

Field, J and McIntosh, PD, 2008, 'Getting lost in the Myths: Blue Tier mining history at risk'. Page 15 in: *Abstracts, Australian Mining History Association 14th Annual Conference, Queenstown, Tasmania, 4–10 October 2008.*

GETTING LOST IN THE MYTHS: BLUE TIER MINING HISTORY AT RISK

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The significance of the Blue Tier in Tasmania's northeast is its rich tin mining history, dating from 1873. By 1878 the township of Blue Tier junction had three hotels, shops, stores and a small cluster of cottages. While the main period of tin production in the Blue Tier was between 1875 and 1913 prospecting has continued until recently. The Blue Tier is littered with the physical remains of the mining era, from large open cut faces to mining machinery, and even remains of prospectors' picks. Although mining and prospecting has had a very large effect on the landscape of the Blue Tier plateau, certain mining exploration marks have become the centre of a controversy.

Over the last 90 years reported observations of surface markings on tin granite boulders, at numerous locations on the plateau, have raised speculation to their origin. Some researchers have attributed the markings to Tasmanian Aborigines. An early investigation to determine these markings' identity by a multidisciplinary team in 1957 concluded they were a combination of natural weathering processes and mining exploration sampling. Another investigation in 2007 claimed the markings were examples of Tasmanian Aboriginal rock art, dating back 1,000 years. We have re-examined the evidence from earlier investigations and undertaken additional research in order to clarify the origin of these intriguing markings and to clarify for what purpose (if any) they were made. The results of these investigations are presented.

The resolution of this issue is of great relevance to the correct historical interpretation of this iconic area.