

HISTORY OF MINING IN THE MACRAES REGION

Our Macraes Operation is New Zealand's largest active gold mine with a rich history backed by over 29 years of industry experience.

The Macraes Operation continues to have an extraordinary journey of efficiency, innovation, and adaptation. The operation's success stems from the high level of expertise and innovation of its employees – an integral aspect since its beginnings in 1990.



Macraes Operation



FIRST DISCOVERY

Gold was first discovered in the Macraes Flat locale in 1862 when prospector, James Crombie, discovered alluvial gold in Deepdell Creek, setting a gold rush in motion.

From shovel, pan and cradle, to sluice boxes, sluicing and stamping batteries, a variety of mining methods were used in the early days for both alluvial and hard rock mining.

The first lode (deposit of metalliferous ore (gold)) worked at Macraes Flat was probably the Duke of Edinburgh in 1875. Whereas the Golden Point/Round Hill lode system was not discovered until 1889. The Golden Point mine was first opened in 1889 and became the property of the Golden Point Mining Company that went into liquidation. The Donaldson brothers then bought the claim, water rights and battery when the Golden Point Mining Company went into liquidation and ran this operation as a significant and successful scheelite (tungsten) and gold producer. They sold it to a Christchurch syndicate in 1912. The battery worked until about 1930 and was turned into scrap metal in about 1953.



GOLDEN POINT PRODUCTION

During its successful 40-year life the operation produced over 15,000 ounces of gold and about 800 tonnes of scheelite.

By 1905 the Golden Point Battery was also in operation on the east side of Deepdell Creek. The Maritana Company built two batteries on the west side, but due to poor grade ore they ceased operation in 1906. The later Maritana Battery was located on the same site as the existing battery. It lay idle until 1911 when it was used to mine scheelite ore. The Callery brothers began using the Maritana Battery about 1912, taking it over in the late 1920s and forming the Round Hill Mining Company in 1932, by 1934 most of the machinery had been replaced.

Areas continued to be mined after 1939 as tungsten was in demand during the Second World War but gold prices were sharply reduced during this time. The scale of operations at these times were much smaller.



You can still explore the remains of those days at the Golden Point Historical reserve run by the Department of Conservation – seeing the only complete stamper battery to survive on site and still in working order, set against our present-day operations. While the Donaldson brothers' first battery is now marked only by concrete foundations and stone-walling, Callery's wooden house is still in good order; two mudbrick dwellings and their associated outhouses occupy terraces a short distance along the road; and the concrete foundations and fallen brick chimney of another building sit among the tailings on the valley floor.

Lodes were worked for either scheelite or gold depending on the price at the time. This was because the fine grinding required to liberate the gold resulted in a poor recovery of scheelite. From 1890 to 1933, it produced an estimated 13,000 ounces of gold and 800 tons of scheelite (Williamson, 1939). The names of these mines that were worked in the past have formed the naming of various open pits throughout the lifetime of Macraes including Coronation, Deepdell, Golden Point, Round Hill, Innes, Mills, Ounce and Golden Bar to name a few.

In addition to mining operations, large parts of the area have been used as pastoral blocks since the 1850s. Farmers and graziers have been in the South Island of New Zealand since European settlement, with some families in Macraes having worked the same land for five generations.

MACRAES NOW

Macraes employees have constantly been using innovation and determination to solve various mining obstacles and challenges.

Some of the main obstacles and challenges our operation has overcome include the low-grade, stripping ratio and metallurgical complexity of the site. A series of innovations in late 1990s and early 2000s involving significant capital expenditure and significant risk (including the installation of autoclave and a series of flotation cells) managed to achieve an increase in gold recovery by 15%. Today, gold recovery at Macraes is now between 83% and 86%. In addition to innovation associated with improving the recovery of gold, the amount of ore processed has increased from 1.5 million tonnes per year to 5.9 million tonnes per year.