R. H. Bland and the

Port Phillip and Colonial Gold Mining Company

Submitted by
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Port Phillip and Colonial Gold Mining Company Works, Clunes, 1866
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Summary

There are numerous histories of the Victorian goldfields, individual digger's experiences, and the digging community as a whole. By contrast, very little has been written about the early gold mining companies. This thesis seeks to address this dearth in part, with a longitudinal study of one of the leading gold mining companies in nineteenth-century Victoria.

The Port Phillip and Colonial Gold Mining Company (‘Port Phillip Company’) was one of many ‘gold bubble’ companies formed in England during 1851-3 to undertake gold mining in Australia. Within a few years it was the only survivor of this episode of British corporate gold-fever. The thesis argues that the influence of Rivett Henry Bland, the company’s managing director, was instrumental in its success, particularly in its early years when faced with anti-company sentiment and unfavourable mining legislation.

The company established a large-scale operation at Clunes in 1857, rapidly assuming a pre-eminent position in colonial gold mining with its superior technology and mining practices. Historians generally portray Australian gold mining operations as small, locally funded and inefficient, prior to British capital investment in the late 1880s. While true of the larger picture, this simply emphasises the uniqueness of the British-owned and funded Port Phillip Company, the largest and most efficient gold mining operation in Australia from 1857 until the early 1880s.

The company and its investment offshoot, the Victoria (London) Mining Company, invested in over thirty Victorian gold mining companies during the 1860s. Again, this runs counter to the general view that British investment in Australian gold mining began only in the late 1880s. Although the two companies’ investments equalled only a fraction of the later wave of British capital in absolute monetary terms, their contribution to the growth of the Victorian gold mining industry at the time was significant.
Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signed: John George Woodland

Date: 22 January 2002