

A SHORT HISTORY OF GOLD MINING IN THE  
MARYBOROUGH - HAVELOCK DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

Havelock is a small township situated some six miles N.W. of Maryborough, on the railway line to Dunolly, and falls within an extensive auriferous area, having the Amherst-Talbot-Clunes Goldfields to the south and the Dunolly-Moliagul Goldfields to the north.

Although it was once included in an area surrounding Maryborough in which there were some 30,000 men who had rushed there in a gold-seeking fever between June and September, 1854, its mining population has decreased over the years since then with only occasional minor fluctuations.

In 1913, A.M. Howitt wrote in Memoir No. 13, Geological Survey of Victoria: "Maryborough, once the site of a sheep and cattle run has in a little over half a century become one of the important centres of Victoria, and is now a large stately township, the main outlet for an extensive mining and agricultural district".

Since that time, mining activities have tended to be overshadowed by the agricultural development and sporadic attempts to continue the search for gold have met with less spectacular results than those in the district more than a century ago.

TOPOGRAPHY

The Four Mile Creek, which rises to the south of Maryborough, winds its way northwards past Havelock to join the Bet Bet Creek which itself eventually joins the Loddon River at Eddington. Most of this area around Maryborough is low hill country in lower Ordovician mudstones and sandstones with alluvium, river sands and gravels, etc. in stream beds and the shallow valleys.

Elevations are of the order of 900 feet above sea level with valleys of less than 100 feet in depth. The alluvial leads rising among the quartz reefs, of which there are many in the Ordovician sediments, and occurring within the alluvium of the Four Mile Creek valley, have been the main source of gold in the district.

Further north near the township of Bet Bet is a basalt flow with which are associated the rich deep leads of the Bet Bet Creek.

EARLY DISCOVERIES NEAR MARYBOROUGH

The first small gold rush in the vicinity of Maryborough occurred just prior to June 1854, at White Hills, then called Simson's Ranges, about 3 miles north-east of Maryborough township.

Mr. E.O. Farrell, once Chairman of the Mining Board of the Maryborough Mining District in the mid 19th century wrote :  
"On arriving at Simson's Ranges in June 1854, searching for new fields, I and my three mates found a prospecting party at work at a place since known as the White Hills. At that time there were only thirty or forty men in addition to the prospectors, and these were engaged principally in stacking or surfacing ... The sinking was very difficult, being through white cement. One party bottomed on the edge of the creek and carried a drive towards the hill where they picked out nuggets varying in weight from one to ten ounces. All the ground was soon marked off in claims, though the sinking was hard and difficult ... The bottom was a splendid soft white pipeclay and though the washdirt taken out at the time was only some six to nine inches yet the nuggets which could be picked out paid the men well.

"The next scene of operations was a hill about one mile south of the first gold workings and on the same flat ... In character it was similar to the first. The depth of sinking was from 16 to 24 feet through hard cement mixed with large white boulders. The washdirt taken out was only some 4 to 6 inches, but in it were found a large number of splendid nuggets thickly scattered over the white pipeclay bottom".

However, because the distance to water suitable for washing the dirt from the hills was several miles, the miners soon moved elsewhere in search of gold.

At this time payable gold was discovered by another party three miles further north in the Four Mile Creek valley in shallow ground. A rush set in and was fed by many of the parties returning from disappointing diggings at Avoca.

Mr. O'Farrell stated in personal communications to Mr. Brough Smyth who quotes in his book 'Gold-Fields and Mineral Districts of Victoria' (1869), that :

"Gold was found in almost every hole -- and within a period of less than three months from the time when I first saw the prospectors' tent near the site of the town of Maryborough,

It was at this time that small rushes were opened simultaneously in Main Lead, Blackman's Lead and many other smaller leads which were tributaries running into the Main Maryborough Lead. In Blackman's Lead the sinking varied from four up to twenty-five feet in depth. In this lead, to the south of Maryborough, much coarse gold and many large nuggets were found. One nugget weighed 1,034 ounces and contained about 833 ounces of pure gold; it was sold in Melbourne for £3,250 i.e. a price of less than £4 per oz. of gold, which indicates how valuable such a nugget would be today with the price of gold more than three times that amount.

Mr. O'Farrell said that dirt he witnessed being taken out of the gutters about two feet in thickness averaged as much as "24 and 36 ounces of gold to forty small buckets".

It was understandably thought that on following the leads north to where the rich tributaries of Main Lead and Blackman's Lead met the ground would be exceedingly valuable. However, for almost half a mile past this junction the ground was found to be poorer than in the tributary leads. Only to the north of Commissioner's Flat, later to be known as Royal Park, did the gold again become plentiful. Further north as the lead turned to the east and approached the White Hills, the sinking became deeper, varying from 56 to 65 feet, and the gold became scattered over a width of 14 chains. This proved too difficult for most of the miners who had little or no machinery and many drifted away from Maryborough.

In December 1854, W. Pierce and G. Young discovered an extensive flat at Alma, a few miles west of Maryborough, where good gold was obtained at a depth of five feet. The two discoverers were each rewarded with £150. By 1855 Maryborough was almost deserted.

In 1856 another rich find at Chinaman's Flat, about three miles north-west of Maryborough, once more attracted population. During this rush which embraced several miles of country, the rich gold-bearing quartz reefs were first discovered in the district. These appear to have been prospected only roughly and workings seldom went below the level of water in the ground for many years.

It was about this time, also, that the first land sale in the district took place and some of the miners settled along the Bet Bet valley and elsewhere helping to form a permanent population.

CONTINUATION OF MAIN-MARYBOROUGH LEAD

About the year 1857, the Main-Maryborough Lead, which had such a rich head in the Main and Blackman's Leads, was found to continue north from where it had been lost previously after a slight easterly diversion just north of Commissioners Flat (Royal Park). The sinking here was much deeper through yellow and white clay with layers of gravel mixed with boulder wash two to three feet in thickness resting on the slate and sandstone bedrock.

It was found, however, that the quantities of water pouring into the comparatively primitive mine workings were too great for the miners to cope with, and for this reason and because of some bad air encountered in the mines, the alluvial leads were not traced far north. Some more experienced miners from the Ballarat goldfield introduced winding and pumping machinery, but still no great progress was reported.

Population statistics for the Maryborough Mining District, Maryborough Division illustrate the result of this difficulty in mining and the correspondingly poor gold returns, which were what most of the population followed from district to district.

	13th Feb. 1858	4th Dec. 1858	1860	1868
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Total Number of Miners	11,500	11,500	7,400	2,370
Number of Chinese	1,800	4,447	...	...

Table 1 Population of the Maryborough Goldfields 1858 to 1868 (Goldfield Statistics, 1858; Victoria - Statistics, 1860; Mining Surveyors' and Registrar's Reports 1868)

The distribution figures for the population around Maryborough in 1860 (quoted from Victoria - Statistics 1860) show how the miners were spread over most of the areas in the district which were or had been good gold producers. Only a comparative few were working the leads as far north as Havelock.

Maryborough	3,000
Alma	900
Havelock	500
Madman's Flat	1,000
Chinaman's Flat	600
Garisbrook	<u>1,400</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>7,400</u>

The report on the Maryborough Division in the Mining Surveyor's and Registrars' reports, 1868, states the position of the mining industry in the district at that time as follows:

"The mining interests of nearly the whole of this division have materially suffered during the last quarter in consequence of the long continued drought. This cause, taken together with the discovery of gold in Queensland and the lately increased demand for mining labor at Ballarat, has had the effect of somewhat decreasing our mining population.

'...not only the main lead at Chinaman's Flat, but also the main lead at Maryborough, each having a course extending over several miles of country, are most probably rich in gold deposit below the water-level... What is specially wanted for this division of the district, in order to develop its large mineral resources, to foster and promote its material progress and prosperity, is capital and enterprise, combined with a fair supply of skilled mining labor. Without more abundant and more powerful machinery than the division at present possesses, it would be quite impossible to work the deep ground referred to with economy, efficiency or success."

DEEPER MINING NEAR HAVELOCK.

After a few years during which there were only shallow alluvial workings around Havelock, a company was formed in the early 1870's to sink a shaft about half a mile to the east of the Havelock Railway Station. The object of this work was to find the continuation of the main Maryborough lead and any tributary leads.

A shaft was sunk approximately 130 feet and levels driven north 150 feet, south 200 feet and west 900 feet. Apparently the ground was found to be unpayable although there are no plans or accurate reports of the results of this mining activity. Prospect shafts were sunk to the west of the Havelock Shaft and proved that a well-defined deep channel existed. The Havelock Consols Company was later formed to investigate this channel. It seems that this company did not have very much success at gold mining either.

About the same time the Old Lord Clyde Company sank a 150 ft. shaft one and a half miles north-west of the old Havelock shaft on the same lead. A main drive was put out approximately 150 feet north-east and some Gold was obtained. However, the shaft had been sunk in wash instead of solid country rock and consequently the ground began to creep so that the shaft was twisted and the mine had to be abandoned.

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It was fairly clear that rich deposits of gold might lie beneath the deeper ground to the north.

In 1889 the 4th. Report of the Secretary of Mines stated that during 1888, 'Four bores put down for the Maryborough Leads Junction Company, Havelock, proved ground from 100 to 127 feet in depth', and from two of these bores prospects of obtaining gold were reported to be good. These bores were in a rough east-west line, all less than 30 chains from the railway line to Bet Bet and about one mile north west of the original Havelock Mine at Havelock.

Although the records are rather poor for the period from 1890 to 1900, it is stated in Memoir No. 13 of the Geol. Survey of Victoria (The Maryborough Gold Field - A.M. Howitt, 1913. p.7): 'After a long interval, the lead, which had been proved further to the north by boring, was worked on an extensive scale by the Main Leads Company and by the Main Leads North Company, both of which paid dividends'. The production figures for the Havelock mines appear in the Annual Report of the Secretary for Mines, and Water Supply from the year 1902. Some of the companies formed at the beginning of the twentieth century to work the alluvial lead running north from Havelock to the Bet Bet Creek Valley were Main Leads Co., A.C.Chivars, Havelock, Duke and Main Leads Consols Co., Main Leads Gold Dredging Co., Pickard Bros. Havelock (See Appendix 1 for production figures).

By about 1910 most of these companies' production figures began to drop and only Duke and Main Leads Consols. Co., which was developing ground near the junction of the Main Maryborough Lead and the Duke Lead in the Bet Bet Valley, prospered.

Mining activity may have decreased then but it was seldom entirely at a standstill. In November, 1935 it was reported in the Chemical Engineering and Mining Review that 'the shaft being sunk by Havelock Central Gold Mining Co. N.L. to work portion of the main lead at Havelock, near Maryborough, has bottomed on 3 feet of strong wash over  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce gold at the bottom. The slum in this area carries  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce values recoverable by cyaniding'.

#### QUARTZ REEF MINING.

In most cases, it seems, the reefs in this area which had first been discovered about the year 1856, were worked only down to water-level for many years.

Perhaps the reef which gave the greatest gold values was McFarlane's Reef which is situated about half a mile south-west of

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yields for some time before the company took the reef up. A main engine shaft was sunk 350 feet and several levels and cross-cuts were driven but the water was found to be very heavy.

In 1899 lenticular patches of antimony ore (stibnite) were found which was said to have interfered with the gold yields, and to have been the main cause of closing down. It is reported that the total quantity of ore crushed was 1,125 tons yielding 803 ounces of recovered gold.

Another reef was Harvey's Reef at Waverly Gully, Havelock, where a shaft 60 feet deep was sunk about the year 1906.

Other reefs such as Harper's Reef, Sailor's Reef, Ant Reef, Wilson's Reef, Havelock Reef, Duffy's Reef, Oxonion Reef, Anglo-saxon Reef, Celtic Reef and Cameron Reef were of varying richness and size, but few gave spectacular results during the many years they have been worked since about 1860.

As can be appreciated from the fact that during 1854 some 30,000 people were living in and around Maryborough, the first real move towards populating this district was the result of the gold rushes there. It is true that not many of these early miners found a permanent population in any one district since they were ready and willing to follow the trail towards any new discovery of the yellow metal which showed promise of reward for them.

They did, however, leave behind them some who were prepared to settle on the land which was soon offered for sale in the district where the gold fever had died down a little. And, although the mining industry supported the majority of the population for many years, agricultural development has been steady and has finally outstripped mining as the main-stay of the thriving community.

A P P E N D I X.Table III. Statistics for some of the alluvial mines in the  
Four Mile Creek Valley.

Company.	Years of Operation.	Total Production Oz.	Total Production dwt.	Total Dividends.
A.C. Chivers.	1910 - 1912.	334.	13.	• • •
Duke & Main Leads Consols.	1906(?) - 1918.	108,090.		£80,000.
A. Hipgrave & Co.	1909 - 1910.	88.	15.	• • •
Main Leads.	? 1903.	2,440.	9.	?
Main Leads North.	? 1906.	28,785.	14.	£22,500.
Main Leads South.	1902(?)	64.	5.	• • •
Main Leads Gold Dredging Co.	1905 - 1907.	259.	9	• • •
Pickard Bros.	1909.	23.	19.	• • •

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y.

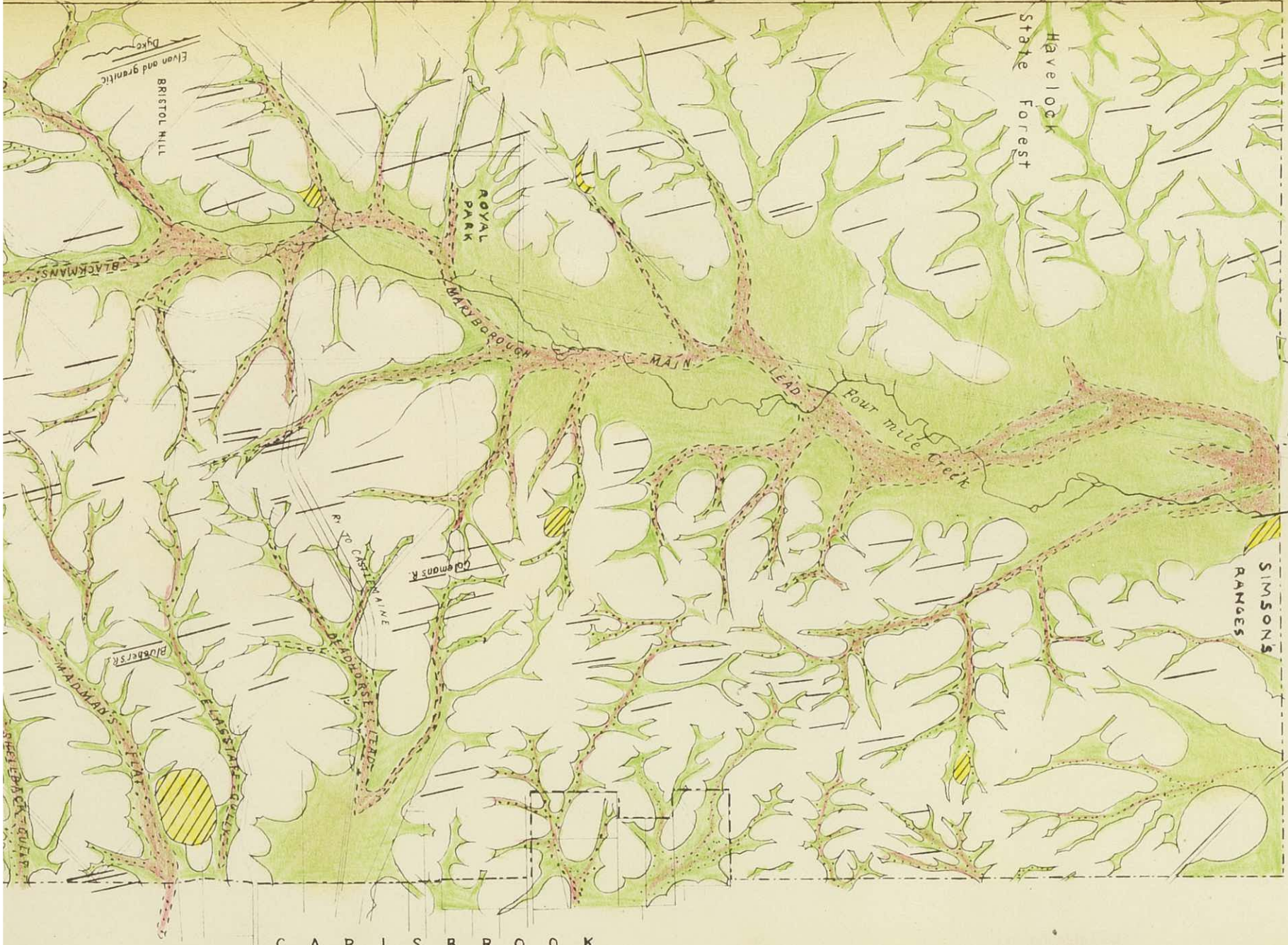
1. 1858: Gold-Field Statistics, 1858.
2. 1860: Victoria - Statistics, 1860.
3. 1868: Mining Surveyors' and Registrars' Reports, 1868.
4. 1869: Brough Smyth:- Gold Fields and Mineral Districts of Victoria, 1869.
5. 1888: Diamond Drills in Victoria IV. 1888. pp. 48-49.
6. 1898: Hunter, S.B:- Reports on Rapid Surveys of the Gold Fields Parish of Bet Bet Spec. Report. Dept. Mines, Victoria, 1898.
7. 1899: Hunter, S.B:- Reports to Accompanying Geological Maps, No. 1. Report on the Parish of Maryborough. 1898.
8. 1902 to 1918: Annual Reports of the Secretary of Mines and Water Supply.
9. 1909: The Deep Leads of Victoria. Geol. Surv. Victoria, Mem.No.7. 1909.
10. 1913: Howitt, A.M. The Maryborough Gold-Field Geol.Surv. Vic. Mem. No.11, 1913.
11. 1935: Chemical Engineering and Mining Review Nov.1935. p.27.

# MARYBOROUGH

PARISH OF  
COUNTY OF TALBOT

Scale: 40 Chs to 1 inch.

B E T B E T



C A R I S B R O O K

# SOUTH EAST PORTION PARISH OF BET BET

SCALE: 40 chains to linch

