

TEACHER'S PACK

The Story of Gold

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THE STORY OF GOLD

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James McBrien, Surveyor, is credited with the first gold discovery in Australia. Diamond Hill, Fish River, O'Connell, NSW on 15th February 1823.

Subsequent discoveries have been credited to : Count Strezlecki, Polish Explorer; Rev. William Branwhite Clarke, Anglican Clergyman and Geologist; and a shepherd named McGregor.

Gold was, and still is a royal metal. It belongs to the crown. During the early days fears were held that if news got out that gold was discovered, convicts and rogues would be enticed to a life of crime and workers desert their employers. So the government of the day had all the gold news suppressed.

Governor Gipps informed Mr Clarke to "put the gold away before we get our throats cut". Before all that, nothing of this nature occurred.

1849 saw the discovery of gold in California, USA by James Marshall, a coach builder, who was building a water race to operate a water powered sawmill. This started the first world Gold Rush. The situation was different in America, as they were independent of England and Queen Victoria, having won independence on 4th July 1776.

Now a series of events happened:

Australia stopped taking convicts in 1845. Free settlers were attracted to emigrate to Australia. One of these free settlers was Edmund Hammond Hargreaves, who came out on a ship captained by John Lister.

With the discovery of gold in America many free settlers left Australia and went to California. This drain on the population greatly worried the Government and so a thought was given to offer a reward to anyone finding payable gold in NSW. Coinciding with this thought, Hargreaves decided to return to Australia and search for gold in rough country beyond Bathurst, which he said reminded him of California. On arriving in Sydney he obtained a backer. This enabled him to equip himself and set off for Bathurst.

He obtained accommodation at an Inn on the Wellington Road, which was run by Mrs Lister, wife of the sea captain on whose ship Hargreaves migrated to Australia. Young John Lister agreed to act as a guide for Hargreaves, and to show him around the area.

On 12th February 1851, Hargreaves on the Lewis Ponds Creek, washed six dishes of dirt and obtained five minute specs of gold. Hargreaves is recorded as saying to John Lister "This is a memorable day in the History of New South Wales. I shall be a baron, you will be knighted, and my old horse will be stuffed, put in a glass case and sent to the British Museum".

Hargreaves left for Sydney to claim the reward of a payable gold field, but met with much scepticism as to the authenticity of the gold. The Colonial Secretary, Peas Thomson, showed the gold to an "expert miner" who had returned from California. The expert said it was "just like Californian gold". Hargreaves had his problems.

Then Hargreaves received a message at his home near Gosford that payable gold had been discovered. Hargreaves came post haste to Bathurst and was taken by John Lister and William Tom to the site where they found the gold. The two boys wanted to mark a claim for themselves but were talked out of it by Hargreaves with a promise of better things, which were never forthcoming.

Before leaving for Sydney to break the news, the Toms were shown how to make a cradle for washing gold.

May 16 1851. The Sydney Morning Herald carried the editorial "Gold Discoveries at Bathurst", and the rush was on.

GOLD LICENCES

To overcome the problem of the Queen's right to the gold, a Gold Licence was issued by the Queen's government at the cost of 30/- (\$3.00) per month. The reason the licence was so highly priced was to deter the poorer section of the community from leaving their jobs. The idea being no money, no licence, no leave. The authorities underestimated the lure of gold.

James Hardy was appointed the first Gold Commissioner in NSW which in those days included Victoria. Commissioner Hardy's job was to issue licences, allocate claims and settle disputes. He was a fair man and was respected on the gold fields of Bathurst.

It was reported that on many occasions diggers arrived with no money to buy a licence. They were told by Hardy "dig for some gold, and then come and get your licence". News of these incidents got back to Sydney and the Colonial Secretary was reported to "hit the roof". "No licence, no dig" came the order from the secretary.

GOLD



LICENSE.

No.

185

The Bearer

Having paid the Sum of Thirty Shillings on account of the General Revenue of the Colony, I hereby License him to mine or dig for Gold, or exercise and carry on any other trade or calling on such Crown Lands within the Colony of N.S.W as she be assigned to him for the purpose by any one duly authorised in that behalf.

This License to be in force until the _____ and no longer.

Commissioner

REGULATIONS TO BE OBSERVED BY THE PERSON DIGGING FOR GOLD OR OTHERWISE EMPLOYED AT THE GOLDFIELDS

1. This License is to be carried on the person, to be produced whenever demanded by any Commissioner, Peace Officer, or other duly authorised person, and is not transferable.
2. No Mining will be permitted where it would be destructive to any line of road which is necessary to maintain, and which shall be determined by the Commissioner, nor within such distance around any store as it may be necessary to reserve access to.
3. It is enjoined that all persons on the Gold Fields maintain a due and proper observance of Sundays.
4. The extent of claim allowed to each Licensed Miner is twelve feet by twelve feet, or 144 square feet.
5. To a party consisting of two Miners, twelve feet by twenty four feet, or 288 square feet.
6. To a party consisting of three Miners, eighteen feet by twenty four feet, or 432 square feet.
7. To a party consisting of four Miners, twenty four feet by twenty four feet, or 576 square feet: beyond which no greater area will be allowed.