**SITE NO. & NAME: 69 New Era Co. mine**

**LOCATION: Ferrons Reef, Fryerstown**

*DIRECTIONS:* Junction of Fryerstown and Crocodile Reservoir Roads. Fryerstown. Battery located on Freehold Lnad, approx 250m north-east of the mullock heap.

*Map/grid reference:* Drummond 1:25,000 - 561.873

*parcel number:* P120481

*Municipality* Newstead

*land Status:* Mine site is on Unreserved Crown Land/proposed Castlemaine Historic Area

Battery located on Freehold land

*EXISTING HERITAGE CLASSIFICATION:* None

*Present Management/use:* LCC Rec - J1

*history:*

23 July 1858: Yielding well. [[1]](#endnote-2)

10 Sept 1858: Stabbing and Co. - 10 ton from 120-ft level yielded 8 oz. [[2]](#endnote-3)

8 Oct 1858: Pilcher and Co. - 102 oz. [[3]](#endnote-4)

May 1859: The claims upon Ferron's Reef are furnishing good wages to those employed. [[4]](#endnote-5)

June 1859: Ferron's & Heron's Reefs - Pilcher & Co. 8 in the party. During the past month this party have been erecting a new engine, machinery, etc., and are making a new dam.

Sullivan & Co. Crushed 30 ton in past month. Yield per ton - 15 dwt. Depth from surface - 30 feet.

Davis & Co. Crushed 3 ton in past month. Yield per ton - 1 oz. 2 dwt. Depth from surface - 10 feet.

Stock & Co. Crushed 32 ton in past month. Yield per ton - 1 oz. 3 dwt. Depth from surface - 20 feet.

Matthews & Co. (party prospecting).

Grodge & Co. Crushed 12 ton in past month. Yield per ton - 17 dwt. Working surface leader.

Ferron & Co. In this claim there is an immense body of quartz, or series of connected leaders, all more of less auriferous, so the whole is raised and crushed. They have already worked to a depth of 70 feet... The yields of the last month indicate the general patchy nature of this gold. [[5]](#endnote-6)

July 1859: [Table of monthly return] lists Matthews and Co., and Rowe and Co. as working Ferron's Reef. [[6]](#endnote-7)

July 1860: Ferron's Reef Company - This company is also doing nothing pending the settlement of a law suit in the Court of Mines between the former claim holders and the present proprietors. [[7]](#endnote-8)

August 1860: The Ferrons Reef has been also the scene of a small rush, in consequences of Pilcher's party having struck a leader which produces 1 1/2 oz. to the ton. [[8]](#endnote-9)

Sept 1860: Ferron's Reef - The claimholders on this reef are doing well; and most of the ground, at one time either registered or entirely abandoned, has been again taken up. [[9]](#endnote-10)

Oct 1860: Ferron's Reef - This has also made a start, having, I trust a splendid future. They have not as yet cleaned up their crushing, but the stuff looks well. [[10]](#endnote-11)

Nov 1860: The Ferron's Reef Company has been doing remarkably well, some of the quartz producing over 1 oz. to the ton. [[11]](#endnote-12)

Dec 1860: Quartz Reefs actually proved to be auriferous [include] - Ferron's Reef, 50 miners employed [[12]](#endnote-13)

March 1861: There is only 1 quartz claim within the area [of Fryerstown], and that employing only 4 men. This reef, although little in this particular locality, is I believe as much worked as any reef in Victoria. It is a southerly continuation of Ferron's Reef, and the latter is believed to be a continuation of Blacksmith's, El Dorado, Wattle Gully, (in the Castlemaine Division), Chewton and Sailors' Gully Reefs, and thence goes on to Barker's Creek... it is a remarkable fact that all the alluvial deposits around this line of quartz reefs have been extremely rich. [[13]](#endnote-14)

May 1861: The Ferron's Reef Company are still idle.[[14]](#endnote-15)

July 1861: Monthly quartz crushing returns lists - Pilcher and Company, and Ferron's Reef Company as obtaining quartz from Ferron's Reef [[15]](#endnote-16)

August 1861: Monthly quartz crushing returns lists - Pilcher and Company, and Ferron's Reef Company as obtaining quartz from Ferron's Reef [[16]](#endnote-17)

Sept 1861: The Ferron's Reef Company are busy, as also are Pilcher and party. [[17]](#endnote-18)

Sept 1861: Quartz crushed & gold obtained in past month: C. Pilcher, 110 feet from surface, 150 tons yielded 6 dwt.;

Ferron's Reef Company, 70 feet from surface, 360 ton yielded 4 dwt. [[18]](#endnote-19)

Dec 1861: The Ferron's Reef Company is showing faint signs of improvement. [[19]](#endnote-20)

17 Oct 1862: Ferron's Reef Co. - getting gold. [[20]](#endnote-21)

1865: Parties reporting yields from quartz crushing during 1865: Ferron's Company, Rowe Brothers (crushing for hire) [[21]](#endnote-22)

Sept 1866: Stevens and Company, of the Old Ferron's Reef, have just struck that reef, to the north of the old workings, and expect a yield of at least one ounce to the ton. [[22]](#endnote-23)

1866: Parties reporting yields from quartz crushings in 1866:Davis and Company, Ferron's Company, Stephens and Company, Little and Company [[23]](#endnote-24)

1867: Parties reporting yields from quartz crushings in 1867: Wyatt and Company, Davis and Stevens, Rowe Brothers, Steven and Davis [[24]](#endnote-25)

1868: Parties reporting yields from quartz crushings in 1868: Stevens and Company, Davis and Little, Bear and Company, Rowe and Company, Stephens and Company, Little and Company [[25]](#endnote-26)

March 1869: Cattle's, Ferron's, Heron's, Prince of Wales, Cemetery, and Specimen Hill Reefs constitute nearly one continuous, unbroken line of reef, although there are what are denominated the eastern and western lodes, 9 or 10 chains apart, with numerous veins and leaders running at different angles between them.[[26]](#endnote-27)

23 Aug 1870: [Claim] No. 12 is the second claim of Rowe Bros., including the claim of Ferron, Mathews, and others, from which such rich returns were once realised. At present it is just paying. Next in order to the west, and parallel, is the claim of Redhouse and Co., on the western line of reef, and embracing the old Golden Gully. It was in this claim that the celebrated Heron nugget of 1008 ozs. was found. No. 14 is the claim of Stephens and Co., where is an engine of 12 horse-power and 12 stampers. There, too, water has been a visitor, and the claim may be said to be just paying. [[27]](#endnote-28)

Dec 1870: Another shaft, about 300 feet east is being sunk, in order to work the eastern lode of Ferron's Reef. [[28]](#endnote-29)

2 Aug 1871: Ferron's Reef Gold Mining Co. - shaft has been sunk to 150 ft. Tributers are working the old workings to the south of the company's claim. [[29]](#endnote-30)

29 Sept 1871: Duchess of Cornwall Gold Mining Co. - lease is 900 ft on the line of the reef which traverses Rowe Brothers' claim...and extends into Anglo-Australian Co. [[30]](#endnote-31)

June 1872: The Ferron's Company are working their mine to advantage. The average yield is 6 dwts. to the ton. The reef underlies easterly; and it is contemplated by the manager that, as a greater depth is attained, the eastern lode of Ferron's will amalgamate therewith. This company are sinking a new shaft northerly. [[31]](#endnote-32)

Dec 1872: The Duke and Duchess Extended (between Ferron's and Anglo Company's ground), at a depth of 111 feet in their main shaft, struck a reef about 3 feet thick containing gold; and as the leaders or feeders thereto were all gold-bearing, it is expected that the lode when developed will prove payable; this will not, I believe, be tested for a time, as the company are anxious to proceed with their main shaft. [[32]](#endnote-33)

Sept 1873: The Ferron's Reef company are also erecting a 25 horse-power, horizontal engine, with 20 heads of revolving stamps, for crushing only; their present engine to be exclusively employed in pumping and winding when present one is completed [[33]](#endnote-34)

Dec 1873: The Ferron's Reef Company have erected a fine 25 horse-power engine and battery of 10 revolving heads, with single friction winding gear; the house is erected to contain a battery of 30 heads. The entire plant has cost over £3000. [[34]](#endnote-35)

8 Jan 1874: Ferron's claim was worked by Ferron and party for about four years. The party commenced breaking stone from the surface, and attained a depth of 2-1/2 feet, where a leader was three inches thick, and which yielded 11-3/4 oz per ton. They sank to a depth of 35 feet, where they struck the lode, which was from 20 to 24 feet thick, dipping west, and gradually tapering to a thread. I cannot do better than quote Mr Ferron's statement, given to me many years back:- "Our washing of quartz was by ordinary tub and cradle process, and we obtained £40 per week for 3-1/2 years. Most of the refuse we stacked, although hundreds of tons were buried up that yielded 1oz to the ton. We afterwards crushed with an imperfect battery, that was only capable of putting through one ton at most per day, the average yield of which was 4oz to theton. We crushed a great quantity from the eastern lode - in the writer's opinion, Clarke's reef - varying from 2oz to 5dwt to the ton. The latter yield was got at a depth of 60 feet; the lode varied in thickness at that depth of from six inches to 2-1/2 feet. We paid £4 per week wages, and £4 per ton crushing, in addition to cartage, and we were compelled to well burn the stone ere crushing." Upon its abandonment, Pilcher and company, who had been working ground adjoining from the opening of the reef, took possession, and, for a period of six years or more, crushed therefrom to a depth of 60 feet on the eastern lode and 70 feet on the main lode. Excellent returns were obtained by this party, and it seems somewhat remarkable that at the time they - a co-operative party - could barely make 5 dwt to the ton pay expenses, when we now have a public company declaring dividends upon an average yield under 4.5 dwt. Rowe and company's crushings during the long period they had possession obtained from 3 dwt to 5 oz to the ton from the eastern lode, which varied in thickness from 9 to 30 inches. From the main lode the party crushed about 1000 tons, varying from 3 dwt to 4oz to the ton, and averaging 9 dwt. Stevens and party, the predecessors of the present company, in four years crushed about 7000 tons, averaging 9 dwt to the ton, and only attained a depth of 80 feet, which in other localities would simply be regarded as shallow workings... The new plant of the company consists of a 25 horse-power horizontal engine, 16-1/4 inch cylinder, 3 feet stroke, fly-wheel 12 feet diameter, boiler 28 feet long and 6 feet diameter, single friction winding-gear, 10-head battery of revolving stamps, horses of best Sandhurst timber, ripple tables of 20 feet 6 inches. The whole substantially and neatly covered in with a house adequate for receiving 30 head of stamps. [[35]](#endnote-36)

27 Jan 1874: Ferron's Reef Co. - The various plant contracts have been carried out in a highly satisfactory manner by Messrs Horwood Bros., ironfounders; Jorgensen and Co., carpenters, and Curtis and Co., bricklayers, under the able supervision of Mr P. Wright, engineer, and your directors are gratified to be able to congratulate you on the possession of one of the best and most efficient plants in the district, consisting of a 16-1/4-inch cylinder engine, with 20 head of stamps, to which 10 more will be added whenever required, and a 10-inch cylinder engine for pumping and winding. The total cost will be about £3500. [[36]](#endnote-37)

28 Jan 1874: Ferron's Reef Co. - The new engine is from the foundry of Messrs Wright and Edwards, Melbourne, and is a model of an horizontal pattern. [[37]](#endnote-38)

2 Feb 1874: Ferron's No. 1 - New shaft down 42 feet. [[38]](#endnote-39)

2 March 1874: The Ferron's Co., having driven to their north boundary, have granted No. 1 permission to work from this level and send the stone up engine shaft. In the new shaft near Anglo boundary a west cross-cut is being put in. [[39]](#endnote-40)

30 April 1874: Ferron's No. 3 Tribute Co. - half-yearly meeting - ...I have every confidence that...this leader will bring us on to a body of quartz, some of which was worked years ago from an old shaft... when I found that there was a big block of stone left alongside of old workings, which have all the appearance of being payable, I thought it would be advisable to take out a trial crushing, and commenced last week with two men to break quartz. The Ferron's Company having a battery available, started crushing at once.[[40]](#endnote-41)

11 May 1874: Ferron's No. 3 Tribute Co. - Rowe Bros., to south, have struck gold near the boundary at 240 feet. [[41]](#endnote-42)

1 June 1874: Ferron's No. 1 - Half-yearly meeting - New shaft was commenced at northern boundary - sunk to 50 feet then cross-cut west. Then worked Ferron's Co. level... The tributers working adjoining ground recently struck stone east of engine shaft yielding 8 to 10 dwt to the ton, which they have followed to our boundary. [[42]](#endnote-43)

1 Sept 1874: Ferron's No. 3 Tribute - The tribute agreement has been cancelled by the directors as the tributers did not employ the required no. of miners - the area will be let on 'pitches'. [[43]](#endnote-44)

14 Sept 1874: Another 'pitch' has been let to Bennett and party who have commenced stoping at the 200-ft level, north of No. 2 shaft. [[44]](#endnote-45)

Sept 1874: The Ferron's are opening out in an easterly direction, having discovered good indications outside their present workings. [[45]](#endnote-46)

18 May 1875: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute Company - Half-yearly Meeting - ...The quantity of stone raised was 1954 tons, yielding 345 oz 19dwt. Great difficulty and delay has been experienced in working, owing to the extraordinary amount of timbering required in a portion of the ground, otherwise even the low yield obtained, averaging 3 dwt 13 gr. per ton, would have proved profitable.

Mine Manager's Report - ... I would like to have done something more in the shape of prospecting the mine, but our means being so limited, we failed to do so. I believe if the mine had been fairly opened up our prospect would be good, but this cannot be until the Ferron's Company sink their engine shaft. [[46]](#endnote-47)

22 Nov 1875: A new tribute has been let to Hill and party (Southern) comprising the ground previously held by No. 3 Tribute Co. [[47]](#endnote-48)

31 Jan 1876: Ferron's Reef Co. - There has passed through the battery 4725 tons of stone, for a gross yield of 711 oz 11 dwt 12 gr retorted gold as follows:- For the Company, 2389 tons, for 374 oz 1 dwt; No. 1 Tribute, 1052 tons, for 161 oz; Bennet's Tribute, 516 tons for 112 oz 11 dwt; Eastern Tribute, 606 tons, for 54 oz 15 dwt 12 gr; Southern Tribute, 145 tons, for 8 oz 9 dwt; and Hill and party, 17 tons, for 15 dwt. [[48]](#endnote-49)

2 June 1876: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute - Half-yearly meeting - ...sufficient stone can now be raised, with the present number of men (twelve) to keep 10 head of stamps constantly going.[[49]](#endnote-50)

June 1876: The Ferron's Reef Company. - This company have been very energetic and prosperous during the past three months, having crushed over 4,000 tons of quartz, yielding on the average 3 dwts. to the ton, and employed regularly forty-three men. Their engine shaft has been sunk to a depth of 284 feet from the surface, or about 50 feet below the level where the gold has been obtained.[[50]](#endnote-51)

Sept 1876: Ferron's Reef Q.M. Company. - This company have been very successful during the past three months, having crushed 3,700 tons, yielding 726 ozs,. and employing 44 men. [[51]](#endnote-52)

Dec 1876: The Ferron's Reef Company are working at the 280-foot level, in payable stone, which is likely to continue in a northerly direction, intersecting the Duke and Duchess and Anglo claims. [[52]](#endnote-53)

Dec 1876: Parties reporting yields of gold from quartz crushed: Ferron's Reef Company, Ferron's Reef; Rowe Brothers, Ferron's Reef [[53]](#endnote-54)

June 1877: The Ferron's Reef Company. ..The company have now suspended crushing operations, and discharged about 30 men, in order to cut down the engine shaft from the surface, and make it the full size of 9 feet x 4 feet in the clear; this will enable them to work two cages, and make provision for more extended mining operations underground. The directors have also decided on erecting new winding engine, poppet legs, gangway, &c., which will probably occupy two months in completion... It appears there is an unlimited supply of auriferous stone within this claim, and years of profitable labor in prospective. [[54]](#endnote-55)

Sept 1877: The Ferron's Reef Company. - This company have completed the various additions and improvements alluded to in last report, viz, erected a new winding engine of 25 horse-power, new winding gear, poppet legs, two new cages (with coverings), enlarged and cut the main shaft down 200 feet; the total cost being about £900.

[[55]](#endnote-56)

17 Dec 1877: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute - Sinking a new shaft on northern part of ground down to 50 feet. [[56]](#endnote-57)

Dec 1877: The Ferron's Reef Company. - This company temporarily suspended mining operations during a crisis, owing to a law-suit, but recently has been reorganized, and is now proceeding with vigor... Various improvements and additions have been effected in connection with the machinery and plant during the past six months, viz., a new boiler and winding-engine erected; the main shaft (9 feet x 4 feet) has also been cut down from the top to a depth of 354 feet; and new poppet-heads, gangway, &c., have been constructed. The company...has crushed during the past quarter 3,345 tons, at an average of nearly 51/2 dwts. to the ton. [[57]](#endnote-58)

March 1878: The Ferron's line of reef appears now to be more profitably worked than the Cattle's, the latter having generally been considered the more important line, and better defined. [[58]](#endnote-59)

Dec 1878: Rowe Brothers and the Ferron's...can succeed with a low average, in consequence of their splendid mechanical appliances, the vast quantity of stone at command, and the economical mode of working the ground. The Ferron's (New Era Company) employ 67 men and boys, and have used during the past twelve months 4,000 tons of firewood, at a cost of £1,100; they have raised during the past three months 5,477 tons of quartz from the 380-foot level, averaging 3 dwts. 14 grs. per ton. Rowe Brothers have crushed 1,508 tons of quartz, averaging nearly 9 dwts. to the ton, from the 175-foot level, and the general prospects of the mine are highly favorable... This company, in their Ferron's Reef claim, are now driving at the 300-foot level, but are not progressing so satisfactorily as might be desired. [[59]](#endnote-60)

20 Jan 1879: New Era - You are aware that considerable difficulty was formerly experienced in disposing of the tailings, your directors are pleased to inform you that an arrangement has been made with the Water Supply department, by which the company now obtain a constant supply of water for sluicing away the sand from the batteries, and a considerable saving will thus be effected, not only in labour in shifting the sand, but in steam power, the tailings pump having been dispensed with. [[60]](#endnote-61)

2 June 1879: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute Co. - half-yearly meeting - ...There has passed through the battery 3848 tons for a yield of 530 oz smelted gold, being an average of 2 dwt 18 gr. to the ton. [[61]](#endnote-62)

Sept 1879: New Era Company...gives good dividends to the shareholders... The total depth of the main shaft is now 514 feet.[[62]](#endnote-63)

13 Oct 1879: New Era Co. - ...Such...was the impression conveyed by an examination of the 230 feet level, which when being driven 70 feet to cut the eastern lode passed through several bodies of quartz. These were followed upwards by rises till within 100 feet of the surface, and all to good purpose. The Tribute Co. also found them profitable for a distance of 340 feet, which brought them to the boundary of the Anglo Co. [[63]](#endnote-64)

1 Dec 1879: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute Co. - half-yearly meeting -... An application was made by George Wilde for assistance, he having been injured last March, when working for the company. His medical adviser informed he would be unable to do mining work for two years, and he was recommended to learn shoemaking. It was resolved to allow him 10s a week for twelve months. [[64]](#endnote-65)

19 Jan 1880: New Era Co. - From the sale of pyrites a sum of £443 8s 7d has been obtained. A valuable addition has been made to the property of the Company by the purchase from the Duke and Duchess United Company Limited, of the northern portion of their lease, comprising an area of 10 acres 1 rood 13 perches.[[65]](#endnote-66)

March 1880: New Era Company. - ...The company has been very fortunate during the past quarter, the yield of gold having greatly increased, principally from having struck payable stone in their new ground, formerly held by the Duke and Duchess Extended Company.... Seventy men are constantly employed, and preparations are now being made for the employment of a large additional number of miners. [[66]](#endnote-67)

17 May 1880: Messrs Tolstrup and Elsbury have taken up a claim on tribute from Messrs Rowe Brothers in which a shaft is sunk and which they intend sinking still deeper from 80 ft to 100 ft - to the south of the New Era... The lease taken up by Tolstrup and Elsbury is between the New Era and the mine of Messrs Rowe Brothers.[[67]](#endnote-68)

31 May 1880: Ferron's Reef Company (Messrs Tolstrup, Elsbury & Co.) - First crushing for the new company (between New Era and Rowe Bros. claims) [[68]](#endnote-69)

June 1880: Ferron's Reef Company. - A new company has been recently started, working, on tribute, on an area of ground held by Rowe Brothers (under the Leasing Regulations) contiguous to and in direct line with the New Era Company's workings. Tenders are being called for supplying a winding engine, to be erected at once. The main shaft has been sunk to a depth of 315 feet. [[69]](#endnote-70)

19 July 1880: Ferron's Reef Company - Putting main shaft in order - timbered to 225 feet and son finished to bottom at 315 feet. [[70]](#endnote-71)

26 July 1880: Ferron's Reef Co. - Let blocks to tributers. [[71]](#endnote-72)

26 July 1880: New Era Mining Co. - At the 184 feet level the No. 1 Tribute Company has extended the north drive to their boundary, when it was continued by us through to the 'Duchess' shaft for ventilation..[[72]](#endnote-73)

16 Aug 1880: Ferron's Reef Co. - About to commence sinking another 40 feet. Crushing for Royal Saxon Co. [[73]](#endnote-74)

25 Oct 1880: Ferron's Reef Co. - erecting engine. [[74]](#endnote-75)

26 Jan 1881: Ferron's Reef Co. - half-yearly meeting - Shaft repaired and two opening sets put in at 320-ft level. It has been divided into three compartments. Present depth 370 feet. Have let several tributes. [[75]](#endnote-76)

25 July 1881: Ferron's Reef Co. - half-yearly meeting - Shaft 430 feet deep. There has been crushed for the Company and Tributers 760 tons of quartz, for a yield of 92 oz 7.5 dwts of retorted gold, being an average of 2.5 dwts to the ton; also 434 tons for the public. [[76]](#endnote-77)

1 Dec 1881: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute Co. - half-yearly meeting - There has passed through the battery 3547 tons of quartz for a yield of 949 ozs 17.5 dwts of melted gold, being an average of 5 dwts 8 gr. per ton. [[77]](#endnote-78)

6 Jan 1882: At the south end of the New Era is the Ferrons. [[78]](#endnote-79)

March 1882: New Era Company have had very good returns of late, no signs of exhaustion in the mine, and 80 men constantly are employed. The company have crushed nearly 5,000 tons quartz, yielding about 900 ozs... Fifty tons of pyrites have also been operated on, yielding 1 oz. 8 dwts. to the ton; the proportion of pyrites is equal to about 1 per cent. on the total amount of quartz crushed. [[79]](#endnote-80)

24 April 1882: Ferron's No. 1 Tribute Co. - final crushing. [[80]](#endnote-81)

June 1882: New Era Company...[have]...procured and erected a new pumping engine of 25-horse power, at a cost of £800, which will enable them to attain a depth of 1,000 feet, and thoroughly drain the mine at all the lower levels. The machinery, which works admirably, has been supplied by Messrs. Thompson and Co. [[81]](#endnote-82)

Sept 1882: The Ferron's Reef Company... The ground occupied by the company is held on tribute from Rowe Brothers, and immediately adjoins the New Era Company on the south. [[82]](#endnote-83)

Dec 1882: The New Era Company have sunk their main shaft a further depth of 56 feet during the past year it has now attained a total depth of 569 1/2 feet from the surface... From the mining manager's statement, it would appear that the underground workings are in good condition, well ventilated, and securely timbered; and considering the large number of men (88) working within an area not exceeding 71/2 acres it is a matter for congratulation that so few accident has occurred. [[83]](#endnote-84)

29 Jan 1883: Ferron's Reef Co. - half-yearly meeting - H.O. Rowe presided. ...a marked improvement has taken place in the prospects of the Company during the half-year just terminated. The Company's share of the gold amounted to £1624 3s 1d, of which the first dividend of 6d per share, amounting to £500, has been declared. It is the painful duty of your directors to report that a fatal accident occurred in the mine on the 2nd December last, to a youth by name, Samson Thomas, through a fall of quartz... Your directors beg to inform you that they have since the termination of the half-year paid £120 as compensation to the father of the young man alluded to.[[84]](#endnote-85)

29 Jan 1883: New Era Co. - Your Directors were fortunate enough to secure a very valuable addition to the Company's property, by the purchase of Finney's freehold for the sum of £317 2s 6d. The acquisition of this property, situate as it is in the heart of the company's lease, is of great importance to the Company, not only for mining, but also for surface purposes... The main shaft has been sunk a further depth of 56ft, making 569-1/2 ft. from the surface... The No. 3 (or 330 ft) level has been extended south on very large stone to the Ferrons Co.'s boundary... During the half-year about 99 men and boys have been employed, all in the day shift, with the exception of those at the battery and those sinking the shaft. [[85]](#endnote-86)

March 1883: Two of the more important companies have, comparatively speaking, suspended operations, viz., the "New Era", and "Rowe Brothers"; the manager of the former company, unfortunately, had a dispute with one of his workmen, which led to the discharge of the latter, when a general strike took place among all the miners employed; various attempts to adjust the difficulty have been made, but hitherto without success, so that a large number of men are out of profitable and permanent employment. A miners' association has been organized at Fryerstown, which assumes to itself the right to dictate terms, and regulate the proceedings between employer and employed. [[86]](#endnote-87)

June 1883: The New Era Company...have recently purchased the Duke and Duchess Company's lease block, which had been idle for a very long time. The mine (New Era) is again in full working order, the recent difficulty with the workmen on strike having been satisfactorily adjusted. There are 85 men employed...but, as the adjoining block of over 20 acres has been secured, it is anticipated more men will be employed.[[87]](#endnote-88)

30 July 1883: New Era Co. - Your Directors have much pleasure in informing you that they have effected a purchase of the southern portion of the lease formerly held by the Duke and Duchess United Company, together with the machinery on it. [[88]](#endnote-89)

Sept 1883: New Era Gold Mining Company. -...the mining manager has no difficulty providing employment for a large number of miners, and keeping fifteen heads of stamps constantly going. [[89]](#endnote-90)

28 Jan 1884: New Era Co. - The mine is in first-class working order, and the whole of the underground work is carried on by about sixty men in the day shift. [[90]](#endnote-91)

March 1884: Ferron's Reef Co. wound up and plant &c. disposed of by tender or auction. [[91]](#endnote-92)

June 1884: New Era Company. - Some two months since, this company considered it expedient to suspend mining operations, and discharge all the workmen, 80 in number, representing that the mine had ceased to be payable. The action taken by the directors caused a considerable amount of surprise and consternation amongst the miners and different tradesmen interested. However, after a few days, it was proposed to work the mine on the tribute system; but the terms submitted were not acceptable to the workmen, and it was feared the works would be stopped for an indefinite period; but, as it was foreseen that the stoppage would entail great hardship on a number of hardworking and industrious men, the directors, on further consideration, determined to re-commence operations under the old system, the number of men to be reduced. There are now about 40 miners employed, and recent crushings show that, by careful management, the mine is still capable of paying expenses. [[92]](#endnote-93)

June 1885: New Era Gold Mining Company, Golden Gully, have now sunk their main shaft a total depth of 645 feet.[[93]](#endnote-94)

Sept 1885: New Era Gold Mining Company. - This company has now succeeded in sinking their main shaft a total depth of 671 feet, the greatest depth yet attained in the Fryer's district. [[94]](#endnote-95)

March 1886: The diamond drill at Fryerstown is now engaged on the New Era Company's lease, the depth bored during the quarter being 725 feet, but up to the present time (March 31st) no bodies of quartz have been intersected... Cowling's patent safety cage and appliances have been recently tested at this mine (New Era) in the presence of many practical miners, and found to work admirably. The cage, when disconnected from the rope, was immediately arrested in its descent by the grippers securely adhering to the guides in the shaft; two or three experiments proved highly satisfactory. [[95]](#endnote-96)

25 July 1887: New Era Co. - The main object for the past half-year has been to push on the sinking of the shaft as energetically as possible. A depth of nearly 900 ft has now been attained, and...no payable stone has yet been discovered[[96]](#endnote-97)

Dec 1887: New Era Gold Mining Company. - This company have now reached a total depth in their main shaft of 1,000 feet, the greatest depth ever attained in the Fryer's district...but the prospects are not particularly encouraging so far. [[97]](#endnote-98)

23 July 1888: New Era Co. - The present depth of the shaft is 1078 ft, and 22 ft more will finish the present contract, which will make the total of 1100 ft.[[98]](#endnote-99)

March 1889 : the original discoverer of Ferron's reef, now an inmate of the Castlemaine Hospital, declares that himself and party realized from the reef, which bears his name, £20,000 worth of gold, which was squandered away in the most reckless manner during a period of two or three years...

New Era Gold Mining Company (formerly Ferron's Reef Quartz Mining Company). - The ground occupied by this company was taken up in the year 1871, but prior to this date several parties had possession and worked the ground to considerable advantage, viz., D. Ferron (the original discoverer), followed by Messrs. Pilcher, Jac Jung, Wyatt, Davis, and Stephens; but no reliable returns can be furnished at the present time, touching the various yields prior to the year 1867. The New Era Company have been very successful up to a certain period, but more particularly during the years 1878, 1879, and 1880, viz., 11,566oz. being realized, and dividends paid, £16,400. during the years 1871 to 1877 inclusive, the total yield was 10,531 oz.; dividends, £6437. The present company have worked the reef 700 feet in length, in separate shoots, to a depth of 330 feet. The strike of the Reef is N. 7° W.... The depth of the main shaft is 1,100 feet, but nothing payable has been found at that depth. The depth of water-level is 50 feet. Although this claim has been remarkable for the vast quantity of quartz raised and crushed, and payable at a low average, still no properly-defined reef has yet been discovered. The mining manager (Mr. Bell) is very sanguine of making some startling discoveries, touching a so-called *second formation* below 1,000 feet... The yields from various depths are as follows:- Surface to 50 feet, 946oz.; to 100 feet, 1,138oz.; to 150 feet, 2,485oz.; to 200 feet, 3,296oz.; to 300 feet, 3,986oz.; to 400 feet, 2,453oz.; to 600 feet, 748oz.; to 800 feet, 594 oz. Total number of tons, 202,517; average 3.7dwt. to the ton. the reef is in work at the present time (March, 1889), driving and cross-cutting, but very little quartz is being raised and crushed from the higher levels. [[99]](#endnote-100)

29 April 1889: Seeing that enough money was not procurable from call paying shareholders, the directors felt unable to sink another 100 feet as proposed, so that they recommend that steps be made to wind up the company. [[100]](#endnote-101)

June 1889: New Era and Perserverance Gold Mining Companies. - After being in existence a great many years, these companies have collapsed through an inability to pick up the lost lead in other claims. The New Era...main shaft has been sunk to a depth of 1,100 feet; but in reaching that depth, some 800 feet of barren country had to be passed through ... it is to be hoped that a new company will be started to work the higher levels (with a new shaft) more to the westward, where in all probability the Cattle's line of reef will be intercepted. The plant should not be removed unless under very pressing circumstances. [[101]](#endnote-102)

9 Jan 1899: Ford & party are working on stone along the New Era Line at a mine called the Saxon adjoining the Blacksmith Gully Extended Co. [[102]](#endnote-103)

*Description*

New Era Co. (formerly Ferron's Reef Quartz Mining Co. ) 1871 to c.1889

Partially quarried mullock heap. To the north east are large dumps of treated tailings. The tailings dumps have been quarried. At the western end of the tailings is the remains of a sludge embankment.

On freehold land to the west of the mullock heap, only metres from a residence is the remains of the New Era Co.’s battery (stone boiler setting and base of circular stone chimney stack base).

*PHOTOS:* None taken

*Artefacts:* None visible

*Integrity/CONDITION:* Mine workings and tailings dump have poor integrity. Only features of any value are what survives of the battery and the tailings embankment)

*THREATS:*

*CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:*

The site has some:

Scientific Significance - Trace of battery foundations on freehold land and remains of tailings embankment on Crown Land.

Cumulative Value - Part of a comprehensive network of quartz and alluvial mining sites asociated with Herons, Ferrons and Cattles Reefs, and Golden Gully. (Sites 66, 67, 68, 69, 70.0 to 70.3, and 71.0)

**Significance ranking: Local**

*CONSERVATION POLICY:*

None required

*RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:*

None

**Assessor: David Bannear Date: 1993**

1. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Mining Surveyors' monthly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Mining Surveyors' monthly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Mining Surveyors' monthly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
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20. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. The Mining Journal, Railway and Commercial Gazette, London, 5/11/1870,p.924 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
28. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
29. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
30. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. iMining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
32. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
33. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
34. Mining Surveyors' quarterly reports, Castlemaine and Fryer's Creek Divisions [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
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102. Mount Alexander Mail, as summarized in Clive Willman collection [↑](#endnote-ref-103)