



Oriental Claims Historic Area

- edge of the high country

The Oriental Claims Historic Area reminds us of a time when this gold rich part of the *high country* showed sufficient promise to encourage pioneers to forge out an existence in remote mountainous areas.

At its peak the Oriental Claims was one of the largest gold sluicing operations in the world. Today many of the mining relics, caves and sites can be viewed from short walks around the Claims.

Getting there and getting around

The Oriental Claims are about 400km north east of Melbourne and can be reached along the Great Alpine Road from either Wangaratta (via Hume Hwy) or Bairnsdale (Princes Hwy).

The Oriental Claims Historic Area (approximately 40 ha) is 2km south of Omeo (see map). If staying in Omeo it is possible to walk to the Claims along the scenic Livingston Creek walking track.

Picnicking

Toilet, tables and fireplaces are provided at the picnic area beside Dry Gully Creek. A display board details stories of the Claims and further information on the surrounding area.

In the past

The name of Oriental Claims may conjure up visions of hundreds of Chinese miners working with shovels and wicker baskets filled with dirt. In reality, it refers to a 19th century European mining company, "The Oriental Company" which worked this particular piece of the ground from 1876 - 1904. The term also acknowledges the significant contribution of Chinese miners to the area's history.

Gold was first discovered in the Omeo district in 1851. As it was publicised in the Sydney and Melbourne papers, miners were soon heading to the area to stake a claim. In the fifty years that the Claims were consistently worked, its estimated total gold production was 58,000 ounces. At today's prices this would equal around 34 million dollars.

The Wardens report of 1854 stated that there were fifty men working around the area, and receiving half an ounce a day for their efforts.

This worked out at 25-35 shillings per day or approximately 7 pounds a week.

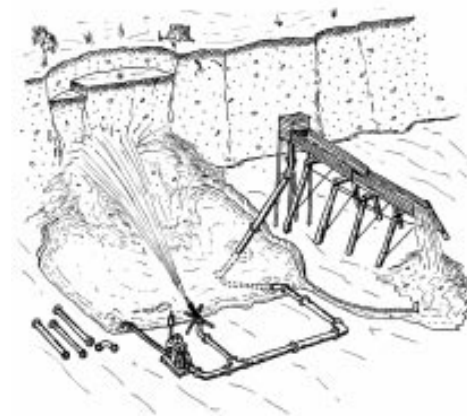
By 1856 gold fever had struck the area with a vengeance. A town, soon to be known as Omeo was emerging, with two stores and a hotel.



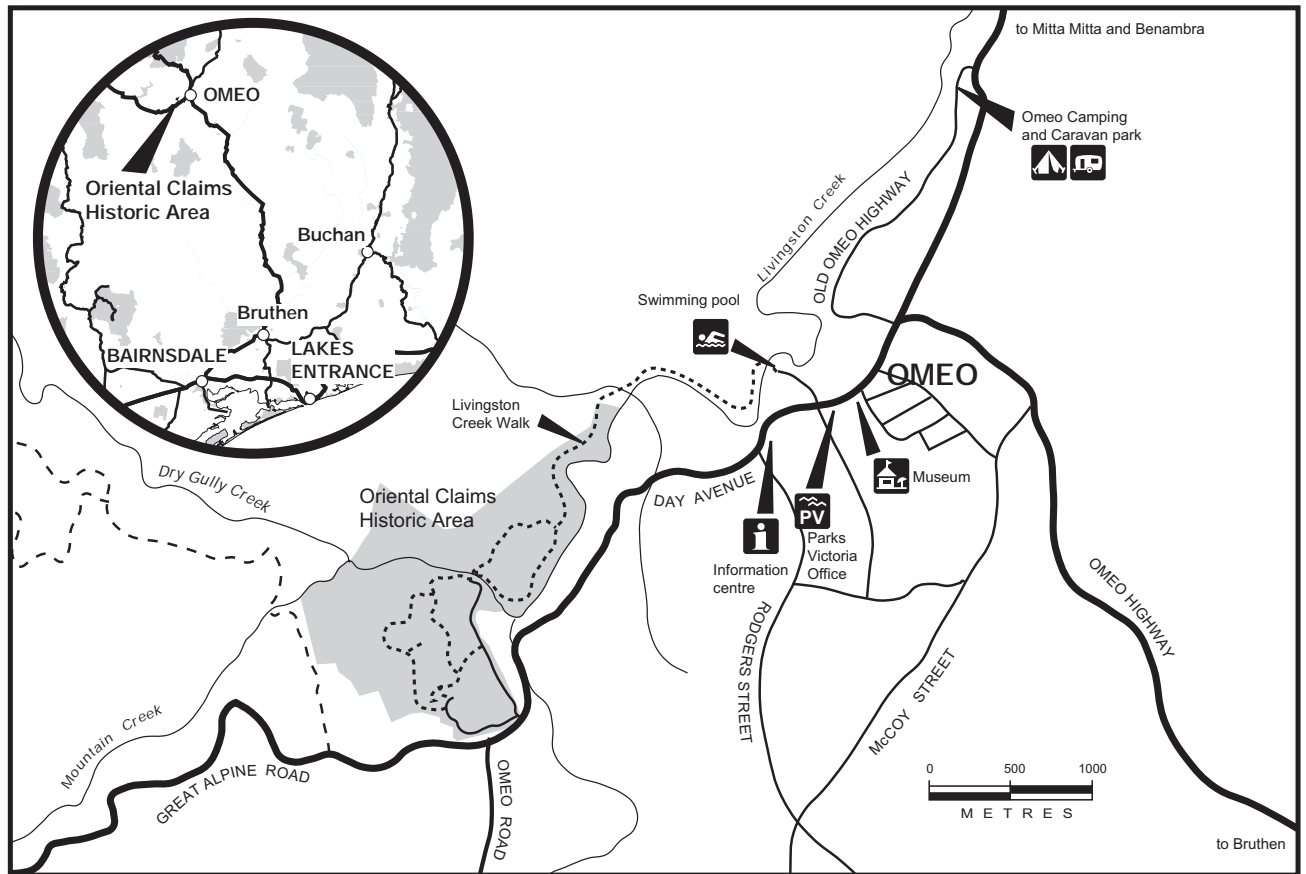
Parks Victoria Ranger

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www.parkweb.vic.gov.au**



Hydraulic sluicing operations,
Livingston Creek (Rob Kaufman)



Walks around the Oriental Claims

- 1** *Ah Fongs Loop 45 minutes return*

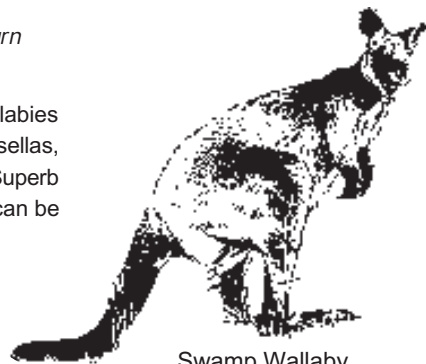
Crossing the Dry Gully Creek Bridge this leisurely walk takes you to the site originally worked by Ah Fong in 1875. It is one of the most extensive and richest sites within the Oriental Claims

Pioneer Claim Loop 45 minutes return.
- 2** The dominant feature of this walk is the rugged cliff faces, up to 30 m in height, formed by hydraulic sluicing. Also along this walk you may see a variety of orchids (Pink Fingers and Wax Lip and the more common colonies of Spider, Sun and Donkey orchids) from late winter to early summer.
- 3** *Oriental Claims to Omeo (or vice versa) 2 hours return*

This pleasant walk follows the Livingston Creek to Omeo/Oriental Claims. Watch out for Swamp Wallabies and the colourful range of native birds (Crimson Rosellas, White-eared Honeyeaters, Eastern Yellow Robins, Superb Fairy-Wrens and White-browed Scrubwrens) that can be seen in this area.

Warning

Please keep to the walking tracks, particularly in the gold mining areas where there are mine shafts and unstable cliffs.



Swamp Wallaby

to Mount Hotham 52km,
Bright 109km

Oriental Claims Historic Area

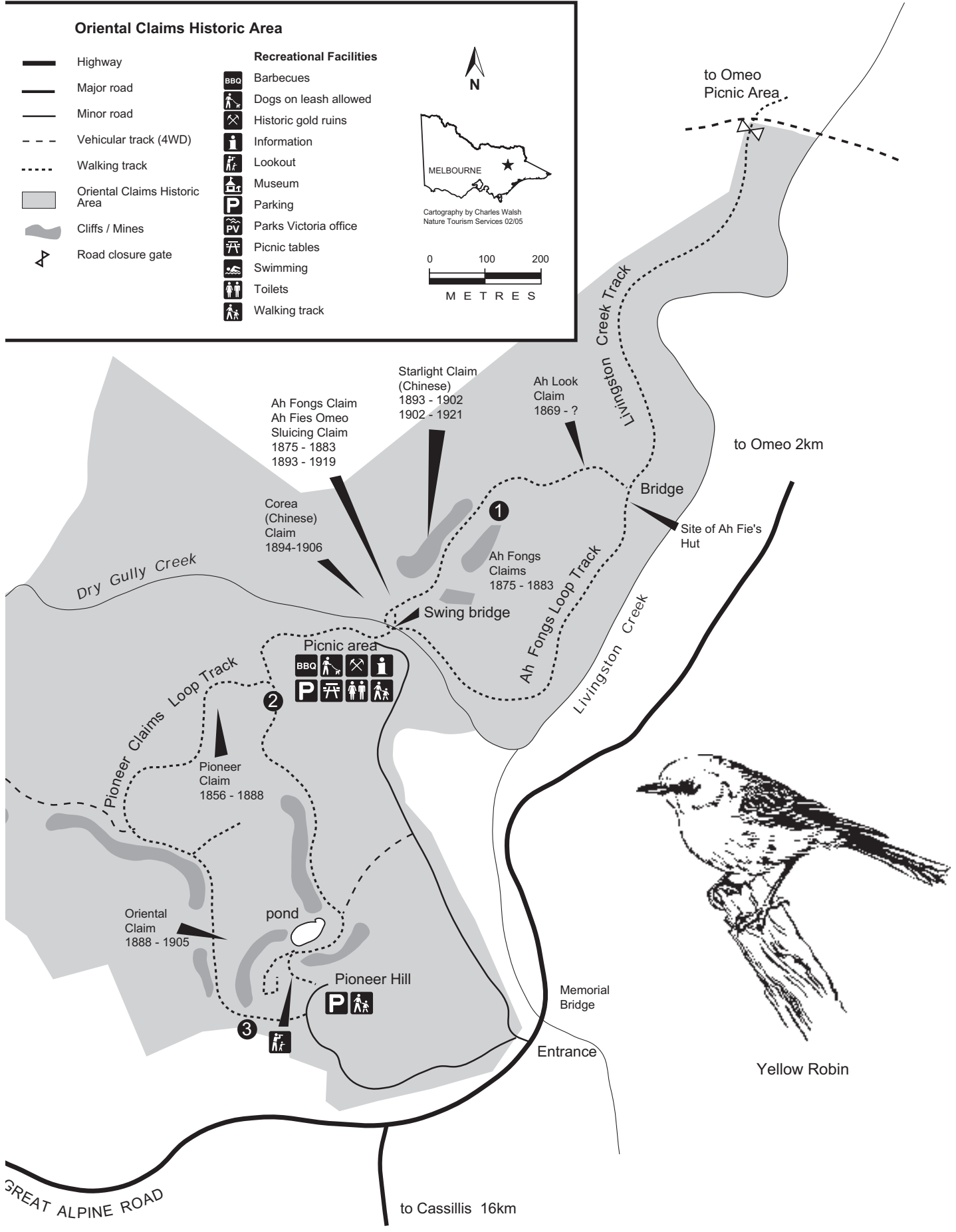
- Highway
- Major road
- Minor road
- Vehicular track (4WD)
- Walking track
- Oriental Claims Historic Area
- Cliffs / Mines
- Road closure gate

- ### Recreational Facilities
- Barbecues
 - Dogs on leash allowed
 - Historic gold ruins
 - Information
 - Lookout
 - Museum
 - Parking
 - Parks Victoria office
 - Picnic tables
 - Swimming
 - Toilets
 - Walking track

MELBOURNE

Cartography by Charles Walsh
Nature Tourism Services 02/05

0 100 200
METRES



Yellow Robin

GREAT ALPINE ROAD

to Cassillis 16km

to Omeo 2km

For further information
contact

Parks Victoria Information
Centre on
13 1963
or visit our website at
www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria Shire Building,
Day Avenue, Omeo 3898
Phone (03) 5159 1660
Fax (03) 5159 1665

Omeo Information Centre,
Great Alpine Road,
Omeo 3898
Phone (03) 5159 1552

Caring for the
environment

Help us care for our parks
and reserves by
remembering these
guidelines:

All native plants and animals
are protected.

Please keep your dog on
leash at all times.

Light fires only in fireplaces
provided and never on days
of Total Fire Ban.

Do not disturb or remove any
fossil, relic or historic
artefacts.

Camping is not permitted.

Alluvial gold

Alluvial gold, as distinct from reef gold, is concentrated above the bedrock or clay. In most Victorian goldfields the alluviums were worked first, before operations switched to hard rock mining. Often the miners moved to new fields as the alluvial gold dwindled. The Oriental Claims were unique for their alluvial workings - achieving consistent gold production throughout it's working history.

Gold Sluicing Techniques used at Oriental Claims

Cradle/Box Sluicing: a box like device used for separating the gold from washdirt. Fed in from the top, the washdirt together with water passes through a screen and then over riffles or bagging where the gold is collected.

The combination of Box and Hydraulic sluicing led to the construction of caves in the clay soils around the Claims.

Hydraulic Sluicing: this form of mining referred to as hydraulicking formed the impressive cliff faces which are still evident in the Claims today. Material was washed down into sluice boxes by means of high pressure hoses.

The new hydraulicking technique created significant problems with the discharge of mud into Livingston Creek. As a result the Sludge Abatement Board was formed, imposing restrictions and eventually leading to the discontinuance of hydraulic sluicing in 1904.

Standing on top of the cliffs at the Claims it is possible to see how these tireless miners cut away an entire hill changing the shape of the landscape forever.



Crimson Rosella

Nearby National Parks and Reserves

Travelling west along the Great Alpine Road will take you into the heart of the high country – the subalpine and alpine areas of the Alpine National Park and the Mt Hotham Alpine Resort. Summer offers walks amongst snow gums and fragrant heaths and wildflowers; whilst winter and spring provide the challenge of both cross country and alpine skiing.

Victoria Falls and Cassilis historic areas are also nearby. Victoria Falls has basic but pleasant camping and picnic facilities.

Further information

Omeo Visitor Information Centre and Omeo Historical Society have information on walking, historic images and maps of this fascinating area. Other publications which are recommended for reading include:-

- *Ghosts and Gold in Victoria High Country*, RW Christie, High Country Publishing Dargo, 1993.
- *The History of Gold Discovery in Victoria*, J Flett, Hawthorn Press, 1970.

Alpine National Park Parknotes

- *The High Country* – around Bright, Mt Beauty & Omeo
- *Source of the Rivers* – around Mitta Mitta, Omeo, Tallangatta & Corryong
- *Wilderness & the Snowy* – around Benambra, Buchan & Bonang
- *Our Mountain Heritage* – around Heyfield, Licola & Dargo
- *Valleys & Bluffs* – around Mansfield & Whitfield



Superb Fairy Wren