
VIRGINIA SHAFT

Location

BENDIGO-PYRAMID ROAD AND KIRKWOOD ROAD EAGLEHAWK, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

H7724-0315

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

Hermes Number 12108

Property Number

History

Contextual History:History of Place:

Heritage Inventory History of Site:

1883: Virginia Co, No-Liability .(Specimen Hill).. John Hooper mine manager. Golden Pyke, Johnson's and Eagle lines of reef, 572 yards, 40 acres, 630 feet deep, powerful hauling, pumping and crushing machinery ... Included in this company's property is the mine and machinery of the Murchinson lease, next north of the Catherine Reef company. Arrived on the summit of another eminence, we have to chronicle another rich first formation of quartz. In the early days mines travelled long distances on Sundays (there were no churches then) to knock out rich specimens from the surface quartz, more for novelties than than for their commercial vale. Many old residents will remember Mr McNair's Eagle Reef and its riches. The late Mr. Willie Walker was another old associate of this famed hill; likewise the present Mr Caldwell, Mr J Mathieson, Mr H Kirkwood and other pioneers of Eaglehawk. It may be mentioned that this fine property is now principally held by Geo. Lansell, most of the old shareholders

abdicating when this progressive pioneer commenced to transform the old site into a busy hive of industry. Heavy calls followed, and now working arrangements are complete. The crushing batteries, Tailings' pump, etc, are made new and perfect. ... Mr Dyason is present ... It may be truly said of him that it would be almost impossible to find his equal as a just and honourable steward. Mr Dyason is perhaps the oldest Bendigonian, he having arrived in the colony from Adelaide; either himself or Mr James Buick can claim precedence, both having located here during the month of December 1851. Respecting the Virginia mine situation, it has been proved in the mineral kingdom that the quality of the top formation of quartz is a true index to the lower formations ... This company has therefore only to sink deeper to be practically successful. A reef has lately been found at 615 feet deep on the main western line, of a saddle formation, the west leg of which carries a little gold. The eastern leg has not yet been met with ...

June 1885: Eaglehawk - The Acadia Catherine and the Virginia companies have added to the list of dividend paying mines.

1896, Sept 19: Cyanide and tailings. [to the editor of the Advertiser] Dear Sir, I read the letter in your issue of the 12th on the above subject with interest, as it is one in which I have been concerned since 1892. In that year I induced three gentlemen to inspect the tailings heaps in Bendigo, and as a practical earnest of their desire to do business, sample of the tailings from the Fortuna and old heaps adjacent, Catherine, Clark'e, and Virginia (old and new heaps) were sent to Swansea, and New York for assay. The results therefrom were fairly good, ranging from 1 1/2 to 3 1/2dwts per ton, and this led to the despatch of of several tons a few months later. Afterwards, in 1893, I consigned six tons to Melbourne, but the practical results from both lots were unsatisfactory, though it did not close the experiment for another larger parcel was treated with no better encouragement, and even after that a series of bores were put through the larger heaps at all angles from top to bottom to obtain a fair average sample without, unfortunately, results good enough to justify the erection of plant. Apart from the poorness of the tailings, however, there is another drawback, viz. the difficulty of storage, as it was a condition insisted on by the companies that the debris should be removed from the existing area. With the exception of the Fortuna heap, there is no convenient spot where the tailings may restacked, and there is an endless view of litigation for any company taking this matter in hand. Mr Denovan's suggestion that the alluvial gullies may be profitably treated is, I think, impracticable. The material, from its clayey nature, sets so compactly that the cyanide solution could not take effect quickly enough, and loss of time in treatment of poor stuff means diminution of profits, as these are dependent on large quantities being dealt with in a short time. The one place I know of about in Bendigo, where cyanide might be profitably employed, is the Slate Reef. There the gold is so fine and the material so easily crushed that a large quantities could be dealt with, as is done in Africa, where the gold is much the same character. It will never pay as at present worked, if it from no other cause than from want of large quantities of clear water. The water must become thick and carry off much of the very fine gold, and I think this view is borne out by recent crushings. When treated at Eaglehawk the yields were 7dwt per ton, now they are about 3dwts, and the directors would do well to have the tailings assayed after passing the plates. Assays, rightly enough, are not believed in in Bendigo, but the Slate Reef is so different from anything else in the district that they are warranted, and indeed, necessary. The cyanide process commonly in use at the African mines provide for zinc shavings and plates, whereon the gold is deposited after having been in the solution. At Tarnagulla charcoal is employed instead, and I understand the method is otherwise slightly different and known only to those working it. Tarnagulla was chosen in preference to Bendigo, after all the experiments that I have named, which were carried out by the same people, and who were perfectly satisfied with the royalty to be paid. The two difficulties were the low grade material and the difficulty of storage. I hope I have not trespassed too freely on your valuable space; the subject is one of importance to Bendigo, and public correspondence is a means to its solution - Yours etc. Cyanide.

1896, Dec 2: Cyaniding Bendigo tailings heaps. Negotiations are now proceeding which will have the effect of greatly enhancing the value of the tailing heaps which have been such an unsightly adjunct to the leading mines of the district, and have been regarded until recently as a worthless nuisance. Steps are now being taken for cyaniding these tailings on a large scale, and have progressed so far that some large heaps of tailings have been secured. Should the matter result profitably it will mean a great deal for the district, as not only will a quantity of waste material be used up, but mining companies will have a not inconsiderable source of revenue; while steps will no doubt be taken in disposing of the refuse to mitigate the nuisances which experience has shown to have arisen in the past. In one case at least, and probably in many others, the removal of the heaps will relieve the company from an almost insurmountable difficulty in insufficient room on the surface. Cyanidation is already carried on to some extent in Bendigo. One of the pyrites works is giving the method a trial, while the Bendigo Gold Recovery Company is at work on the Great Britain heap. It is understood that a good deal of dirt has been put through by the latter, but no results have been made public. The company, however, gets 6d a load. It is also stated that the tailings at one of the pyrites works are being profitably treated. According to the negotiations

referred to, however, the system is likely to be used on a much larger scale. Among the heaps which have been secured are those of the St Mungo and Virginia Companies, both very large lots, covering many thousands of tons. The St Mungo heap has been sold for a bulk sum, and it is understood that the Virginia is to be paid for at 1s 6d per load. A small heap on the Golden Age lease (from the old Shellback machine) has also been sold. Negotiations are proceeding in other directions. Should negotiations be successful, the sludge difficulty will probably receive a prompt solution, as should it be found payable to treat standing heaps the millions of tons of sludge run down the creek would no doubt be equally profitable.

1897, Annual Report: The following is a list of mines from which a large yield was obtained, but no dividends paid; included are the privately-owned mines of Mr G. Lansell:-

Johnson's Reef; Lansell's 180; Virginia; Lansell's South Red, White and Blue; Carisle; Lansell's Comet; Garden Gully United; Great Extended Hustler's.

1899: Specimen Hill Group - The Virginia Co., which has a large lease of 100 acres, and a battery of 50-head, has done but little better, though the ground paid well to its original holders.

One of the numerous Specimen Hills which dot the neighbourhood of Bendigo in every quarter has given its name to the company whose ground lies between the Virginia and the New Hopeful claims. This claim and the claims north of it up to the North Argus were all very rich on the surface. It was in this portion of Eaglehawk that the first attempt at quart-reefing was made, two storekeepers, Cave and Amos, literally hammering out £3000 worth of gold from a surface formation, which they worked for a length of 20 feet, to a depth of 25 feet ...

Subsequently small companies were formed to work the ground, and some of these gave handsome dividends Clarence United - since the formation of the present company, gold to the value of £70,000 has been won, and dividends of £25,125 paid, on called up capital of £2,125. These are not brilliant figures

North Argus - whose career had not before this year been marked with any success.

3 March 1909: The Virginia Mine - Its Dividend Record. For the past 2 years the Virginia Mine has occupied the position of the premier mine on the Bendigo goldfield, and it is interesting to note that the dividend payable tomorrow marks a notable event in the history of the company. The distribution of 1/6d per share ... brings the dividend record from the present reefs at the 1300ft, 1400ft, 1900ft, and 1960ft up to £100,575, representing £3/14/6d per share ... In the early stages of development £37,800 in calls until the opening of the rich reef at 1900 and 1960 feet, which was practically commenced in 1905 brought the mine into prominence as a gold-bearer and dividend-payer.

The dividends do not represent all the profits ... as the company has expended upwards of £10,000 on machinery and surface works, and exploratory work at the Murchinson mine, a property owned by the company, and situated at the north extension of the Snob's Hill mine. The reef that is being operated on so successfully by the Virginia at the 1900ft and 1960ft has proved a wonderful gold-producer in nearly all the mines situated along this section of the line. In the last decades' operations extending from the Great Northern upwards to the Clarence United have been principally confined to this formation. Some idea of its wonderful resourcefulness is afforded by the dividends paid by the group of mines in the section reaching to close on half a million sterling in the past ten years :-

Great Northern £159,00

Virginia £100,575

Specimen Hill £43,500

New Hopeful £2,400

New Argus £75,000

Clarence United £105,000.

1910, 7 Dec. Virginia crushing works - economy in fuel. A few years ago the Virginia Co. remodelled its milling plant in order to economise in fuel consumption, and to ensure a higher working efficiency. The results achieved have been very satisfactory, and the management states that the saving in fuel costs compared with the old system is equal to about 62 1/2%. The motive power is steam supplied from a Stirling boiler of the latest type, working up to a pressure of 160lbs. per square inch, with super-heaters attached. The battery engine has 12in. high pressure and 22in low pressure cylinders, with a 36in. stroke. The engine provides power for operating 50 heads of stamps working 75 drops per minute, shaking tables, water and tailing pumps, raising tailings 50ft. , and milling 760 tons of ore per week. The air compressor plant is also installed at the battery, and is operated by steam power drawn from the Stirling boiler ... The air compressor is supplying air on a daily average of 18 rock drills and three winches, blacksmith's forge, emery wheel, and drilling machines in workshop ... The whole plant, including mill and air compressing services, is run on a fuel consumption which has not exceeded 70 tons of firewood per week for the last 3 1/2 years. The plant was designed and erected by Andrew Harkness ...

18 Dec 1911 ... Virginia Crushing Works - A few years ago the Virginia Co remodelled its air compressor and milling plants, and with the view of economising on fuel consumption a Stirling boiler of large capacity was installed ... the boiler, with working pressure of 160lb, provides the power for the battery, crushing 760 tons per week. Five Wilfley tables, tailings and water pumps, air compressor, supplying an average of 15 drills and 4 winches, and air for blacksmith forges.

1912-14: By 1912 wage increases of up to 15 per cent had been achieved despite the recession in the industry. It was not only in the matter of wage claims, however, that the new militancy was asserting itself. Since the passing of the Goldbuyers Act, aimed at stamping out gold-stealing in the mines, the question of the searing of miners rankled bitterly.... Local mine-managements and miners laid charges and counter-charges. One night in early August 1912, Detective Timanus paid the South New Moon Mine a surprise visit as the midnight shift was coming off. One miner, John Hutchens refused to permit Timanus to lay hands on him. Hutchens was a man of highly reputable character. He readily agreed to be searched by Dawe, the mine's regular searcher; no gold was found on him.

When the shift lined up next afternoon, Hutchens was hauled out and given his dismissal notice. The rest of the shift refused to go below unless Hutchens was reinstated. A reason for his dismissal was demanded; the company refused to give one.

Employing 140 men, the South New Moon was one of the more important mines on the field, but it had a poor record in industrial relationships. Other shifts immediately struck in sympathy with the men who were out. The mine was declared black and picketed. The company threatened to bring in outside labour. The men stood their ground and a week later the management capitulated. Hutchens was reinstated and work resumed.

The issue continued to fester. It was indicative of growing industrial unrest in the mines. Strikes occurred the same year at the New Red, White and Blue and at the New Moon, and the following year (1913) at the Virginia and the Prince of Wales over the question of compulsory unionism. The latter strike dragged on for months ending at length in the unconditional capitulation of the strikers. Its failure was symptomatic of the fading prosperity of the industry. With the onset of World War I and the numerical decline of the work force, the bargaining power of the miners virtually disappeared.

1917: Eaglehawk District - No development of general benefit to the field has taken place. Gold yields have been small, and, together with the high cost of mining material, have, in some instances, mitigated against the general animated mining activity common to this district.

Most of the mining companies in the Eaglehawk portion of the Bendigo mining district amalgamated their interests, and now carry on under the title of the Bendigo Amalgamated Gold-fields Company. Greater economy in management is anticipated.

The work carried on by the company in the shafts on the several lines of reef is as follows:-

Garden Gully Line of Reef - At the Koch's shaft, Windmill Hill shaft, Johnson's No. 2 shaft, and Golden Age shaft
Pyke and Moon Lines of Reef - Constellation shaft, Great Northern shaft, Virginia shaft, Specimen shaft, New Argus shaft. Clarence and North Argus shafts - Work suspended.

New Chum Line of Reef - Catherine shaft

Derby Line of Reef - Johnson's No. 3 shaft

Paddy's Gully Line of Reef - Clark shaft. It is the intention of the company to sink the shaft and do prospecting work.

South New Moon and North New Moon

1918, 3 June: Amalgamated Goldfields Policy - The Bendigo Amalgamated Goldfields Company on Saturday made available [a] statement dealing with its policy

It is proposed to maintain sufficient mills to treat approximately 8500 tons per fortnight. These mills are the Virginia, Johnson's No. 2, Nelson, Koch's Pioneer, Carlisle, Consols and Garden Gully. It is possible that the Catherine mill may be used to replace one or other of these. The Virginia mill is now equipped with very efficient steam power, and the Koch's mill with suction gas. For the remainder, suction gas plants with good producers have been purchased, and these are being installed together with the replacement of the old geared drives by belt drives. The Carlisle mill is now undergoing this reconstruction

1918, 2 Aug. Mining Questions ... The opinion having been expressed that if the Snob's Hill group of mines could be re-opened much gold would be won. Messrs Dyason and ? of the Bendigo Amalgamated goldfields, waited on the Eaglehawk Council last evening in order to make a statement in regard to their activities and policy in that area Regarding the winding plants at the mines, Mr Dyason said the compressor and mill at the Catherine mine would be of use in Eaglehawk. With regard to the mill, the present proposals are to shift it to a more central position somewhat south of the Constellation mine, but the proposals could not be carried out at present owing to the machine shop going full time. Mr Dyason, explained that the opening of the Koch's Pioneer air station would

take place shortly. It was far the largest present air station yet erected in Victoria, and capable of supplying a very large number of drills. It was proposed to shift the Catherine air station to the Virginia air station. They would be prepared to supply air to any purchasers that might come along at the running cost, plus 15% for running charges.

1921-22: the Bendigo Amalgamated Goldfields Company, of which so much had been expected, decide to cease operations at several of the best known Eaglehawk mines, including the famed Virginia which, over the years, had yielded some 161,333 ounces of gold. The city was stunned. 'Not since the inception of the gold mining industry', wrote the Advertiser, 'had Bendigo experienced such a lean year'.

A local syndicate calling itself the Eaglehawk Golden Mile Company hoped to arrest the decline by redeveloping the Snobs Hill group of mines, but the malaise was already deep-seated. The venture failed. Privately owned, the New Red, White and Blue continued as virtually, the only successful operator on the field and in 1922 was again, the only mine paying a dividend.

1936: Virginia - In this mine good stone was obtained from strong west dipping faults, and a massive centre formation under a strong slide. Two shafts were sunk, the main to 2,680 feet, and a north shaft to 780 feet. The first dividends were paid from a saddle formation at 607 feet with a cap 12-15 feet wide. At 1,113 feet a centre reef and spurs were worked, and at 1,893 feet the cap of the Great Northern and Virginia reef was worked.

1936 (Summary): Cyanide Yield - Further Increase - One of the most valuable adjuncts to the mining industry on this field is the cyaniding treatment plants, which this year produced close on 10,000 oz of gold and gave employment to about 300 men. It is only in the past three years that this industry has boomed, and on present results it is apparent that there remains several years of work for many parties. Little cyaniding treatment of battery tailings was undertaken in years gone by owing to the low price ruling for gold, but at present values the small gold content, which varies on this field from 8 grs to 18grs gives a good profit, but the organisation behind the plant must be most exacting. Only two companies are operating the dumps in a big way, namely Devonshire Sands (Bendigo) Ltd and New Red White and Blue Consolidated Company. The first named company which is an Adelaide-capitalised venture, paid £3700 in dividends last year, and followed this with the payment of £1826 to shareholders. This company treated 94,286 tons for a return of 2562 oz of gold, while New Blue Consolidated treated 44,950 tons for 825-1/2 oz of gold. The latter company has only been in operation a year and recent returns show a considerable increase. In addition to the two main companies there are about 18 private parties treating sands on various parts of the field.

The following table, supplied by the Mines Department, Bendigo, shows the amount of gold won for the year ending December 16, 1936.

Ozs: dwts

Anderson and Party, Abe Lincoln: 125: 0

W. Bussey, Victoria Heap: 420: 0

W. Bussey, Ironbark Heap: 480: 0

Devonshire Sands -

Devonshire, 10,308 tons: 249: 0

Johnson No. 3, 16,550 tons: 448: 12

Johnsons No. 1, 9348 tons: 251: 0

Kochs, 58,080 tons: 1583: 9

Slag: 30: 0

Deeble and Party: 245: 0

Hamley and Harris, Garden Gully United: 325: 0

J. Stanley, G.G. Heap: 94: 0

J. Stanley, Hibernia: 189: 10

Mr May, New Chum Railway: 100: 0

*New Red, White and Blue Big Blue Heap: 825: 11

Mr O'Halloran, Catherine: 512: 10

Mr O'Halloran, New Moon and Virginia: 1000: 0

Ruedin and Party, Lansell's 222: 305: 0

Ruedin and Party, Hustlers' Reef: 364: 0

Valli and Party, Shenandoah: 100: 0

Woods and Lawrence, Hustler's Cons: 300: 0

C. & M. Woods, Great Extended Hustler: 430: 0

W. Wood and Sons, Great Extended Hustler: 540: 0

Total:9037:15

*-Note New Red White and Blue treated 44,950 tons of tailings

1937? summary [Bendigo advertiser ?/?/1937] Cyaniding production. Returns doubled during the year. Many thousands of tons of battery tailings were treated by cyanide parties during the year, and this important branch of the mining industry has become one of the stable influences for the gold production of the field. For these these heaps dotted around Bendigo had been considered worthless, but with the increase in the price of gold they immediately became areas of wealth, and the present activity is the greatest that has ever occurred in cyaniding in Victoria. There are now nearly 30 plants in operation on the field, and even at the present rate of treatment there is ample sand available for a few years more work. Attention has been directed principally to the older dumps raised by batteries which were not so efficient as the stamp mills of a later day. This new industry has been of great assistance in relieving unemployment, as each plant requires a fair staffing. Many of the parties who entered into the treatment of the heaps had little previous experience, but they have profited by their work, and the results being obtained today are satisfactory.

Devonshire Sands (Bendigo Ltd) is the only cyaniding company tackling the heap treatment in a big way, and the results during the past year speak for themselves. The company treated 100,498 tons for a return of 3253oz. This company, financed largely by Adelaide investors, have been operating for more than two years, and this was its most successful year. The company has paid two 3d dividends, absorbing £3700. Biggest production was obtained from Koch's Pioneer heap which treated 58,138 tons for 1927oz. The Johnsons plant treated 23,050 tons for a return of 721oz, while at the Devonshire plant 19,310 tons were treated for 603oz.

The profitable returns being obtained by private parties induced the New Blue Consolidated Company to install a plant on its own dumps, capable of treating 1000 tons per week ... O'Halloran Brothers, who have commenced cyaniding at the New Moon dump about four years ago, were the first to realise the value of the heaps and their returns from the same dump continue to be profitable. The party is now operating the Moon dump and Clarke's dump, and last year recovered 840oz. The Great Extended Hustler's dump is returning splendid returns to the members of the Woods family, who have considerably increased their plant in the last 18 months. ... Following table shows principal heaps - Devonshire Sands Ltd; Deeble and party (Rae's dump); F. Goldsmith (Virginia dump); Hibernia dump; H. May (New Chum Railway); O'Halloran & party (New Moon); O'Halloran and Hicks (Catherine); Ruedin & Timewell (Hustler's and Redaan); J. Stanley (G.G. heap); W. Bussey (Victoria Consol); W.Woods (Great Extended Hustler's); C & M Woods: Woods and party (Hustlers Reef); A.Andersen and Kennedy (Abe Lincoln); New Red White and Blue .

1938, ? . : Paddy's line - South Virginia was the principal company working on this line for this year ... North Virginia after an extensive period of development on the 450 ft reef south , now concentrating work in the eastern country ... Virginia South Extended ... operations now concentrated on sinking a prospecting shaft
Employees in mines - Number to be 703 ... The numbers of men working underground and engaged on the surface are - New Chum Syncline 21; South New Moon 60; Carshalton (BML) 54; Napoleon 40; Nell Gwynne 35; Central Nell Gwynne 80; Deborah 50; North Deborah 11; South Frederick the Great 12; South Red white and Blue 16; Monuement Hill 37; Central Napoleon 7; North Virginia 12; Hercules No 1 16; South Ironbark 16; Hercules 16; Ironbark 19; South Virginia 16; Virginia Extended 16; New Red White and Blue 74; North Red White and Blue 41; Central Red White and Blue 20; Little 180 16; North Nell Gwynne 18; Big Hill 6.

Jan 1938: Mines such as the Central Nell Gwynne, Deborah, South New Moon, and South Virginia have realized expectations, and are now producing with every probability of further success.

A few mines, notably the B.M.L. group, comprising the Carshalton, Napoleon, and Nell Gwynne, after the expenditure of much capital, failed to prove remunerative, and these companies have now practically suspended operations. Other companies that have not survived include the New Prince of Wales, Virginia South Extended, and South Frederick the Great.

1939: Bendigo (No 2) District: The number of mines operating in this district is smaller but ore and gold production has advanced. Bendigo and Eaglehawk Banks during November purchase 4,950oz of gold, which is a record monthly return since the revival of mining in the district some eight years ago. The 22 companies working employ approx. 700 men and disburse £150,000 annually in wages. The Central Nell Gwynne, Deborah, New Chum Syncline, and South Virginia Companies are paying dividends and the New Red, White and Blue is making a return of capital ... The dividend paying mines are situated on the Nell Gwynne, Deborah, and Paddy's Gully anticlines ... the contributing companies being the Central Nell Gwynne, Deborah, New Chum Synclines and South Virginia.

1940: Of the 35 companies operating on the Bendigo field at the end of the year, fifteen were undertaking important developmental work by shaft sinking. The lines of reef receiving particular attention are the Deborah, on which nine miles are situated, and the Carshalton on which there are seven.

Seven companies appeared on the 1940 dividend list - North Deborah £92,800; Deborah, £79,300; Central Nell Gwynne, £65,000; Ironbark South, £25,311; South Virginia, £6,000; Ironbark, £4,138; Sheepshead, £2,500. The

total for the field was £275,049, or nearly half the total for the whole State.

1946: For the first time in five years shaft sinking was resumed on the Bendigo field at the North Deborah, Central Deborah, Ironbark, Hecules, and South Virginia mines. Operations were hampered by the shortage of explosives and shaft timber ... Nine mines which reopened during the year after closure for a considerable period were - Deborah Consolidated, Deborah Associated, Deborah United, Deborah Extended, Golden Carshalton, Nell Gwynne Reefs, New Chum , South Virginia and East Clarence.

Sept 1947: Bendigo District - During the term six mines have suspended operations, leaving twelve at present in operation ... Four companies are at present shaft sinking. They are the Nell Gwynne Reef, Central Nell Gwynne, North Virginia and Central Deborah companies.

1947: At present there are 11 companies engaged in active operations on the field, and many have found it difficult to maintain full operations because of a continued shortage of skilled labour and especially of shaftmen and engine-drivers. Four companies engaged in shaft sinking are the Deborah, Central Nell Gwynne, Nell Gwynne Reef, and North Virginia. The North Deborah, Central Deborah and South Virginia companies have completed their shaft-sinking programmes for the present and have commenced exploration to open up new zones.

March 1948: Gold Dumps Pty Ltd has operated continuously on the Big Blue Dump, treating 600 tons daily. The Company has erected extensive plant at Sailor's Gully to treat the large dumps of the old New Moon, South New Moon and Virginia mines. This plant is treating 500 tons daily, and a similar plant is soon to be erected at Devonshire Gully.

Other cyanide plants have been operating almost continuously, the largest being that of Messrs Nation & Bussey on the old Victoria Consols dump.

Sept 1948: Eleven companies are still operating on the Bendigo field ... The North Deborah continues as the major mine, and has maintained regular production ... The Central Deborah and the New Chum Syncline mine, have had intermittent crushings ... Of the four companies shaft sinking, three of them, the Nell Gwynne Reefs, Central Nell Gwynne and North Virginia will shortly complete their present programmes and then will be in position to develop the ground through crosscutting. The fourth company - the Deborah - will continue sinking. At the South Deborah, North Nell Gwynne, Hercules and South Virginia mines, prospecting is being carried out with reduced staffs ...

Sept 1949. Cyanidation plants have been in active operation, including the large plant of Gold Dumps Pty Ltd ... The South Deborah and North Virginia mines have now closed down.

1950s: ...by the 1950s the days when local prosperity was assessed in terms of the mining industry, were past. Diminishing yields, spiralling costs and declining dividends spelled out the inevitable. The industry was in its death throes. Great mountains of battery sand still rose impressively above the twisting streets of Eaglehawk, and skeletal poppet-legs still dominated the city skyline but now they were an obituary. Youngsters played unchecked about the rusting equipment; frogs croaked in the shrinking slum-dams; swallows skimmed and dipped about abandoned shafts and deserted engine-rooms. Once the pride of local foundries and mine-managements, boilers and engines were sold to be dismantled and carted away, or broken up for scrap or left rusting where they stood. The batteries were silent, the stamps were still.

Only the North Deborah, the Deborah and the Central Deborah mines remained in production. Across the vast plateaux of sand stretching northward to Eaglehawk for miles, not a single mine-whistle wailed. decay soon began to trace itself along the hilly streets of Ironbark and California Gully and Long Gully that once had throbbed to the roar of the richest mines in the land.

The Hustlers, the New Chum, the Great Southern, the Garden Gully, the Virginia and the Victoria Quartz - the great and shining names in the story of local gold - were already being forgotten. Miners' jargon began to disappear from the bar of the Rose of Australia and the British and American. In the ward of the local Hospital specially reserved for them, men still lay spitting the grey quartz-dust from their lungs but gradually, the number of ashen-faces phthisis-victims shuffling the streets grew fewer. Claiming the lives of a thousand miners over the decades, 'the white death' had, however, reaped a rich harvest..

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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