

Gold Strike

VICTORIA



‘We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties.’

– Eureka Oath, November, 1854

Eureka Stockade Gardens

At daybreak on 3 December 1854 a government force of British soldiers and Victorian police attacked an entrenchment of 120 aggrieved gold miners at Ballarat. The Eureka Rebellion became one of Australia’s defining moments.

The Eureka Stockade Gardens mark the site set aside in the late 1800s to acknowledge the Eureka Rebellion of 1854, an event that gave rise to Australia’s unique tradition of a ‘fair go’.

Events like the Eureka Stockade have shaped Australia’s political and social development. The small band of 120 miners, made up of more than 16 nationalities gathered in a wooden stockade, were attacked at dawn by around 400 soldiers and police officers. By the end of the conflict 33 miners and five soldiers were dead.

The rebellion was fuelled by discontent with the mining licence, which the diggers claimed was taxation without representation and a tax upon labour. More generally, the uprising was sparked by a desire for fair treatment for all. The rebellion led to a fairer goldfields system with the licence replaced by the cheaper Miners Right, giving miners the right to vote. Many see this act as the first steps on the path to Australia’s democracy.

In addition to helping build an egalitarian and diverse nation made up of people from different backgrounds, the legacy of the gold rush has been far reaching and continues to be felt today.

National Heritage List: 8 December 2004

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, Victoria

In 1851 the burning intensity of gold fever lured tens of thousands of immigrants to Australia, from all over the world, eager to strike it rich. Within 10 years, Australia’s population trebled to more than one million people.

Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park in Victoria is the most outstanding gold rush era site in Australia in terms of the diversity of types, integrity and time-depth of its collection of mining sites. The miners huts, Chinese market gardens, mine headframes, stone footings



and shallow shafts in a bush environment gives us a rare snapshot of how people lived and worked in the harsh environment of the goldfields.

Gold and the search for this precious metal, has played a major role in how our nation has developed. Its influence has left us with the enduring legacy of exploration, immigration, research, and industrial booms.

The gold seekers who came to this part of the world brought an enormous range of skills, professions and cultures. The work they did in places such as Ballarat and Bendigo ushered in a long period of prosperity and the development of a modern industrial base in Australia.

The first major gold rushes took place in 1851 near Bathurst in New South Wales and at Ballarat in Victoria.

A sheep station hut keeper, Christopher Thomas Peters, had also found gold in Castlemaine, Victoria but kept his discovery quiet. He and three friends earned a year’s pay in a month by chipping gold from rocks with a hammer and chisel.

However, word of the fabulous richness of the diggings soon got out and thousands of people started to explore the creeks around the area, finding gold close to the surface. Major gold rushes followed in Queensland from 1866 and Western Australia from 1892, with thousands of hopeful prospectors joining the hunt each time.

National Heritage List: 27 January 2005