

# Heritage Notes for the ③ Monster Meeting Walk, ④ Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk and ⑦ Forest Creek Trail

## Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Learn about the lives of gold miners on these self-guided walks in the Northern Diggings. Discover the heartbreak behind the romance of the goldrush, and how immigration and protests against the unfair system of gold licences helped shape Victoria and Australia.



### Womin-dji-ka (Welcome)

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is part of the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung People *Djaara* whose rights were recognised through a Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria in March 2013. The Dja Dja Wurrung People maintain a close and continuing connection to *Djandak*, their traditional Country.

*Djandak* is a cultural landscape that includes both tangible objects such as scarred trees, oven mounds, rock wells, and stone artefacts, and intangible stories. *Djandak* is a living entity, which holds stories of creation and histories that cannot be erased.

Experience a Dja Dja Wurrung Welcome to Country and learn more about Dja Dja Wurrung Culture from signs at the Monster Meeting Site, Burns Hill and the Garfield Water Wheel.

Parks Victoria pays our respects to Dja Dja Wurrung Elders, past, present and emerging, and asks that visitors do the same. Aboriginal artefacts are protected by law, and it is prohibited to disturb them in any way.

### Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Gold was first discovered by Europeans in the Castlemaine area at Specimen Gully in 1851. The discovery triggered the Mount Alexander goldrush, bringing flocks of migrants from around the world, hoping to strike it rich, and changing the physical and cultural landscape forever.

The gold rush, and the social and political changes that it triggered, helped shape the multicultural democratic Australia of today.

This remarkable story is etched into the landscape of the Castlemaine Diggings, one of the best preserved mid-nineteenth century goldfields in the world, and Australia's first National Heritage Park.

Peel back the layers of history on one of the self-guided walks through the Northern Diggings, starting at the Garfield Trailhead, located approximately 120km north-west of Melbourne via the Calder Freeway.

### Before you set out



Download the free geo-referenced Castlemaine Diggings Northern Walks map from the Parks Victoria store on [Avenza Maps](#) and use your phone's GPS to help you find where you are in relation to the places and stories in these notes.

If you don't have the Avenza Maps app on your phone, you will be prompted to download it – access to WiFi is recommended.



Public toilets are located on Cribbes St, behind Chewton Town Hall, and beside the Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre, 44 Mostyn St, Castlemaine.



Dogs are permitted provided that they are kept on a lead and under control at all times. Please collect and remove your dog's droppings for the sake of other visitors and to avoid stress to native animals.



Dogs are prohibited in the Expedition Pass Reservoir and the Special Protection Area around the Nimrod Reef Mine and Welsh Village.



The Castlemaine Diggings are a heavily mined landscape and contain a variety of ongoing hazards, including uneven and unstable ground, mineshafts, open cuts, quarries, and mine tailings. For your own safety, please stay on mapped tracks and supervise children.

Please comply with local signs and do not climb over or around barriers and fences or on the stone foundations of the water wheel. Do not park or rest under trees. Tree and branches may fall at any time and swing away from the tree.

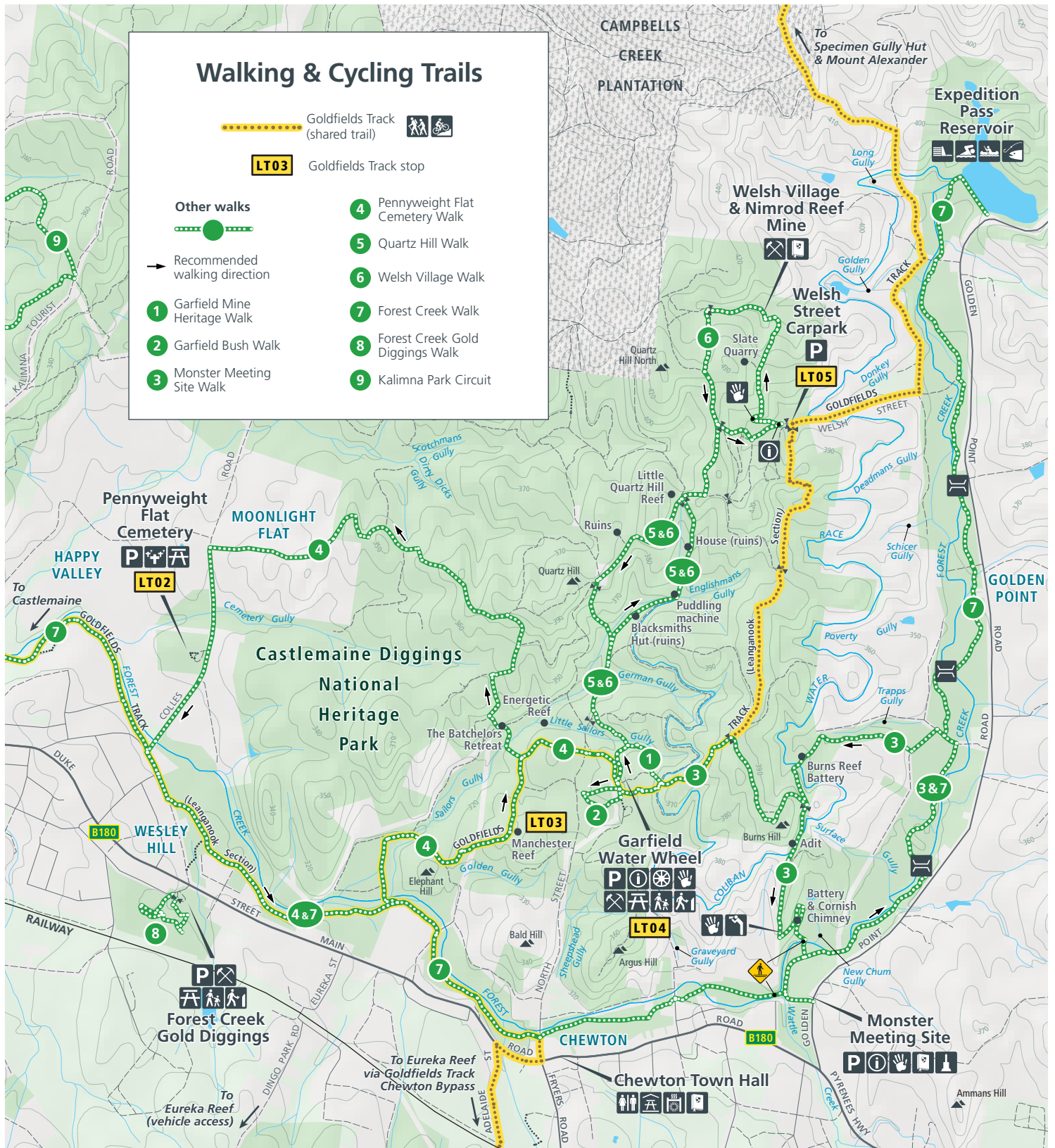
Mobile phone reception is unreliable in the park, particularly in the gullies. You may get a signal by moving to higher ground.



The loop walks can be walked in either direction, but we strongly recommend following the direction suggested on the maps and signs which corresponds with the order of features in these notes. At track junctions, look for the number of the walk you are on, as shown in the map and descriptions.

# Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Northern Walks



- |                                     |                     |                                   |               |                                |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Parking                             | Cemetery            | Fishing                           | Highway       | Castlemaine Diggings NHP       |
| Park information                    | Monument            | Canoeing                          | Main road     | Other reserve                  |
| Toilets                             | Picnic shelter      | Swimming                          | Sealed road   | Waterbody                      |
| Trailhead                           | Picnic area         | Lookout                           | Unsealed road | Significant creek / water race |
| Mine site                           | Barbecue (electric) | Dam                               | 4WD           | Stream / gully                 |
| Learn about Dja Dja Wurrung Culture | Family walk         | Pedestrian bridge                 | Walking track | 10 metre contour               |
| Historical site                     | Self guided walk    | Shallow water crossing (seasonal) |               |                                |

### 3 Monster Meeting Walk



Grade 3 | 5.5km loop | 2hrs

Well-marked gravel and earth track. Gentle hills with some steep and uneven ground. Some bush-walking experience recommended. After rain it may involve a shallow water crossing at Forest Creek.

Starting from the Garfield Trailhead, this loop walk leads over Burns Hill down to the site of Monster Meeting, where 15,000 gold diggers met in December 1851 to protest an unfair increase in the mining licence fee. There are several well-preserved gold mining features to explore on Burns Hill, and great views over Chewton and Forest Creek from the lookout above the Monster Meeting Site.

Leaving the Trailhead, you follow the **Goldfields Track east, as it climbs towards the top of Burns Hill, then turn south-east (right). At the steep Y junction, follow the track south (straight on). Later, you will return via the track to your left. Look for the signs with a 3.**

#### Solid foundations from an unstable past

On either side of the track over Burns Hill, lines of rock protrude like the scales on a crocodile's back. These are outcrops of a sandstone reef. In places, they form the surface of the track.

480 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs, the land you are walking on was under a warm shallow sea, teeming with corals and early fishes. The earth's crust was unstable, with tectonic plates on the move. A plate in the east and one in the west, began pushing towards each other, squashing the seabed.

Over the next 40 million years, an area originally 1500 km wide was compressed to half its width, and the ocean drained away. The folded sand and mud layers were welded together as sandstone and mudstone, forming the solid foundations of what is now central Victoria. Erosion has added its own shape to this ancient seabed.



**Want to learn more about the forest you are walking through?** Download the heritage notes and follow the trails of the **1** Garfield Mine Heritage and **2** Garfield Bush Walks.

#### Looking out over layers of history

Descending from Burns Hill, you cross the Coliban Water Channel and pass old mine workings and cleared paddocks on your way to the lookout.

Below you to the south-east is the site of the Monster Meeting (can you see the Digger's Flag?), and to the south, the township of Chewton. On this side of the town, roughly south-west of the lookout, Shield's Tannery operated during the late 1800s. Due to a constant need for water, tanneries were always located on waterways, and usually close to towns.

Tanning is the process of turning animal hide (skin) into usable leather or parchment. Shield's was the first tannery in the colony to produce parchment, and locals believe that the pages of Australia's constitution may have been made here.

The production of leather was an important industry in the nineteenth century. Leather was needed for footwear, saddles, harnesses, straps, pulleys, and all kinds of other equipment.



Shield's Tannery was located at the end of Shields St, Chewton. Photographer unknown. Source: Ken McKimmie, *Chewton Then and Now*.

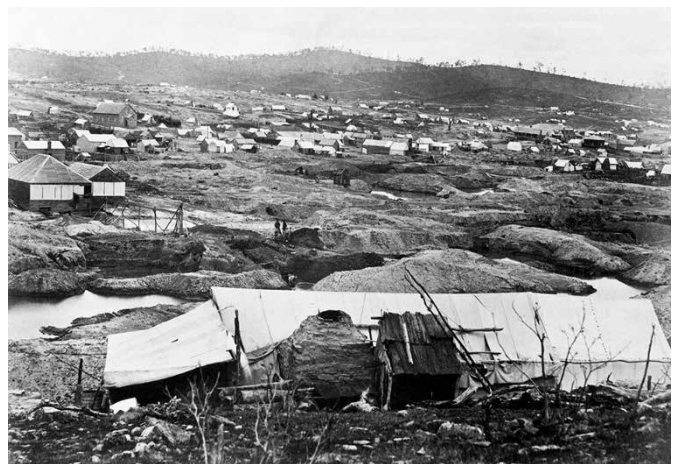
Wattle bark contains elevated levels of tannin and is one of the world's best barks for tanning leather. The bark was stripped from wattle trees by axe, chiselling upwards from the base, then bundled up and held together by leather straps ready for transport.

The bark was dried, crushed in a bark mill, and mixed with water in tanning pits to produce tannin liquor. The hair was removed from animal hides (skins) with a lime solution, and the skins immersed in the tannin liquor until completely tanned. Finally, the hides were stretched, dried and compressed between massive brass rollers.

The demand for wattle bark was so great it had a huge impact on native forests. In 1878, the Wattle Bark Board of Inquiry found that years of indiscriminate and unregulated stripping had brought the genus *Acacia* (wattles) to the edge of extinction in many places. This was in addition to the extensive deforestation caused by gold mining and a growing population. The Wattle Bark Board responded by developing forest regulations to conserve and encourage the growth of wattle trees.

Today, synthetic fibres have reduced the demand for leather and tanning liquors to more sustainable levels, but wattle bark is still used by some tanneries in Victoria.

Take a moment to appreciate the views, and read the signs to gain an understanding of the importance of ceremony and quartz to Dja Dja Wurrung People, and imagine what Forest Creek was like before and during the goldrush.



The view over the Forest Creek diggings towards Old Post Office Hill (directly south of where you are standing). Photograph taken in 1858, just after the height of the goldrush, by Richard Daintree. Source: State Library of Victoria.

## Cornish creativity cuts costs of chimneys

Walking down towards Forest Creek you pass the remains of an early quartz crushing works probably operated by the Golden Point Quartz Mining Company. Not much remains of the crushing battery and steam boiler but look for the well-preserved stone chimney built against the hillside.

Bricks were expensive, so instead of building tall expensive chimneys, Cornish miners saved money by building stone chimney flues along the ground. Smoke would drift uphill inside the flue and emerge from a short upright chimney at the end. The chimney here was 30m long with a 1m high stone stack at the end.

A long history of tin and copper mining in Cornwall in south-west England, resulted in the development of all kinds of creative ways to reach, extract and process the ore. Adaptability was a key to success on the goldfields, and Cornish miners have played a leading role in Australian mining since the 1840s.

After gold was found at Specimen Gully in 1851, many of them abandoned the copper mines of South Australia to try their luck in Victoria. Much of the mining technology and language used on the goldfields (words like 'adit' and 'stope') originated in Cornwall.

Miners from America, Chile, China, New Zealand and many European countries also flocked to Victoria, bringing their language, technology, and culture with them. Tensions between miners from different countries were common, sometimes leading to bloody battles. The British used force to retain their control of law and administration, but Victoria was rapidly becoming multicultural.

**i** **Want to learn more about alluvial and quartz reef mining techniques?** Download the heritage notes and explore the Garfield Water Wheel and **1** Garfield Mine Heritage Walk, and **5** Quartz Hill Walk.

After crossing Forest Creek, turn right at the junction with the **7** Forest Creek Trail to visit the Monster Meeting Site and experience a Dja Dja Wurrung Welcome to Country (500m return), or left to continue on the loop walk without visiting the site itself.

## A cost too big for a licence to dig

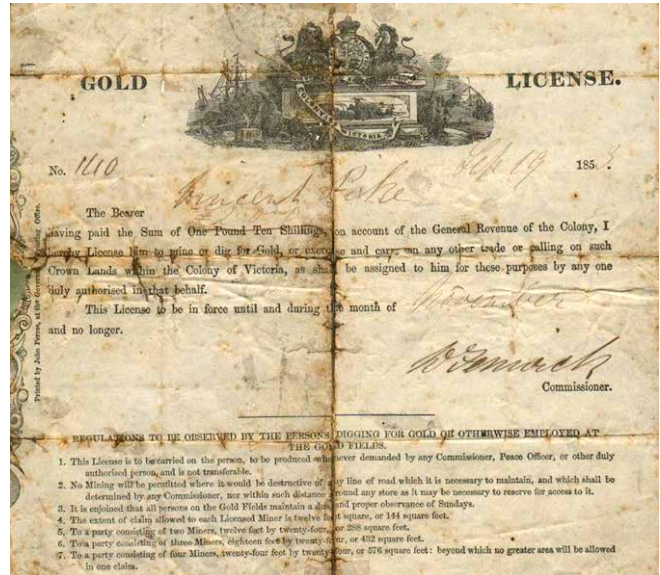
Gold was found at Specimen Gully in the first week of July 1851 – the same week Victoria became a state. On 15 August, Charles La Trobe, the new Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, proclaimed that regulations were being prepared for the issue of licences to mine for gold at a "reasonable" fee.

At the time, an unskilled labourer in Victoria earned between £20-30 (British pounds) a year, a skilled labourer (like a carpenter or blacksmith) £30-45, and a female domestic servant between £10-20. So, when the regulations were published on 18 August, raising the monthly licence fee to thirty shillings (£1 10s) to be paid in advance from 1 September, this was not viewed as reasonable. It was double the licence fee in New South Wales.

The regulations also prohibited anyone from digging without a licence, and the power to enforce the regulations was given to newly appointed Commissioners of Crown Lands. To deter people from walking away from their jobs and leaving employers in the lurch, would-be-diggers also had to provide a certificate of discharge or other proof that they had not abandoned a position.

La Trobe viewed the licence as a way to put the brakes on the goldrush and to raise revenue for the administration and policing of the goldfields. Money was needed to pay for armed escorts to take the gold to Melbourne, and to build roads and bridges.

So, in November 1851 he announced that the licence fee would double to the shocking sum of £3 per month from 1 January 1852. And that it would apply to everyone engaged in the search for gold: diggers, cooks and tent-keepers alike.

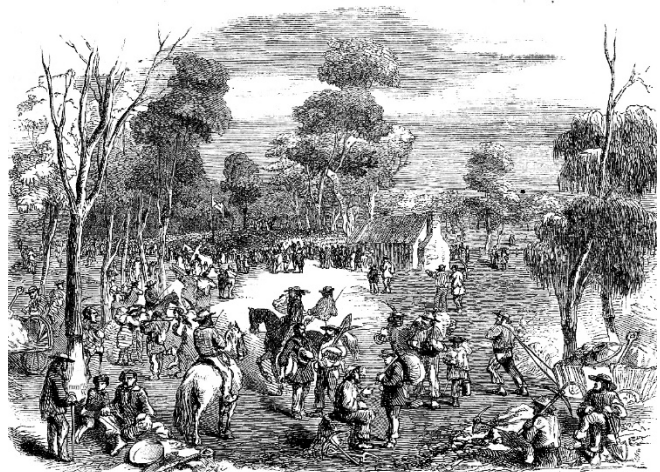


A monthly gold licence issued in 1853. Source: Damian Hayes.

## The Monster Meeting, Australia's first successful mass protest

The announcement triggered widespread outrage. Prospectors viewed the licence fee as taxation without representation. With no land, and no right to vote, they were being asked to pay £36 a year. In contrast, squatters with 20 square miles of land and the right to vote, paid an annual tax of £10.

The diggers began to organise. Flyers were put up around the Mount Alexander diggings inviting people to a public meeting.



An engraving of the Great Meeting of Diggers by G.F. Sargent which appeared in the *Illustrated Magazine of Art*. The hut shown here was located near where the Digger's flag flies now. The large trees would have been cut down for fuel and timber within a few years. Source: Ken McKimmie, *Chewton Then and Now*.

On 15 December 1851 an estimated 15,000 miners gathered for the Great Meeting of Diggers at the Shepherd's Hut on Forest Creek, part of Dr Barker's Mount Alexander sheep run. Speakers whipped up the crowd, but apart from the shouting, it was a peaceful protest.

Unknown to the diggers, Governor La Trobe had been tipped off about the plans for the Great Meeting and of the diggers likely refusal to pay. It was reported in the Government Gazette of 13 December that he had revoked the increase – but the news didn't reach the diggings until several days after the meeting.

Although the aim of the Monster Meeting (as it later became known) was achieved before it was even held, it was a key step on the way to securing rights for the diggers.

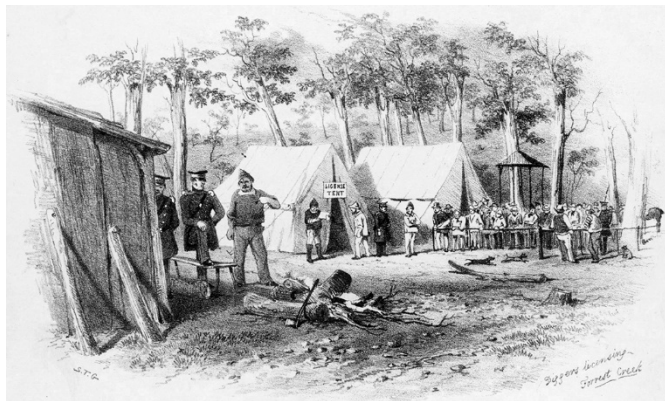
**i** **Want to learn more about:**

- **the Monster Meeting and the fight for miners' rights?**  
Visit the Chewton Domain Society's [Monster Meeting website](#). Explore the site or go to 'The Story' page to download the Monster Meeting Flyer. Find out about the community celebration held every December on 'The Diggers Remembered' page.
- **the discovery of gold on Dr Barker's sheep run?**  
Download the factsheet and visit the Specimen Gully Hut and Gold Memorial.

## From rebellion to reform

It was not just the licence fee that the diggers were protesting, but also the system that upheld it.

A government camp was established on each of Victoria's main goldfields, filled with gold commissioners, police and soldiers, tasked with ensuring that everyone on the goldfield held a licence. Anyone that didn't was apprehended and punished.



Every month, diggers had to renew their licence, sometimes waiting in line for days. At Forest Creek they were confined in a kind of pen near the licensing tent, only approaching it one at a time when summoned by officials. Lithograph by S.T. Gill, 1852. Source: State Library of Victoria.

The goldrush had ignited the desire of working men to be free of oppression by the ruling classes, and miners were ready to fight against this heavy-handed and frequently corrupt system. The diggers gathered for three major protests over the next few years, including the:

- Great Meeting of Diggers at Chewton on 15 December 1851
- Red Ribbon Rebellion at Sandhurst (now Bendigo) in 1853
- Eureka Rebellion at Ballarat in December 1854.

Of these protests, only the site of the Monster Meeting has retained its original appearance. The other sites have been swallowed by the

growing cities of Bendigo and Ballarat. A commemorative monument with interpretive plaques marks the Monster Meeting site, and a replica of the Digger's Flag flies above it.

Following these rebellions, a Commission of Inquiry recommended much-needed reforms. On 1 May 1855, the monthly mining fee was replaced by an annual permit (the Miner's Right) and a tax on the sale of gold.

These changes meant that miners with bad luck paid less than those with good luck, and the word 'digger', which had often been used as a slight, was formally replaced by 'miner'.

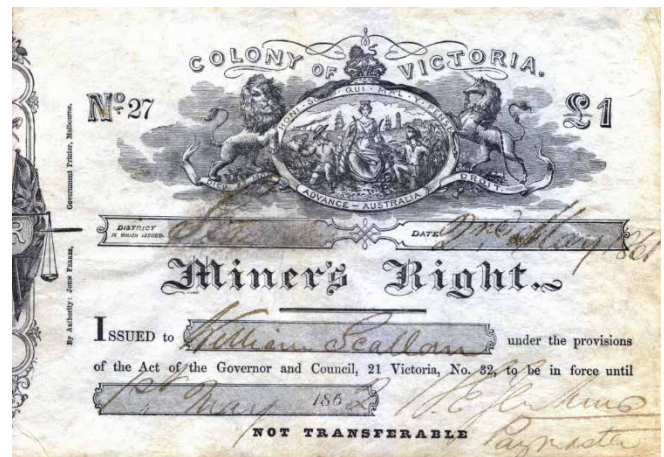
However, the Miner's Right wasn't just about money. Holders were entitled to take out mining claims, vote in government elections, and elect representatives to sit on local mining courts, which replaced the hated gold commissioners, making and enforcing regulations to suit local conditions.

**i** **Want to learn more about the right to take out a residence area that was later granted to holders of a Miner's Right?**

Skip ahead to the information about the Batchelor's Retreat on the 4 Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk or download the factsheet and explore the 6 Welsh Village Walk.

Before leaving the Monster Meeting Site, take a moment to imagine what it would have been like here on 15 December 1851 with 15,000 diggers jostling for space, straining to hear the speakers and shouting out excitedly in response.

From the Monster Meeting site, the walk briefly turns back on itself and before continuing north-east along Forest Creek (along the same path as the 7 Forest Creek Trail). After rain, the walk may involve a shallow water crossing. At Chinaman's Point Road you turn north-west (left).



A Miner's Right from 1861. Source: Castlemaine Art Museum

Stop at the interpretative sign located where the 7 Forest Creek Trail and 6 Monster Meeting Walk diverge to learn about how this area got its name.

## Rising resentment for some...

Chinese people first arrived on the diggings in 1853, and by 1855 there were 17,000 Chinese migrants in Victoria. Many took out loans to pay for their fares, working under supervision until they repaid the loan and could earn money for themselves. They diligently reworked areas that had already been abandoned by earlier prospectors, and generally kept to themselves.

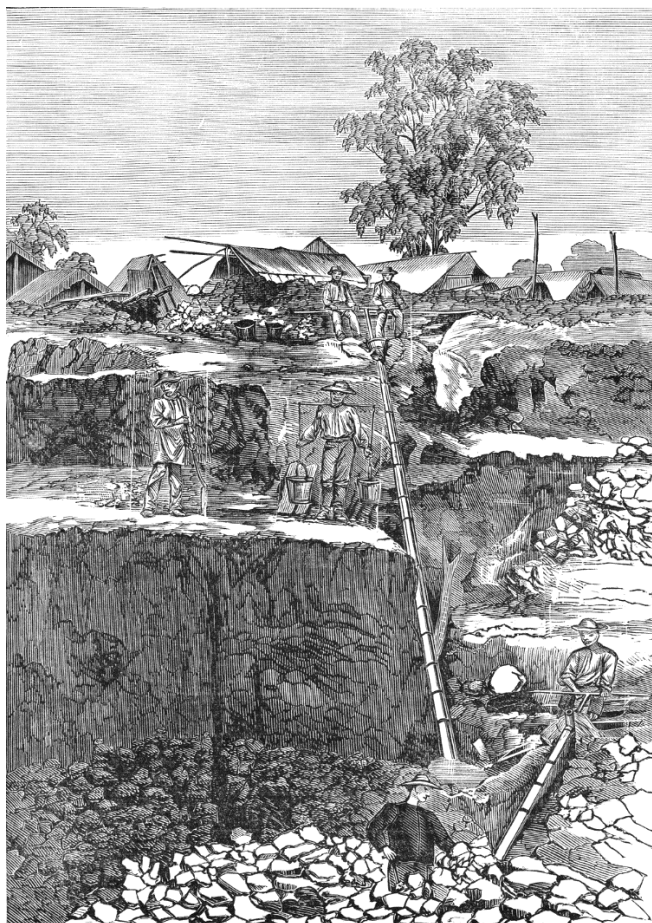
The Chinese were extremely mobile on the goldfields, but gradually established semi-permanent camps with mobile buildings and joss houses (temples) that they could pick up and move when necessary.

Discrimination against them was common, and in 1872 a colonist wrote that "All diggers have a horror of Chinamen, though I doubt if half of them could tell you for what reason." Fights often broke out between European and Chinese miners. Sometimes the Chinese were forcibly evicted from their claims or moved into Chinese Protectorates and forced to pay a £1 annual poll tax. They were regularly harassed, cheated and imprisoned by police and officials.

In 1855, Victoria attempted to restrict Chinese migration by imposing a staggering £10 pounds entry tax on Chinese migrants, forcing many to disembark in South Australia and make the long hard journey overland to the Victorian goldfields. Nevertheless, by mid-1857, the Chinese population had grown to 35,000.

That year, there was an attempt to drive the Chinese out of this area and move them into camps at Pennyweight Flat and Moonlight Flat. Their equipment was broken or thrown down mine shafts until a police constable stepped in to hold the peace.

However, the harassment continued. Once they'd earned enough money to cover the fare, many Chinese miners returned home. Some of those that stayed behind continued mining, while others established market gardens and cafés serving hot meals.

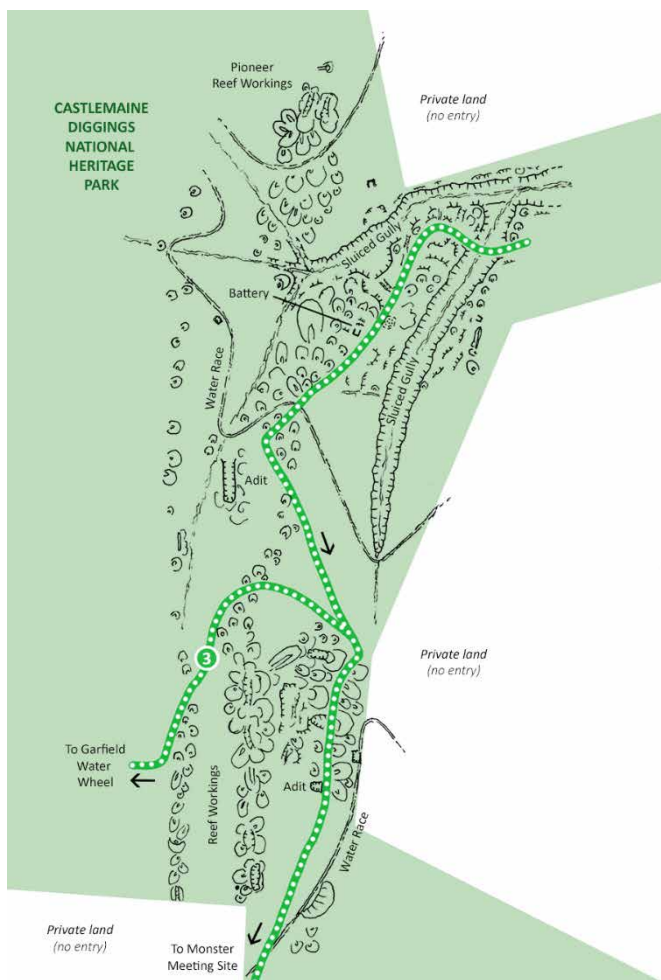


Chinese miners at Forest Creek in 1863. Unknown artist. Source: State Library of Victoria

Continue along the road (not Forest Creek Trail), then turn south-west (left) onto Ammans Road, then north-west (right). Look for the signs marked ②.

## ...rising status for others

As you start to climb Burns Hill you pass another quartz crushing battery. Look for a large pile of battery sand on the west side of the track. You can also see sluiced gullies, the stone footings of a steam boiler and an extensive line of reef workings mined from around 1869 by the Burns' Reef Quartz Mining Company.



The mining landscape of Burns Hill along the walking track (white dots on green line, arrows show the direction of travel). The semi-circle shapes represent mullock heaps. Adapted from line art mapping of the mining landscape features by Robert Kaufman.

Burns Reef itself was probably discovered around 1854 and likely one of the first reefs to be worked in the area. The evidence of early alluvial diggings has mostly been disturbed by sluicing in the gully and later quartz reef mining. Small to medium-scale mullock heaps, shafts, stopes, adits (tunnels) and costeans (small pits dug down to the bedrock) are evident across the hillside.

One of the shareholders of the Burns' Reef Quartz Mining Company, James Brown Patterson, ended up making his name in politics, rather than gold. Born in Northumberland, England in 1833, he migrated to the area in 1852, during the height of the goldrush.

With little success in prospecting, he became a farmer and butcher in Chewton, where he served as Mayor for four years, before being elected to the Parliament of Victoria in 1870 as the representative for Castlemaine and moving to Melbourne. Patterson held several government positions, including Minister of Railways, and served as Premier of Victoria from January 1893 to September 1894.



Sir James Patterson was described as an ambitious, adaptable and politically cunning man, with a sharp, vigorous style – formidable and outspoken in debate. Portrait and caricature of Patterson (drawn on the same page) by Edwards Gilks in 1874, early in Patterson’s political career. Source: State Library of Victoria.

After passing through the Burns Reef mine site and crossing the Coliban Water Channel again, the walk turns south-east before closing the loop at the Y junction you passed earlier. From there you turn north-west (sharp right) and retrace your steps to the Garfield Trailhead.

## 4 Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk



**Grade 3, 6.5km loop, 2-2.5hrs**

Well-marked gravel and earth tracks. Short section on bitumen. Gentle hills, uneven ground. Some bush-walking experience recommended. Parking and picnic tables are available at Pennyweight Flat Cemetery.



Mountain bikes permitted. Rating: blue / moderate.

Starting from the Garfield Trailhead, this loop walk explores several mining features on the way to the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery, where dreams of success on the goldfields came to a sad, and sometimes premature, end.

From the Trailhead, follow the ■ Goldfields Track north and east. After crossing the Quartz Hill Track, the walk passes through the Energetic Mine site.

### An energetically expanding mining empire

In 1886, the Garfield Company purchased this mine and erected winding gear and a crushing battery. Little survives except for the mostly buried stone foundations.

The Manchester Company worked another mine just to the north-east of the Energetic shaft, and in 1880, they erected a waterwheel 12m in diameter to power a small quartz crushing mill. In 1886, the Garfield Company purchased this too. Water from the Garfield Water Wheel was delivered by race and flume to the smaller wheel. Sadly, no trace of that wheel remains.



This plan of the Chewton Mines from 1902 shows the location of the Garfield and Energetic Shafts and the race and flume that took water from the Garfield Water Wheel to the former Manchester Company’s water wheel. Source: Mines Department, Earth Resources Regulation.

### The batchelor’s retreat

Leaving the ■ Goldfields Track and heading north over Sailors Gully, you begin to climb a slope. Where the track turns sharply, you reach the ruins of a residential area known as the Batchelor’s Retreat.

From 1857, after the protests and reforms to the mining licence, the holders of a Miner’s Right were entitled to take out a Residence Area. Miners could claim a quarter acre of land for a dwelling and garden, and sell any improvements they made to the property, such as houses, dams and fences.

Many homes were built and settled under the Miner’s Right, an easy route to home ownership.

The Batchelor’s Retreat was established by Hans Christian Wind and John Warnock in 1928 and occupied until Wind’s death in 1949. The side and front walls of the stone house have been demolished, but the fireplace and chimney have survived.

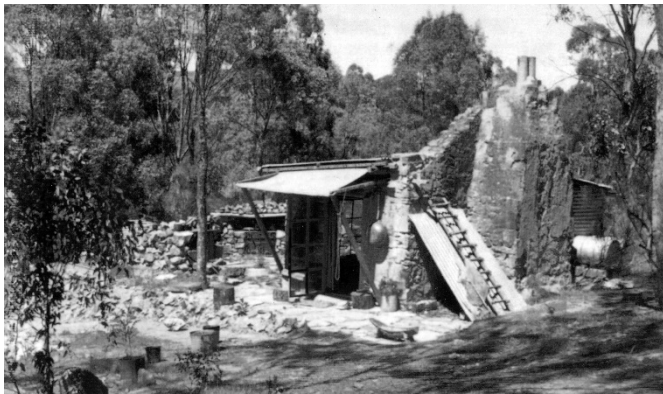
To the east of the house are garden terraces enclosed by stone walls, and a square dam.



**Want to learn more about homes and communities during the goldrush?** Download the heritage notes and explore the 📍 Welsh Village Walk and Specimen Gully Hut and Gold Memorial.



You can read more about the Batchelor’s Retreat, pictured here (probably in the 1930s), in *Chewton Then and Now* by Ken McKimmie, the source of this image. Photographer unknown.



In 1968, Clive Winmill converted the Batchelor's Retreat into a home for himself. Today, only parts of the fireplace and chimney that you can see here are still standing. Source: Clive Winmill via Chewton Town Hall Collection.

## Place names as windows to the past

The names of places in the goldfields provide a fascinating glimpse into their stories. Some were named for geographic features, but often they record the names and fortunes of the miners and companies that once lived and worked in them. Everyone wanted name a piece of ground, and although the people and stories behind them may have been forgotten, many of the names have survived.

Places were sometimes named after a miner or their loved ones (such as Burns Hill, Tobys Track, Daphne Reef), the places they came from (Manchester Reef, Bolivia Reef, German Gully, Italian Hill, Chinamans Flat), or the things they did (Butchers Creek, Sailors Gully, Hangmans Lane, Murderers Hill).

They might reflect the fortunes or misfortunes miners met with (Golden Point, Chokem Flats, Graveyard Gully), be a case of mistaken identity (Porcupine Flat) or be chosen to deliberately mislead other prospectors (Poverty Gully)! Pennyweight Flat was named that because diggers claimed it was incapable of producing more than a pennyweight of gold per acre.

Dirty Dicks Gully was named after someone who once lived there. In 1846 – several years before the gold rush – Richard Lowe was accused of rape, but his case was dismissed due to “absurd and contradictory statements” from the witness. He was already known as ‘Dirty Dick’ before the case, so we can only guess how he earned his nickname. Was it his treatment of women, because of how he earned a living, or a reflection of unusually poor hygiene?

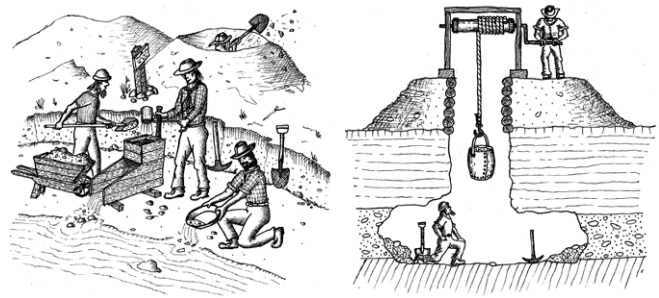
As you explore the Goldfields, consider how other places you visit might have got their names. Why do you think this place was known as The Batchelor's Retreat?

Keep climbing in a northerly then easterly direction skirting around the south-eastern side of Quartz Hill.

Located between Sailors Gully (to the east) and Dirty Dicks Gully (to the west) Quartz Hill yielded a rich supply of gold, and you can explore some of its history on the 5 Quartz Hill Walk.

The 4 Pennyweight Flat Walk continues through regenerating Box-Ironbark forest and turns west (left) onto Quartz Hill Road. The road is not a busy one, but please watch out for vehicles.

Dirty Dicks and Scotchmans Gully, which lie to the north of the road, were heavily mined in three waves. From 1852 to 1854 prospectors worked 8 foot (2.43m<sup>2</sup>) claims with pans and cradles, sinking shallow shafts to get to the gold. In 1853 they began to use puddling machines, and in the 1870s turned to ground sluicing.



Left: Miners working 8 foot claims with pans and cradles. Right: Shallow shaft with a hand-operated windlass to lift out the soil. Illustrations by Robert Kaufman.

**i** Want to learn more about the different techniques and equipment used by gold miners? Download the heritage notes and explore the Garfield Water Wheel and 1 Garfield Mine Heritage Walk and 5 Quartz Hill Walk.

At the end of Quartz Hill Road, turn south (left) onto Colles Road towards the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery.

## What doesn't kill you...

Life was hard on the goldfields, and lives were often cut short. People died from accidents, such as falling down mine shafts, and from poor hygiene. Wounds were slow to heal in the unsanitary conditions, so even a minor injury like a bite or a cut could have serious consequences. There were few doctors, but many charlatans selling ineffective remedies. Before 1859, people didn't know about germs, or that they were the main cause of disease.

Water was scarce and often contaminated from mining and human waste, and frequent outbreaks of contagious diseases like typhoid and cholera swept through across the diggings. Dysentery claimed hundreds of lives, including two children in November 1851 – the first recorded deaths of the Forest Creek rush.

For women, the most common cause of death was giving birth, and more than one in four children died before the age of five – victims of dysentery, diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, measles, whooping cough, and other diseases. Scurvy, caused by lack of Vitamin C, was common. Pneumonia, influenza, and the common cold claimed numerous lives.

If it didn't kill you, it left you weaker. Fleas and ants invaded people's beds and kept them up at night, as did mosquitoes. During the day, flies drove people mad. Sandflies stung and laid eggs in people's eye, causing 'bung-eye' (temporary blindness) which afflicted humans, dogs and horses alike. Soil was constantly being thrown up or blown into people's eyes, causing irritation. Burns from campfires and fireplaces were common.

Isolated graves can be found through the goldfields. A few have headstones (like the Escott Grave on the Evenmore Track, off the Vaughan-Chewton Road) but most would have been simply marked with a stone or a wooden cross that would no longer be noticeable. At least one such grave lies in Scotchmans Gully, just north of here:

“Information was given to the police yesterday that a deceased person had been buried in Scotchman's Gully. An inquiry was made into the matter, and showed that a miner, known as Irish Jack, had unintentionally approached near the remains of a German buried in the gully in the early days of the goldfields, and in order, as



far as possible, to make reparation for the desecration he had unwillingly committed, returned the top of the grave and placed a stone at each end, thus giving it the appearance of one newly formed.”

Account in the *Mount Alexander Mail*, 15 September 1865. Source: TROVE, Newspapers and Gazettes, National Library of Australia.

## Pennyweight Flat Cemetery, where hopes and dreams were buried

The Pennyweight Flat Cemetery (stop LT2 on the ■ Goldfields Track) began as an informal burial ground located on a rocky hill overlooking the once bustling goldfields along Forest Creek. It was one of six graveyards that developed within a few miles of each other in the final months of 1852, at the start of the goldrush.

The Forest Creek rush lasted less than three years but had a huge impact on the people who took part— changing their futures, expectations and values. The cemetery bears testimony to the efforts and dreams of those pioneering diggers and their families. Around two hundred people, including children and babies, were buried at the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery between 1852 and 1857, when authorities closed it.



A burial on the goldfields. Illustration by Andrew Swift.

Due to the hard, rocky ground, many of the graves were shallow and built up above ground with rock walls. Without mortar to hold them together, these quickly began to fall apart. The ruined graves, and sense of desolation, have long had a powerful effect on visitors:

“Rude letters, cut by the unskilled hand, and dictated by the unlearned pen, attest the sincerity of the grief that once carved its record there. There are not wanting, under those circumstances, the usual proportion of quaint and curious epitaphs. There is a glimmer of the rhythmical, if not of the poetic, in the short  
J. Hayes,  
Aged 7 days.”

Excerpt of an account in the *Mount Alexander Mail*, 28 July 1862 about the Pennyweight Weight Flat Cemetery five years after the last burial there. Source: TROVE, Newspapers and Gazettes, National Library of Australia.

The cemetery was officially gazetted as a ‘sepulchral reserve’ in 1874, and in 1918 the Castlemaine Pioneers and Old Residents’ Association was made trustee, to conserve the cemetery as a memorial. Stop for a picnic (tables are available) or take a break

from your walk and reflect on the lives of the pioneer gold seekers whose hopes, dreams and hard work are buried here.

Leaving the cemetery, turn south (right) along Colles Road until you reach the junction with Farran Street. Follow the signs pointing east (left) to rejoin the ■ Goldfields Track and the 7 Forest Creek Trail.

You can take a 300m detour to the nearby 8 Forest Creek Gold Diggings or continue along the ■ Goldfields Track back to the Garfield trailhead.

Continuing on the 4 Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk and ■ Goldfields Track the path takes a sharp bend to the north (left) cross Forest Creek and then begins to climb Manchester Hill.

## The Manchester Mine, a mixed success

As you continue back towards the Garfield Trailhead, you pass a pine plantation and a very large gum tree, before reaching a large open cut on the crown of Manchester Hill, to the east (right) of the track (stop LT3 on the ■ Goldfields Track). The surface quartz here was quarried, yielding rich rewards, however, later attempts to mine the reef underground had limited success.

Operated by the Wheal Margery Company, the mine’s crushing battery was powered by a water wheel, smaller than the one at Garfield. After driving the Garfield Water Wheel, the same water was channelled towards the Manchester Mine to turn their wheel. Unfortunately, nothing remains of the wheel today.

**i** **Want to explore Manchester Reef or other sites away from signed walking tracks?** We recommend hiring an experienced guide to help you explore safely. Enquire at the Castlemaine or Maldon Visitor Information Centres.

You can see similar but more varied mining features, including an impressive open cut, Dja Dja Wurrung rock wells, a Cornish chimney, and the ruins of crushing batteries, on the self-guided Eureka Reef Heritage Walk, off Dingo Park Rd, Chewton. Download the heritage notes or take a photo of the map and interpretive sign in the carpark.

Stay on the same path back to the Garfield trailhead, continuing straight on at the junction where you turned north earlier to start the loop section of the walk.

## 7 Forest Creek Trail



**Grade 2, 9km one-way, 2-3hrs**

Well-marked gravel and earth track. Relatively flat with gentle hills. No bushwalking experience required. After rain, the trail may involve a shallow water crossing where the path crosses Forest Creek.



Suitable for some road bikes in dry weather. Mountain bikes recommended. Rating: green / easy.

Follow Forest Creek through what was once the richest goldfield in the world on this shared walking and cycling trail from the Western Reserve on Hargraves St in Castlemaine to Expedition Pass Reservoir at Golden Point. Visit the site of the Monster Meeting along the way

and take detours to the Pennyweight Flat Cemetery and Forest Creek Gold Diggings.

The trail follows the same route as parts of the **3** Monster Meeting Walk, **4** Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk, and **5** Goldfields Track. Follow the **6** red-capped posts (or number **7** at track junctions) and look for interpretive signs dotted along the trail.

From the Garfield Trailhead, you can follow the **3** Monster Meeting Walk over Burns Hill then pick up the **7** Forest Creek Trail from the Monster Meeting Site to Expedition Pass (3.7km, 1-1.5hrs) or Castlemaine (3km, 1-1.5hr).

## The rush to Forest Creek

The Forest Creek goldrush began in 1852 and lasted less than three years. At its height, thousands of diggers from all over the world would have lived and worked along this creek.

As you walk, look around you and try to imagine what it might have been like, with groups of prospectors working the creek, tents popping up everywhere, children gathering wood or water and people cooking over open fires. Imagine the sounds of thousands of people digging, felling, chopping, hammering, swishing water and soil in pans or cradles, talking and singing in different languages, fires crackling and dogs barking.

**i** **Want to see some of the impacts of mining on the landscape?** Take the 300m detour to the **3** Forest Creek Gold Diggings.

**Want to learn more about the Monster Meeting which took place along Forest Creek in 1851?** Refer back to the information for the **3** Monster Meeting Walk.



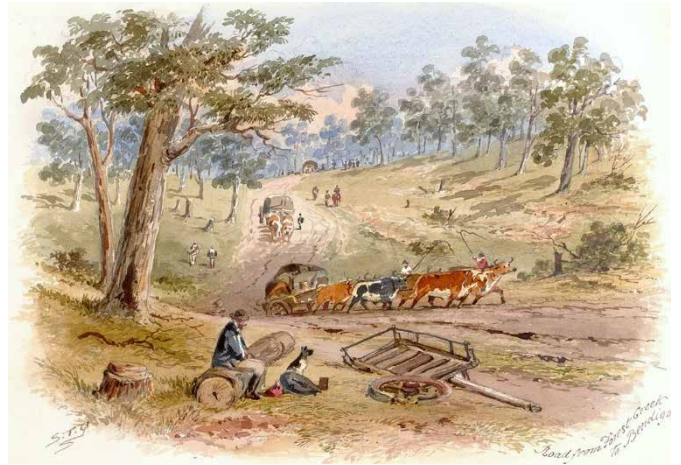
**Top:** The Forest Creek Diggings in 1851 from Adelaide Hill, Chewton. Lithograph by J. Allan from a painting by G.T. Angus. Source: State Library of Victoria.

## A road well-travelled

William Howitt, a noted ethnographer of the time, observed carts travelling from Melbourne to the diggings:

“piled with all sorts of diggers’ apparatus—shovels, sieves, cradles, iron buckets, picks, axes, and the like. Behind hang whole heaps of pans, panikins, kettles, and iron pots, with a sprinkling of frying-pans. Upon the rest of the cargo lie beds and bedding, and often two or three women and some children. Under or beside the cart go a couple or more of huge dogs.”

Source: *Nothing but Gold: The Diggers of 1852*, Robyn Annear, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1999.



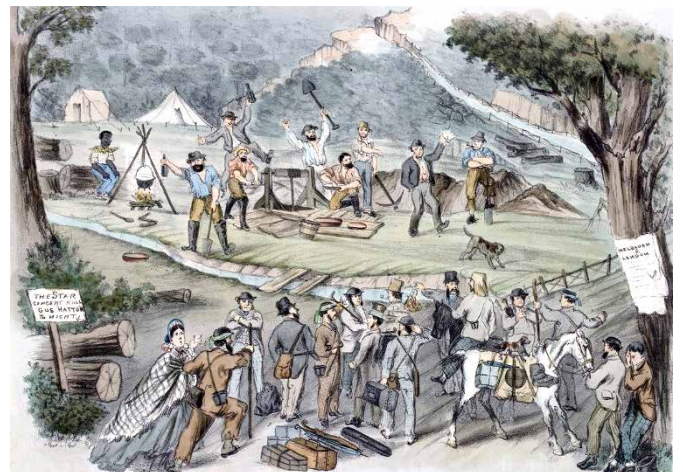
Travellers on the road from Forest Creek to Bendigo in 1852/53. Watercolour by S.T. Gill. Source: State Library of Victoria.

When Governor Charles La Trobe visited the Mount Alexander Diggings in early December 1851 he was astonished at the number of women and children already on the goldfields.

During 1852-53 when gold fever was at its height, nearly 200,000 men, women and children disembarked in Melbourne, most making their way to the goldfields. By early 1855, women and children represented nearly half of the population on goldfields.

The lucky ones travelled to the goldfields by bullock cart or horseback, but many diggers walked, a journey of days or even weeks on rough tracks, carrying everything they owned. A handwritten note on the painting below suggests that:

“Distance lends enchantment to the view [...] they therefore, scorning any such notion as riding, commence a long and arduous journey on foot. Many getting either disgusted at the difficulties of travelling, or becoming heartsick returned dispirited to Melbourne.”



The “new chums” arrival on the Diggings in the 1850s. Artist unknown. Source: State Library of Victoria.

## Expedition Pass Reservoir, a recreational oasis



At the end of the 7 Forest Creek Trail, Expedition Pass is a wonderful place to cool off on a warm day. Enjoy a refreshing swim with family or friends in the cool waters of the reservoir. Fish, paddle, or bring a picnic blanket and relax on the shore.

Dogs are not permitted in the reservoir. The water is deep away from the shore, with submerged obstacles. Please supervise children closely at all times.

There are no facilities and parking is limited, especially on warm weekends and in during school and public holidays, and care should be taken along the busy road. For your own safety, do not park on the roadside. Why not park at the Monster Meeting Site and walk or cycle (7.5km return)?

The reservoir was constructed in 1868 to provide a reliable source of water for the Goldfields community. It takes its name from a gap in the hills named by Major Mitchell on his 1836 expedition. Thousands of diggers travelled through here during the goldrush.

Fed by the surrounding hills and the newly constructed Coliban water race (which also supplied the Garfield Water Wheel), unfortunately the reservoir silted up quickly. After only four years, Castlemaine had to be connected directly to the Coliban Main Channel instead, and by the late 1870s, the reservoir had become a popular oasis for recreational activities.

In 1994, Coliban Water considered decommissioning the reservoir, with one option being to breach the wall and release the water. However, the Mount Alexander Shire stepped in to manage the reservoir until it was added to the Park in 2002.

The forest around the reservoir, which was almost completely cleared during the goldrush, has regenerated significantly, making it a great spot for bushwalking and birdwatching.



Expedition Pass Reservoir in 1878. Photographer unknown. Source: State Library of Victoria.

## 8 Forest Creek Gold Diggings



**Grade 2, 400m circuit, 30mins**

Well-marked gravel path. Relatively flat, one slightly steeper section.

Discover how generations of miners won gold from Forest Creek on this self-guided walk with interpretive signs. The landscape shows the environmental impacts of various types of alluvial gold mining, including shaft sinking, tunnelling and hydraulic sluicing.

Ideal for families, including people with restricted mobility, there is one short section along the gravel path where assistance may be required. There are picnic tables and a large, unfurnished shelter suitable for groups near the carpark.

Access is via a 300m detour off the 4 Pennyweight Flat Cemetery Walk, 7 Forest Creek Trail or 5 Goldfields Track (walking and biking). Parking is available off Prendergast St.

From the Garfield Trailhead, follow the 5 Goldfields Track towards Castlemaine, turning south (left) at Farran Street and crossing the Pyrenees Highway (2.7km one-way).

## The Goldfields Track



**Grade 4, 12.6km one-way from Castlemaine to Specimen Gully Rd, 6-8 hrs**

Well-marked, shared-use track. Gentle to moderate hills. Mostly Grade 3 with some steeper and rougher Grade 4 sections. Bushwalking or mountain biking experience recommended.

The 210km Goldfields Track passes through the Castlemaine Diggings on its way from Ballarat to Bendigo. It is divided into four longer sections, including the Leanganook Track (Castlemaine to Bendigo), and into shorter (part or full day) walks.

The 12.6km Heritage Walk between Castlemaine Railway Station and Specimen Gully Rd, visits the Garfield Water Wheel (stop LT4 in the *Goldfields Track Walk or Ride Guide*), with short detours to Pennyweight Flat Cemetery (LT2), Welsh Village (LT5), Expedition Pass Reservoir and Specimen Gully Hut (LT6). For more information or to download files for your handheld GPS, visit [goldfieldstrack.com.au](http://goldfieldstrack.com.au).

Look for the 5 gold-capped posts and signs. Allow extra time for detours and to explore the goldrush features along the way. Bikes are prohibited at Welsh Village: please leave them at the carpark on Welsh St.

## Acknowledgements

These heritage notes were drawn from multiple sources, including David Bannear, Robert Kaufman, heritage reports, mining surveys, accounts in the *Mount Alexander Mail* and *The Argus* newspapers (retrieved via TROVE, National Library of Australia), and:

- Robyn Annear, 1999, *Nothing but Gold: The Diggers of 1852*, Text Publishing, Melbourne
- Robyn Annear, David Bannear and Philip Ingamells, 1999, *Discovering the Mount Alexander Diggings*, Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings
- Geoff Hockings, 1994, *Castlemaine, from Camp to City. A Pictorial History of Forest Creek & the Mount Alexander Goldfields 1835-1900*, New Chum Press
- Ken McKimmie, 2011, *Chewton Then and Now*
- Marjorie Theobald, 2021, *Mount Alexander Mountain of Gold 1851-1861*, Chewton Domain Society

## Taking care of the park



The Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park has been included on the National Heritage List as Australia's outstanding gold rush landscape. The park's goldrush features are of great national cultural and historic significance. Left undisturbed, they will remain for many future generations to rediscover.

You can help protect the cultural heritage values of the Park by following these simple guidelines:

- No rubbish bins are provided. Please take all rubbish away with you for recycling or disposal.
- Fires are prohibited in this area. Firewood collection is prohibited throughout the Park.
- Firearms are prohibited.
- Culturally important Aboriginal sites are found throughout this landscape. Please tread lightly and be mindful of conserving both physical and intangible heritage. All artefacts are of cultural significance and are protected by cultural heritage laws.
- Please do not touch the ruins or disturb the ground. All plants, animals, historical artefacts, archaeological sites and geographic features are protected by law.
- Fossicking, prospecting and digging for gold are only permitted within defined areas. A prospecting map of the park is available from [parks.vic.gov.au](https://parks.vic.gov.au).

- Vehicles, including motor bikes, may only be used on formed open roads, not on walking tracks. Drivers must be licensed and vehicles registered and roadworthy.

## Be prepared, stay safe



The Castlemaine Diggings are a heavily mined landscape and contain a variety of ongoing hazards, including uneven and unstable ground, mineshafts, open cuts, quarries, and mine tailings. For your own safety, please stay on mapped tracks and supervise children.

- Comply with local signs and do not climb over or around barriers, fences or on the ruins.
- We recommend hiring an experienced guide to safely explore mining relics located off the mapped tracks. Enquire at the Castlemaine or Maldon Visitor Information Centres.
- Do not park or rest under trees. Tree and branches may fall at any time and swing away from the tree.
- It can be cold and wet in winter and very hot and dry in summer so be prepared for adverse weather conditions.
- Mobile phone reception is unreliable in the Park, particularly in the gullies. You may get a signal by moving to higher ground.

## Emergencies

For emergency assistance call Triple Zero (000).

The Northern Diggings are in the North Central Total Fire Ban District. Bushfire safety is a personal responsibility. Anyone entering parks and forests during the bushfire season needs to stay aware of forecast weather conditions. Check the forecast before leaving home, and reconsider visiting forested areas on hot, dry, windy days or when storms are forecast.

Check the Fire Danger Rating and for days of Total Fire Ban at [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://emergency.vic.gov.au), on the VicEmergency smartphone app or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

On days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating this Park will be closed for public safety. Do not enter the Park. If you are already in the Park you should leave the night before or early in the morning. Closure signs may be erected but do not expect an official warning. Check the latest conditions at [parks.vic.gov.au](https://parks.vic.gov.au) or by calling 13 1963.