

*Conservation
Management Plan*

**CORNISH HILL
DAYLESFORD
VICTORIA**

A document prepared for:

Hepburn Shire Council

76 Vincent Street

Daylesford, Vic 3460

PREFACE

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PHOTOGRAPHY**LOCALITY PLAN****MASTER PLAN - CORNISH HILL RESERVE****FIGURE 1 HISTORIC ZONE & INFRASTRUCTURE****FIGURE 2 WEEDS****FIGURE 3 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT****FIGURE 4 WALKING TRACKS****FIGURE 5 ROADS**

**DRAWING, SHEET 1 - MAIN INFORMATION BOARD SHELTER
DRAWING, SHEET 2 - MAIN INFORMATION BOARD DESIGN
DRAWING, SHEET 3 - SITE PLAN: BONNARD'S SHAFT**

FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

Preparation of this Conservation Management Plan was initiated by the Hepburn Shire Council, and was funded by grant monies from the Department of Natural Resources & Environment. The recommendations of the plan will guide improvements and on-going management of Cornish Hill, a 38.5 hectare area of public land within the township of Daylesford.

The Brief for preparation of the Conservation Management Plan specified that low cost improvement and maintenance works were to be investigated. Budget considerations aside, Cornish Hill does not recommend itself to major capital works - there is not enough left of the historical fabric to institute a major mining interpretations area along the lines of the North British Mine, Maldon, and there are too many site constraints for a major revegetation program like Tower Hill, near Warrnambool. The community consultation phase of the project also identified a strong desire to exclude major or intrusive developments from the area.

1.2 BEST PRACTICE

Best-practice has been used in the formulation of the Conservation Management Plan, and it has been written to satisfy the Incorporated Plan guidelines contained in section 36.02-4 of the proposed Hepburn Planning Scheme, 6 June 1997. Each section of the plan is prefaced by the relevant compliances etc.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This Conservation Management Plan has been written to provide guidance for the improvement and future management of the Cornish Hill reserve, Daylesford. Because these works are likely to be undertaken by a committee representing community interests, and the composition of that committee will vary over time, *this plan has been written as a comprehensive manual, with strong emphasis on analysis and the deductive processes which have led to the various recommendations.* This will ensure that the managers are fully conversant with the issues of best-practice management of public land. Resource folders for the information of the managers are supplied with the Conservation Management Plan.

1.4 PREVIOUS STUDIES, REPORTS

- Argus and Cornish Hill Goldfields, Draft Management Plan, R Cloonan, 1982;
- Argus/Cornish Hill Stage 1 Draft Development Plan, D A Endacott, 1983;
- Daylesford-Hepburn Springs, Mineral Springs Tourist Plan, Kinhill P/L, 1984: Action Plan 15, Argus Hill;

- Historic Sites, Melbourne Area, District 1 Review, D V Bick, LCC, 1985: Long Tunnel & Argus/Cornish Hill Mining Area, Daylesford, pp 207-209;
- Daylesford & Hepburn Springs Conservation Study, Mathieson & Ward, 1985: Mining Precinct, pp 72-73;
- Preliminary Feasibility of Argus Hill, Daylesford, Department of Finance, 1995;
- Report & Valuation on Crown Land at Daylesford, Countrywide Valuers, 1995;
- Hepburn Mining Division - Daylesford Goldfield (Draft), D Bannear, DNRE, 1996, pp 7-10, 36, 37.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The cultural significance of an historic place needs to be established before management objectives, strategies and policies can be prepared. The Burra Charter, Australia's version of an international agreement relating to the care of places of cultural significance, is the acknowledged best-practice document, and requires that the history of the place be elaborated in order to determine the cultural significance.

2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Djadjawurrung tribe of aboriginal people were the original inhabitants of the Daylesford district, but little evidence or record of their culture remains. They occupied a large area of south-central Victoria before the arrival of the Europeans, and nearby Mt Franklin, or Lal-gam-book to the Djadjawurrung, is believed to have been a ceremonial site. No information regarding the status or use of Daylesford or Wombat Hill by the tribe has been established, although the presence of permanent springs, sheltered gullies and commanding viewpoints would have been attractive features. With the arrival of Europeans, the aborigines were displaced from their land, and moved onto reserves administered by the Loddon Aboriginal Protectorate. The last of the local Djadjawurrung were moved to Corranderk Mission in 1864, and only one remained alive by 1876.

European settlement in the area began in 1837, shortly after Major Thomas Mitchell's glowing reports of rich pasture lands south of the Murray River. Among the early pastoralists were John Egan, who in 1845 took up the "Corinella" run to the west of the present site of Daylesford, and Lawrence Rostrom, who in 1844 took up the "Holcombe" run to the east. By the start of the 1850's, homesteads were established throughout the district.

In August 1851, the quiet world of the pastoralists was shattered forever when John Egan discovered gold on the banks of Wombat Creek, below the slopes of Cornish Hill. Subsequent discoveries along all the rivers and streams of the local area brought thousands of diggers to the district, and settlements developed at Wombat Flat, the site of Egan's original discovery, and Hepburn Springs.

Initially, workings were confined to the rivers and streams, but within a short space of time, the sources of that gold - the ancient, buried river streams under the basalt plains, and the quartz reefs - were discovered and being worked. Tunnelling under the basalt to work the deep leads flourished from the mid-1850's, and this method was pioneered by the Ticinese (Swiss/Italian) miners who came to the Jim Crow (Daylesford) diggings in large numbers. Reefing began in 1854, at the Mauritius Reef north of Daylesford, followed closely by the Cornish Hill reefs. Timber cutting and milling began, to supply timber for the mines and the settlements, as well as more intensive farming to supply the large local population, which had grown to 12,450 people in the Daylesford Shire by 1866.

The importance of the mineral springs which existed in the area was acknowledged in 1865, with the declaration of the Hepburn Springs reserve, and this heralded the development of a major tourism industry.

Reef, alluvial and deep lead mining continued to be valuable contributors to the local economy throughout the latter half of the 1800's, and well into the 1900's in certain instances. Cornish Hill, the Ajax & Nuggetty Ajax lines, Rising Star, Specimen Hill and Maxwell's were the major reefing areas, and recorded productions were substantial, the first two areas alone producing in the vicinity of half a million ounces of gold¹.

2.2 HISTORY OF CORNISH HILL

The mining history of Cornish Hill, particularly the early years, has had little authoritative research. Much of the accepted story derives from sections of Henry Maddicks' book, "100 Years of Daylesford Gold Mining History", which relies on selected historical records and the reminiscences of old-timers for its information. Historical research is not part of the brief for the Conservation Management Plan, but sufficient has been done to indicate that there may be many inaccuracies in the early history as told. Accordingly, some new elements of the story of the early years are presented here in detail, simply because there are no authoritative texts to refer to. The later years are presented as a brief summary.

2.2.1 The Name

Cornish Hill has had many names over the years since gold was found on its slopes and gullies. In 1854, it was called the Specimen Hill², or referred to as just the Wombat Hill. In the 1860's to 1890's, it was referred to as Wombat Hill or Wombat Hill South in the Mining Surveyors and Mining Surveyors & Registrars Reports³. In the early 1900's, it was known as St Just's Hill⁴. Cornish Hill makes its first appearance in 1923⁵, and it was later called Argus Hill, or simply "The Argie"⁶. Recent usage has swung back to Cornish Hill.

2.2.1 The Early Years - 1853 to 1860

The date of the first gold workings on Cornish Hill have not been established. A report in the Daylesford "Herald" in 1900⁷ put forward the claim that a ticket-of-leave man known

¹ Context derived principally from "Daylesford & Glenlyon Conservation Study Part II", Wendy Jacobs & Mary Grant, 1990, and "Hepburn Mining Division" (draft), David Bannear, DNRE, 1996.

² "Plan of Wombat Hill & Wombat Flat", Hugh Fraser, 19/4/1854; Mount Alexander Mail, 27/11/1854.

³ Called Wombat Hill until 1867, after which year it was regularly called Wombat Hill South

⁴ Daylesford Herald, 7/12/1900, in an article "Mining in Daylesford and District"; Official Souvenir & Programme, Back to Daylesford Celebrations, November 1936 - St Just refers to a district in Cornwall.

⁵ Bulletin 42, "The Daylesford Goldfield", GSV 1923; "100 Years of Daylesford Gold Mining History", H Maddicks & K Butler, DHS 1981

⁶ Still in common usage today.

⁷ Daylesford Herald, 7/12/1900, in an article "Mining in Daylesford and District"; Maddicks (1981) also mentions "Wombat Jack" Clarke, but this cannot be considered substantiation.

as "Wombat Jack" had been working gold in Johnson's Gully on Cornish Hill for some months prior to Egan's discovery on Wombat Flat in 1852, but this is not substantiated in any source material. Given that the reefs on Cornish Hill had been shedding gold down the gullies to Wombat Flat, it could not have been long before gold was traced up the hill by the early diggers. A specimen stone (gold in quartz) was reported to have been found on the hill in late 1853, and the finders were offered £70 sterling for it, indicating it contained over 20 ounces of gold⁸. Maps of the diggings drawn in April and June 1854 showed that Long Gully (below the Old Cornish shaft) and Johnson's Gully (below Bonnard's) had been sluiced⁹, but the workings had not been extended between these dates.

The main rush onto Cornish (Wombat) Hill occurred on the 12th of November 1854, and in the space of two days, two hundred diggers were camped in tents on the hill, working furiously with picks, shovels and crowbars in the shallow diggings. Some ground was yielding half an ounce to the tubful of dirt¹⁰. By the end of November, rich specimens of gold in quartz were being found, and the first quartz veins were opened up in early December¹¹. C Parsons and J Cocksley, two Cornish sluicers, were said to be the first to uncover a reef, below the present Mitchell's shaft¹².

The slopes of Wombat Hill, virtually deserted up till now, had been surveyed for the new township in June 1854, but there had been little interest in blocks released for sale in October. The focus of settlement was still on Wombat Flat (now Lake Daylesford), where stores and houses were established. But the new rush changed this focus, drawing settlement up onto the hill, and creating a market for the town lots.

The main reefs uncovered were, from east to west, the Crown, Wombat (Cornish), Sandstone and Colliers reefs. There was a call for erection of crushing machinery as early as 1854, but crude appliances were used for crushing in the early years. They included a single-stamp crusher, in which an iron-shod wooden pole was lifted by a lever arrangement and dropped onto the gold-bearing quartz, effectively little more than a large dolly-pot. In the mid-1850's, another crusher was built, in which iron-shod wooden wheels revolved in a lined circular trough, the apparatus being driven by one horse¹³. Rich stone was required, because of the slow rate of crushing. It was early in 1857 before the first engine-driven crushing machine was installed in Johnson's Gully by Robert Johnson. It consisted of a steam-driven Chilean mill, a more sophisticated version of the horse-driven unit¹⁴.

⁸ Mount Alexander Mail, 27/11/1854

⁹ "Plan of Wombat Hill & Wombat Flat", Hugh Fraser, 19/4/1854; original Town Survey, Hugh Fraser, 10/6/1854

¹⁰ Mount Alexander Mail, 17/11/1854, in article dated 13/11/1854

¹¹ Mount Alexander Mail, 11/12/1854 & 15/12/1854

¹² "100 Years of Daylesford Gold Mining History", H Maddicks & K Butler, DHS 1981; Mark Amos gives the credit to Parsons, in "History of the Daylesford Goldfield", Reports & Statistics of the Mining Registrar, June 1890.

¹³ "Short History of the Cornish Quartz Mining Company", H Nicholas, Appendix L, Mining Registrars Reports, March 1888

¹⁴ Mount Alexander Mail, 13/2/1857; The Argus, 29/12/1886

An attempt to form the first legal company on Cornish Hill, in March 1857, the Jim Crow Mining Association, ended in failure in July because of restrictions imposed by the Local Court¹⁵. But Wombat Reef was "one great hive of activity"¹⁶, and when Winter & company installed another Chilean mill in August, there were over 100 rough residences on the hill, where only one tent had been a little more than two-and-a-half years before¹⁷.

In October of that year, the Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, visited the Wombat Hill quartz reefs. At the Crown claim of Montgomery, Hope and Brown, he was presented with a specimen, "a very beautiful one", taken from the reef which had yielded 46 ounces of gold to the ton in a recent crushing. He also visited the claim of Trimble, Addis & company on the same reef¹⁸.

The first stamp battery was erected by a Mr Reed at the end of 1857, and in early 1858, the Cornish party, a group of 13 miners who had worked co-operatively on Cornish Hill since 1856, erected a 12-head stamp battery on Wombat Flat. It was the most powerful crusher yet seen in the district, and was connected to their mine by a 600m long tramway¹⁹.

Quartz mining was in full swing, with nearly 200 miners employed on the hill. But by the end of 1858, only two parties remained at work, including the 13 Cornishmen. Brown & party's rich patch had finished. Mining revived a little in 1859, with several tunnels put in to work Colliers Reef, and the Cornish company enjoyed a monopoly of public crushing for these groups²⁰.

Sluicing continued on Cornish Hill through the 1850's, using water brought to the hill in long race lines. Wardell's Race, which traversed the north-eastern end of the present reserve, brought water to the town from Kangaroo Creek, a distance of 17 miles, and was completed in 1860²¹. Several tunnels were started, principally by Swiss/Italian miners, to work the buried deep leads (ancient river beds) under the basalt capping of Wombat Hill. The largest of these within the reserve boundaries was Pozzi's Long Tunnel Mine, started in 1857²². Spillaci's tunnel ran from Cornish Hill under Queensberry Street.

For some time in 1860, the Cornish party were the only reef gold producers on Cornish Hill, and their success was attributed more to their superior working methods than the

¹⁵ Mount Alexander Mail, 20/3/1857, 10/4/1857, 10/7/1857

¹⁶ Mount Alexander Mail, 7/8/1857

¹⁷ Mount Alexander Mail, 28/8/1857

¹⁸ Mount Alexander Mail, 2/10/1857

¹⁹ Mount Alexander Mail, 27/11/1857, 26/3/1858, 9/4/1858; "Short History of the Cornish Quartz Mining Company", H Nicholas, Appendix L, Mining Registrars Reports, March 1888

²⁰ Mount Alexander Mail, 10/12/1858, 15/4/1859

²¹ Mining Surveyors' Reports, June & July 1860

²² "100 Years of Daylesford Gold Mining History", H Maddicks & K Butler, DHS 1981; commencement also attributed to Paganetti, 1860 (Bannear, 1996); Mining Surveyors Reports chronicle works by the Great Tunneling Co, commenced in 1869, and resumed as Long Tunnel Co in 1874 - an earlier tunnel may have existed, but this has not been researched

value of the stone²³. This party also took up other claims on the hill, gradually establishing their dominance in both production and area.

2.2.2 The Company Era

The Mining Partnerships Limited Liability Act of 1860 facilitated the formation of legal companies, and the early 1860's was a period of company floats and claim amalgamations. As on any quartz mining field, the costs of progressively deeper workings spiralled, and it was normally beyond the means of individual claimholders to purchase the necessary pumping and winding machinery. Among early floats on Cornish Hill were the Cornish Quartz Mining Company, undertaken by the original party of 13, the Crown Quartz Mining Company, the Daylesford Quartz Mining Company, and the Argus Company who purchased ground from the Daylesford QMC²⁴. The Argus Company originally worked in long tunnels put in north and south from Smith's Creek. One of these tunnels had reached a length of 700 feet by 1862. The mid to late 1860's was a complex period of company floats, re-structuring, renaming, amalgamations and takeovers, and the unravelling and recording of the sequence of events is beyond the scope of this project.

The Cornish Company was the most successful of the early companies, erecting a second battery in 1864 on Argus Spur, and producing about £50,000 worth of gold between 1857 and 1867. This company re-organised in 1867²⁵, and by the mid-1870's was the dominant company in the Daylesford reefing scene, employing up to 120 men²⁶. Between 1867 and 1888, a further 52,000 ounces of gold was produced from the Old Cornish shaft alone²⁷.

The North Cornish, with its shaft just inside the reserve on the Stanbridge Street end, became the major producer in the 1880's and 90's, but folded in 1895, and by the end of the 1890's, the No. 1 North Cornish Company was the only one left working the Cornish Hill reefs - there was no activity south of Stanbridge Street..

2.2.3 The New Century

In the early 1900's, Donald McLeod, a former Town Clerk of Daylesford, had a vision of amalgamating all the mines on Cornish Hill, and working them as one large-scale operation. In 1903, the Victorian Cornish Gold Mining Company was floated in London, and took over the workings. Freeman's battery, purchased by the North Cornish Company in 1886 and enlarged to 50-head in 1890, had been sold off in 1898. The Victorian Cornish company restored the battery to an eventual 50-head in 1906, and worked profitably for a number of years, using Field's (No. 1, or Fear Not), Bonnard's, Mitchell's and the Old Cornish shafts, which were deepened and enlarged. The first three were taken to depths of over 1000 feet. Newly-floated companies operating to the north and south of the lease used Freeman's battery for their crushings. The Victorian Cornish produced nearly 20,000 ounces of gold and employed up to 281 men (in 1906), before operations

²³ Mining Surveyors' Reports, October 1860

²⁴ eg Daylesford Express, 1/2/1862 (Argus); company details in Dickers Mining Record, Vol V, 26/9/1865, 10/10/1865, 5/12/1865,

²⁵ Mining Surveyors' Reports, June 1889

²⁶ Mining Surveyors' Reports, eg June & September 1874, and March 1874

²⁷ Mining Surveyors' Reports, March 1888