

Reworking The Red, White And Blue

In the 1930s, this was the site of a small underground gold mining operation known as the Red, White and Blue. A shallow open cut was also developed, though the whole operation only produced about 20,000 ounces of gold in total. From this humble beginning though began a series of mining projects on this site involving three different metals.

Around the same time iron pyrites was discovered just north of the old Red, White and Blue. Lasting several decades, the pyrites phase of production was a much more significant one. More than a million tonnes of pyrites ore was brought up the four 300 metre deep underground shafts of the Iron King mine. This was sold under contract to the Government, to be used in the production of superphosphate fertiliser.

In 1994 Australasian Gold Mines NL commenced the substantial open cut gold mining project that resulted in the pit and tailings walls that you can see here today. Over a 3 year period four 50 tonne dump trucks shuttled ore up from an ever-expanding pit to the crushing plant which was located at the south end of the operation.

The extraction of about 700,000 tonnes of ore saw the pit grow to its final depth of about 50 metres. Some 50,000 ounces of gold was produced, sufficient to allow the whole operation to turn a small profit. The overburden and rock by-product was all stockpiled in these massive walls which display some remarkably successful rehabilitation.

The mining company collected seed from the site prior to commencement of work, and then used this in the revegetation project.



An early open cut mine near Nofseman, circa 1890s.
Courtesy Phototone Colonial Library.

In a fascinating third chapter of the ongoing story of mining on this site it now appears likely that Tantalum Australia NL (formerly Australasian Gold Mines NL) will reopen the site for the production of both gold and tantalum. Tantalum is rarer than gold, and the deposits just south of where you stand are some of the few in the world. It is valued for its semiconductor and high melting-point properties, and is used in the electronics and aerospace industries. It seems there is more life yet in the old Red, White and Blue!

The Iron King Mine of the 1940s was swallowed up by this open cut.
Courtesy Shire of Dundas.





