

BHP BILLITON PLC
Form 6-K
May 27, 2004

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 6-K

REPORT OF FOREIGN ISSUER

PURSUANT TO RULE 13a-16 OR 15d-16 OF

THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the Date of

22 April 2004

BHP Billiton Plc

Registration Number 3196209

Neathouse Place

London SW1V 1BH

United Kingdom

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant files or will file annual reports under cover of Form 20-F or Form 40-F.

Form 20-F	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Form 40-F	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Indicate by check mark whether the registrant by furnishing the information contained in this Form is also thereby furnishing the information to the Commission pursuant to Rule 12g3-2(b) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>		No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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If "Yes" is marked, indicate below the file number assigned to the registrant in connection with Rule 12g3-2(b):

Date 22 April 2004

Number 20/04

BHP BILLITON PRODUCTION REPORT
FOR THE QUARTER ENDED 31 MARCH 2004

BHP Billiton today released its production report for the quarter ended 31 March 2004.

- **Production for all major minerals commodities higher than the March 2003 quarter.**
- **Strong natural gas and LPG production compared with the March 2003 quarter.**
- **Record quarterly aluminium production resulting from the ramp up of production at the Hillside 3 (South Africa) expansion.**
- **Record quarterly alumina production.**
- **Record silver and lead production at Cannington (Australia) as a result of the ongoing debottlenecking project.**
- **Record quarterly nickel production.**

• **Total Petroleum Products**

- Total production for the March 2004 quarter was 29.8 million barrels of oil equivalent, five per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter and 2 per cent lower than the December 2003 quarter.

- ◆ Oil and Condensate - Production for the March 2004 quarter was 14.3 million barrels, six per cent lower than the 15.3 million barrels produced in the March 2003 quarter. This was mainly due to natural field decline in Laminaria (Australia), Griffin (Australia), Bass Strait (Australia), North West Shelf (Australia) and Liverpool Bay (UK) plus the divestment of our producing assets in Bolivia in the current quarter. This was partly offset by new production resulting from the commissioning of Ohanet (Algeria) in October 2003, Boris North (USA) in September 2003 and Boris South (USA) in February 2003. Production for the quarter was four per cent lower than the 14.9 million barrels produced in the December 2003 quarter, reflecting natural decline across the portfolio, higher cyclone downtime at North West Shelf and Griffin and the divestment of our producing assets in Bolivia. This was partly offset by the first full quarter production from Ohanet.
- ◆ Natural Gas - Production for the March 2004 quarter was 76.5 billion cubic feet, 14 per cent higher than the 67.0 billion cubic feet produced in the March 2003 quarter. This was due to increased demand from Bass Strait and the commissioning of the Zamzama Phase 1 development (Pakistan). These factors were partly offset by cyclone downtime in North West Shelf and Griffin and the divestment of our producing assets in Bolivia. Production for the quarter was one per cent lower than the 77.6 billion cubic feet produced in the December 2003 quarter due to cyclone downtime at North West Shelf and Griffin and divestment of our producing assets in Bolivia. This was partly offset by increased demand from Bass Strait and improved efficiency at Bruce (UK) following maintenance shutdowns in the previous quarter.

• **Alumina**

- Production for the March 2004 quarter was a record 1.1 million tonnes, six per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter, mainly due to stronger production at Worsley (Australia). Production was in line with the December 2003 quarter.

• **Aluminium**

- Production for the March 2004 quarter was a record 333,000 tonnes, 25 per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter mainly reflecting the ramp up of production from the Mozal 2 (Mozambique) and Hillside 3 expansions, which reached full commissioning in August 2003 and December 2003 respectively. Production was eight per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter mainly due to the ramp up of production at Hillside and higher production at Alumar (Brazil) following an electrical outage in July 2003.

• **Copper**

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- Production for the March 2004 quarter was 240,600 tonnes, four per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter and six per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter. This mainly reflects higher production at Escondida (Chile) and Tintaya (Peru), partly offset by sale of the Group's interest in Highland Valley Copper (Canada) and Alumbraera (Argentina) in January 2004 and April 2003 respectively.

• Iron Ore -

Western Australian production of 22.3 million tonnes (100 per cent basis) was in line with the December 2003 quarter and 26 per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter due to ongoing strong market conditions, and increased Chinese demand for iron ore. Despatches from Western Australia also remained strong with the March 2004 quarter in line with the December 2003 quarter and 13 per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter. Total iron ore production of 21.1 million tonnes (BHP Billiton share) from Western Australia and Samarco (Brazil) was in line with the December 2003 quarter and 22 per cent higher than the March 2003 period.

• Metallurgical Coal

- Production for the quarter of 8.5 million tonnes was in line with both the December 2003 and March 2003 quarters, reflecting continued strong market conditions. Queensland Coal (Australia) production of 7.1 million tonnes in the March 2004 quarter was in line with the December 2003 and March 2003 quarters, while Illawarra Coal (Australia) production of 1.5 million tonnes was in line with the December 2003 quarter and four per cent lower than the March 2003 quarter. The decrease in production at Illawarra reflects difficult mining conditions at the West Cliff colliery.

• Manganese

- Ore production of 1.3 million tonnes was 42 per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter and five per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter, reflecting increased customer demand, particularly from China. Alloy production of 179,000 tonnes was in line with both the March 2003 and December 2003 quarters, reflecting continued strong market conditions.

• Hot briquetted iron

- Production for the March 2004 quarter of 399,000 tonnes was 24 per cent lower than the December 2003 quarter and 14 per cent lower than the March 2003 quarter. The decrease in production was due to maintenance activities and adverse weather conditions during the period.

• **Ekati(TM) Diamonds** - Production of 1.0 million carats was lower than the 1.7 million carats produced in the December 2003 quarter. This decrease reflects the completion of processing from a pocket of high grade material from the Koala pit in December 2003. March 2004 quarter production was in line with the March 2003 quarter.

• Energy Coal -

Production for the March 2004 quarter was 21.3 million tonnes, eight per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter. The increase is mainly due to higher production at Cerrejon Coal (Colombia), New Mexico Coal (USA) San Juan mine and the ramp up at Mount Arthur North (Australia). Production was seven per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter mainly due to higher production at New Mexico Coal along with lower production at Cerrejon Coal in December 2003 due to adverse weather conditions. Production at Ingwe (South Africa) was in line with both the March 2003 and December 2003 quarters.

• Nickel

- Production for the quarter of 21,200 tonnes was 14 per cent higher than the March 2003 quarter, mainly reflecting the benefit of ongoing process enhancements arising from the operating excellence initiatives at both Cerro Matoso (Colombia) and Yabulu (Australia). Production was six per cent higher than the December 2003 quarter due to the conversion of work in process inventories to finished goods at Yabulu following scheduled maintenance in the December 2003 quarter.

Further information on BHP Billiton can be found on our Internet site: <http://www.bhpbilliton.com>

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BHP BILLITON PRODUCTION SUMMARY										
			QUARTER ENDED			9 MONTHS ENDED		% CHANGE		
								MAR Q04	MAR Q04	YTD 04
			MARCH	DEC	MARCH	MARCH	MARCH	vs	vs	vs
			2003	2003	2004	2004	2003	MAR Q03	DEC Q03	YTD 03
PETROLEUM										
	Crude oil & condensate	('000 bbl)	15,310	14,877	14,341	44,730	50,258	-6%	-4%	-11%
	Natural gas	(bcf)	66.99	77.57	76.47	239.23	208.26	14%	-1%	15%
	LPG	('000 tonnes)	160.62	200.51	217.83	617.67	537.55	36%	9%	15%
	Ethane	('000 tonnes)	22.35	25.25	16.59	69.16	69.93	-26%	-34%	-1%
	Total Petroleum Products	(million boe)	28.4	30.2	29.8	92.1	91.5	5%	-2%	1%
ALUMINIUM										
	Alumina	('000 tonnes)	1,003	1,050	1,062	3,165	3,032	6%	1%	4%
	Aluminium	('000 tonnes)	267	308	333	923	801	25%	8%	15%
BASE METALS										
	Copper		231.3	226.8	240.6	681.8	641.4	4%	6%	6%

		('000 tonnes)								
	Lead	(tonnes)	59,065	55,211	70,838	185,413	180,653	20%	28%	3%
	Zinc	(tonnes)	46,755	45,912	35,194	130,200	139,412	-25%	-23%	-7%
	Gold	(ounces)	57,802	32,085	32,983	94,238	182,130	-43%	3%	-48%
	Silver	('000 ounces)	10,355	9,980	12,055	32,631	31,485	16%	21%	4%
	Molybdenum	(tonnes)	373	290	81	696	1,051	-78%	-72%	-34%
CARBON STEEL MATERIALS										
	Iron ore	('000 tonnes)	17,237	21,728	21,085	63,683	54,312	22%	-3%	17%
	Metallurgical coal	('000 tonnes)	8,556	8,445	8,532	26,076	25,596	0%	1%	2%
	Manganese ores	('000 tonnes)	890	1,199	1,264	3,616	3,044	42%	5%	19%
	Manganese alloys	('000 tonnes)	177	183	179	509	542	1%	-2%	-6%
	Hot briquetted iron	('000 tonnes)	465	527	399	1,422	1,212	-14%	-24%	17%
DIAMONDS AND SPECIALTY PRODUCTS										
	Diamonds	('000 carats)	1,015	1,704	1,015	4,271	3,040	0%	-40%	40%
ENERGY COAL										
	Energy coal	('000 tonnes)	19,735	19,978	21,279	62,391	59,712	8%	7%	4%
STAINLESS STEEL MATERIALS										
	Nickel	('000 tonnes)	18.6	20.0	21.2	61.8	57.1	14%	6%	8%
	Ferrochrome	('000 tonnes)	263	269	266	762	731	1%	-1%	4%
Throughout this report figures in italics indicate adjustments made since the figure was previously reported.										

BHP BILLITON ATTRIBUTABLE PRODUCTION			QUARTER ENDED					9 MONTHS ENDED	
	BHP Billiton		MARCH	JUNE	SEPT	DEC	MARCH	MARCH	MARCH
	Interest		2003	2003	2003	2003	2004	2004	2003
PETROLEUM									
Production									
	Crude oil & condensate	(000 bbl)	15,310	15,635	15,512	14,877	14,341	44,730	50,258
	Natural gas	(bcf)	66.99	72.91	85.19	77.57	76.47	239.23	208.26
	LPG	('000 tonnes)	160.62	205.57	199.33	200.51	217.83	617.67	537.55
	Ethane	('000 tonnes)	22.35	24.97	27.32	25.25	16.59	69.16	69.93
	Total Petroleum Products	(million boe)	28.4	30.3	32.1	30.2	29.8	92.1	91.5
ALUMINIUM									
ALUMINA									
Production ('000 tonnes)									
	Worsley	86%	658	724	699	700	704	2,103	2,018
	Suriname	45%	222	223	227	230	228	685	656
	Alumar	36%	123	113	127	120	130	377	358
	Total		1,003	1,060	1,053	1,050	1,062	3,165	3,032
ALUMINIUM									
Production ('000 tonnes)									
	Hillside	100%	133	132	135	151	169	455	402
	Bayside	100%	48	46	47	46	45	138	139
	Alumar	46.3%	45	45	31	36	44	111	133
	Valesul	45.5%	10	11	11	11	11	33	32
	Mozal	47%	31	39	58	64	64	186	95
	Total		267	273	282	308	333	923	801
BASE METALS (a)									

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COPPER									
Payable metal in concentrate ('000 tonnes)									
	Escondida (b)	57.5%	118.5	126.6	115.9	109.1	130.8	355.8	292.5
	Tintaya (c)	100%	-	-	-	15.0	22.9	37.9	-
	Antamina	33.8%	23.6	21.2	16.9	20.5	24.6	62.0	75.7
	Alumbraera (d)	25%	9.9	-	-	-	-	-	34.4
	Highland Valley Copper (e)	33.6%	13.2	13.8	14.1	14.2	-	28.3	42.4
	Selbaie (f)	100%	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.8	0.8	4.1	6.6
	Total		166.9	163.4	148.5	160.6	179.1	488.1	451.6
Cathode ('000 tonnes)									
	Escondida	57.5%	20.4	21.1	21.4	21.8	21.7	64.9	57.4
	Cerro Colorado	100%	32.5	33.0	33.1	33.0	28.1	94.2	98.1
	Tintaya (c)	100%	9.0	9.1	9.0	9.0	9.3	27.3	26.3
	Pinto Valley	100%	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.4	7.3	8.0
	Total		64.4	65.8	66.0	66.2	61.5	193.7	189.8
LEAD									
Payable metal in concentrate (tonnes)									
	Cannington	100%	58,711	59,389	59,364	55,211	70,838	185,413	178,038
	Pering (g)	100%	354	-	-	-	-	-	2,615
	Total		59,065	59,389	59,364	55,211	70,838	185,413	180,653
ZINC									
Payable metal in concentrate (tonnes)									
	Cannington	100%	15,480	18,479	14,850	11,692	13,589	40,131	45,383
	Antamina	33.8%	20,519	28,553	27,933	27,026	19,099	74,058	54,132
	Selbaie (f)	100%	6,421	7,364	6,311	7,194	2,506	16,011	22,801
	Pering (g)	100%	4,335	-	-	-	-	-	17,096
	Total		46,755	54,396	49,094	45,912	35,194	130,200	139,412
	Refer footnotes on page 4.								

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BASE METALS (continued)									
GOLD									
Payable metal in concentrate (ounces)									
	Escondida (b)	57.5%	17,458	20,664	25,016	24,833	27,561	77,410	43,468
	Tintaya (c)	100%	-	-	-	2,658	4,009	6,667	-
	Alumbraera (d)	25%	35,084	-	-	-	-	-	121,303
	Selbaie (f)	100%	4,146	4,081	3,129	3,428	1,413	7,970	13,701
	Highland Valley Copper (e)	33.6%	1,114	1,007	1,025	1,166	-	2,191	3,658
	Total		57,802	25,752	29,170	32,085	32,983	94,238	182,130
SILVER									
Payable metal in concentrate ('000 ounces)									
	Cannington	100%	8,773	8,161	9,177	8,287	10,485	27,949	26,711
	Escondida	57.5%	471	538	561	550	605	1,716	1,162
	Antamina	33.8%	617	517					