 450,000 tons.
Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance
Successful mining of the Kilcunda black coal resource from 1865 followed closely on the first commercial level mining at Cape Paterson. The ‘light tramway’ with its wooden rails over a 13 kilometre haul route, indicated to Government the need for Government facilitation if not financial support for outloading infrastructure for coal deliveries from mine to market.

Scientific Significance
No specific scientific investigations were undertaken associated with the usage of this coal as fuel. The Government eventually awarded to the Western Port Coal Mining Company a part of its proposed bonus for the first deliveries of 5,000 tons of coal to Melbourne indicating its acceptance of this coal meeting the criteria for black coal.

Economic Significance
The several ventures to mine the coal seams at Kilcunda, intermittently from 1865 to 1966, met with mixed commercial success. Eventually mining ceased due mainly to the rather unpredictable occurrence of faults in the seams. Output from the various mines appears to have been influenced adversely by the mining difficulties and low investment rather than the ability to compete or gain access to the Melbourne coal merchants.

Social Significance
There appears to have been little co-ordination between private companies involved in mining the same coal seams on neighbouring leases. The geological interpretation of the seams seems to have been inadequate in the identification of faults such that mining of some seams had to cease abruptly on encountering an unpredicted fault. This situation also applied to the numerous coal mines in the Korumburra area as distinct from the regional mining made available to the State Coal Mines at Wonthaggi.

The intermittent initiation and demise of the several mining ventures at Kilcunda did not have a significant impact on the number and skills of mine workers in the area. The land occupiers in the area predominantly retained their agricultural base rather than being diverted to a coal mining community as was conjectured in the mid to late 1800s.

Mine Infrastructure Features
‘Some tunnels, an old steam winch and a black stope dump are still visible’ at Kilcunda.

Timber Trestle Railway Bridge at Powlett River entrance.

References
Brown, George ‘Coal Resources of Victoria’, Mining and Geological Journal, September 1948
Knight, JL ‘Coast Coal Mine Woolamai’, Mines Department memo to Chief Government Geologist, 3 May 1957
Annual Reports, Mines Department, 1947–1967
Mineral Statistics, Mines Department, 1872–1974
Mining and Geological Journal, Mines Department, March 1947 to September 1955

Note: Gary Wilson, a current researcher on aspects of the coal mines and communities of South West Gippsland, is a valuable resource of anecdotal and recorded history of the Kilcunda and Powlett River area coal mines. He is accessible through the Wonthaggi Historical Society.
3 South West Gippsland—Later Black Coal Mines

3.1 Korumburra Area Mines

Map Reference: 8021-2-3 Korumburra, Coal Creek Mine 3979, 57441
Municipality: Shire of South Gippsland
Land Use / Status: Private

Site History

3.1.1 Exploration and discoveries of Coal in the Korumburra Area.

In 1872, a black coal outcrop was found by James Brown in Coal Creek, South West Gippsland. In 1873 the seam was inspected by RAF Murray who found a party boring in the Coal Creek seam. About the same year and in the vicinity of Coal Creek, Eyre, a surveyor, discovered what was later known as the Strzelecki Seam. In future writings, Murray included the Coal Creek Seam as part of the wider Strzelecki Seam.

By the early 1870s, many outcrops of black coal were found by settlers and prospectors in the countryside within 15 kilometres or so to the South and East of Korumburra. Many of these outcrops were not reported to the Mines Department. Murray states that ‘from late 1874, land selection was spreading into all the South Gippsland forest country.’

In 1876, seams of coal 18 inches and 33 inches thick, identified as the Strzelecki seam, were found about two kilometres south of Korumburra. Although there were three companies formed for coal mining before 1891, there was no profitable outcome before that time.

At 1889, stimulated by the Royal Commission on Coal, the Mines Department engaged five diamond drills searching for black and brown coal in Victoria. In 1889, black coal was found in the Powlett River flats at Jumbunna and at Mirboo. In 1890, at Korumburra six seams from two feet six inches to four feet eleven inches thick were found (Drawing 3.1.1/1).

With these finds and the advent of the South Gippsland Railway through Korumburra in 1891, the time was ripe for successful black coal mining in the Korumburra region. To the end of 1894, 46 groups of individuals formed syndicates or companies and took up leases in and around Korumburra, Korumburra South, Konwak, Jumbunna, Kardella and Outtrim.

Between 1889 and 1908, forty deep bores were installed in the Korumburra Region by the Mines Department.

3.1.2 The mine at Silkstone

Silkstone Coal Mine NL; Silkstone Colliery Company NL; Dudley Coal Syndicate (Wynne’s Mine)

In 1872/73, 20–30 miners were working at a mining operation at Silkstone, a few kilometres south of Korumburra. Lack of transport from the mine resulted in only a small output for local consumption. However the venture was reactivated in 1882 via a tunnel. A block of the coal was sent to Melbourne for exhibition in 1882. This is thought to be the first coal from the Korumburra region to reach Melbourne.

The Silkstone Coal Mine, located about four kilometres south of Korumburra, was operated by the Silkstone Coal Mine NL from 1891 to 1892. A tunnel 130 feet long was inspected by the VR official party at the opening of the VR railway through Korumburra in 1892.

The mine was taken over by the Silkstone Colliery Company NL in November 1893, with an official opening in January 1894. The mine operated through two shafts delivering over a light railway 390 feet to a siding on a VR branch line off the Coal Creek Branch line. At April 1895, output was at about 300 tons per month, but much pumping was required. The Silkstone mining operation was found to be uneconomic compared with other mines in the area and ceased operation in 1895 after a contract to sell coal to the VR was lost.
In 1923, the Dudley Coal Syndicate, in an operation known also as Wynne’s mine, reopened the old Silkstone mining operations. However it encountered faults in the seams and experienced danger from influx of water from old workings of the adjacent K & J mine. The operation proved uneconomic, the last coal being sent out in 1927. Over its five year life approximately 27,000 tons of coal were mined including 10,116 tons in its peak production year 1925.67

The Dudley Coal Syndicate reformed in 1932 and operated the old mine until 1934, producing 4,447 tons of coal.68
3.1.3 The Coal Creek Mine (including Sunbeam Collieries); Coal Creek Mining Company; Coal Creek Proprietary Company Ltd.; J Cook & Company; Kay & Company (Coal Creek Sunbeam). Sunbeam Collieries Pty Ltd

Following the coal discovery at Coal Creek in 1872, an area had been set aside in 1879 at Coal Creek as a coal reserve.69 In 1888, the Coal Creek Mining Company70 was formed to mine at about one kilometre east of the present town centre of Korumburra. In May 1890, the Royal Commission on Coal visited the mine site where “a tunnel 50 feet long intersected three good seams of coal.”71

In 1892 a branch rail line at VR gauge was completed from Korumburra to the Coal Creek mine. On 25 October 1892 the first trainload of coal left the Coal Creek Siding (Photo 3.1.3/1). Previously for about one year coal from this mine had been hauled by road to Korumburra Station (Photo 3.1.3/2). At 1892, the mine workings at Coal Creek comprised its tunnel and two shafts with several seams being worked including the main seam four feet six inches thick with skiplines delivering from the mine to the VR rail siding.

At 1894, new capital was needed to expand the workings. The original company went into voluntary liquidation and the Coal Creek Proprietary Company Ltd. (CCPC) was formed to progress the mine.72

In the first quarter of 1894, outloading to rail from the Coal Creek Mine was 24,649 tons, and from the two other operating mines 2,132 tons.73

In October 1895, the CCPC and the Slikstone mine lost contracts to sell coal to the Victorian Railways. The CCPC continued in operation at lower output until, in 1907, the CCPC was in financial difficulties. It was taken over in part by J Cook & Company who operated until 1920 and in part by Kay & Company (known as Coal Creek Sunbeam) who operated until 1922 then reforming as Sunbeam Collieries Pty Ltd74 (This company continued to mine the two upper Coal Creek seams until 1958/59). At 1942, the Sunbeam mine was producing 300 to 500 tons per week and about to commence a new tunnel75 in war time conditions of high demand but restricted manpower. In 1947, a longwall face was being opened up. A shaft had been sunk to 540 feet to test a five foot seam known as the deep seam but subsequently this seam was not worked because the coal was assessed as poor quality and gaseous.76

Sunbeam Collieries continued to work the mine through a series of tunnels. In 1950, intentionally and by arrangement with the Mines Department, it broke through via one of its drives into the disused workings of the adjacent former Austral Mine to fully work the contiguous leases and gaining access to 16,000 tons of coal. Output in 1951 was 5,578 tons and rising to over 8,000 tons in each of 1955 and 1956. From the 1950s, the colliery had been contending with faulting and with driving through stone to follow the seams.77 In 1955, a tunnel was opened into the outcrop to mine some pillar coal from previous workings. It ceased mining in September 1958 with production in that year of 5,957 tons. The last load of coal left the Sunbeam Colliery on 15 April 1959, this representing the end of black coal mining in the Korumburra district.

In the Mines Department Annual Report for 1961, mention is made of the Coal Creek Syndicate mining 102 tons of coal. No prior or later mention was made of this small venture.

From the end of World War II, output of black coal from the privately operated collieries gradually declined as briquettes became more available and The State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi took over fuel supply to the VR locos. The Korumburra Butter Factory, the last commercial customer of Sunbeam Collieries, converted to briquettes in 1958/59.

3.1.4 The Strzelecki Coal Mine Strzelecki Coal Mining Company; Strzelecki Consolidated Colliery Company; Strzelecki Coal Mining Company Pty Ltd; New Strzelecki Coal Mining Company Ferguson Quick Proprietary Company, Quick & Company; Strzelecki Co-operative Syndicate; Lucas & Greenwell; Korumburra Coal Mine

By 1875, a seam of black coal, later called the Strzelecki Seam, was found by surveyor Eyre at about 14 miles north of the mouth of Screw Creek at Anderson’s Inlet.78 Exploratory tunnels and a shaft 102 feet to coal were installed.79 It was not until 1890 that mining operations commenced following registration of the Strzelecki Coal Mining Company. This company was wound up in 1893 and replaced by the Strzelecki Consolidated Colliery Company with additional capital. The renewed company with a new manager installed
a new shaft into the main seam. In 1895 the VR installed
a branch line with a railhead about a half mile from the pit
mouth to which it was connected by a wire rope tramway
on 24 September 1895. However this operation shut down
in March 1897.80

In March 1905, the mine was reopened by a new company,
the Strzelecki Coal Mining Company Pty Ltd, which mined
947 tons before closing in June 1906.

Other ventures followed between 1907 and 1910 which sold
9,788 tons of black coal in attempts to achieve commercial
success – these groups were successively the New Strzelecki
Coal Mining Company, the Ferguson Quick Proprietary
Company, and Quick & Company. The mining lease was
forfeited in 1911.

In 1911 the Austral Coal Company was formed, bought part
of the former Strzelecki mining equipment and commenced
a mine on a different sites (see Section 3.1.6).

In 1922 the Strzelecki Co-operative Syndicate was formed
to open the old mine but closed down within one year after
mining only 30 tons.

In 1930, a venture by Lucas & Greenwell reopened the mine
producing approximately 600 tons per month at its peak and
16,912 tons of coal until its closure in April 1939 due partly
to the coal seam petering out. In 1939, the mining lease was
taken over by a new group who renamed the site as the
Korumburra Coal Mine but mining did not eventuate as much
of the former equipment had been sold81.

Thus the original Strzelecki Coal Mining Company NL mine
had been operated intermittently from 1875 to 1939.

3.1.5 The Korumburra & Jeetho Mine.

Korumburra & Jeetho Coal Mining Company; Coal
Creek Extended Coal Mining Company; Korumburra
Coal Company NL

The Korumburra & Jeetho Coal Mining Company was formed
on 4 April 1892. Its mine was located about 100 yards west
of the Coal Creek Mine. The company purchased most of
its plant from the Boolarra Coal Company, and constructed
a shaft but found that pumping was needed continuously
(Photo 3.1.5/1). This company drove a tunnel to a main seam
estimated to be five feet six inches thick. The K & J Company
had access to a VR branch line off the Silkstone line from
January 1894 (Drawing 3.1.5/1). In July 1894, the K & J
Company amalgamated with an adjacent mine, the Coal
Creek Extended Coal Mining Company, to form the
Korumburra Coal Company NL82

The Coal Creek Extended Coal Mining Company had been
formed in August 1892 and commenced mining coal from a
tunnel in January 1894 at the south east of the K & J mine and
on the south of the CCPC mine. By the end of March 1894, it
had sold about 1,500 tons of coal and had a capacity of about
150 tons a day.83 It was probably working the same seam as
its neighbour the K & J Company.

The Korumburra Coal Company NL newly formed from the
amalgamation noted above, held four leases over 450 acres
at the south of Korumburra. From its tunnel operations, 4,985
tons were extracted until the end of 1894 and a total of 31,957
tons to mid 1897 when the company ceased operation due to
financial difficulties mainly caused by low prices on offer from
the VR.84

Anecdotally, an offer was made by the Coal Creek Proprietary
Company to take over the mining operation but this has not
been confirmed.

3.1.6 The Black Diamond Mine – The Austral Coal
Mine: Black Diamond Coal Mine NL; Coal Creek
Proprietary Company Ltd.; Austral Coal Company

The Black Diamond Coal Mine NL was registered in April
1894. It operated on the east side of the Strzelecki VR branch
tunnel through two tunnels delivering coal to the Silkstone VR
branch line over ‘nine chains of tramway trestles’, but did
not start coal deliveries until late 1898. It purchased some
of its equipment from the Silkstone Mine. To December
1899 it produced 3,940 tons of coal but found the project
uneconomical due to low coal prices on offer.

In 1900, the mine was taken over by the Coal Creek
Proprietary Company Ltd. which operated this mine as well
as its Coal Creek Mine until 1905 when it abandoned its lease
on the Black Diamond Mine. In 1907, the lease was taken
up by the Austral Coal Company. In 1908 this new operator
worked in a four feet six inches seam which it followed until its
cessation of operation in 1943. The mine acquired the name of
the Austral Mine. It produced 433,745 tons of coal from 1908
to 1943 averaging 12,393 tons annually.
The Austral Coal Company considered re-opening the mine in the late 1940s when coal supply was in crisis but found it could not obtain sufficient skilled mining personnel available in the immediate post World War II scene. In 1948, the Austral Coal Company offered the mine lease and equipment “free” to the State Government. This offer was accepted but the mine was not subsequently reactivated except by the adjacent Sunbeam Collieries intentionally breaking through the lease boundary following its seam to gain access to a small tonnage on the previous Austral lease.85

3.1.7 The Cardiff Colliery Company Mine

A company registered as the Cardiff Colliery Company was formed circa 1906 to take over the Coal Creek Proprietary operations. It did not succeed with its objective and did not
enter the mining stage. A second company with the same name (named Cardiff Collieries Number One) was formed in 1922, mining 31,635 tons of coal until it was liquidated and all assets sold in September 1925. The mine was located south of Korumburra with coal haulage over a tramway to the Silkstone-Strzelecki VR branch line at Wynne’s siding.86

The mine was reactivated in 1937 (named Cardiff Collieries Number 2) and operated until 1943, mining 59,483 tons in this latter period.87

### 3.1.8 The Mine Road Colliery, Korumburra

The Mine Road Colliery was opened by 1949 when it recorded an output of 1107 tons.88 No further information has been ascertained in this study. It appears to have been the last mine opened at Korumburra. It probably had ceased operation by 1951 as no further references to its operation have been found.

### 3.1.9 Mahoney’s Black Coal Mine North of Korumburra

This mine was located about 13 kilometres south of Warragul and 17 kilometres north of Korumburra. The mine location is depicted on the Mines Department original 1890 drawing of the County of Buln Buln Coal Field. The outcrop of the main seam was about 12 inches to 18 inches thick (Drawing 3.1.9/1). A drive into the outcrop and two shafts were sunk. However the seams were too thin to be of commercial prospects with lack of transport facilities to either Warragul or Korumburra. Commercial mining did not proceed.

### 3.1.10 Warne’s Black Coal Mine North of Korumburra

This mine was located about seven kilometres north-east of Korumburra. The mine location is depicted on the Mines Department original 1890 drawing of the County of Buln Buln Coal Field. [This location is several kilometres south of that
stated by Kenny in 1947.] The seam was outcropped at one foot, 10 to 15 inches thick. A syndicate was formed, a shaft was sunk to 15 feet and a drive proceeded for 30 feet until the seam disappeared in a fault. The mining venture did not proceed further.90

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

The development of the black coal mines at Korumburra was highly significant in the history of coal mining in Victoria. At the 1872/3 discovery and confirmation of the black coal find at what was later to be called Korumburra, the only commercial black coal mines were small operations in thin seams at Cape Paterson and at Kilcunda. However the Korumburra area was remote from transport to Melbourne and although some minor mine openings occurred in the 1880s, it was not until the VR rail line from Melbourne to Korumburra came into service in 1891 that black coal mining in the Korumburra area became commercially viable.

The delay of some 19 years between discovery and commercial mining had however provided time for a wide investigation of the coal resource and the organisation of syndicates with prepared mining plans ready to commence when the rail connection became available. The coal quality had been proved highly suitable for use in the VR loco fleet and mining ventures were able to commence with assurance of an available market. These factors lead to a higher level of plant mechanisation in the mining activities at Korumburra compared with the other black coal mines at Jeeralang, Boolarra, the Narracan Valley and around Thorpdale which had arisen in the 1880s with limited technical input and initially without access to an assured market.

The Korumburra mines gained a large proportion of their mine workers from the other black coal mines as well as from the gold explorers. There was a high level of political involvement with the various mining syndicates and in the land subdivisions, housing, commercial and servicing activities.

In outcome there were too many individual mines, on adjoining leases, without adequate co-ordination of optimum extraction of the coal resource. This lesson was learnt in the subsequent establishment of the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi where the one enterprise was given the mandate and responsibility to mine the total coal resource of the Powlett River coal field.

Scientific Significance

No specific scientific significance was associated with the Korumburra black coal utilisation. The coal was used predominantly by the VR Commissioners and by gas companies substituting for usage of NSW coal. Economic utilisation of the slack coal (finest) not acceptable to the VR Commissioners for locos or for Newport Power Station presented an unsolved challenge.

Economic Significance

In the 1880s, the potential coal output from the Korumburra Mines was viewed enthusiastically by the Government of Victoria ostensibly prepared to support a Victorian black coal industry as opposed to dependence on coal from NSW for the VR locos and power stations at Newport, Richmond and central Melbourne.

The VR Commissioners set the price for Korumburra coal at the usage location based on its calorific value compared with that contracted for NSW coal at the same usage point.

Social Significance

The potential of the Korumburra black coal resource lead to the installation of the South Gippsland rail line which opened up South Gippsland for closer settlement and for commercial outlets for its timber and primary produce.

The influx of mine workers in the 1890s lead to a rapid development of the town of Korumburra as a vigorous district centre. Mine workers from the Korumburra mines progressively transferred to the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi from 1910 as various small mines at Korumburra phased out of operation in their separate uncoordinated mining of the same seam(s).

Mine Infrastructure Features

The Coal Creek Museum at Korumburra preserves various relics and reminders of the mining activity.

A replica coal mine opened in March 1984 is a feature of the Coal Creek Museum.

No other remains of the Korumburra mines have been identified in this study.
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Note: The details of individual mines in the Korumburra area have largely been collated from the writings of Joseph White in The History of the Shire of Korumburra. A large and detailed assembly of the research notes and associated documentation by Joseph White (now deceased) has been bequeathed by his family to the Korumburra Historical Society. Barry Sykes, a current researcher on aspects of the coal mines and communities of the Korumburra, Jumbunna and Outtrim areas, continues to collate a detailed history of these areas. Barry Sykes is an associate member of the Wonthaggi Historical Society and is accessible for detailed information on mine sites in the South West Gippsland area.

3.2 Jumbunna Coal Mines

Map Reference: 8021-2-3 Korumburra.
Jumbunna Rail Stn. 3930, 57413

Municipality: Shire of South Gippsland

Land Use/Status: Private

Site History

Black coal was discovered at Jumbunna East (Drawing 3.2/1) in the early 1880s but was not reported at the time. In 1889, at or near the same site, coal was reported on land owned by Thomas Horsley and was known as Horsley’s Seam. It was reported on favourably by Mines Department Geologist RAF Murray as a four feet six inches 4’ seam. The Jumbunna True Coal Mining Company was formed but did not reach a commercial operation stage. Land subdivision for the township of Jumbunna took place in August 1893 (Drawing 3.2/2). At 1893, the subdivision advertisement stated ‘Jumbunna is the centre of the largest deposit of black coal in the Colony’. ‘Contracts have been let for opening up a second tunnel.’ [It is indicated in some sources but not confirmed from official documentation that some extraction of coal commenced in 1890.]

In 1894, the Jumbunna Coal Mining Company NL (JCMC) commenced commercial operation of the mine located about six miles south west of Korumburra. (Drawing 3.2/3 & Photo 3.2/1). A VR branch line three and three quarters miles long to Jumbunna from the Coal Creek Mine branch line officially opened in May 1894 to serve the mine and the new township.

The entrance to the main tunnel of the JCMC mine was about one mile south of outloading bins on the VR branch line at Jumbunna with an aerial ropeway connection from the mine outlet to the bins (Photo 3.2/2). The ropeway came into service in June 1895 with an expected capacity of 30 tons per hour which was not achieved and resulted in output capacity from the mine being lower than envisaged. This delivery system stayed in service until the VR railway extension to Outtrim was in operation in February 1896. This VR extension brought the railway line closer to the Jumbunna Coal Mine. A new haulage system about 400 feet long from the pit head
to a VR loading point was installed. Later the aerial tramway and its subsidiary plant were dismantled and sold.

The West Jumbunna Coal Company was registered on 3 June 1893, before the township land auctions, on a lease a mile or so west of the initial Jumbunna Mine. This company sold out to the Jumbunna Coal Mining Company (JCMC) in 1896 without working its lease.

From 1894–1903, average output from the JCMC mine was about 54,000 tons per year. In 1903/1904, there was a major strike for 70 weeks, during which the workings of the main (lower) seam were flooded, followed by a recovery phase of two years before returning to full production. From 1906–1912, production averaged over 60,000 tons per year before output fell away due to better wages and conditions at the State Coal Mine causing strikes and threats of closure at Jumbunna. In 1916, a disastrous fire caused closure of part of the mine. JCMC continued at low output until 1921. In 1920, it had approached the Government for financial assistance or purchase without success. Total coal deliveries from this company from 1890 to 1921 were 1.223 million tons.
In March 1921 a new company Jumbunna Coal Pty Ltd took up the workings but wound up in October 1925 after a strike. Total production by this company was about 50,000 tons.

In early 1926, the Jumbunna Colliery Pty Ltd (owners Wimpney & Coy) took up operation of the initial mine including attempts to reopen the north tunnel of the mine taken out of operation after the 1916 fire. In 1928, with the mine producing about 50 tons per day and uneconomical due to price competition from the State Coal Mine and the SECV production of briquettes, the Jumbunna mine was offered to the Government for £12,000 as a going concern. Evaluation of the mine by the General Manager of the State Coal Mine acknowledged the advantages of the Jumbunna coal with its low moisture and ash but stated the ‘mine output was insufficient for profitable working’ in the two feet four inches top seam being mined. He assessed that new shafts of 1,000 feet would be necessary to access the three feet six inches lower seam which had not been reworked since its flooding in 1903. The offer to purchase the mine was not accepted by the Government and the mine suspended operation in 1929 after excavating some 36,000 tons.

A sequence of small mining companies had continued operating the mine from 1929 until a further suspension of commercial operations in 1939. Barry Sykes includes the following:

- 1931–1934 Jumbunna Colliery Syndicate (Mac’s) 3,194 tons,
- 1935 Bright Star (McLeans) 403 tons,
- 1936–1939 J Durkin et al probably well below 1,000 tons,
Another reactivation reputedly occurred from 1936 to 1939 by the Jumbunna Colliery Pty Ltd excavating about 18,000 tons. [Quantities, dates and nomenclature listed above vary somewhat between sources. Definitive reconciliation has not been undertaken in this Coal Sites Identification study.]

The Mines Department Annual Report 1947 states that some mining of outcrop coal and pillar coal at 1,330 tons in that year from mine workings at the Jumbunna Coal Mine was being undertaken by Messrs. Blackmore, Leighton and Murray.99 Output 1946–1948 is stated by others as 3,750 tons.

Reactivation of the mine occurred in 1949 when the three feet six inch seam was struck from a lower tunnel and an air rise was installed. Intentions were to follow the seam dip. In mid 1950, the Jumbunna Coal Mining Company (known as the Jumbunna Colliery Syndicate) amalgamated with the Outtrim West mine to mine through the contiguous lease boundaries. They utilised the merged workforce to commence a new tunnel into dwindling coal reserves.

The Mines Department Annual Reports continued to refer to the Jumbunna Coal Mine or the Jumbunna Colliery at
Jumbunna or Jumbunna South as the only commercially significant mine at Jumbunna. Nomenclature used in Mines Department reports and various sources varies confusedly including Jumbunna Coal Company, Jumbunna Coal Pty Ltd, Jumbunna Coal Mining Company, Jumbunna Coal Syndicate, Jumbunna Coal Pty Ltd and Jumbunna Colliery Pty Ltd. The Annual Reports show production averaging about 4,000 tons per year by 1957 and then gradually declining to 714 tons in 1960, its last full year of operation. Production from this mine from 1930 to 1961 was probably of the order of 40,000 tons. Over its operational lifetime from 1894–1960, the mine at Jumbunna had produced about 1.4 million tons of black coal. [See also the reference to the Jumbunna Colliery at the end of the Section on the Outtrim Mines.]

From 1910, no exploratory leases for coal had been granted in the south west Gippsland area in a policy of preserving the coal resources for development for public purposes. This policy prevented the JCMC and other private mines from long term planning and survival as coal resources on existing mining leases dwindled. 106

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

The discovery of the Jumbunna black coal deposit in 1889 occurred when syndicates at Korumburra were preparing to open their mining operations as soon as VR rail transport to Melbourne was available. The prospects of a widespread coal field beyond the Korumburra known seams appeared good. Land speculators took a leading role in the subdivision of land into township allotments adjacent to the proposed mine. Mine workers were attracted by offers of housing blocks paid for by direct deduction from wages.

Scientific Significance

The coal quality at Jumbunna was highly satisfactory and could substitute adequately for coal from NSW. The Jumbunna coal was used predominantly for steam power and gas production using technology developed on NSW black coal. No specific scientific applications were sought for the Jumbunna coal.

Economic Significance

Opening of the Jumbunna Mine was postponed until a VR branch line had been brought into service to the new Jumbunna Township to serve the Jumbunna mine. The mine output was of significant importance to Victoria from inception in 1894 until about 1914 by which time the State Mine at Wonthaggi had come fully into service. The VR Commissioners responsible for the State Mine complex was fully committed to the success of the State Mine and considered the Jumbunna mine as a competitor. VR freight rates for coal haulage from Jumbunna were higher than expected. The customer price for slack coal from Wonthaggi was set by the VR Commissioners to ensure disposal of all such Wonthaggi coal forcing Jumbunna slack coal to be sold below cost.

The coal resources at the Jumbunna mine were not fully worked out, a lower seam requiring substantial capital investment to be mined. The Jumbunna area did not receive the extensive exploratory and proving drilling applied to the Wonthaggi site by the VR Commissioners in their determined efforts to maximise coal recovery from the Wonthaggi coal field.
Coal Mining Heritage Study – Mine Sites Identification

Social Significance

The establishment of a new town specifically to house the Jumbunna mine workers was a short term profit making venture by land speculators supported by the extension of the VR line and the rapid opening of the mine. This mine appeared to have a successful commercial outcome until the advent of The State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi with pricing policies applied to disadvantage private coal producers. The township of Jumbunna had a short life influenced significantly by the transfer of mine workers to Wonthaggi from about 1910 by offers of higher pay.

Mine Infrastructure Features

Site of Jumbunna VR rail station.
Site of aerial ropeway from mine site to VR rail siding.

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3.3 Outtrim Mines

Map Reference: 8020-1-4 Drumdlemara 3925, 57370
Municipality: Shire of South Gippsland
Land Use/Status: Private

Site History

3.3.1 The Outtrim Howitt and British Consolidated Mining Company Mine at Outtrim.

Map Reference: 8020-1-4 Drumdlemara 3925.57370

A two feet six inches seam of black coal was found by McLeod on his selection 107 about 12 miles by road from Korumburra circa 1890, after the coal finds at Korumburra and Jumbunna. From 1891, active prospecting for coal then followed in the area. [RAF Murray, former Mines Department Geologist, took up a selection adjoining the Mc Leod selection.]102 In October 1892 Johnson found an outcrop in the same area and sank a shaft which intersected a four feet seven inches seam.

The first mining activity was by the Outtrim Coal Company (originally named the Hopetoun Proprietary Coal Mining Company) which in November 1893 registered a mining lease covering the original discovery location (Drawing 3.3/1). By this time, search leases had been taken out over a wide area around the Johnson find.103 (The mining venture was named after the Minister of Mines.104) Some mining of the exposed seam, probably on a manual basis, occurred and a small sample was sent to Melbourne for testing.

The Howitt Coal Mining Company was registered on 21 November 1893105 on leases about one mile west of the Outtrim operation. A third company, the Outtrim Murray & Stirling Amalgamated Coal Company was registered on 18 June 1894. A fourth company, the British Blocks (Colliery?) Syndicate was also registered about this time. There was much overlapping of significant shareholdings in these companies which had been inspired by a geological assessment (by Mines Department geologists Murray & Stirling) of a six million tons coal resource.
In 1894, these 70 week companies went into voluntary liquidation and their assets were sold into a new company, The Outtrim, Howitt, and British Consolidated Mining Company which was registered on 4 July 1894.106, 107 This company was to be the major mining company of many which subsequently operated at Outtrim.

The OHBCM Company commenced operation by driving a tunnel south westerly from a location later to be near the south end of the Outtrim rail station. Initial coal deliveries were by bullock wagon to the railhead at Jumbunna. Considerable negotiations with the VR Commissioners were necessary before agreement was reached on an extension of the VR line by 2 3/8 miles from the existing terminus at Jumbunna. The extension came into service on 5 February 1896 with anticipation in the South West Gippsland community that the rail line would subsequently be extended to Inverloch (Photo 3.3/3).

The OHBCM Company initial tunnel used an endless ropeway haulage with small skips. The company installed two additional tunnels (known as McLeod's tunnels) in a northerly direction and worked a seam approximately five feet thick. Haulage from these two tunnels was by a two feet gauge tramline.108

The OHBCM Company had anticipated sales of 60,000 tons per year. In the year 1896, output was 126,000 tons and rose to 140,000 tons in 1898 out of a total from Victoria of 240,000 tons. Practically all coal from the OHBCM Company mine was sold to the VR for locomotive use. OHBCM initially won a three year contract with Victorian Railways undercutting prices by other Victorian mines and NSW.
In 1900, the NSW collieries reduced their price to the VR; the VR responded by reducing the price it was prepared to pay for Victorian black coal; the OHBCM Company responded by reducing wage rates; the mine workers responded with strikes and work interruptions including a strike in 1903/04.

By 1908 the company was aware of dwindling coal reserves in their mining lease and was experiencing problems with faulting and thinning of seams. The Government had refused exploration licences outside current mining leases in an endeavour to control future coal winning and reserve resources for public utilities.

With labour strikes again in 1908, and the opening in 1910 of the State Coal Mine in direct competition for workers and in price, the OHGMCC opted for closure of its Outtrim operation. The company purchased coal leases from the Kilcunda Coal Mining Company at Kilcunda in 1913 and transferred equipment, miners and houses from Outtrim to Kilcunda. The OHGMCC ceased commercial operation at Outtrim in 1915 (last recorded output of about 7,500 tons). It terminated all its activities by 1924 including its operations at Kilcunda and at Korumburra in the Cardiff Colliery. During the company’s operations about 1.375 million tons of coal were mined at Outtrim. [One reference states output as approx. 0.975 million tons only.]

3.3.2 Chronological listing of smaller mines at Outtrim 1921–1962

From 1921 to 1957, small groups generally ex-miners formed and reformed into companies, obtained mining licence(s) and began mining coal from the old OHGMCC workings normally extracting pillars rather than extending the workings. There was also some near surface new workings commenced into outcrops some known previously and others found since the Government embargo on exploration and mining licences for coal had terminated. Underground interconnection between the OHGMCC workings and the Jumbunna mines also occurred.

The following listing of small mining companies and mining lease holders recorded as mining at Outtrim between 1921 and 1957 as extracted from their reports to the Mines Department are copied directly from the writing of James White (1987), pp.132, 133.

- Outtrim Coal Syndicate 1921–1928 17,790 tons
- Outtrim Extended 1921–1926 7,336 tons
- Outtrim West Syndicate 1924 251 tons
- Mount Pleasant 1923–1928 2,436 tons
- Roy’s Extended North Outtrim 1924–1928 9,068 tons
- Howitt Colliery 1926–1936 56,990 tons
- Wallis & Party 1927 259 tons
- Melrose Colliery 1931 90 tons
- Station Area 1932–1933 2,587 tons
- Station Area Extended 1932 170 tons
- Outtrim West (GA Foote) 1944–1951 13,357 tons
- Blackmore (Leighton & Murray) 1946 1,045 tons
- Outtrim North (Willoughby) 1947–1948 1,847 tons
- Howitt Colliery (Mc Bride’s) 1947–1949 3,396 tons
- Hillside Colliery 1953–1956 3,425 tons
- Blackmore & Leighton 1956–1957 1,836 tons
- Webster (Axford & Hodges) c1950–1962 not ascertained

This latter group was the last to be working the original Outtrim mine.
Comments on some of these minor mines in the Outtrim area which were significant enough to be recorded in the Mines Department Annual Reports were as follows.

Five mines at Outtrim were recorded as being opened between 1921 and 1924, all being phased out by 1928 with a total production of about 36,000 tons.

The Outtrim Coal Mining Syndicate mine (also known colloquially as the Perseverance mine) tunnelled below the main street in Outtrim. It became flooded in 1929 bringing its operations to a close.

The Outtrim Extended mine operated from a tunnel about 500 yards south of the Outtrim Station.

Roy's Extended (North Outtrim). Registered in 1924 this became known as Atkinson & Gleeson Mine. It opened a tunnel north of the Outtrim Rail Station and broke through into former workings in McLeods Tunnel at the east of its lease.

Howitt Colliery commenced operation in 1926 by reopening old workings. This mine was known as Howitt Colliery Number One and operated until 1936 mining about 57,000 tons of coal working out its available coal. Howitt Colliery Number Two (Mc Bride's) operated in the Western Area of the initial lease between 1947 and 1949. This was the largest producer of the smaller mines.

Station Area Mine. This had a brief life of less than two years with an output of less than 3,000 tons.

Outtrim West (GA Foote) This mine tunnelled into an outcrop at the west of initial lease area, operating over 7 years from 1944 to 1951 with an output of about 13,000 tons.

Outtrim North. Two small mining ventures occurred with this name, one in 1923–1926 excavating some 1,000 tons in the vicinity of McLeods tunnels and the second in 1946 to 1949 extracting some 2,100 tons.

Blackmore, Leighton & Murray. From 1945 intermittently to 1957, a syndicate, Blackmore, Leighton et al. mined at Outtrim and at Jumbunna. In 1945/46, this syndicate mined under the former VR rail reserve at the North East of the Outtrim township. Output has been variously written as between 1,000 and 1,667 tons. A renewed syndicate Blackmore & Leighton has been recorded as operating in 1956/57 mining some 1,800 tons of coal. The location of this operation has not been ascertained by me but would most likely have been removal of pillars in old workings. This group was the last coal mining operation at Outtrim mentioned in the Mines Department Annual Reports. At Outtrim, total coal production by this group was about 3,000 tons.

Hillside Colliery. This mining activity was on the south side of the initial lease area extracting pillar coal and following a thinning seam.109 At 1954, this was the only black coal mine listed in the Mines Department Annual Report as operating at Outtrim. The Hillside Colliery closed in 1957 after total recorded production of 3,425 tons.

Activities of a group called Jumbunna Colliery has been outlined in the Jumbunna mine sites sub chapter as having operated at Jumbunna at times intermittently from 1926 to 1961 under some variations of nomenclature including Jumbunna Colliery.

Barry Sykes writes in his collation on Outtrim Mines that a syndicate called Jumbunna Colliery operated from 1948 to 1962 located several hundred yards south east of the original Jumbunna Mine and adjacent to the Outtrim West (GA Foote) mine. He writes that the two operations merged in 1951 continuing as Jumbunna Colliery, with local customers only, the operation eventually winding down due to availability of SECV briquettes. He locates the mine as being an Outtrim mine with a lifetime production from 1948 of 29,517 tons.

I have included the mine as a Jumbunna Mine outlined in my subchapter on Jumbunna Mines while noting that another information source refers to this operation under the Jumbunna Coal Company nomenclature producing 30,870 tons from 1948 to 1962.

Some further reconciliation in nomenclature, location, and output between information sources is required.
Assessment of Heritage Significance

**Historical Significance**

Substantial mining of black coal in the Outtrim area occurred from 1896 only six years after initial coal discoveries in the area. An extension of the VR line from Jumbunna was installed with strong strategic proposals for extension of this line to Inverloch thus opening opportunities for extended agricultural development of this area of South Gippsland. Within a year or so after opening of the Outtrim/Howitt mine in 1896 about a half of Victoria’s black coal production came from this single mine at Outtrim.

**Scientific Significance**

No specific scientific significance was associated with the discovery, mining or utilisation of the Outtrim Coal.

**Economic Significance**

Mining commenced at Outtrim before a VR rail line extension to the new town and mine at Outtrim was in service. An efficient mining operation succeeded commercially for about five years only until price reductions and industrial disputes jeopardised long term development.

As with other black coal private mining ventures in Victoria from the early 1890s, Government support was either spasmodic or not forthcoming. Decline of the economic prospects of the Outtrim mine occurred from about 1910 with aggressive competition from The State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi and restriction on coal exploration licences. The major mine at Outtrim closed in 1915 virtually frozen out of existence by State Government influence.

Small scale mining of the Outtrim coal seam took place from 1921 to about 1960, providing income for small domestic scale operations supplying small scale local industrial usage such as in milk processing and for heating in local hospitals.

**Social Significance**

The mining operation at Outtrim was predominantly by one company producing over 90 per cent of total Outtrim output. Establishment of a new town served the domestic requirements of the one company. Survival of this township depended on commercial success of this company. From 1910, the Outtrim-Howitt mine provided a reservoir of mine workers for the early years of the Wonthaggi State Coal Mine where higher pay and long term employment attracted transfer of the Outtrim Mine workers and their families. Some small scale mining operations continued until 1960 as Outtrim area residents in small syndicates worked separate local leases or the old workings of the Outtrim-Howitt mine.

**Mine Infrastructure Features**

Site of the Outtrim-Howitt mine.

Site of the township rail siding.

**References**

Gleeson, K ‘The Rise and Fall of Outtrim’, *The Korumburra Times*, 16 September 1965

*Mining and Geological Journal*, Vol. 6 No. 2, Mines Department, 1957

Murray, RAF ‘Recollections and Experiences’, *Annual Report*, Mines Department, 1891,

*Company Records* Nos. 4792, 5145, Public Records Office

Wells, John, *Gippsland: A People, a Place, and their Past.*

3.4 The State Coal Mines, Wonthaggi

Map Reference: 8020-4-4 Dalyston Number 5 shaft 3757, 57259
8020-4-1 Kongwak Kirrak area 3810, 57273
8020-4-4 Dalyston No 20 shaft 3754, 57291

Municipality: Shire of South Gippsland

Land Use/Status: Public and Private

Site History

The existence of black coal seams inland from the coast in the Powlett River plains was known from 1858 from boring carried out by the government. However subsequent spasmodic drilling had shown the coal seams to be highly faulted such that an understanding of the seam geology had been difficult. ‘Deep boring in the Powlett River Valley was undertaken (by the Mines Department) from 1886 to 1889 with only moderate success.’ Systematic drilling was not undertaken (again) until 1908–1909. Although this latter drilling generally revealed multiple scattered seams up to three feet thick, in some locations seams merged to 9 feet in thickness. The existence of ‘a splendid and extensive field of coal’ was declared. This assessment was substantially reinforced by the discovery of a seam or seams six feet and eight feet thick at 16 feet and 39 feet below surface, in a well and in a shaft respectively.

Photo 3.4/1 The initial tent city at Wonthaggi circa 1910 (from Quilford, (1977)). Copyright Arthur Quilford

Drawing 3.4/1 Location of Installation of the Wonthaggi Mines (from Quilford, The State Mine). Copyright Arthur Quilford.
On 11 November 1909, in reaction to a shortage of coal from NSW due to strike action in NSW, the Victorian State Government sanctioned the opening of the Powlett River coalfields under the control of the Mines Department. Site work commenced immediately. Table 3.4/1 ‘Chart of Operations 1909–1968’ (adapted by J Coglan from JL Knight, Mining and Geological Journal, Vol.6, No. 6, 1970), shows details of the names, working periods and production from the various shafts, tunnels, and benches of the State Coal Mine, identifying 12 designated mines (Drawing 3.4/2). The location of the first mine opening was about eight miles north of Cape Paterson. The township of Wonthaggi commenced as a tent town for men only (Drawing 3.4/1 & Photo 3.4/1). On 24 February 1910, the Government reserved land for a planned township named Wonthaggi which was laid out eastwards of the mine opening and intended to provide housing to the mine workers and service providers without land speculator involvement. Subsequently, land speculation did occur outside the planned township boundaries with the land subdivision of satellite dormitory suburbs. In 1911 the Commonwealth census counted 3,200 inhabitants in Wonthaggi.
The first mining operation involved the sinking of four shafts, Nos. 1–4, to the top coal seam (Drawing 3.4/4). This work was completed within 3 weeks. Coal was cut by hand tools, hauled to the surface in wicker baskets via poppet heads assembled from old drilling rigs (Photos 3.4/3 & 3.4/5). Coal was loaded into bullock wagons and hauled over a 10 mile route on unmade tracks to shallow draught vessels at a makeshift port at Inverloch. By 30 June 1910, a total of 42,274 tons was delivered to Melbourne by this means. Equipment, materials and supplies were transported to the mine either from the Inverloch Port or from the nearest railhead at Outtrim. A VR rail extension from Nyora on the Great Southern Railway was rushed into service by the 20 February 1910, with completion of ballasting achieved by June 1910 (Drawing 3.4/3).

Number Five shaft was opened in 1910 following which Numbers One, Two and Four shafts were used as ventilation.

Table 3.4/1: Chart of Operations, State Coal Mine, Wonthaggi 1909–1968. Copyright The State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mine No.</th>
<th>Area and Mine</th>
<th>Working Period</th>
<th>Seam Worked and Thickness in Inches</th>
<th>Area Worked Acres</th>
<th>Production to Nearest 50 Tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dudley Basin 1. Central Area, No. 3 Shaft</td>
<td>1909–1914</td>
<td>Top. ———— 50–99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>783,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Top. ———— 50–99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>937,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Top. ———— 70–99</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>975,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom. ———— 50–99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,394,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom. ———— 50–99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>917,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom. ———— 43–84</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,017,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom. ———— 35–40</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>778,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom. ———— 34–42</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,009,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRAND TOTAL: 16,376,050

Kirkra Basin closed from 1940–1956.

*Note—Due to the inclusion of dirty and unclean coal in the gross weight of coal from each mine, the total production from individual mines exceeds the actual published figures by 4,784 tons.

Adapted from “The History of the State Coal Mine, Wonthaggi”, by J. L. Knight, p.60, in Mining and Geological Journal, Vol. 6, No. 6 (Mines Dept., Victoria, 1970).
shafts. Number Five shaft was located about 200 metres north east of the cluster of the first four shafts (Photo 3.4/2).

On 1 July 1911, the Government transferred management of the State Coal Mines from The Mines Department to the Railways Commissioners in accordance with the intention in the initial legislation for the Powlett River Coal to be dedicated to the VR for their use in locos and in the VR Newport Power Station.

Drilling was continued over the years to determine the structure of the faulted mining area and to determine mining strategy.

Numbers Nine and Ten shafts were located about 600 metres west of Number Five shaft and were connected to the train outloading facility at Number Five shaft by endless ropeways (Photo 3.4/5). Drives from Numbers Nine and Ten shafts were at depths of 52 to 82 metres working in seams of two and one metre thick respectively. The four production shafts Numbers Three, Five, Nine and Ten were progressively worked out until 1927 producing over 31 million tons of coal.

Mc Bride’s Tunnel was installed in 1915 developing new mine workings northwards from Number Five shaft area on four levels, the lowest of which continued until 1936. Total production from the Mc Bride tunnel workings was over 3.3 million tons all outloaded through the Number Five brace outloading facilities. A second tunnel operation, the Station
Area tunnel, north of the Wonthaggi Railway Station, produced over 0.3 million tons between 1919–28 (Photo 3.4/6).

Three other production shafts: Number 16 and Number 20 (Photo 3.4/8), 2.5 kilometres and three kilometres to the north respectively from Number Five shaft and Number 21 at 2.7 kilometres to the west came into service from 1925 to 1936. Number 16 and Number 20 outloaded to a VR branch line on or near the route previously used by the private ‘Daly’s Mine’. Number 21 shaft was connected by surface haulage to the Number Five bracing outloading plant [there was also a small tunnel operation in the vicinity of Number 21 shaft which produced over 0.019 million tons in a thin top seam between 1956 and 1959]. These three production shafts produced a total of over 5.6 million tons sequentially closing in 1938, in 1962 and in 1968 respectively. All of the above mining was carried out in the area designated as the Dudley Basin which lay to the west of the Wonthaggi Township.

At a separate mining area (in the Kirrak Basin) at the east of the township, mining on three separate bench areas occurred from 1919 to 1931, producing over 1.2 million tons. At 1930, at about 3.5 kilometres east of Wonthaggi Railway Station, Number 18 production shaft (Photo 3.4/7) was installed producing over 1.9 million tons to closure in 1946. In 1939, at about four kilometres north east of Wonthaggi Railway Station, Number 23 production shaft (Photo 3.4/9) was installed producing over 0.46 million tons to closure in 1968. The peak year of production was the 1929–30 financial year with 0.662 million tons of output by 1770 employees. Table 3.4/1 shows 12 separate mines in the State Mine complex.

Total production from the State Mine complex until its closure in 1968 was over 16.7 million tons. A Government Select Committee of 1910 had assessed that five million tons was a liberal estimate of the coal readily recoverable from the Powlett River area. Subsequently in 1913, the General Manager of

Table 3.4/2 Reserves of Black Coal in Victorian Coalfields (from Knight (1970), p.69). Copyright State of Victoria, Department of Primary Industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Bench Depths</th>
<th>Number of Braces in Area</th>
<th>Reserve in Tons Gross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dudley Basin</td>
<td>Unworked areas and pillars</td>
<td>30–33</td>
<td>197,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top shafts</td>
<td>18–40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom shafts</td>
<td>15–30</td>
<td>1,170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kirrak Basin</td>
<td>Top shafts</td>
<td>24–40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom shafts</td>
<td>18–20</td>
<td>2,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top shafts</td>
<td>30–48</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top shafts only</td>
<td>24–30</td>
<td>252,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Wonthaggi Basin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>444</td>
<td>8,380,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 92

Coal Mining Heritage Study
the State Mine estimated that ‘69 per cent of the total coal reserves of 28 million tons were not recoverable profitably’. The quantity subsequently recovered was well above these early estimates. This high recovery was an outcome of extensive drilling to map the recoverable reserves and of socially influenced perseverance in mining thin and faulted seams not competitively economical to mine.

The reservation by the Government in 1909 of the coal resources of the Powlett River valley for development exclusively by a State Authority was controversial. In October 1909 the Minister for Mines had stated that it was not the intention to enter into competition with private enterprise\textsuperscript{115} (from Victoria). However the State Mine within two years became a privileged competitor\textsuperscript{116} against the private mines at Korumburra, Jumbunna and Outtrim for coal supply to the Victorian Railways with production from the State Mine being more than three times that of all other black coal mines in the State. The State Mine also sold a large proportion of its ‘slack’ coal (about 30–55 per cent of total production) to private industry at prices well below those previously available to the private mines.\textsuperscript{117} The State Mine also recruited extensively from the experienced employees of the south west Gippsland private mines by offering better wages and housing subsidies.

Considerable mining difficulties were encountered with coal seams generally becoming thinner than first mined and with extensive faulting requiring new shafts and tunnels as seams ‘disappeared’ at expected or unpredicted faults. The Wonthaggi coal was more friable than anticipated resulting in a high proportion of ‘slack’ coal and in general had only about 82 per cent of the calorific value of the benchmark coal from Maitland NSW.

In 1913, a private group, the Patent Fuel Syndicate Pty Ltd, obtained from the Government, as recommended by the Railways Commissioners, a lease of land at the north of Wonthaggi to manufacture briquettes from ‘slack’ coal from the State Mine. However this project did not proceed further.\textsuperscript{118} Two later proposals for manufacture of briquettes by the State arose, the second in 1928 not favoured by the VR Commissioners on the basis of cost\textsuperscript{119} and a third in 1932 not supported by the VR Commissioners on the basis that limited coal reserves should not be made available at a subsidised price for a long term briquetting project.\textsuperscript{120}

Closure of the State Mine had been mooted seriously from about 1939 due to continuing industrial disputation and resulting higher costs per ton. In the 1940s, the mine output was vital during World War Two and economic recovery thereafter. By the mid 1950s, the future place of the State Mine in Victoria’s energy needs again came under review. The VR loco fleet was changing to diesel fuel and electrification. The Morwell Briquetting and Power project was under way based on brown coal. In 1956, the VR Commissioners proposed
closure of the State Mine to the Minister for Railways. However
the Government was concerned about unemployment in this
sole industry area and in September 1958 directed that closure
should be implemented gradually with a ‘last on, first off’ basis.
This directive was subsequently modified to provide for early
retirement of mine workers from age 58.

By mid 1965 operations had been reduced to one shift per
day and in the following mid year the works power station was
closed down with electric supply now received from the SECV
system. By December 1967, the workforce had been reduced
to only 112 men. Further improvements to redundancy
payments and retirement benefits occurred with general
satisfaction of the last group of mine workers acknowledging
the clear inevitability of closure.121

‘Closing of the 1050 feet deep Kirrak Shaft on 20 December
1968 ended 59 years of continuous black coal mining at
Wonthaggi by the State Coal Mine’.122 Closure coincided with
the Christmas holidays of 1968. Total output from the State
Coal Mines at Wonthaggi was over 16.7 million tons.

The Railways Commissioners moved quickly with the
dismantling of equipment and buildings. ‘What could not be
sold was allowed to rot.’ In its last years, the State Coal Mine
was a ‘bizarre form of social security benefit for the miners and
the Wonthaggi community’. After the achievements of the first
two decades this was a sorry end for an initially successful
incursion by Government into a field traditionally left to private
enterprise.’123

The gross reserves of un-worked black coal at Wonthaggi and
other Victorian Coalfields determined from bores are set out in
Table 3.4/2. For the Wonthaggi Coal Fields ‘much of the coal
included as reserves would be difficult to extract due to the
proximity to old workings and other factors’124 including stone
bands not previously detected and the thinning of seams and
occurrence of faults.

‘It is most unlikely that black coal mining operations on the
scale of those of the State Coal Mine [at Wonthaggi] will ever
again occur in Victoria’.125

Various relics of the State Coal Mines have been preserved at
Wonthaggi, some in-situ at their operating location and some
in local museums available to the public. At the initial mine site,
conducted underground visits were available for several years
to 2005 to inspect the upper coal seam. These underground
visits were suspended in 2005 for reconsideration on public
safety aspects. A State Mine Park Project has been initiated
‘dedicated to preserving what remains of the once extensive
State Coal Mine operations. The main project, located on the
site of the old Dudley Area, is the creation of a park containing
the recently restored Number Five Brace building, the old
Rescue Station, the Powder Magazine, Mc Bride Tunnel
Entrance, and other facilities’.

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

Mining of the Powlett River Coal Fields by the specifically
formed State Coal Mine organisation was the first public
authority mining venture in Victoria.

The success of the mining activities, the determined search
for additional coal resources and the strategic mine planning
resulting in a total lifetime coal output of over three times the
estimate at inauguration of the mine set an example for the
establishment of other public enterprise ventures in Victoria.

Scientific Significance

No specific scientific applications involving coal composition
or usage were initiated for the Wonthaggi coal which
was intended and occurred almost exclusively for railway
locomotives and the VR Newport Power Stations utilising
well established steam raising techniques using black coal.

At least three private enterprise proposals to utilise slack coal
for briquette manufacture reached Government consideration
between 1913 and 1932 but had inadequate conceptual
support from the VR Commissioners or the State Government
and did not proceed beyond the concept stage.

Economic Significance

The State Coal Mine(s) at Wonthaggi proved of vital economic
significance to Victoria especially from 1910 to about 1932
by which time the SECV’s utilisation of brown coal in the
Latrobe Valley was taking up the increasing demand for power
generation and supplementing hard fuel supply with briquettes.

Output from the State Coal Mines at Wonthaggi was also of
extreme importance to Victoria during the 1940s when war
time coal shortages and deterioration of fuel supply from other
sources existed.
By 1914, the excavation from the Wonthaggi complex was 0.55 million tons for that year being 90 per cent of the Victorian black coal output and was stated to be ‘the largest producing coal mine in Australia’. The 16.7 million tons lifetime output from the 12 separate mines at Wonthaggi greatly exceeded the prediction of five million tons at inauguration of the Wonthaggi Project.

By the mid 1950s the significance of the Wonthaggi continuing operations had reduced significantly as VR locos converted to diesel fuel and briquette supply from the Latrobe Valley increased.

Social Significance

Establishment of the Wonthaggi mines involved the creation of a planned township and connection to the VR rail system thus presenting opportunity for closer development in south west Gippsland.

The rapid development of the mining operation from 1910 did involve the progressive transfer of much of the mining communities from the other black coal mining operations in south Gippsland.

The protected trading position of the Wonthaggi mines with its ‘owner’ being its major customer and with its policy to undercut ‘slack’ coal prices below production costs of the private black coal mines to achieve total disposal of this poorer quality fuel from Wonthaggi lead to the demise of the black coal mines elsewhere in Victoria.

Considerable downsizing of the workforce occurred from about 1932 and by 1939 closure of the mine was being mooted as coal seams were found to be decreasing in thickness and major faults were necessitating opening of new shafts to intersect the faulted deposits. A reprieve in the mine’s prospects occurred in the war years 1940 to 1946 as other fuel sources suffered problems in supply. From about 1950, continuation of the mining operations became uneconomic and the VR Commissioners formally proposed closure in 1956. From that time the mine operation was closed down progressively with Government oversight as staged depletion of the workforce was managed in attempts to avoid abandonment of the Township and large scale unemployment. Transfer of mine workers to the SECV burgeoning open-cut, power generation and briquetting operations at Yallourn and then at Morwell assisted with the decreasing reductions in the Wonthaggi operations albeit with some adverse industrial relations affects from militant elements of the previous Wonthaggi workforce.

One description of the graduated closure of the Wonthaggi Operations has defined this arrangement as ‘a social security benefit for the miners and the Wonthaggi Community.’

The success of the early years of the State controlled Wonthaggi Mines followed some 20 years of spasmodic and generally unsuccessful coal mining ventures by private entrepreneurs, some mines initiated by land developers seeking rail extensions and township land subdivision. This public enterprise success lead to rejection by Government of private industry development proposals of brown coal mines at Altona and at Morwell requiring exclusive rights to power generation and electricity. The success of the Wonthaggi operation by 1915 influenced considerably public support for Public Enterprise to manage the opening of the Latrobe Valley brown coal resources and the hydro electric resources of the State in a co-ordinated electricity supply and distribution throughout the State.

The staged withdrawal from the Wonthaggi operation was successful in reducing the impact of unemployment with the township having a high level of retirees which has continued as the township stabilised as a tourist resort and regional centre.

Mine Infrastructure Features

Visitors centre and underground inspections – Central Area Mine.

Mining Museum – Central Area.

Wonthaggi Historical Society Museum – at Old Wonthaggi Rail Station.

Poppet Head – at Old Wonthaggi Rail Station area.

Number Five Mine Shaft Brace – at West of township.

Old Power House – at West of Township.

Number 20 Shaft Northern area.

Number 18 poppet head Kirrak area.

VR rail route Wonthaggi to Kilcunda preserved as a walk trail.
3.5 The Powlett River Mine (Daly’s Mine)

Map Reference: 8020-4-4 Dalyston 3755, 57289 approx

Municipality: Shire of South Gippsland

Land Use/Status: Private

Site History

Until about 1908, the existence of thin and scattered coal seams in the Powlett River valley had been known mainly from intermittent drilling by the Mines Department. However a more systematic drilling program in 1908–09 revealed the existence of merged seams up to 9 feet in thickness leading to a decision by Government in 1909 to mine these coal seams as a State Enterprise and to prohibit mining by private companies of the main coal bearing areas, as interpreted from the drilling information.

Immediately outside the north west of the reserved area, a land owner, J P. Daly, became a shareholder of a company, the Powlett River Company, formed in 1910 to mine coal on his property. Location of the mine known colloquially as Daly’s Mine, was just south of the present junction of the Loch-Wonthaggi-Dalyston roads (Drawing 3.5/1).

Two seams were mined through separate tunnel systems. [These seams were the same as those worked later in the adjacent Dudley Mine but the coal was of poorer quality.] A rail connection about one and a half miles long south to the VR line to Wonthaggi was installed. A coal burning power plant was installed for electrification of machinery and ventilation. However the mine did not prosper initially and production ceased in 1912.

In 1916, with war time shortages of coal from NSW, the Powlett and North Woolamai Colliery NL reactivated the mine. However the seam thickness progressively decreased in thickness, one seam predicted from three Mines Department bores to be over four feet thick had reduced to 15 inches. The coal seams also proved to have more shale lenses than predicted.

In 1922, the Gippsland Coal Company took over the mine which subsequently changed hands to the Hicksborough Coal Company in 1924. *All working closed in 1926 after a total production of 132,757 tons.*

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Fahey, C, Wonthaggi State Coal Mine, Wonthaggi Coal Mine Committee, 1987


The Melbourne Age, 28 October 1909

The mine was not reactivated, but the seams that had been worked in Daly's mine were also worked in the Dudley area and in Number 20 shaft workings of the State Coal Mine. Rail track and some equipment from Daly's mine were reused in the State Coal Mine workings in the Dudley area.

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

Daly's Mine was the only privately operated mine on the Powlett River coalfield area. Compared with the black coal mines in the Korumburra to Outtrim area, Daly's mine had advantages of proximity to the growing township of Wonthaggi with its community facilities and especially to the VR Wonthaggi branch line.
This private mining venture was commenced within the first year of the State Coal mine to supply the same market as the Wonthaggi mines while the Mines Department was still in charge of the Wonthaggi mines. However the financial viability of Daly’s Mine was subsequently disadvantaged by pricing policies of the VR Commissioners both in rail freight charges and in demanding equivalence with NSW coal deliveries on a calorific value price. The VR Commissioners virtually forced the private mine to go into recess as an emergency unmined resource available for reactivation Daly’s Mine, with changes in financial syndication, was reopened for brief periods finally closing in 1926 with a recorded lifetime output of under 140,000 tons, this output being the lower than any of the 12 operational areas of the State Mine complex.

Scientific Significance

No specific scientific significance was associated with the utilisation of coal from Daly’s Mine which was of somewhat lower quality to the coal extracted from the much larger mining output of the neighbouring State Coal mines.

Economic Significance

The private coal mining operators in Victoria were not organised effectively as a bargaining group. They operated predominantly as price takers subject to fluctuating demand from major users. Daly’s Mine was not of sufficient output or coal resource to influence the market price. The VR Commissioners’ strategy was to use Victorian Black Coal resources as a reserve coal stock combined with stockpiles of coal at depots throughout the State to counteract vagaries in coal supply and price upgrade demands from NSW. The small mining operation at Daly’s Mine had only low economic significance on the State or local area and suffered the same fate as the other private black coal mines in Victoria being subject to restrictions imposed by the VR Commissioners with respect to demand and price.

Social Significance

Daly’s Mine initially appeared to be in a competitive position with respect to that of the adjacent operations of the State Coal Mine Complex with the advantage of access to the Wonthaggi infrastructure for social support and services. However housing preference in the Wonthaggi Township was given to State Coal Mine employees resulting in the growth of small shanty groups for housing of those not employed directly by the State Mine or those in-waiting for employment. Employment at Daly’s Mine was intermittent as the mine struggled for survival and as the Daly’s workforce tended to transfer to the growing requirements of the State Mine Complex.

Mine Infrastructure Features

Some of the concrete foundations of former plant of Daly’s Mine reputedly still exist on the private property of the former mine site.

References


Sleeman, J, *Black Coal in Gippsland*, 1976
4 Central Gippsland-Black Coal Mines

4.1 Narracan Creek Valley Black Coal Mines

Map References: 8121-1-3 Yallourn
Broad vicinity of 4356, 57675

Approximate locations only are shown below for individual mines. All mines listed below were within two kilometres of map reference 356-675. A detailed map has not yet been found depicting mine locations with greater veracity than stated below.

Municipality: City of LaTrobe
Land Use/Status: Private

Site History

Drawing 4.1.1/1 reproduced from a Mines Department map of 1890 depicts the known area of Brown Coal in the county of Buln Buln south of the Princes Highway at that time. This map shows the boundary of the brown coal deposits at about two kilometres to the east of the Narracan Creek valley at the site of Coalville, with all the mines at and north of Coalville being determined as black coal mines. However the original map also showed a small area about three kilometres to the south east of Coalville which was also depicted as a “Known Area of Brown Coal” where subsequently two brown coal mines at the middle reaches of the Narracan Creek valley south west...
of Coalville were developed. These brown coal mines are referred to respectively in Section 6.3.2 as Haswell’s Mine and in Section 6.3.3 as Horrock’s Mine.

4.1.1 Early Black Coal Discoveries – The Fear Not Coal Mine

Map Reference: Vicinity 359, 675 approx., The Gippsland Coal Mine

In 1862, George McDonald found black Coal seams in the Narracan River Valley during his pioneering survey for a route from central Gippsland to Western Port. This location was probably on the ridge about two kilometres east of the Narracan Creek.

In 1864, a mining lease was taken out on the Narracan Creek by a prospector William Gladman, who is reported to claim he found coal there in 1860.

In 1876, ‘fine bituminous coal’ was found in a 60 inch seam just below surface at the head of Mosquito Creek a few miles south of Moe. In February 1877, a black coal seam two feet thick was found as an outcrop in Mosquito Creek. By 1879 a local company the Fear Not Coal Mining Company (approx. vicinity 359.675) was operating in two shafts to mine the coal. The quality of the coal was assessed as equivalent to that found at Cape Paterson and Kilcunda. However, the venture was not successful and the mine did not reach a commercial stage before expiring by 1880.

In 1879, a little further down Mosquito Creek, probably in the same seam as being worked by the Fear Not Mining Company, a private venture sank a shaft 20 feet deep (John Wells says 25 metres deep) which was inspected by officials from the Victorian Railways in 1882. The Melbourne to Sale rail line had been completed in 1879 and the VR Commissioners were evaluating the possibility for a reliable and economic coal supply for their locomotives. Via a tunnel, this mine initially worked a seam of 70 centimetres thickness at a depth of a few metres.

In 1884, the Moe Coal Mining Company excavated about 800 tons of coal. The Railways Commissioners visited the site in 1884. Subsequent trials of the coal in locomotives appeared satisfactory and by 1888 locos operating on the main Gippsland line and its branch lines were using this coal. The Moe-Narracan-Thorpdale branch line was in progress from 1886 and the first load of coal by this line to Moe and onwards to Melbourne took place in June 1887. A steep tramway connected the mine to a siding on the Moe-Thorpdale line. Output rose to its peak in 1890 at about 15,000 tons in that year, largely due to increased demand due to strikes reducing supplies from NSW to Victoria. The price received for the coal was largely determined by prices applicable to the Korumburra mines which were working in thicker seams. It was also being found that the Narracan Valley coal was more friable and tended to choke loco furnaces. The mine closed temporarily from 1892 to 1895 over a land boundary dispute preventing expansion of the mine. By 1896/7, sales from the mine had fallen to about 1,200 tons annually.

This mine closed in 1897 and the company was liquidated on 17 July 1897 after 15 years of significant activity. Over its lifetime this mine had produced over 100,000 tons, employing over 200 men at its peak but paying a dividend in only the peak year 1890. This was the most successful and by far the largest mine in the Narracan Valley. This mine was the major employer in the Coalville area, leading to the Coalville township being the second largest town after Walhalla in the
Drawing 4.1.1/2 Location of Coalville in Narracan Creek Valley (from Topo Map 8121-1-3 Yallourn). Copyright State of Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment.
Buln Buln County in the early 1890s but declining significantly from the mid 1890s.

In 1897, the Tipton Vale Co-operative Company commenced operation on the former Moe Coal Mining Company site. However the VR withdrew completely from purchase of Narracan Valley coal and the Tipton Vale Cooperative Company closed down in 1898.

4.1.3 Narracan Valley Company (Narracan Company)
(Approx. location: 345 662)
This company commenced operation in 1883 working a 76 centimetres seam at 36 metre depth. It operated intermittently, being renamed as the Narracan Company in the mid 1880s. One reference source states that this mine surrendered its lease in 1886 which was taken up by the Coalville Central Company136. The location of this mine was near the Coalville Station137. (John Wells states the location as 1.5 kilometres south of the Township.) See sub-Section 4.1.5.

4.1.4 Grange Colliery Company
(Approx. location: 355 684)
This mine was opened in 1887 at a location on the west of the Narracan Creek overlooking the Moe Coal Mining site. Some coal was sent to Melbourne and England for appraisal by potential investors. The mine did not prosper and ceased operation by 1890.

4.1.5 Coalville Central Company
(Approx. location: 345 662)
This mine which took over the workings of the Narracan Company in 1888 was located about 1.5 kilometres south of Coalville. It was stated to be better coal than the major producer, the Moe Coal Mining Company. The mine paid a dividend in 1891 but had closed by the mid 1890s.

4.1.6 Emmersley Park Company
(Approx. location: 353 673)
This mine commenced operation in 1890 as a shaft operation with its poppet head prominent at the township of Coalville138. The mine ceased in 1891.

4.1.7 North Coalville Mining Company and the New North Coalville Company
(Approx. location: 360 682)
This mine located on the east side of the Narracan Creek was opened in 1892. Several tunnels were used to intersect a 38 centimetre seam. At 1893, the mine output was 200–300 tons per week. However, from 1893, the VR reduced its total intake from the Narracan Valley mines to 1,000 tons per week, one third its previous demand. In late 1894, the mine was unsuccessful in a tender to the VR for continuation of coal supply and the mine closed in early 1897. The New North Coalville Company was formed in 1897 for operation on this site but did not prosper and ceased operation in 1898.

[All black coal mining in the Narracan Creek Valley upstream as far as Thorpdale had ceased by 1898. The coal mining township of Coalville was not named until 1886 when a postal service was provided. In January 1887 the Narracan Valley Coal Mines State School Number 2822 was opened in a hall with about 100 pupils by 1890139. The VR rail line between Moe and Thorpdale was completed in 1888. At 1890 there was a population of 300–350 mainly scattered along the creek as squatters. It was not until 1893 that township housing blocks were surveyed and available for purchase and eviction of squatters from the creek banks occurred to allow road alignment. A rapid decrease in population occurred from 1897 as uncompetitive mines closed down. At least four new mines commenced operations in the Narracan Valley north of Narracan from 1904 to 1929. Each of these ventures had short unprofitable lives.]

4.1.8 Coalville Co-operative Black Coal Company
(Approx. location: 353 672)
This mine opened in 1904 but did not prosper and closed circa 1905. The location of the mine has not been ascertained in this study but is presumed to be near the Coalville township (353-672).

4.1.9 New Moe Company Dudley Colliery Company
(Approx. location: 351 674)
In 1908, the New Moe Company was formed and operated via shafts to a one metre thick seam on the west side of the Narracan Creek near the Coalville Railway Station. Coal was
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delivered via a tramway from the mine over a bridge to the station. Coal supply was to private industry including the Australian Paper Mill, Geelong Woollen Mills, and to Sale Water Works. In 1909 this mine was renamed as the Dudley Colliery Company. The mine operated until 1911.

4.1.10 The Gladiolus Company

This mine operated in 1929–1930 but ‘was only moderately successful’ (John Wells, So Tall the Trees, p.101). ‘All mining ceased in October 1930’ (K. Bowden p. 82). The location of this mine is indicated by these two writers as in the Narracan River Valley but its more precise location has not been ascertained in this coal heritage study. [Another source (Waghorne (2005)) includes the Gladiolus Mine with the Korumburra area mines from 1926–1929 with a lifetime production of 5,408 tons. The differences between these information sources have not been resolved in this Coal Heritage study].

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

The discovery of black coal in the Narracan Creek Valley in 1862 was the first reported in the new colony of Victoria after the initial discovery of the Cape Paterson area coal seams. However it was some 17 years later before mining of black coal commenced in the Narracan Valley as a small scale operation with inadequate transport from the mine site to local customers. The construction of a VR branch line through the Narracan Valley in 1887 after a mine site visit in 1884 by the Victorian Railways Commissioners stimulated several mining ventures at the time of industrial disputation in NSW adversely affecting coal supplies to Victoria. However coal seams were thin and transport costs to the main market in Melbourne were high and not subsidised by the VR Commissioners. By 1893, coal supply to Victoria from NSW had returned to normal and black coal had become available from the Korumburra coal fields with rail access to Melbourne.

In the late 1880s, commercial prospects for black coal mines in the Narracan Valley appeared good. A rapid influx of mine workers took place leading to the establishment of the township of Coalville for about five years as the second largest town in Central Gippsland (after Walhalla). In 1889 the newly surveyed township had a population of about 350 with over 100 children going to school. [This township no longer exists.]

The closure of nearly all the Narracan Valley mines by 1900 and their entire demise by 1930 was indicative of the likely economic fate of small scale mining ventures with a limited resource in competition in cost and reliability of supply and in quantity and quality.

Scientific Significance

No specific scientific significance was associated with the Narracan Valley black coal mining. The Narracan Valley black coal had been tested in laboratory and in usage as a black coal of average heating quality.

Economic Significance

The Narracan Valley mines attempted to compete with larger scale mines supplying well established industrial usage. These mines had no competitive economic advantage over the NSW coal supplies at the Victorian Fuel Depots and had no boutique niches in metropolitan or regional markets. Some competitive advantage in lower transport costs to Central and Eastern Gippsland markets was availed of but there were no significant industrial establishments in these areas at 1900, by which time the Korumburra mines were operating in thicker coal seams on a larger coal resource.

The local demand was later met by briquettes, brown coal and electricity from the Latrobe Valley large scale mining activities and subsequently by natural gas virtually eliminating prospects of revival of mining of the Narracan Valley remaining black coal resource.

Social Significance

The advent of coal mining in the Narracan Valley, in the 1880s, initially by tunnels into surface outcrops, presented paid work opportunities for the early settlers in the Narracan area who were mainly engaged in timber clearing on leased properties. The small mines could be readily worked by manual labour without the cost of extensive mechanisation and offered a bonus and an unexpected source of income to the timber and grazing workers in the area. The subsequent mechanisation of the mining activities for larger scale mines attracted mine workers in a time of high unemployment in the early 1890s,
eventually requiring replacement of unofficial ‘tent’ settlements along the Narracan Creek with establishment of the township of Coalville at the centre of the mining activities.

Coalville was a one industry township eventually with the Moe Coal Mining Company as the major mine, but with several (many?) small scale tunnels and shafts, some unmechanised and unreported, being worked along the hillsides and tributaries of the Narracan Creek.

Most of the paid mine workers and their families progressively transferred with their acquired mining skills to the new Korumburra, Jumbunna and Outtrim mines from the early 1890s and later to the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi.

**Mine Infrastructure Features**

No specific remains of the Narracan Valley mines have been ascertained in this Coal Heritage Study.

The Coalville Rail Siding area is identifiable as a public reserve; a memento of the mining activity in the Narracan Creek Valley could be appropriately located at this site.

The Gippsland Heritage Park at Moe preserves some relics of the community of Coalville.

**References**

Adams, John, *So Tall the Trees*, 1986, pp.94–105


Hillbrick, G, *Memories of Coalville, Coach News*

*Mineral Statistics*, Mines Department, 1876, p.51

Rlingen, Kath ‘Bundilla and Coalville’, *Coach News*, June 1983

Wells, John, *Gippsland: A People, a Place, and their Past*, 1986, pp.158–161

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**4.2 Morwell River Valley Black Coal Mines**

**Map Reference:**

- Jeeralang Mines 8121-2-N Yinnar North Vicinity 4480, 57555 approx.
- Boolarra Mines 8121-3-2 Mirboo Vicinity 4340, 57511approx.

**Municipality:**

City of LaTrobe

**Land Use/Status:**

Mainly Private

**Site History**

Black Coal seams in the Morwell River Valley occur at Jeeralang (Billy’s Creek) and at West Boolarra at the southern border of the ‘Known Area of Brown Coal’ as depicted in Drawing 4.1.1/1. Other black coal seams found to the south west of Mirboo North and off the western border of the ‘Known Area of Brown Coal’ are outside the Morwell River catchment and are listed in Section 4.3 of this study.

**4.2.1 The Excelsior Coal Mining Company**

[Specific location not ascertained]

The existence of this mine on the Hazelwood Run is referred to in the *Mineral Statistics* for 1873. Reference to this mining operation has also been made by John Adams in *So Tall the Trees* p.94. The venture is also referred to by John Wells in *A People, a Place and their Past* p.158 as beginning mining operations on the Hazelwood Run in 1873/74. It is possible that this project may have been located on a brown coal deposit as was most (all?) of the Hazelwood Run. Alternatively it may have been the fore-runner of the Hazelwood Coal Mining Company which mined black coal. No record of the output from the Excelsior mine has been found in this Coal Heritage Study. Due to lack of transport from the area in the 1870s it is probable that usage of coal would have been restricted to the mine locality and less than 1,000 tons. It is reported that the company operating the mine failed ‘shortly after 1874’.141
4.2.2 The Hazelwood Coal Mining Company and subsequent mines at Billy's Creek.

Map Reference: 8121-2-N Yinnar North Vicinity 4480, 57555 approx.

J P L Kenny writing in 1947 states that the Hazelwood Coal Seams were first found as outcrops of black coal on a branch of Billy's Creek on Allotment 17 Section C Parish of Jeeralang. The Hazelwood Coal Mining Company was formed circa November 1874 to mine this seam.\textsuperscript{143}

In 1876, the Mines Department depicted sections across a drive into a two feet four inch black coal seam named the Hazelwood Seam.\textsuperscript{144} The site of this drive was ‘on a branch of Billy’s Creek, a tributary of the Morwell River, about three and a half miles south east of the ‘Hazelwood Run’ homestead’ and at the southern border of this Run. (See Drawing 4.2.2/1). The location of the mine has been ascertained in this heritage study as that shown in Drawing 4.1.1/1 as a location of ‘true’ coal some 4.5 kilometres south from the present Churchill Town Centre. Smaller seams up to two feet thick outcropped at 60 yards and somewhat further down Billy's Creek. The quality of the coal was described as ‘scarcely marketable as fuel although possibly suitable for gas making.’ The feasibility of installing a tramway to the proposed VR Gippsland Rail line was suggested by RAF Murray to open up a market for this coal.\textsuperscript{145} This suggestion was also pursued by the surveyor George Jones who had interests in the mining venture and through whose land the tramway route passed. The route remained as a reserve for a tramway but was not developed as such although Tramway Road between Morwell and the Billy's Creek area is a reminder of the original suggested route.

It was probably by about 1875/6 that the Hazelwood Coal Mining Company activities lapsed due largely due to lack of access to a market. A neighbouring venture on Billy's Creek also failed about this time without site activities having occurred.

In 1883, RAF Murray reported that ‘the company continued working for some years.’\textsuperscript{146} Presumably this comment conveyed that mining had ceased by 1883. It is also probable that Murray was referring to a company working the Hazelwood seam after the demise of the Hazelwood Coal Mining Company. As detailed below, other companies appear to have operated the mine or adjacent workings from 1878/9.

JPL Kenny \textsuperscript{147} presents a somewhat different summary of the coal mining of the Hazelwood Seam, stating that shortly after 1878 a mining lease was taken out by M Ehrenberg who formed a company to open the seam. Two shafts and several tunnels were installed. Coal in the main tunnel was up to four feet thick, averaging three feet.
In June 1879 after completion of the VR Gippsland Railway through Morwell, the Prince of Wales Coal Mining Company was formed to rework the former Hazelwood Coal Mining Company mine but shortly after the shaft was flooded by Billy’s Creek and this venture closed down without reaching production. A VR branch line from Morwell through Boolarra to Mirboo North was built progressively from Morwell between 1883 to 1886 opening up possibilities for coal transport from the Hazelwood black coal seam.

In December 1884, the Lady Loch Mine was established but did not proceed to a commercial mining stage. The United Hazelwood Coal Mining Company, floated in 1886, apparently did not reach a commercial mining stage.

At January 1888 a syndicate, the Royal Standard United Coal Mine, Hazelwood, appraised diamond drilling in progress investigating the extent of the coal seam estimated by RAF Murray as three feet thick. In March 1888, the syndicate, registered subsequently as the Hazelwood Coal Proprietary Company NL, took out leases ‘to commence a mining operation’ at the South West of the Hazelwood mine. Tenders were called to mine 20 tons of coal and send this to Morwell but this project also did not proceed. No further information has been ascertained in this heritage study.

Although the Mines Department carried out widespread drilling around Hazelwood and Jeeralang in 1889, additional payable black coal seams were not discovered. Some minor black coal mining of the Hazelwood seams shaft continued to about 1890.
Some coal mining minor ventures were initiated in the flat land northwards towards Morwell but all were probably in brown coal deposits and none succeeded commercially. All these embryo mining activities had ceased by the mid 1890s as the Narracan Valley and the Korumburra area black coal mines and the Great Morwell Brown Coal mine had come into production in more economic ventures.

4.2.3 Black Coal Mines in the Boolarra Area.

Map Reference: 8121-3-2 Mirboo Vicinity 4340, 57511 approx.

About two kilometres west of the township of Boolarra, bores Number Two, Three and Four as depicted on Drawing 4.1.1/1 penetrated black coal seams delineating the boundary of the Known Areas of Brown Coal from bores Number One and Five.

Number Four bore passed through a black coal seam known subsequently as the Boolarra seam at three feet two inches thick at 696 feet with no other coal found to 1163 feet. Number Five bore north of Boolarra passed through brown coal in two layers the uppermost being 139 feet thick commencing at 71 feet with the bore terminating in basalt at 923 feet.151

At 1889, three black coal mines as listed below were in operation at Boolarra after the VR Rail line from Morwell through Boolarra to Mirboo North was opened on 31 December 1885.

Mirboo Collieries Number One
Map Reference 8121-3-2 Mirboo 4340, 57512 approx.

[In 1889, the Mirboo Collieries Company sank the Boolarra Shaft north east of the Boolarra township and extracted brown coal. See Section 6.4.4.]

This company also operated in the vicinity of the Number Three bore in the three feet five inch seam known as Batt’s or the Boolarra seam of ‘dense black coal’ with a low ash content and ‘good for gas, coke, and house or steam purposes’152.

Boolarra Coal Mining Company
Map Reference 8121-3-2 Mirboo 4340, 57510 approx.

The mine was located in a three feet two inch seam near Number Four bore and was worked for several years.153

This seam was found in 1890154. This mine closed in the early 1890s due to high costs.

Gippsland Railway Company

The operating location and history of this black coal mine have not been ascertained in this Heritage Study.

This mine reputedly closed by the early 1890s due to competition from the Korumburra area mines.

[The same company name was involved in brown coal exploration alongside the VR main Gippsland rail line between Moe and Morwell circa 1899.155]

Assessment of Heritage Significance

Historical Significance

The mining operations of the Excelsior Coal Mining Company in 1874 at a black coal outcrop at Jeeralang in the Morwell River Valley was the first commercial mining of black coal in Central Gippsland preceding commercial mining in the Narracan Valley Creek where an outcrop of black coal had been found earlier in 1862. Although the Excelsior venture failed within about one year, mining of the same black coal seam in the immediate vicinity was subsequently taken up by a succession of companies until about 1890.

The commencement of black coal mining at the Jeeralang outcrop stimulated drilling activities by the Mines Department in the Morwell River Valley which disclosed the widespread existence of the brown coal deposits and the spasmodic occurrence of black coal seams. The commencement of black coal mining at Boolarra in 1890 in the Morwell River Valley resulted from this drilling activity.

The lack of commercial prospects for black coal mining in the Morwell River Valley was understood by the early 1890s. The advent of the VR branch line in the mid 1880s in the Morwell River Valley, provided partly for coal transport, proved insufficient cost advantages to compete with other coal supplies to the Melbourne area.

Scientific Significance

No specific scientific significance was associated with the mining and utilisation of the small black coal output from