VICTORIAN GOLDFIELDS PROJECT

HISTORIC GOLD MINING SITES IN THE KILMORE –YEA REGION OF VICTORIA

REPORT ON CULTURAL HERITAGE

Department Of Natural Resources & Environment

September 1999

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

This report is based on the results of a historical archaeology survey undertaken during April 1999. The historical research, fieldwork and public consultation undertaken within the study indicated that various parts of the region experienced limited gold mining from 1851 until the 1940s.

The study area stretches is centred on Kilmore and Yea.

1.2 Site Gazetteer

The work underlying the gazetteer involved a desktop survey of recorded sites, analysis of historical records, fieldwork and community consultation. The assessment process used was designed to achieve the best practical results within the project's time frame and limited budget. Places not previously recorded and which were assessed as likely to have significant heritage values were visited and included in the gazetteer that forms part two of this report.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of report

The study seeks to identify, assess and document the cultural heritage values relating to the historic theme of gold mining in the Kilmore-Yea area. The categories or types of sites to be covered by the report are mainly those of shallow alluvial (shaft sinking and sluicing) and quartz reefing (tunnelling, shaft sinking and open cutting).

The study will make a contribution to a State-wide investigation of the theme of gold mining.

2.2 Aims of report

The aims of the project were to:

- undertake a desk-top survey of known sites,
- conduct research on the theme of gold mining,
- compile information on historic gold mining places in South West Victoria,
- identify and record previously unrecorded historic mining places assessed as having State or regional significance, and
- document the project's methodology and decision-making processes.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study forms part of a State-wide inventory of historic gold mining sites, which commenced some eight years ago. The primary aim of the inventory is to systematically record, interpret, and assess historic gold mining sites on public land in Victoria for the purpose of providing a sound basis for management of such sites. Where possible sites on private land were also considered. The report has been written to assist the Department of Natural Resources, Parks Victoria and Heritage Victoria in conserving a very widespread and diverse resource.

3.2 Historical Research

The assessment process was designed to achieve the best practical results within the project's time frame and limited budget. The first stage of the assessment was an investigation of primary and secondary historical sources, including Mining Surveyors Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Reports; Mines Department maps, plans and reports; photographs and illustrations; published

local histories and newspapers. This stage also involved a desktop survey to identify places already recorded.

3.3 Assessment Process

3.3.1 Site gazetteer

For each gold mining locality, a chronology of activity was compiled, detailing gold discoveries, mining parties and machinery, settlement patterns, population levels, and gold production figures. This information was used to target important mining localities and specific sites that had not been previously recorded, and also aided in the interpretation of sites.

The focus of the survey work was entirely on relics of above ground mining operations. For obvious reasons of access and safety, it did not cover any aspects of underground mining. The perspective presented by the inventory is thus biased, for on some types of mining sites, in particular; quartz reefing and deep lead mining, the bulk of operations and human effort took place below ground, hidden away from sight. A physical picture of underground mining technology and features can only realistically be gathered and recorded when new mining ventures take place on old gold mining sites.

3.3.2 Site selection process

The poor nature of the gold deposits at Kilmore and Yea meant that gold mining was not a major industry and thus little of note survives today. The following two-stage assessment process was used to determine the significance of the sites that were visited:

i) *Consultation process*—Given the comprehensive historical research undertaken as part of the State-wide survey, additional information was mainly sought through consulting present and former Department of Natural Resources and Environment field staff (foresters and land protection officers), Parks Victoria rangers, and local community members. Information sought included:

- the integrity and condition of sites: in particular, whether the site still exists or has visible remains (including foundations),
- whether they know of other sites of a similar nature which had physical remains, and
- names of other informants who may have knowledge of gold mining activity sites in the south west region.

The consultation process was designed to sieve out sites not worth a visit because no substantial evidence remained, and to pick out sites which had played only marginal historical role (and hence not highlighted by the historical assessment) but now may have a high scientific significance due to their rarity and intactness.

ii) *State heritage threshold*—The following significance indicators were further used to refine the list of site to be surveyed:

- the role the place played in the historical development of the region and State's gold mining industry. For any given place significance will be greater where evidence of an association or event survives in situ,
- the scientific importance of the data represented in the features of a place and upon the degree to which the place may contribute further substantial information,
- the degree to which the place can be demonstrated as having historical integrity and /or rareness in its intactness or condition better than any other similar place,
- the measure of the awareness in the local community of the site and its role in the history of the locality, and
- the degree the setting of the place had been modified.

3.4 Site survey

The terms of reference for the project required that previously unrecorded sites assessed as having potential significant heritage values be visited and documented following set guidelines, so that they were comprehensively and uniformly described. Time and budgetary constraints

necessitated that recording be of a fairly basic standard: brief descriptions, rough plans and photographs. It was envisaged that more detailed recording of the more significant sites would be undertaken in the future, when all sites have been identified, and the more significant sites have been determined.

3.5 Final ranking

The main thrust of current heritage assessment in Australia is that the more significant cultural places are generally those that retain unique qualities which can best explain the past to present and future generations. Only one site was identified as having high significance during the course of the study. It was assessed (unsuccessfully) against the following criteria developed by Heritage Victoria to determine whether it had State significance and should be placed on the Victorian Heritage Register:

a. The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.
b. The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness
c. The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.
d. The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.
e. The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.
f. The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements
g. The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural association.
h. Any other matter which the Council deems relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance.

3.6 Victorian Heritage Register

The Heritage Act (1995) provides for the protection and identification of places of heritage significance to the State. It applies to both private and public land and to public authorities, private owners and companies. The Act expands the type of place that can be listed on the register to include buildings, archaeological sites and landscapes. If a site is placed on the Heritage Register, a permit must be sought for works from Heritage Council unless those works are covered by an exemption negotiated at the time of registration

In the course of the project no historic gold mining places were identified as having heritage values worthy for listing on the Victorian Heritage Register.

3.7 Victorian Heritage Inventory

The Heritage Act (1995) establishes a Heritage Inventory for all archaeological sites recorded in the State. The Act contains provisions to protect all archaeological sites and relics whether known or unknown. The consent of the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria is required to excavate, damage or deface an archaeological relic. Any relics found during excavation have to be reported to the Executive Director, and consent is required to sell relics.

The study identified one site as being of regional significance and for listing on the Victorian Heritage Inventory. Another seven sites and/or locations were investigated and found to have local significance.

4. Report Body

4.1 Introduction

The research of primary resource material undertaken was designed to trace the development of gold mining activities at Kilmore and Yea. This data helped produce a picture of the underlying technology and physical remains and to identify potential sites. Fieldwork and community consultation found the surviving gold mining heritage to be very poor, a reflection of the district's limited gold.

The following historical overview is designed to provide a context for the surviving gold mining heritage at Kilmore and Yea.

4.2 Historical Overview

4.2.1 Kilmore Goldfield

During the 1850s there were numerous but insignificant gold finds made at Kilmore, King Parrot Creek, Strath Creek, Reedy Creek, and Prices Creek.[1] This area became more recognised as a goldfield when quartz reefs yielding from 3 to 4 ounces per ton were opened at Reedy Creek. Reefs also discovered about this time at King Parrot and Strath creeks.[2] From 1858 to the 1890s Reedy Creek was the district's premier mining locality with Langridge's and Doyles being the main reefs.

Alluvial gold was also found along Reedy Creek in 1858 and alluvial mining peaked in 1864 when there was a large rush to a tributary called Nuggetty Gully. About 400 miners were said to have attended this rush.[3] After the initial frenzy of the rush, alluvial miners settled along the creek constructing a number of water races to facilitate banks sluicing.[4]

The alluvial mining population along Reedy Creek dramatically increased in 1866 when some 300 Chinese miners arrived, rising to 450 by the end of year. The Chinese miners erected stores and many huts.[5] By 1868, most of the Chinese miners had deserted Reedy Creek, those that stayed were reported working for European puddling machine owners. During this time alluvial miners were also reported as working at the sources of Dabyminga, King Parrot, and Kurucuruc creeks. By 1870 alluvial mining had reached the stage that those alluvial miners— both European and Chinese— who continued to work in the area made only bare wages.[6] In 1880, the mining registrar wrote that 'alluvial mining exists only in name' in the Kilmore mining division.

By 1864 the patchy nature of the quartz reefs along Reedy Creek had become apparent - initially rich but becoming poorer the deeper the sinking. The local mining official reported on the general lack of confidence in the reefs:

> After the first wave of quartz mining was over, and reefs were almost deserted following the rush to the Jordan. While many of the reefs are in the hands of poor people, much good cannot be expected—when workings reached water-level, claimholders could not afford pumping apparatus and the claims were abandoned.[7]

The largest quartz mine of the 1860s was the Reedy Creek GMC which had a 15-acre lease, taking in Langridge's, Doyle's, and Saddle reefs, and boasting an 18-head battery. Other parties

1 Fleet, pp. 110-15
2 Flett, pp. 114-5; Mining Surveyors' Report (Kilmore Division), March 1864
3 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), September 1864
4 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), December 1864
5 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March–December 1866; Murray (1884)
6 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March 1872–December 1874
7 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March–September 1864

working at this time were crushing with Chilian wheels or hand-powered Berdan pans.[1] Apart from the Reedy Creek Company, other mines that operated along Reedy Creek during the 1860s included Langridge, Magenta, Doyle's, Rantoon, Red Rover, Tonstal GMC, Rich & Rowe, Specimen Hill, and Eclipse.

Another relatively large mining venture in the mid 1860s took place on the Kilmore Old Diggings (a farmers' common, at Moranding—later Goldie). Here the Laurence Bourke and Co./Kilmore GMC took a lease of 12-acres and erected a battery. They treated large quantities of low-yielding, rubbly sandstone-quartz reef mined by open-cut. Larry Bourke's Reef yielded a total of 1,070 oz (worth over £20,000) from 5,620 tons during this period.[2]

Some new mining localities come to notice during the mid-1860s. A discovery of antimony was reported and there was also a shortlived reefing rush between Tallarook and Seymour. Less successful was some prospecting on Harp of Erin Reef at Moranding West, midway between Kilmore and Lancefield.[3] The most important of the new finds, however, came in 1866 when a new reefing field was opened at Sunday Creek, about 9 miles south east of Kilmore, 'on Mr McKenzie's run'. The principal pioneering quartz claims were Ryan & Cushian's (prospectors), Windsor Castle, Rising Sun, and Golconda.

The Sunday Creek quartz mines were productive for several years. In 1868 the principal gold producers were Ryan & Co., Rising Sun, and Golconda (Tobin & Co.). The mine operated by Ryan & Co. regularly returned 1 ounce to the ton and fetched high prices for their gold—over £4 per oz.[4] By 1871 quartz mining along Reedy Creek was languishing. In 1872 all the Reedy Creek mining plants had been sold and removed. Any remaining mines in the area now had to send quartz to Sunday Creek for crushing. This soon proved unprofitable and Reedy Creek mines were abandoned. Sunday Creek continued the most prosperous locality—largely due to the cheapness of water-powered crushing—until 1873, when Ryan & Co. sold out their claim and machinery to a Melbourne company, which appears to have discontinued operations after only a short time.

The demise of the Sunday Creek field plunged the fragile Kilmore mining industry into a deep depression. In December 1874, the mining registrar reported 'utter stagnation': his office had done no business during the previous quarter. During the following two years, he had no mining activity to report.[5]

The Reedy Creek field experienced a revival during the late 1870s when prospectors proved a payable resource in the defunct Doyles Reef mine. The erection of a crushing battery at the mine led to other abandoned mines in the vicinity being taken up. By 1881 the field had six batteries and the larger mines were reported as being well-capitalised and fully equipped with rock drills, pumping and winding gear, etc. Average yields from the Reedy Creek reefs in 1881 were from 1 oz to 10 ounces per ton.

The three principal Reedy Creek mines on the field during the 1880s were the Langridge, Crown, and Doyle's. Doyle's had the deepest shaft, down 610ft by 1884. By 1888, these three claims had worked out their shallow ground and needed to prove deeper ground, and the mining registrar suggested that the companies would do better to amalgamate and sink one main shaft, as the three lines of reef were only about 400ft apart. 'At present,' he wrote, 'there are nine engine-drivers, three legal managers, and three mining managers, besides firewood for three engines required.' Amalgamation took place soon after, and Langridge & Doyle's United GMC was formed.[6] Further attempts to develop the Reedy Creek reefs did not bear fruit after 1890.

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1 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March–September 1864

2 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), September 1864, September 1865, ; Kenny (1937/7); Murray (1890); *Australian Mining Standard*, 1 June 1899

3 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March–December 1866; Murray (1884)

4 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), June, September & December 1868, June 1869

5 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March 1872–December 1874

6 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March 1880–December 1889

From the 1890s onwards small-time operators carried out quartz mining in the district. Little of note happened except for prospectors discovering a rich reef (the Golden Dyke) at Clonbinane. Several small mining companies worked the reef up until the First World War. The Golden Dyke Consols Co. was the most successful. Mining halted during the war years and never recovered. Even the 1930s revival produced nothing of note apart from some minor prospecting shows.

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4.2.2 Yea Goldfield

Gold mining at Yea commenced in 1851 with a small rush to alluvial ground on Muddy Creek.[1] The rush was shortlived. The Yea goldfield drew attention again at the end of the 1850s when alluvial ground was worked at Tea-tree Creek, at the Junction (of Boundary and Muddy creeks, north of Yea township), and in Muddy Creek, about 9 miles above Yea.

The first quartz mining commenced in the late 1850s with miners working reefs at Tea-tree Creek and the Junction. During 1858 to 1860 up to 600 quartz miners were reported as being engaged in working these reefs. The early reefs yielded richly (up to 10 oz to the ton, and more), but few mining parties could afford pumping machinery and had to abandon their mines at water level. The main mines of the field proved to be the Welcome at Tea-tree Creek and (less so) the Providence at Yea (a very wet mine), both of which worked periodically until the early 1900s.

During the late 1860s there were further discoveries of both alluvial and quartz gold. In 1866 reefs were discovered on a tributary of the Murrindindi Creek, about 12 miles SE of Yea. Development of the new field was retarded, due to lack of crushing machinery. The locality was originally called Newchum (the name of the creek), but changed to Higinbotham in 1868.[2] The main Higinbotham reefs were called the Balaclava, George Higinbotham, and Galatea.[3]

At the same time as the Higinbotham rush, alluvial gold was discovered at Ghin Ghin (or Palestine Creek), north west of Yea. 1868 reported the alluvial deposits at Ghin Ghin as being worked out.

The district's most successful mine, the Welcome Company had a productive period from 1877 to late 1880s when it was worked by Chinese tributers (Ah Mouy, of Melbourne). In 1882, the mining registrar complained of not being able to properly ascertain yields from the Welcome Mine, blaming the Chinese proprietor, who sold gold direct in Melbourne. Next quarter, he pronounced the yield 'excellent'. The mine achieved a total production of £30,000 worth of gold, and its main shaft attained a depth of 800ft.[4]

The other notable quartz mine, the Providence, did no fair so well during the 1880s. The Yea Gold Mining Company who ran the mine spent much of their time prospecting. The mine was abandoned in 1889 after the collapse of a shaft.[5]

During the early 1900s small scale mining took place at Yea, Flat Lead, Homewood and Kerrisdale. Attempt to re-work the Welcome mine at Tea-tree, and to cyanide the mine tailings, gave poor results.[6] After the Second World War the Providence Mine was dewatered but no economical mining took place.[7]

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1 Flett, p. 116

2 Flett, p. 116; Mining Surveyors' Reports, March–December 1866

3 Mining Surveyors' Reports, March 1868–December 1869

4 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra subdivision), March 1877, September & December 1882; *Australian Mining Standard*, p. 103

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6 Department of Mines Annual Reports, 1903-4

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VICTORIAN GOLDFIELDS PROJECT

HISTORIC GOLD MINING SITES IN KILMORE –YEA REGION OF VICTORIA

SITE GAZETTEER

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

September 1999

1. Introduction

Time and budget constraints did not permit a comprehensive investigation of all sites. The relative poor nature of the goldfields being studied meant that there were not many sites. Fieldwork was restricted to visiting those sites, which were on public land and were known to contain significant remains.

The table below shows the sites that were identified during the desk-top survey and were visited. All places and objects assessed as having regional or higher significance have been included in the gazetteer below.

Name	Location	Ranking
Captains Reef Quartz Roasting kilns	Reedy Creek	Regional – Heritage Inventory
Reedy Creek Township reef workings	Reedy Creek	Local – including Langridge and Doyles reefs.
Water race and tunnel	Reedy Creek	Local – water race and tunnel. Race conveys water to Wild Dog Gully.
Murchinson Spur reef workings, north of Reedy Creek	Reedy Creek	Local – including Prince of Wales, Thomsons, Red Rover, and Morning Star reefs.
Murchinson Spur reef workings, south to Blackmans Creek	Reedy Creek	Local – including Russells and Beaconsfield reefs.
Murchinson Spur reef workings to Wild Dog Gully	Strath Creek	Local – reef workings in the headwaters of Strath Creek.
Sandy Creek reef workings	Sandy Creek	Local – reef workings in Sandy Creek catchment.
Providence Mine Site	Yea	Local – concrete foundations, shafts and collapsed adit.

PLACE NO. & NAME: **Captains Reef Quartz Roasting kilns**
Reedy Creek goldfield
HI No. ***H7923-0038***

LOCATION: Beaconsfield Track
MUNICIPALITY: Mitchell Shire
LAND STATUS: State Forest

HISTORY:

September 1860: Satisfactory trial crushing from Wellington Reef. Langridge Reef Co. putting their crushing plant in thorough repair. Rich specimens raised from Captain's Reef (Nickinson & Co.). Quartz has been crushed from the Albert and Magenta Reefs, but was not payable.[1]

March 1864: Only three claims are presently taken up at Reedy Creek - Albert and Captain's return an average 4 oz/ton - they can raise little stone, because of water in their shafts - whim or pumping apparatus is required.[2]

September 1864: Hayes and Co., Captain's Reef, crush with a small basin with two balls, turned by hand - crush two tons per week - 7 tons gave 21 oz.[3]

1866: At Reedy Creek, the principal companies were the Reedy Creek Co. (working by shaft), Magenta and Solferino (tunnelling), Captain's Reef GMC, Leviathan Co., Shepherd's Reef Co., and Sailor's Reef Co.

December 1866: Captain's Reef GMC erecting machinery.[4]

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION:

Quartz roasting

Roasting kilns ¾ two small stone-lined roasting bowls set 6 metres apart. Both kilns have been built up against exposed rock faces and their sides and fronts are constructed of local rock. The stone has a very burnt appearance. The bowls are 3.5 metre wide at the top, less than 1.5 metres at the base, and at least 2½ metres deep. Both portal entrances have collapsed.

Mine workings ¾ there are several shafts above the kilns

Ore processing site ¾ the bank below the kilns has several benched-out platforms (possible treatment site) and is very overgrown.

INTEGRITY/CONDITION: Good condition

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Site 1.0 has

b) *The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness* ¾ Quartz roasting kilns were similar in shape and construction to lime kilns, and have been found in Victoria as free-standing masonry structures, and also excavated into bedrock on hill slopes. Despite being once common, known examples now only survive on five places in Victoria ¾ Maldon, Castlemaine, Beechworth, Reedy Creek and Gippsland.

SIGNIFICANCE RANKING: Site listed Heritage Inventory

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1 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), September 1860
2 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), March 1864
3 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), September 1864
4 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), December 1866

Assessor: David Bannear Date: 1998