Heritage Notes for the **Garfield Water Wheel,** **❶ Garfield Mine Heritage Walk** and **❷ Garfield Bush Walk**

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park

Marvel at the stone foundations of the Garfield Water Wheel and learn about the importance of water to the Dja Dja Wurrung People and gold miners. Wander through recovering Box-Ironbark forest, explore the relics of the Garfield Mine, and learn more about quartz and alluvial gold mining.

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.

You can learn more about the Dja Dja Wurrung People's spiritual connection with water from an interpretive sign at 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 may be walked on a lead on the tracks around the Garfield Water Wheel. They must be 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.

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 and fences or on the stone foundations of the water wheel.

These circuit walks may be walked in either direction, however we strongly recommend following the directions suggested on the maps and signs which corresponds with the order of features interpreted in these notes. At track junctions, look for the number of the walk you are on, as shown in the map and descriptions.

The Garfield Water Wheel and Mine

There's gold in these hills. How did it get here?

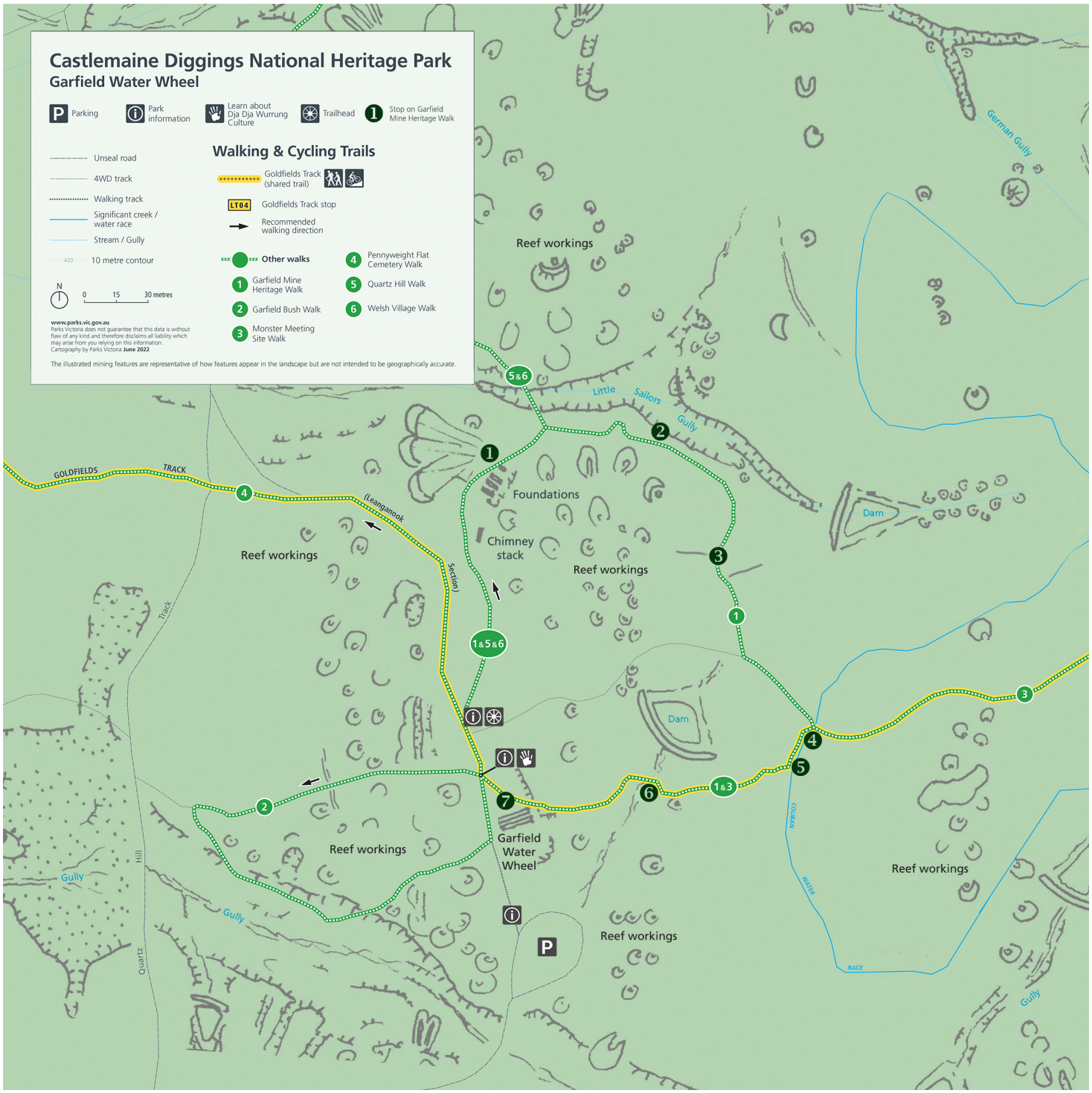
Imagine what the earth was like 440 to 360 million years ago, 200 million years before the dinosaurs, around the time of the earliest fish and land animals. Australia was part of the supercontinent of Gondwana, located close to the equator. The climate was warm, and Australia was covered in shallow seas full of corals. Plants were evolving to cover the previously barren landscape.

It was a time of geological unrest, with many volcanoes active across what is now Victoria, and many cracks (or faults) opened up in the Earth's crust. Water flowed into these cracks, and under intense pressure, the minerals it carried, like gold and quartz, formed reefs or lodes.

Parks Victoria
Phone 13 1963
www.parks.vic.gov.au

Parks VICTORIA

VICTORIA State Government



Most of Victoria's gold comes from these quartz reefs. As wind and rain eroded the softer sandstone around them, the harder quartz was often left exposed as white hills. Over thousands of years, bits of quartz and gold washed down into the creeks to eventually be found by prospectors. They followed the creeks up into the hills, looking for the reefs the gold came from.

And how do you get it out?

Finding gold is one challenge – getting it out of the quartz is quite another! First, you have to get the quartz out of the ground. If it is near the surface, you can start chipping away at it with picks. If it's below ground, you need to dig a shaft (to get at the gold from above), or an adit (tunnel in the side of a hill). Then you need to remove the quartz and crush it to a fine powder to extract the gold.

Initially, this was done by hand with hammers or using horse-powered crushing machinery, but it was slow and back-breaking work. Steam-powered crushing (or stamping) batteries were more efficient and soon became widely used. A boiler and steam engine powered a series of pulleys and straps that operated heavy iron hammers which pounded the quartz. However, they required a regular supply of wood to burn in their boilers, which was labour intensive and caused deforestation.

By the 1880s, timber was hard to find and expensive to buy. There was an alternative – but it required a steady supply of flowing water.

Where did the water for the wheel come from?

Water was scarce on the goldfields, and in the early days of mining, work often had to stop due to shortages. This changed with the construction of the Coliban Water Scheme in the 1860s-1870s.

This incredible feat of engineering was designed by Mr Joseph Martin Brady, a civil engineer from Ireland, who proposed the scheme in response to a competition launched by the Victorian Government to provide a reliable water supply to the mines and farms of the central goldfields.

His system of water races (channels) took almost a decade to plan and construct, but when completed, carried water from newly created reservoirs to the mines. The channels follow the contours of hills, dropping only a few feet per mile. Gravity ensures a steady but controlled flow of water along the gentle slope. Parts of this extraordinary Victorian Heritage-listed system still operate today.

Although it is only 2.5km from here to Expedition Pass as the crow flies, this race has travelled over 7.5km around the hills.

Want to learn more about the Coliban System? Download the factsheet from Coliban Water.

A revolving solution to a crushing problem

A reliable supply of flowing water meant that water wheels could be used to power the crushing batteries instead of steam. Replacing a steam engine with a water wheel saved money and manpower, and they quickly became popular. More than two hundred were built across Victoria, including several in this area, but the Garfield Company's, constructed in 1887, was the largest.

With a diameter of over 21m and 220 buckets, it was one of the largest in the world, and could be clearly seen from the Chewton-Castlemaine road. At that time, most of the trees in the area had been chopped down for fuel and construction. The forest you see now has regrown naturally since then.

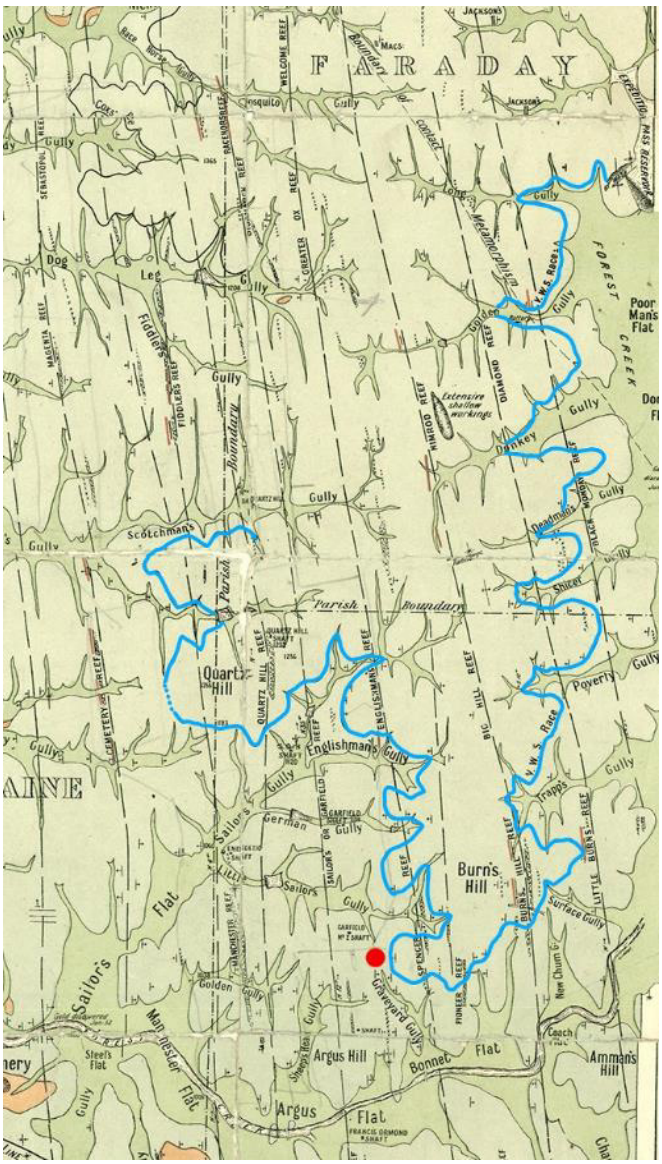
A deep pit was dug into solid rock and two walls, nearly 12m high, were constructed from large blocks of sandstone. The central hub of the wheel rested on top of these walls. The spokes (arms) were made of wood painted light blue, and secured to three circular bands of iron painted black. The 220 buckets fixed on the wheel were just over 24cm wide and made of galvanised iron.

The Coliban Water Race brought water to a nearby hill, and then it was carried along a 241m wooden flume (aqueduct), supported by huge trestles (6-18m high), before falling into the buckets on the rear of the wheel, causing it to rotate backwards. A full revolution took 45-55 seconds.

It was an efficient process, with only a quarter of the water carried along the race needed to power the wheel, which was then diverted to another water wheel and reused.

The crushing battery was housed in a corrugated iron building next to the wheel. The rotation of the wheel transferred power to the machinery, including eighteen heavy iron stampers (hammers) that crushed the quartz to a sand-like powder, releasing the gold within.

The water wheel operated almost continuously from 1887 to 1904, turning even on Sundays, when the battery fell silent, and miners took the day off.



This plan of the area around the Garfield Water Wheel (red dot) shows several quartz reefs, embedded in the line of sandstone running north-south through the area. The section of the water race that supplied Garfield and neighbouring mines is shown in blue. Source: *Plan of the Chewton-Castlemaine gold field showing anticlinal axial lines*, Victoria Mines Department 1902. State Library of Victoria

The Garfield Company water wheel and crushing battery. To the left of the battery is a raised tram line used to transport the heavy blocks of quartz from the mine shaft to the battery. Source: State Library of Victoria

After turning the Garfield Water Wheel, the same water continued down the race to drive the water wheel at the Manchester Mine operated by the Wheal Margery Company. Its wheel was smaller and older than the one at Garfield.

The ruins of the Manchester Mine can be accessed via the Goldfields Track (stop LT3).

The wheel eventually proved to be too big for its own good. Wear and tear plus difficulty in high winds, caused the wheel to be decommissioned in 1903 and dismantled in 1904. The battery was converted to steam-power.

The Garfield Company and successors

The Garfield Mine was one of many in the area that mined the local quartz reefs. The Garfield Company (later known as the Forest Creek Gold Mining Company and Chewton Gold Mines) operated from 1882 to 1912.

By 1885 it was employing around 70 workers. The Company was so successful that it was able to purchase shares in several additional mines nearby.

Workers at the Garfield Mine in the 1890s. Photographer unknown. Source: from a private collection shared to the Chewton Town Hall Collection.

A watercolour painting of the Garfield Mine and Water Wheel from 1890 showing the headframe (poppet head) over the shaft (in the background, centre left) and the crushing battery and water wheel (centre) linked by the tram line. Two flumes can be seen: the one on the right carried water from the Coliban Water Race to the Garfield Water Wheel, and the one on the left carried the same water to the water wheel at Manchester Reef. The building behind the tramline may have been the Ebbott's house or the pump and winding mechanism for the shaft. Painting by Chas Marques. Source: Castlemaine Pioneers and Old Residents Association.

The mineshaft that supplied quartz for the battery, was located 150m to the north of the wheel. The quartz was transported to the battery via a tramline. This was built with a very gradual slope so that the heavy trolleys of quartz could be easily and safely pushed down to the battery, and the empty carts could be pushed back up to the shaft.

Who kept the wheel turning?

The Garfield Mine was managed by John Ebbott, a Cornishman whose family migrated to Victoria in 1852. They settled in Bendigo, where John married Margaret Thomas, the daughter of a mine manager. His interest in mining took him to New Caledonia and India where he learned how to operate water wheels.

John Ebbott oversaw the mine's operation from construction right through to its closure in 1912, when the machinery was sold off. John and Margaret, who lived in a cottage overlooking the tramline with their eleven children, lifted the timber section of their home onto a dray and re-located it to Chewton.

One of their children had a very lucky escape. One Sunday, the only day of the week that the mine did not operate, their daughter Ada climbed to the top of one of the water wheel's walls, and got her head stuck between two of the spokes.

John and Margaret Ebbott with their eleven children. Left to right, back row: Alf, Lizzie (later Mrs Jacka), Jack, Will and Perc, middle row: Gert (Mrs Docking), Margaret, Beatrice (Mrs Ellery), John, Evelyn (Mrs Veal), front row: Gill, Stan, Ada (Mrs Johns). Source: Silas Ellery and the Chewton Town Hall Collection.

Left: John Ebbott, manager of the Garfield Mine. **Right:** Ada Johns (formerly Ebbott). Source: Chewton Town Hall Collection.

She was rescued, but her face was slightly twisted in the ordeal and noticeable for the rest of her life. However, Ada lived to the grand age of eighty-four, a long life for that time, married and raised a family. Sadly, her grandfather was not so lucky. He was crushed to death by the water wheel only two years after Ada's accident.

❶ Garfield Mine Heritage Walk

Grade 2, 500m circuit, 15mins
Gravel and earth track. Gentle hills, a few slightly steeper and rocky sections. No bushwalking experience required.

Starting from the Garfield trailhead, this short circuit walk explores the Garfield Mine Site. Numbered posts along the way correspond with the notes below.

From the trailhead, follow the ❶ Garfield Mine Heritage Walk signs north. The path briefly follows the same track as the ❺ Quartz Hill Walk and the ❻ Welsh Village Walk, before turning east.

As you leave the trailhead, you are passing close to where the mine manager, John Ebbott lived with his wife Margaret and their eleven children. The Ebbott's five-room timber cottage was located beside the tramline used to move quartz from the mineshaft to the wheel-powered crushing battery.

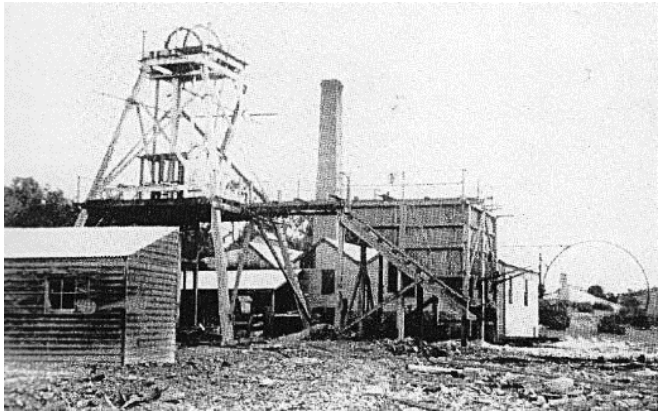
As you approach Stop 1 you can see an iron chimney stack lying to your right, part of the New Garfield Company's plant in the 1930s.

Stop 1

The Garfield mineshaft – plumbing the depths for riches

To the left of the track is the Garfield Mine's main shaft. At 346m deep this is almost 50m deeper than the height of the Eureka Tower (Melbourne Skydeck)!

To the right of the track are some concrete blocks. These supported the machinery that lifted the quartz out of the shaft and pumped water out. The iron chimney stack was connected to the boiler. These relics are from the New Garfield Company, founded in 1937.



The Garfield Mine with the headframe over the mineshaft, the large iron chimney stack, and the crushing battery and iron frame of the water wheel visible in the distance. Source: *Chewton Then and Now* by Ken McKimmie.

The original Garfield Company removed and crushed 132 million kilograms of quartz from this shaft, yielding 1,042kg of gold. The New Garfield Company, was not as lucky. It was unable to secure water from the government-run water race and work stopped several times. It closed in 1943, during World War II.

Stop 2

Mullock heaps – reminders of intensive labour

The many small holes and mullock heaps on both sides of the track show how intensively this area was worked by diggers.

Alluvial gold mining methods use a combination of water, movement and gravity. Swirl the soil and water around until the soil breaks apart and the heavier gold sinks to the bottom. Miners would dig holes, wash the soil, remove any gold, then discard the soil in mullock heaps. Common techniques included:

- **Panning** – swirling very small amounts of water and soil around by hand in a dish.
- **Cradling** – rocking small amounts of soil and water back and forth in a wooden box similar to a child's cradle.
- **Puddling** – stirring larger amounts of soil and water in a round tub or ditch, using paddles or rakes pulled by hand or horse. You can see the remains of a puddler on the ❺ Quartz Hill Walk.
- **Sluicing** – diverting water to wash anything from small amounts to enormous quantities of soil.

Prospectors panning in a creek. To their left is a cradle, and behind it, a small puddling tub. Illustration by Andrew Swift.

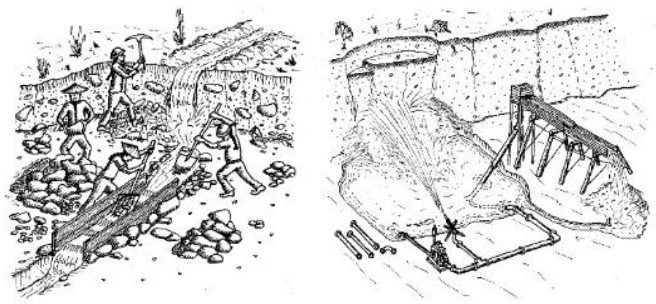
Stop 3

Sluicing channels – washing away the dirt

To the right of the track here you can see a small trench which channelled water from the nearby dam for sluicing. There is another trench on the left of the track a little further on.

Sluicing was more efficient than other alluvial gold mining methods, allowing larger quantities of soil to be washed, but it also required more water. Before the water races, sluicing was only possible when there was enough water in the creeks and dams. Work on the goldfields often came to a stop in droughts or over summer.

The sluicing here was small-scale, but in the 1890s, hydraulic water cannons were used to wash huge amounts of soil away from creek banks, creating dramatic cliffs. You can get a glimpse of this in the gully to the left of the road as you drive back towards Chewton, but there are other sites nearby that offer better views.



Left: Small-scale sluicing by Chinese miners diverting water and shovelling soil into a sluice box. Right: hydraulic sluicing on an industrial scale. Illustrations by Rob Kaufman.

Want to view impressive sluiced cliffs? There are several sites within a short drive including the ❽ Forest Creek Gold Diggings on Prendergast St, Spring Gully Mine off the Old Coach Rd, and Red Knob Lookout on Greville St, Vaughan.

Between stops 3 and 4 the path turns left along an unsealed road, before leaving the road at stop 4.

Stop 4

The Coliban Scheme – slow and steady wins the race

Between stops 4 and 5 the track follows the channel that brought water from Expedition Pass Reservoir to mines in this area.

During the goldrush, mining often had to stop due to water shortages. So, the Victorian Government offered a prize to anyone who could provide a reliable water supply to the mines and farms of the central goldfields.

The construction of water races across hundreds of kilometres of Central Victoria took almost a decade. It was an extraordinary feat of engineering without the benefit of modern maps, GPS equipment or laser levels. Source: Coliban Water.

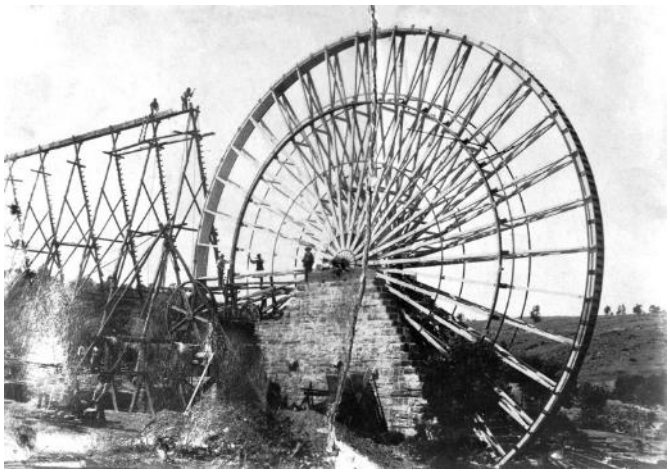
This incredible system of water races was designed by Joseph Martin Brady, a civil engineer from Ireland. The channels follow the contours of hills, dropping only a few feet per mile. Gravity ensures a steady but controlled flow of water along the gentle slope. It took almost a decade to plan and construct.

From here to Expedition Pass is only 2.5km but the water travelled over 7.5km on this slow race around the hills.

Stop 5

The flume – taking water to dizzying heights

The small semi-circular stone structure on the water race here is the point where water was diverted along a flume, a raised wooden channel like an aqueduct, to the wheel. The flume was 241m long and supported by trestles ranging from 6-18m high.



The final section of the flume being constructed in 1887. From this angle it looks as though the water would have had to run uphill, but it is just an illusion. Like the water race, the flume would have sloped down gently towards the wheel. Source: State Library of Victoria.

Look downhill following the line of the path before it turns left, and then look up into the trees. You should be able to glimpse the stone foundations that supported the centre of the water wheel through the trees. Can you imagine what the flume would have looked like from this angle?

The next section of path is rocky and uneven and involves a moderately steep descent for a short distance. To the right of the path is a large dam.

Stop 6

Coppiced trees – survival and transformation

Look around you at the trees. They are mainly box species. Like the example here, you will see that many have multiple small trunks, often around a central stump. This is known as coppiced regrowth, and is a remarkable story of survival, transformation and regrowth.

Many Australian trees have a type of swollen root called a lignotuber, that allows the tree to regrow after fire – or being chopped down during the goldrush. All the trees in this area have regrown after being harvested for fuel and timber.

Coppiced regrowth: A) Original tree, B) tree cut down near its base, C) new shoots appear around the rim, D) the shoots grow into multiple trunks and the old tree rots away. Illustration by Robert Avitabile. Source: *Discovering the Mount Alexander Diggings*, Mount Alexander Diggings Committee, 1999.

Continuing along the path towards the foundations of the wheel, you can see a channel at the point where the flume ended. This would have collected any water that spilled over from the buckets.

Stop 7

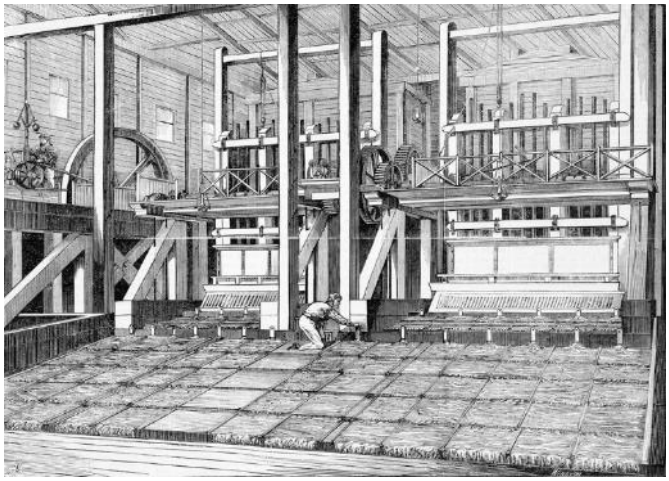
The crushing battery – shattering quartz and peace

Continue along the path and stop at the bottom of the steps beside the wheel foundations. There is no numbered post here.

This is where the Garfield Company's crushing battery stood, housed in a corrugated iron building next to the wheel. The battery also crushed quartz for the neighbouring Louisa James Company, which the Garfield Company bought a share in.

Nothing remains of the battery now. The ground beneath it began to subside in 1886, and it was relocated further south. Reports suggest that the wheel and flume were also relocated. It was a mammoth undertaking that stopped work for about six months. When the mine closed in 1912, all the equipment was sold off.

The machinery inside the shed would have looked something like the illustration below. Eighteen metal stampers (heavy hammers that looked like organ pipes each weighing over 200kg) were powered by a system of wheels and pulleys driven by the turning of the water wheel.



Engraving of a crushing battery by C.E. Winston, 1869. Source: State Library of Victoria.

Quartz was tipped into the battery from the raised tramline and pounded to sand by the stampers. The battery sand was mixed with water into a slurry and forced through mesh screens onto the sloping aprons or concentrating tables (also known as blankets). These were covered by copper sheets coated with mercury, which caught and amalgamated with the gold.

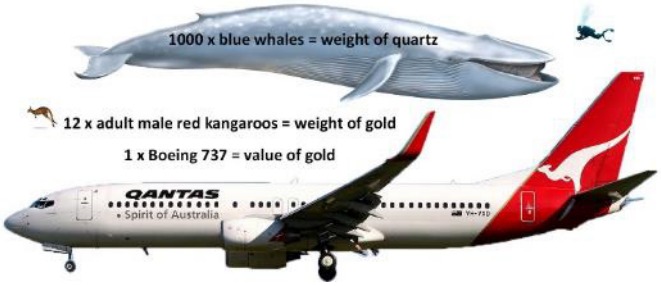
Periodically, the gold-mercury amalgam was scraped off the copper sheets and heated to vaporise the mercury and release the gold. Once cooled, the mercury was reused.

The miners involved in this process would probably have suffered from mercury poisoning. Mercury is a neurotoxin which damages the part of the brain that co-ordinates movement. It also harms the kidneys and other organs.

Although it is illegal to use mercury in gold mining in many countries today, there are an estimated 10-15 million unregulated gold miners operating in 70 countries. About 15% of the world's gold is produced by small-scale miners. Mercury is still widely used, causing irreversible neurological damage to workers.

Traces of mercury, arsenic and cyanide can still be found in mullock heaps and mine tailings across the Victorian goldfields, but pose little danger if not disturbed.

The Garfield Company crushed 136,468 tons (132 million kg) of quartz from this one shaft alone, yielding 33,518 troy ounces (1,042kg of gold). Enough to make 208,400 wedding rings or sell for around AUS $83 million in 2022.



Can you imagine what it would have been like to work here, among the quartz dust and the mercury and the deafening noise?

The battery operated 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, making a deafening noise. The water wheel turned almost continuously from 1887 to 1903, even on Sundays when the battery fell silent.

In 1903, the wheel was replaced by a steam engine which offered more crushing power, and an increase to twenty-five stampers.

From here, you can return to the trailhead or carpark, or continue on to the ❷ Garfield Bush Walk which starts on the opposite side of the clearing.

❷ Garfield Bush Walk

Grade 2, 400m circuit, 10mins
Gravel and earth track. Gentle hills, a few slightly steeper sections. No bushwalking experience required.

This short walk meanders through the bushland, giving you a taste of the surrounding Box-Ironbark forest.

Starting from the trailhead, look for the sign marked with a ❷ on the opposite side of the clearing and follow the short well-marked path which re-emerges near the water wheel.

On both sides of the path you can see the evidence of mining, including shafts, mullock heaps and small trenches and channels. The path slowly descends into a gully, where the battery sands (mine tailings) from the crushing plant were dumped, before climbing back towards the foundations of the water wheel.

From winter through to spring, gold returns to these hills when the wattles flower, including Golden Wattle, Spreading Wattle and Silver Wattle (there are several of these overhanging the path in the gully). Look out for a large Cherry Ballart on your left about half-way around the path. Known as *Balatj* in Dja Dja Wurrung language, it is a culturally important plant for its many uses and resources.

Clockwise from top left: Silver Wattle, *Balatj* or Cherry Ballart, Spreading Wattle, Tall Sundew, Leopard Orchid, Sticky Everlastings, *Murnong* or Yam Daisy (an important food plant for the Dja Dja Wurrung people), Golden Wattle (Australia's national floral emblem). Source: Deb Pople except Silver Wattle by Bidgee, Cherry Ballart by Eyeweed.

Spring wildflowers, including lilies, daisies, and orchids, are usually at their best between September-November, but Sticky Everlastings dust the forest with gold well into summer.

The forest floor is at its greenest after autumn and winter rains, when moss, fungi and lichen flourish. The closer you look, the more you begin to notice.

With different trees flowering through the year, there is always nectar to attract birds. Over 100 species of birds have been recorded in the area.

Walk slowly and be sure to look up, down, and all around.

What can you see, hear and smell?

Want to learn more about local plants? The Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club maintains Castlemaine Flora – an excellent website for identification. Why not take some photos of the trees and flowers on your walk and try to identify them later?

The recovering forest

How many coppiced trees – trees with multiple trunks around an old stump – can you see?

During the gold-mining era, most of the trees in this area were felled to support both mining and a growing population. Wood was needed for buildings, scaffolds, braces, headshafts, tramlines, trolleys, wheels, handles, tubs and cradles, to burn in quartz kilns (roasting made the quartz brittle and easier to crush) and boilers to generate steam for crushing plants. It was needed for homes, shops, churches, furniture, horse-drawn carts, cooking and warmth.

The felled trees have regrown multiple trunks around their stumps from lignotubers. What looks like many trees, may actually be just one. This make the forest look denser than it was originally.

Stop for a moment and imagine what the area might have looked like before the goldrush. The forest would have been more open with more big old trees with single trunks up to 2m in diameter.

Top: Splitters turning trees into planks. Watercolour by S.T. Gill, 1864. **Lower:** How many different uses of wood can you see in this photo of the Forest Creek Diggings, taken just after the height of the Forest Creek goldrush? Richard Daintree, 1858. Source (both): State Library of Victoria.

Tree hollows would have provided dens for possums and Brush-tailed Phascogales (Duan) and nest sites for birds. Small hollows may take seventy years to develop, and large hollows even longer, as branches break away and wood slowly begins to decay.

Few hollows have been able to develop yet in the recovering forest, presenting a challenge for the animals that rely on them. In many areas around Castlemaine and Bendigo, community groups are helping things along by placing nest boxes in the trees.

Recovery is slow, but steady.

Want to learn more about nest boxes? Connecting Country is community group working to increase, enhance and restore biodiversity across the Mount Alexander region through various projects, including nest box monitoring.

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, David Bannear and Philip Ingamells, 1999, *Discovering the Mount Alexander Diggings*, Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings,
- 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.

Help us look after your park by following these guidelines:

- No rubbish bins are provided. Please take all your 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.
- 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, 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 or by calling 13 1963.