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## HAYTOR AND SMALLACOMBE IN DARTMOOR.

by Rolf von Arx

The region  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles west of Ilsington, roughly in the triangle of Ashburton, Bovey Tracey and Moretonhampstead, part of which was called Smallacombe Estate, saw considerable mining activity in the past.

The first documented mining operations were carried out by Haytor Consols (before 1850, black tin) and by the Haytor Iron Mine (before 1858, iron). No details, apart from some tentative ore returns, are available, however. The workings entered a new phase with the formation of The South Devon Iron & General Mining Co. Ltd on April 7th 1859. Having decided on a nominal capital of £65,000, the Company issued certificates for 5, 20 and 50 £1 shares, all bearing the printed year 1859. The object was to work the Atlas Mine near Ilsington (iron and tin), as well as the Hercules Mine at Hennock, NE of Bovey Tracey (iron and lead), and the Phoenix Mine at St Issey, between Wadebridge and Padstow (lead). The directors who signed the share certificates were Samuel Bonefield, William Huggins and Lynch White, and the secretary was George F. Goodman. The South Devon Iron & General Mining Co. Ltd was the first mining company in the West of England to obtain an official quotation on the Stock Exchange in London (February 1860), following the first sale of black tin from Atlas Mine. The operation was, however, shortlived - despite the high-sounding name - and the Company had gone into liquidation in February 1862, after having produced only negligible quantities of ore at all three locations.

In 1863, the Atlas Mining Co. was producing iron ore from the Atlas sett, but was replaced a year later by William Browne who also worked Haytor Mine from 1864 to 1877 and Smallacombe Mine from 1866 to 1872. He was in turn followed at the latter by the Native Iron Ore Co. from 1873 to 1875, and in 1880/81 by Paull & Sons. There must have been some activity in the 1880s under Captain William Cox, who later stated he had worked for the "Atlas Tin and Copper Mine". At Haytor we find the Haytor Magnetic Iron Co. Ltd taking the place of Browne from 1878 to 1883. After the demise of the two companies detailed in the following paragraphs, the Ilsington Mining Co. Ltd operated at an unknown location in the area from 1907 to 1913, while the end was made by the Albion Company at Smallacombe in the early 1920s.

On the advice of Captain William A. Grose, who hailed from Cornwall, but lived at Ilsington, John Sampson had acquired the right to mine on the Smallacombe Estate and soon entered into negotiations with a company being floated under the name of The Smallacombe Tin Mining Co. Ltd. The capital amounted £60,000 in shares of £1, of which £40,000 was to be offered for public subscription. By July 1887 it was agreed that John Sampson was to be paid an exorbitant £10,000 in cash and £20,000 in fully paid shares of the new company for the mining rights, as well as materials, tools and all the tin ore on the mine. William Grose was named mine superintendent and W. W. Airey, Mem. Inst. C.E., 6 Great George Street, Westminster, London, consulting engineer. Frederick Sanders was secretary, with offices at 50 Parliament Street, Westminster.

The property of the new company comprised 164 acres on the southern slope of the Haytor Rage (originally described as “*some of the most profitably productive mines in Cornwall and Devon*”, which passage was changed by Grose to the more realistic, but still too sanguine “*profitable and productive mines*”). It was mentioned that some 30 years ago the property was worked by a company which also owned iron mines and that a shaft had been sunk to the depth of 35 fathoms. At 20 fathoms, a crosscut had been driven southward for some 40 fathoms traversing the tin lode not far from the shaft and at 16 fathoms further a rich lode known as White’s Lode, obviously in honour of director Lynch White of The South Devon Iron & General Mining Co. The latter company did apparently not abandon the workings at Smallacombe by reason of want of tin, but on account of the capital being lost in connection with the adjoining iron mines.



Captain Charles Thomas, of Dolcoath Mine, was called in at this point to deliver his opinion on the mine as it stood in 1887. He reported that the 20 fathom level was driven 5 fathoms east of the crosscut and 15 fathoms west to the flat rod shaft which was sunk upon the lode, underlying north fully two feet in a fathom. This level yielded tin for five fathoms in length near the crosscut. The shaft was down five fathoms deeper and the 25 fathom level driven four fathoms west and 16 fathoms east of it. The lode there was much better than in the upper level. The 20 fathoms in length, together with the stoping of five fathoms in the back near the crosscut, produced seven tons of tin, which was sold for £430 or £17 per fathom on average. The eastern part and the present end were worth fully £25 per fathom even at very low prices for tin. Thomas advised that White’s Shaft (also named for director Lynch White) be sunk deeper and that the 25 fathom level be driven east and west by suitable forces. In addition, a communication should be made from the 20 to the 25 fathom level for good ventilation as well as for economical stoping of the tin already discovered.

Further positive comments came from the well known authority on Cornish mines, J.H. Collins, who stated that White’s Shaft “*yielded large quantities of fine tin*”. Captain William Cox in turn wrote: “*I worked at the Atlas Tin and Copper Mine for a considerable time and saw splendid work for tin and copper come from about White’s Shaft*”. In support of the prospects, miners F. Clark, J. Osborne and J. Wellington, who had been employed in sinking White’s Shaft, all bore testimony to the richness of the tin lode.

To prove the quality of the ore, the Company quoted John Sampson who, on the advice of Captain Grose, had been sinking a shaft six fathoms and had driven a crosscut for five fathoms. This brought about the discovery of a rich tin lode. As there was no means of stamping the ore on the property, a portion was carted to an adjoining mine some two miles distant with the result that nearly three tons of tin concentrate was sold to Messrs Daubuz & Co. of Truro, netting £63 2s 6d per ton. About five tons more from the same place were lying on the mine.

The workings in the new shaft were suspended during the driving of an adit, started in February 1887, which had a length of nearly 30 fathoms in July. There were about 25 fathoms more before intersecting the lode. This adit would drain the mine at 12 fathoms, thus enabling the company to sink the new shaft to this level without recourse to pumping machinery. Tram rails had been laid and waggons provided, and a tip made adjoining the public road.

Captain Grose estimated that, with an outlay of about £20,000 in machinery and labour, he would be able to re-open White's Shaft and sink it to a depth of 60 or 80 fathoms. He told the directors that they could "*fairly and safely*" promise the shareholders dividends at the rate of 20 per cent on the capital. He also confirmed that ample water power was available and that the ground was being cleared for the purpose of erecting a powerful head of stamps, waterwheel, dressing floors etc.

It is, however, almost certain that The Smallacombe Tin Mining Co. never got off the ground because, in July 1889, a new company was formed and registered in Camborne under the name of The Atlas Tin Mining Co. Ltd. By this time, things had been reduced to a more modest level, the capital being only £12,000. In anticipation of meeting a tin lode the company drove an adit which reached 130 fathoms in September 1890. At the same time, a waterwheel and 28 heads of stamps were erected. Nevertheless, when the lode failed to appear after 190 fathoms, the adit was discontinued and the fate of the venture was sealed. Operations were suspended in 1893 and voluntary liquidation of the company took place a year later. Mineral Statistics have an Atlas Tin Mining Co. Ltd active until 1898 and again from 1902 to 1908, but this must have been the restructured company mentioned by Collins.

The three mines known as Haytor, Smallacombe and Atlas all lie within a radius of just over a mile west and north-west respectively of Ilsington. The mines were variously worked singly or in combination and the exact origins of the ore returns cannot always be determined.

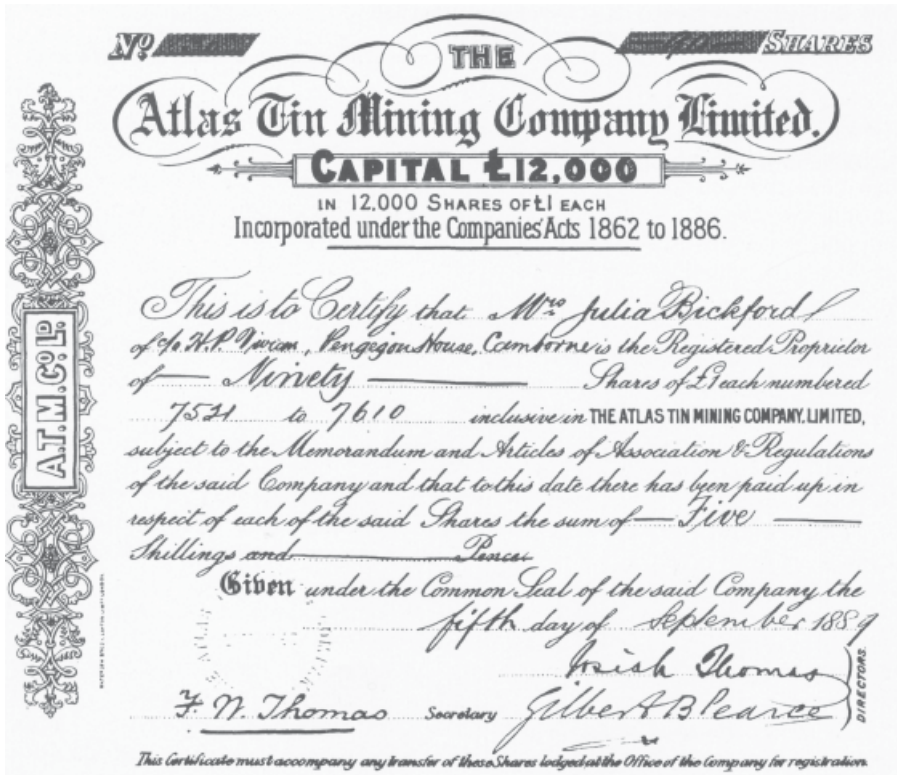
According to Dines, the Haytor lode of magnetic iron ore was well known in the 16th century and he notes opencast workings 200 yards south of the Rock Hotel, Haytor Vale, in the early part of the 19th century. Later, an adit was driven from the valley bottom, 200 yards east of the hotel, reaching the ore beds 20 fathoms below the opencast. He states that Smallacombe Mine was first worked as an opencast, still known as Smallacombe Cutting, 900 yards south-east of the Rock Hotel, and by adits. The deep adit starts in the valley 200 yards east of the opencast and, driven as a crosscut 95 fathoms west by south, strikes the ore deposit 6½ fathoms below surface

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just west of the road to Smallacombe village, where there is an air shaft. Dines then mentions more underground works, as well as Whim Shaft and another air shaft.

For the Atlas Mine, H.G. Dines indicates three tin lodes and two beds of iron ore. One shaft, 115 yards north-north-west of Lewthorne Cross, is named Sarl's, no doubt in honour of Joseph Sarl, of Cornhill, London, who must have been one of the major shareholders of The South Devon Iron & General Mining Co. of 1859 (see share certificate). Apart from Warren's Lode, Dines also mentions White's Lode and White's Shaft (the latter 60 yards south-west of Sarl's).

Some of the features were still there when Helen Harris visited the site in the second half of the 1960s. She found the opencast (SX777766) very overgrown and the adit (SX773773) hidden amid beech trees. A number of shafts of the Atlas Mine are located near Lewthorne Cross (SX779762) with White's in a private garden, grown over and fenced in. This shaft was last used by the Albion Company, which worked the mine for about five years in the 1920s, producing tin, copper and arsenic. In a nearby copse are the remains of concrete beds of their compressor engine. In addition to various dumps, some covered by trees, there is an adit opening at Trumpeter (SX778765), with the remains of an old wheel pit, stack and flue (SX781766) from



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the end of the 19th century. The old stamps are rumoured to have been around that location too.

Some 50,000 tons of iron ore were produced in the area between 1858 and 1910, while the tin returns were negligible.

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