

Junction Mine (Browne's Shaft)

The Junction Mine is a good example of the smaller mines developed along the Line of Lode. The company held Mining Lease 39, taken out by Penglass and Carson trading as the "Great Northern Junction". The Line of Lode in this area curves to the north then turns to the north-east. The south-eastern boundary of Lease 39 includes the Line of Lode.

The Argus of Monday 27 April 1885 (pp10) carried a report from their Silverton Correspondent on the mine: "The Great Northern Junction, contiguous to the Broken Hill, has also been proved to contain chlorides of silver in a close ferruginous ore, bearing a close resemblance to the ore of the Broken hill....The Great Northern Junction had sunk 24ft when they found the chlorides. It is now decided for the more satisfactory (working of the property) to bring it under the Companies Act." This seems to have occurred by April 1886 when stocks in the Broken Hill Junction are listed as being traded.

Mining Reports in *the Argus* identify the main shaft as "the Penglass shaft"; this is likely to have been renamed Browne Shaft. The other large shaft was Macintyre and there were also the King and North shafts.

In May 1886 a new Mine Manager was installed and rich ore was reported to have been struck in the shaft at a depth of 150ft in July 1886. Although it was never completely closed, the Mine worked intermittently as the lead price rose and fell. From 1904 ore processing for the mine was developed around Browne Shaft.

On the 15th February, 1906 a serious fire broke out in the Junction Mine workings at the 550ft level. The timber sets used to support the hanging walls of the lode were particularly vulnerable to underground fires. The Annual Report of the Mines Department for 1906 stated that 23 million gallons of water (104,560,300 litres) were used to extinguish the fire, flooding the adjacent North and Junction North Mines. The MacIntyre Shaft and associated drives and stopes were badly affected by the fire and suffered major collapses due to the timbering being burnt out.

The Mine constructed a concentration plant from 1904 but, despite a major refurbishment of the plant in 1912, it did not adopt the froth flotation technique. Indeed, the Junction Mine simply sold its tailings to treatment plants. From 1916, when the mine was working, the ore was treated at the Central Mine's plant.

In 1923 the Mine was purchased by the Sulphide Corporation and was connected to the Central Mine by rail. Ore was crushed at Browne Shaft and then sent by rail to the Central Mine for processing.

By 1928 the mine was out of production.

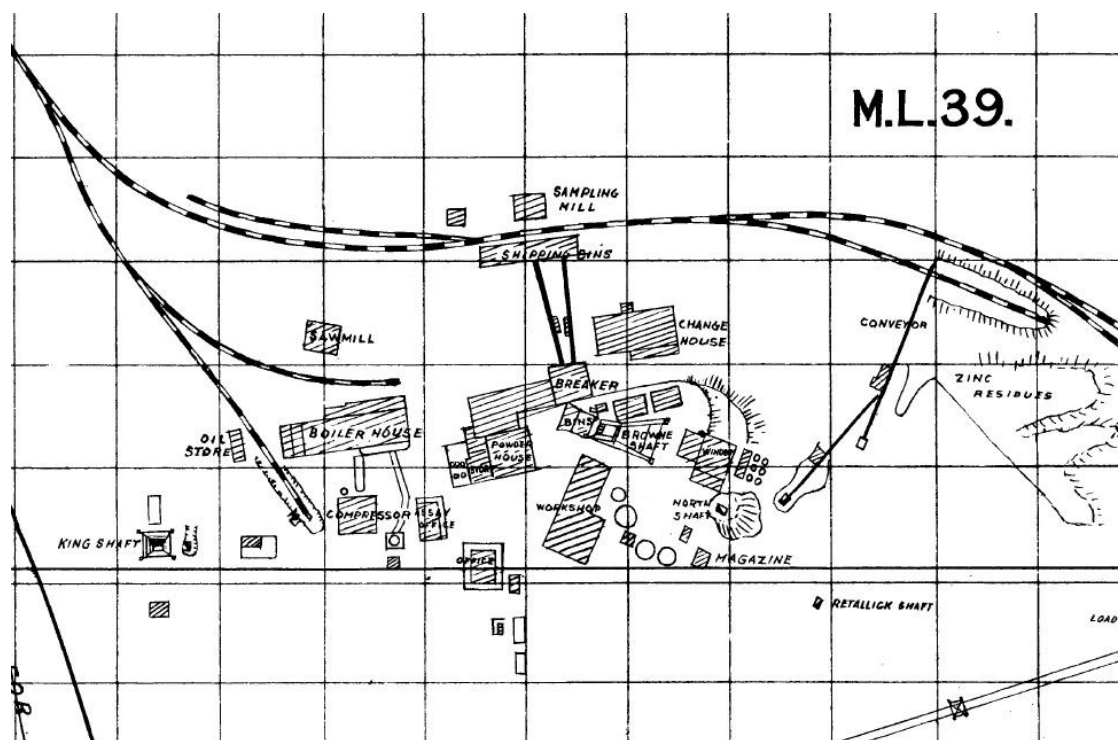
In October 1929, the North Mine purchased the Junction Mine from the Sulphide Corporation. In May 1931, the Junction North Mine was purchased for £2,750. Both mines had been struggling to make a profit for some time. The Junction North had been made insolvent due to a lack of provision for Workers' Compensation and owed £47,382. Together with the old British BHP mine, these formed what was known as the "British Section" of the North Mine. By these acquisitions, the North Mine had secured an important section of the Line of Lode which, although it had been mined for some time, had the potential to be developed to exploit new ore bodies and for older areas to have lower grade ore extracted.

It was decided to reopen the British Mine in August 1936. The British Section consisted of two shafts: Thompson's and Blackwood's. The other shafts, such as Browne Shaft within this section, were not further developed at this time. In 1939 Browne Shaft was partially de-watered and reconditioned to the c900ft level; it was considered that it would be easy to put the shaft back to work. Ultimately, the Junction Mine was only put back into production in 1946.

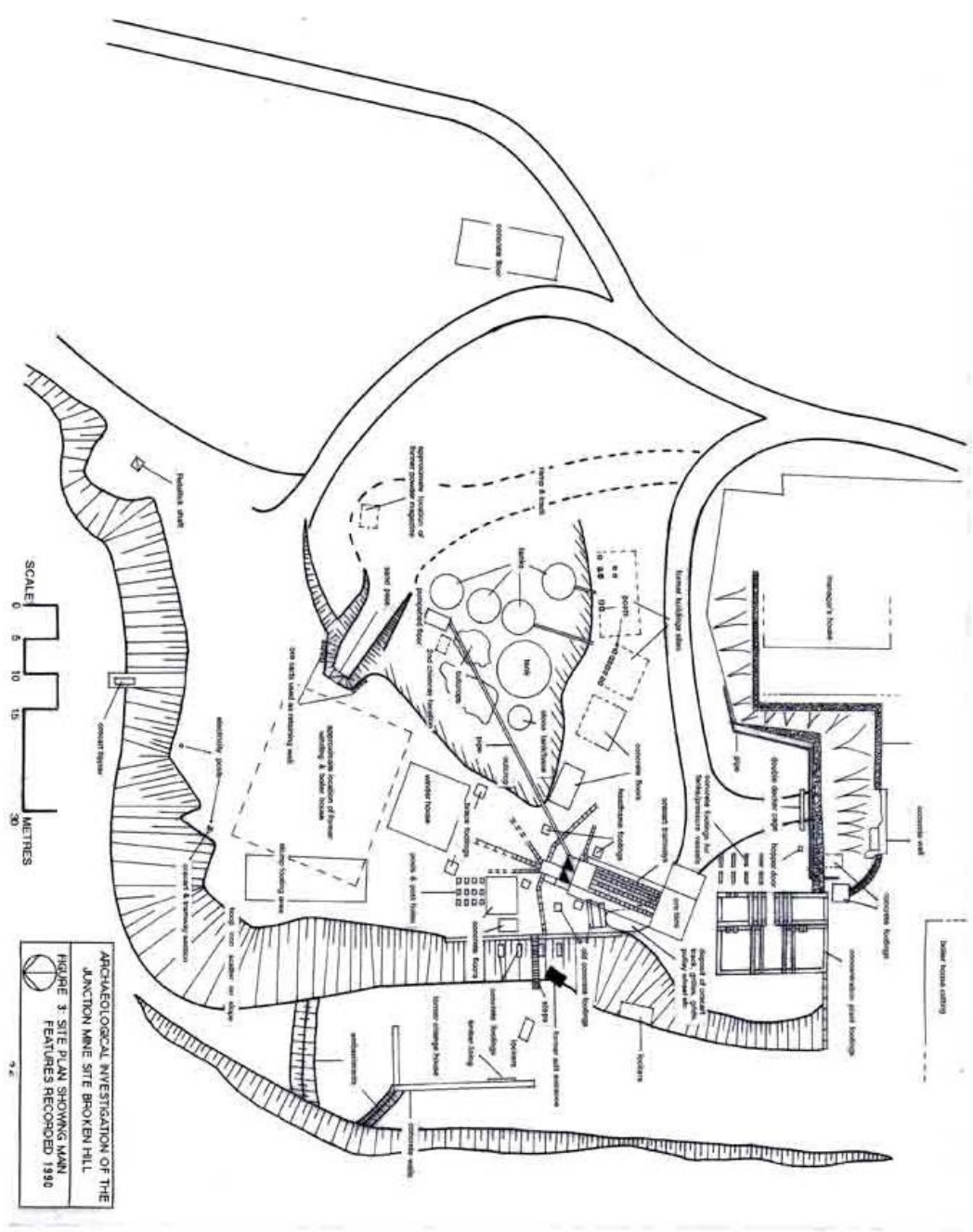
In 1962 the British Section (including the Junction Mines and Block 14) were closed and sold to Broken Hill South Limited. Broken Hill South constructed a long drive at the 1480ft level to connect their No 7 Shaft and Browne Shaft. Ore was extracted from No 7 shaft.

Work ceased at Browne Shaft in 1972.

The Mine remains are a good example of the smaller mines on the Line of Lode. Undercapitalised, with limited ore reserves, the mine's struggles after the initial rich ores were exhausted and the capital and ore reserves to develop into a larger mine were lacking.



1932 Plan of the Junction Mine (from the Annual Report of the North Mine)



Archaeological Survey plan (courtesy Austral Archaeology)