

Alta rewrites Gorno recipe

Having a project right at the epicentre of Europe's initial COVID-19 outbreak could be assumed to be a severe hand-brake for a junior explorer but Alta Zinc Ltd has managed to keep things moving despite the limitations.

Alta's flagship asset is the Gorno zinc project, in the Lombardy region of northern Italy, location of the first major coronavirus outbreak in Europe earlier in the year.

The Italian Government imposed strict lockdown conditions in early March, curtailing Alta's onsite activity but as Alta managing director Geraint Harris explained, that didn't result in a complete freezing of work for the company.

"We have actually moved the project on a lot in the last few months," Harris told **Paydirt**. "We stopped drilling and staff began working from home in March and that really gave us the focus to sit down and understand what the drilling from Pian Bracca was telling us (about the wider exploration potential). But since then we have had a lot of feedback from the regulators on the mining licence renewal and that collaboration has been positive."

Technical aspects of Gorno have also been addressed with the exploration team taking the pause in field work to build a greater understanding of mineralisation.

"We have done a lot of reinterpretation of the geology," Harris said.

The pause for reinterpretation could even be considered well-timed. Alta's Gorno exploration strategy has undergone a transformation over the past 18 months after positive results from drilling on the newly drilled Pian Bracca zone, first identified during a review of Gorno rich historical data.

Although tested, Pian Bracca was undeveloped at the time of Gorno's closure in 1982. In the first exploration in more than

35 years, underground sampling in 2018 returned grades of 10-20% zinc-plus-lead before drilling in the latter half of 2019 produced numerous mineralised intercepts, including: 12m @ 12.1% and 38 g/t, 12.1m @ 19.4% and 60 g/t and 15m @ 18.3% and 70 g/t, confirming the potential of the zone.

Even more encouraging was evidence that the Pian Bracca thrust structure sits above the stratabound horizon of the existing Zorzone resource, opening up a second exploration horizon for the entire Gorno system.

"The reinterpretation has been really informed by what we found at Pian Bracca," Harris said. "Suddenly, it is looking very different to when we only had Zorzone. It has allowed the exploration team to put a lot more meat on the bone and in going back through the Zorzone drill holes we can see we missed that thrust mineralisation in the northern holes that were drilled into the right post-code."

Alta is now planning to apply this knowledge to six other targets it has identified at Gorno.

"Pian Bracca is the start of looking at the low-hanging fruit," Harris said. "We are targeting seven areas, giving us the better chance of successfully building out a strong resource base in the most efficient manner."

Work began on the first of the targets, Ponente 850m along strike from Pian Bracca, before lockdown with channel sampling returning assays of 2.4m @ 58.8% zinc-plus-lead and 80 g/t silver and 2.2m @ 32% and 39 g/t, Alta once again using the historical adits to sample directly from the face.

"At Pian Bracca, we started with channel sampling and it has proven very effective. It tells you a lot about how real and predictable the mineralisation is. Having a leading

programme of channel sampling to test the grade of the visible mineralisation gives you confidence to follow-up with drilling. It means you are not drilling at shadows."

With lockdown restrictions now easing as Italy's infection rates fall, Alta is preparing for a restart of drilling, including hitting Ponente.

"We were back on site in May and remobilisation of the driller will begin in June. We will spend the rest of 2020 and 2021 defining the resource and in 18 months from now I think Zorzone will be only a portion of the overall mineral inventory, and one of the lower-grade, thinner zones at that."

Defining resources on seven additional targets could transform a project which has fallen short on expectations on several occasions in the last decade.

"It has always been considered a good project but has never been given the best crack of the whip by the market," Harris said. "In the past, the company perhaps couldn't afford to divert attention from the Zorzone resource but using the strong technical work we have done in the past and reviewing the historical data we have been able to put together a wider picture."

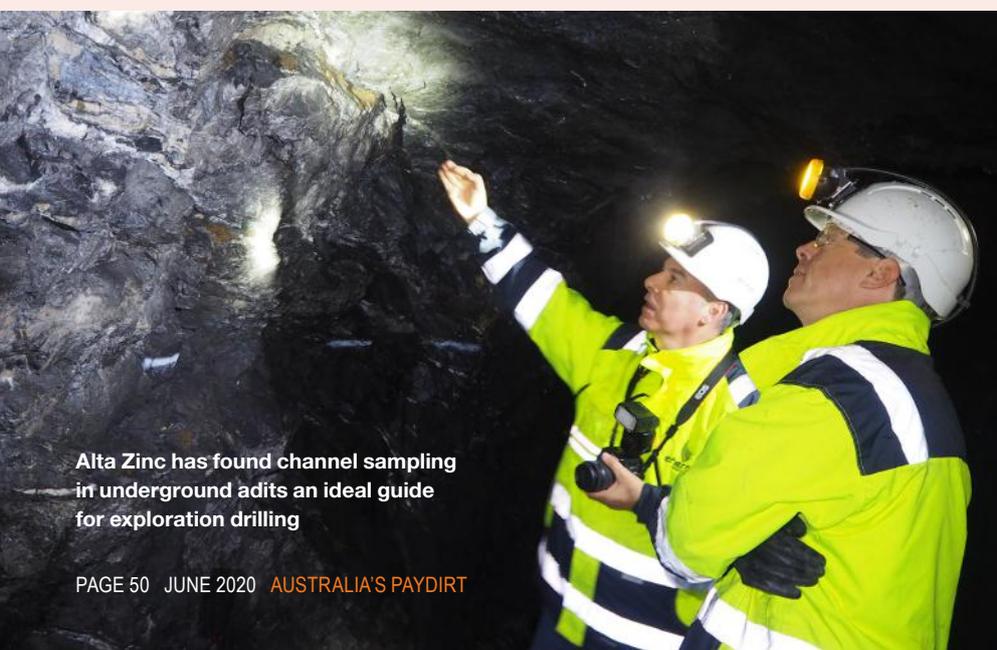
"It has always been considered a good project but has never been given the best crack of the whip by the market," Harris said. "In the past, the company perhaps couldn't afford to divert attention from the Zorzone resource but using the strong technical work we have done in the past and reviewing the historical data we have been able to put together a wider picture."

"This is a Mississippi Valley-type [MVT] orebody, only it's been thrust like a deck of cards and is therefore stacked on top of itself in the north-south direction, rather than just one single horizon. We have historic mining present over 8-10km east-west and we know that the Metallifero geology, which hosts the mineral, is present for many tens of kilometres" Harris said. "So, this is a big system which is something not recognised in the past."

"We have taken the concentrate to a zinc market expert and asked where we would sell it, whether we would get preferential financial terms, etc and his response was there was nothing comparable available in the open-market," Harris said.

"He said it was the cleanest, high-grade concentrate available which gives us confidence that we can back up the things we have been saying about the metallurgy for some time."

– Dominic Piper



Alta Zinc has found channel sampling in underground adits an ideal guide for exploration drilling