

NOTHING BUT GOLD

Prologue: DISCOVERY

The existence of available gold-fields in Australia was first made public during the month of May, 1851, in consequence of the practical experiments of Mr Hargraves in the vicinity of Bathurst, in the adjacent colony of New South Wales, on the 12th February preceding. The spirit of research soon extended to Victoria, where, in August following, a gold-field was established, although with limited workings, at Anderson's Creek, about sixteen miles eastward from Melbourne, and another at Clunes, on the Deep Creek, a tributary of the Loddon, about ninety miles west of the same city. In the following month the importance of Ballarat began to be ascertained; and this was rapidly succeeded by the discovery of the rich deposits near Mount Alexander. The auriferous character of a large area of the colony was thus assured; and upon the faith of this circumstance, multitudes were incessantly prospecting for new deposits. By the guidance of certain empiric tests, derived entirely from local and practical observation, various other gold-fields, extending over a vast area of surface, were successively discovered, and their united produce has already astonished the world by the marvellous quantities of the precious metal. (Anderson, p. 7)

The mysterious and wonderful arrangement of Divine Providence are brought forcibly to our minds on viewing the modes of life of this peculiar people, existing without a wish beyond hunting the forests, and living precariously on food which they obtain by climbing the immense gum-trees, wholly ignorant that at their roots the most precious metal has been concealed for thousands of years; generation after generation of aborigines has passed away, unconscious of the riches concealed beneath the surface of their native hunting-grounds, perchance to have made them the most powerful race under the sun. (*Illustrated London News*, 24/4/52, p. 314)

The first supposed discovery took place some sixty years ago [c. 1790], at Port Jackson. A convict made known to Governor Phillip the existence of an auriferous region near Sydney, and on the locality being examined, particles of real gold-dust were found. Every one was astonished, and several other spots were tried without success. Suspicion was now excited, and the affair underwent a thorough examination, which elicited the following facts. The convict, in the hope of obtaining his pardon as a reward, had filed a guinea and some brass buttons, which, judiciously mixed, made a tolerable pile of gold-dust, and this he carefully distributed over a small tract of sandy land. (Clacy, p. 50)

Unfortunately his ingenuity was only rewarded with lashes, confinement, and a spare diet. (Bonwick (magazine), October 1852, p. 5)

[Brass Button Gully at Tarnagulla may have had similar provenance.]

In 1849, a mining man wrote home to Cornwall from Australia: 'If... you may know of any Government [assisted] Cornish miner about to seek his fortune in Australia, be pleased to tell him to apply his knowledge of the mode of extracting his ore from his own gravel to the drift and debris on the flanks of the great north and south chain of Australia... for great would be my pleasure to learn that through the application of

Cornish skill such a region should be converted into a British El Dorado.’ (*South Australian Register*, 19/7/1851)

Californian gold rushes—1849-50

The ex-sailor shepherd known as Bendigo, after whom the creek (also known as Piccaninny Creek) was named went to California in 1849. (John Hamilton in *Bendigo Advertiser*, 23/12/1901)

Black Thursday bushfires, 6 February 1851—Fires burnt (among other places) Plenty Ranges and the Pyrenees and Loddon districts. (Turner, pp. 331-2) Instrumental in discovery of gold?

Victoria had 77,000 inhabitants in march 1851—23,000 in Melbourne, 8,000 in Geelong, and 46,000 thinly spread over the rest of the district (half of them in pastoral occupations). (Turner, pp. 304-5)

... we have a superabundance of the richest land for agricultural purposes, only waiting for what the mother country has too much of,—labour... (*Argus*, 18/8/51)

NSW gold rushes—May 1851

The flockmasters are in despair. Hosts of people are leaving Port Phillip for Ophir—drawing their small sums from the different banks, so that a country cry has been raised. (*Adelaide Times*, 23/7/51)

Prominent citizens and business leaders of Melbourne formed a Gold Discovery Committee, offering a reward of £500 for the discovery of a profitable gold mine within 200 miles of Melbourne. (Flett, p. 1)

15 July 1851—Separation celebrations, LaTrobe took oath of office. (Serle, p. 10)

16 July 1851—Mayor of Melbourne, on behalf of Gold Discovery Committee, announced that payable gold had been found by James Esmond at Clunes in the Pyrenees and by Louis Michel and his party at Anderson’s Creek near Warrandyte. (Serle, p. 10)

Eventually, these two groups would be awarded £1000 each for their finds. (Flett, p. 7)

After the first Victorian discoveries, two months had still to pass before the rush really began. In mid-July when Esmond returned to Clunes with the first cradle to be used in Victoria, he found about fifty men getting meagre returns from the use of tin pots and dishes. By the end of the month there were some three to four hundred at Clunes and as many at Anderson’s Creek, but the latter field proved so poor that it never attracted more than the first few hundred people. (Serle, p. 11)

Anderson’s Creek also known as the Victoria Diggings. (*Argus*)

The first important discovery was by T. Hiscock at Buninyong early in August. All those at Clunes were immediately attracted, but few managed to pay their way and many left in disgust. Knowledge of the proper washing technique was slow to spread, and some were still trying to pick out grains of gold with pins. There was little yet to attract any large numbers, especially in a bitter winter with snow on the midland ranges and widespread flooding. ...there was little surface alluvial and it was necessary to sink between ten and forty feet deep. (Serle, p. 12)

Clunes diggings almost deserted by early September 1851—'nothing can be done without quarrying, or blasting, and ...it takes a man a whole day to get one cart-load of earth for the cradle. (*Argus*, 8/9/51)

In late August, diggers dispersed from Buninyong to avoid having to buy licences (gold licences introduced 1 September). Led to prospecting of new ground—discovery/development of Ballarat—prolific gold. (*Argus*, 8/9/51)

From Buninyong.—The mailman from this locality, informs me that a new goldfield has been discovered there on the banks of a river, the name of which he could not recollect. The spot is distant eight miles from the present field, further inland, and it promises to be a much more profitable one than the present. (*Argus* (Geelong correspondent), 30/8/51)

Yuilles Creek/Golden Point.

The discovery of this gold field is the salvation of Port Phillip... (*Argus*, 10/9/51 (ex. *Geelong Advertiser*))

Ballarat was first given its name in a *Geelong Advertiser* report in the *Argus*, 17/9/51.

Ballarat, 25th November 1851

Sir.—Perceiving that the name of the diggings here is generally pronounced incorrectly, I beg to state that it is a native name, and that the accent is not on the last syllable, but on the one before the last as written above. It is a pity that Englishmen should spoil the enphony of the native language.

Archibald B. Yuille, Owner of the Run, Ballarat (*Argus*, 29/11/51)

About 20 September the Cavanagh brothers (the first to break through the 'second bottom') arrived in Geelong with 60 lb. of gold, and the exodus from the towns began in earnest. Ballarat reached its first peak in population (between six and ten thousand) in mid-October. (Serle, p. 12)

Ballarat—'the shrine of the golden Juggernaut'. (*Argus*, 8/10/51)

The people of Geelong regarded Ballarat as *their* goldfield, and saw it as a guarantee of the town's future greatness and its predominance over Melbourne. (Serle, p. 12)

Rush to Black Hills—late Sept/early Oct?

The rush was thought to be abating, the gold at Ballarat being 'generally found in one vein, and this vein is only rich now and then'. (Letter to 'a German gentleman in Adelaide', 15/10/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 31/10/51)

The Golden Point is nearly worked out, and the new diggings as well as the Black Hill are laborious and uncertain. (*Argus*, 25/10/51)

Ballarat diggings had begun to lose some of their lustre and townsfolk were already becoming apathetic of gold news. (*Argus*, 15/10/51)

Letter from John Worley appeared in 'Domestic Intellience' column of the *Argus* of 8/9/51—'discovery of a new gold field at Western Port'. Overlooked for a month or more.

A party at Mount Alexander wrote in early October that it was one of only two parties digging there at that time. (*Argus*, 13/10/51)

...many of those who had found the Ballarat diggings preoccupied or unremunerative were moving away to Mount Alexander, but what were the prospects in that locality we are not informed. (report dated 15/10 in *SA Register*, 31/10/51)

20/10/51—Within the last fortnight however the discovery of gold in the bed of an adjoining creek, descending from the Mount Alexander ranges, and forming a junction with a branch of the East Loddon [sic] River drew off the attention of all from the [Barker's Creek] quartz veins. (LaTrobe to Grey)

[At Mt Alexander] ...about 100 men at working, digging out clay of a purple tint, from the side of the Creek, and picking out particles of gold, which, without the usual cradling machine, was affording an ample reward for their labour. (*Argus*, 29/10/51)

[Hardships at Mt Alexander described by a Ballarat digger] ...and all this because of the new toy... (*Argus*, 17/11/51)

By the end of the first week in November 1851, 2000 licences had been issued at Mt Alexander. (*Argus*, 10/11/51)

...the more experienced [diggers] are quietly retreating to the Loddon, where report states that gold has been found in abundance. (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

A rich new deposit of gold was discovered at Forest Creek 'through a horse kicking up some of the dirt while galloping'—diggers prised gold from the surface with knives, filling pint pots and, in one case, a quart pot. (*Argus*, 14/11/51)

The central diggings—in fact the *rendezvous* of all the diggers—is at the Forest Creek, generally spoken of by the diggers as 'the Mount' ... (*SA Register*, 14/452)

In November 1851 diggers began to congregate on Bendigo Creek at the foot of Golden Gully. By mid-December about 250 were at work. The first report of the goldfield was sent to the *Argus* by Henry Frencham on 8 December. It was published on 13 December. (Bowden, p. 57)

A new goldfield has been found about 30 miles beyond Mount Alexander, on Mr Gibson's run. (*Register*, 9/1/52 (ex-*Argus*))

Until about April 1852, the Bendigo diggings were generally considered part of the Mt Alexander goldfield.

Since I last wrote the upper workings on Forrest [sic] Creek, prolific as they are, have been found equalled by others down the valley to its junction with Barker's Creek, a secondary branch of the Loddon River, upon which, and in converging gullies, the workings now extend in continuous lines for many miles. On Friars [Fryers} Creek, five miles to the westward, an equally rich field has now been two or three weeks in working, and within a short period another ground at Bendigo Creek, to the north-east, on a branch of the Campaspe, arising in the Mount Alexander range, and promising equal richness, has been entered upon; these are already resorted to by many adventurers. Right and left throughout the whole region gold is found to exist. (LaTrobe to Grey, 19/12/51)

[Mt Alexander]... it is impossible to give you any idea of the extent of these diggings, but from what information I can collect, there will be no cessation for several months. (*Argus*, 2/10/51 (Kyneton correspondent))

In short, judging from the general prevalence of the geological formation in which the gold has hitherto been found so abundantly over the whole length and breadth of the colony I can contemplate no limit to the discoveries or the results of the opening of these fields. Meantime the whole structure of society and the whole machinery of Government is dislocated. (LaTrobe to Grey, 19/12/51)

Chapter 1: DIGGINGS, HO!

Gold Fever

A favourite song of the ‘new aristocracy’ was ‘There’s a Good Time Coming’. Emigrants bound for the United States and Australia had been singing it for many years, but the words, by the versatile Dr Charles Mackay, were still rousingly appropriate: ‘There’s a good time coming, boys, a good time coming:/We may not live to see the day, But the earth shall glisten in the ray/Of the good time coming. (Pearl, p. 135)

One of the discoverers of gold on the Plenty River at Warrandyte, on returning to Melbourne to make his claim for the reward in early July 1851— ‘heard of several shepherds and farm servants having in a fit of the prevailing epidemic absconded from their employers, and a blacksmith residing beyond Kavannah’s public house on the Plenty, is hard at work making picks, with orders for which he is completely overwhelmed.’ (*Adelaide Times*, 23/7/51)

Originally, the gold commissioners were instructed not to issue a digger with a licence until he had furnished proof of discharge from his last employer—i.e., that he was not an absconder. This proved to be an impossible requirement.

Farmhand William Wilson (alias Cabman) absconded from his hired service—‘preferring to gather golden dust on his own account, to getting in golden ears on another’s’. (*Argus*, 13/12/51)

GOLD IN ABUNDANCE

It is no use mincing matters respecting the richness of our gold fields. The truth must be told, whether for good or evil, and the sooner the better. (*Herald*, 1/10/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 13/10/51—the *Register* called it ‘an embarrassment of riches’.)

The month of September 1851 is the most eventful epoch in the history of Victoria—it will stand in golden letters in our Kalend, and will be the datum line to start on our new career of prosperity, for in this month fortunes have been made in a few hours, and a digger who went down into a hole at daybreak, a poor man, emerged at sunset with a competency: yes!—this is true—every moment is a golden one... gold is revolutionizing us...

... I must bring to a close this golden epistle to the Geelongites, and bid them gird up their loins for the forthcoming harvest of prosperity. (*Geelong Advertiser* (Ballarat correspondent), September 1851, quoted in *SA Register*, 13/10/51)

Geelong is mad, stark staring gold mad. (17/9/51, quoted by Bonwick, p. 32)

The whole town of Geelong is in hysterics. Gentlemen foaming at the mouth, ladies fainting, children throwing somersets, and all on account of the extraordinary news from Buninyong. (quoted from *Argus*)

‘The Pivot City’—a sobriquet invented by the citizens of Geelong to symbolise it as the point on which the fortunes of the colony would culminate and revolve. (Kelly, p. 160)

The Melbourne *Argus* crowed over the *Geelong Advertiser* (or ‘Pivot Thunderer’) when the Mount Alexander rush seemed about to eclipse Ballarat. For too long the Geelong paper had boasted of its town’s nearer proximity to the ‘scene of attraction’—often

exaggerating the discrepancy between its closeness and Melbourne's. The *Argus* was swift to ascertain and advertise the fact that Melbourne would be the point of access to the new goldfield. (*Argus*, 29/10/51)

Mount Alexander, says the *Geelong Advertiser*, should be re-christened and baptized Mount Deception. ... Where are the monstrous yields so much vaunted by the Melbourne press, that were to eclipse the Geelong gold yields? ... Mount Alexander is a sham, a gold mirage that fades on approach—a 'Glamour' raised by Melbourne conjurers, a Will-o'-the-wisp, started from the swamp of Melbourne despair, to mislead the journeyers from Ballarat, and turn traffic from the Geelong golden road... (*Sydney Morning Herald*, quoted in *Argus*, 25/11/51)

The correspondent of the *Geelong Intelligencer* announces that the gold [at Mount Alexander] is embedded in iron ore, and that it is found thirty-two feet below the surface. (*Illustrated London News*, 20/3/52, p. 243)

... it is a race for wealth, in which even the laggard gains a prize. Every movement is measured by troy weight, and any of the workmen would as soon think of swallowing a nugget as making a strait [sic] back. Gold is revolutionising manners and language—everything is tintured with the yellow hue, and ounces and grains have become familiar words. (*Argus (ex-Geelong Advertiser)*, 17/9/51)

Oh, this gold! I wonder where this mania will stop. People used to be satisfied to find it by the ounce, but now nothing but lumps will satisfy... ... men, who for life have been slaving for 25s. or 20 s. per week, are now earning £20, £30, £40 or £50, and as much as £60 per week, digging up gold by pounds, picking it out in lumps with the point of a pocket-knife, and walking into a draper's shop, and clothing their wives and children in silks and satins, or fooling and drinking away their money in a style that would startle you Sheffields out of your senses. (Letter from Geelong to Sheffield, December 1851, quoted in Murray, pp. 63-4)

The field [Victoria] is reported to be *illimitable*, the indications of gold extending over scores of miles, and each last found diggings apparently eclipsing all before it. (*Argus*, 20/12/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 30/12/51)

I must now apprise your Lordship that the progress and results of the successful search for gold in this quarter in the short interval which has since elapsed has been such as completely to disorganize the whole structure of society. (LaTrobe to Grey, 3/12/51—this was LaTrobe's most hysterical dispatch)

Society is convulsed, servants have become masters, the world here is so turned upside down, and nothing is talked of but gold! gold! incessantly gold, and I, smitten with the fever, can write of nothing else. Letter from 'an intelligent compositor' on the *Daily News*, writing from Melbourne in November 1851. (quoted in *A Visit to Australia...*)

'Cluny', a critical correspondent to the *Argus*, referred to the 'golden shower'. (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

'Sloped for the diggings'—popular phrase in late 1851 (*Argus*)

The Gold Mania.—... Those who, from their engagements, are unable to go at once, seem unhinged and incapable of attending to business. The owners of buildings in course

of erection have their workmen continually on the move.... Painters put on their first coat, and then vanish. Plasterers mix their mortar, get impatient, and throw away their trowels. Bricklayers fix their scaffolding, turn giddy with the thought of gold, and descend. Stonemasons adjust their work, handle their tools for an hour or two, and then put on their coats and start. Carpenters cannot even keep at work making cradles, although more profitable than diggings. Gold is to be had directly; and no one can have the patience to seek it indirectly. In some of the suburban villages the male population has almost completely disappeared. The proportion of the sexes is reversed. Women and children are the only representatives of whole streets of families... Staid, plodding citizens, and retired capitalists, cannot resist the infection, and saddle their horses, and are off, 'just to have a peep.' ... One of our compositors went to have a look at the diggings and returned in four days with a four ounce nugget and two ounces in dust (dust as large as split peas). (*Geelong Advertiser*, 27/9/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 6/10/51)

Everybody, non-alarmists and all, are beginning to cry out, 'What will become of us?' The only answer in our power to give is, 'Be off to the diggings.' (quoted in Murray, p. 75)

The old fashioned flash expression of 'When did you come out?' has given way to the modern one of 'when are you going?' and it is so well understood that no one ever thinks of asking to what place the question applies.... Nor is the excitement confined to the lower classes; doctors, lawyers, and master tradesmen are off to the Ballarat Diggings. The weather and the state of the roads are mere trifles apparently to these enthusiasts—these slaves of Old King Gold. (*Argus*, 20/9/51)

I arrived here [Melbourne] last night, but found all the people gold mad, and believe that upwards of a thousand people have left for the diggings this day, and God knows where it will end. There is nothing but gold. ...if it continues for another week, all the people in Melbourne will be at the diggings. There are several parties made upwards of £3,000 in a fortnight. I intend going myself this week to see if I can get some. (Letter to Mr Kenneth Campbell of Adelaide from his brother, dated 2/10/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 20/10/51)

Judging from its effects upon the community in general hitherto, one would be disposed to regard the discovery of these great mineral treasures in any other light than a blessing. (LaTrobe, closing his dispatch to Grey, 19/12/51)

In my opinion this place is inevitably and irretrievably ruined; I cannot see it in any other light.... The gold fields are inexhaustible. (Letter from Melbourne dated 1/1/52, in *Illustrated London News*, 22/5/1852, p. 402)

The gold fever is terrible, and Melbourne was quite a deserted place; no drays nor carts seen in the streets. (Letter to 'a German gentleman in Adelaide', 15/10/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 31/10/51)

[News of incredible finds]... drive the few remaining men in Melbourne mad, or to the diggings, which is pretty much the same thing. (*Argus*, 20/12/51)

...I was seized with a severe bout of 'Yellow Fever', which was very prevalent at that time, and about 13 of us decided to take a trip to Mount Alexander for the good of our health. (George Baker, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 109)

Song of the Early Digging Days

Oh, Ballarat! oh, Buninyong!
These household words of fair Geelong...
For nuggets make old hoary men
Feel themselves hale and young again;
Gout flies in terror from the joint,
At the bare thought of Golden Point.
Inspired afresh they start and stare,
Rush from the cushion'd easy chair;
Not that they care a straw for wealth,
But somehow they believe their health
(The thing has lately been discovered)
Their health can never be recovered,
Unless they go,

A month or so... (George Wright, in *Bonwick* (magazine), February 1853, p. 171)

Gold fields have a most bewitching influence upon fallen humanity. The very name begets a spasmodic affection of the limbs, which want to be off. Then man, as a mere lover of beauty, cannot help wishing to look upon the pretty mineral in its virgin home of seclusion, and his acquisitiveness pants for possession of the loveliest darlings ever rocked in a cradle. (*Bonwick*, p. 3—opening paragraph)

Onwards rolled the wave, until it was found that almost every creek and gully in these districts was more or less impregnated with the precious metal. From all parts flocked aspirants for wealth; the flocks and herds were left straying in the bush for want of tendance; ships lay useless in every harbour, no men to navigate them; shops were shut up; ladies cleaned their own shoes, made their beds, and cooked the dinners; judges had to croom their own horses and fetch water from the well, or the meat for their dinners from the butcher's shop; all order in the town was at an end; every one and every thing tending towards that magnet—the gold diggings. (Earp, p. 117)

If the present migration of males continues much longer, Geelong will be entirely under petticoat Government. (*Argus*, 20/9/51)

In some of the suburbs not a man is left, and the women are known for self-protection to forget neighbours jars [tiffs], and to group together to keep house. (LaTrobe to Grey, 10/10/51)

The ladies had to chop the wood, saw up great logs, AND didn't they do it too. Those jolly times—when all the men were gone! (Strutt, p. 65)

Illustration:'The Girls the Diggers left behind them and what they had to do' (Strutt, p. 65, plate 87—original in Parliamentary Library)

Kyneton has but two men in it, and Mr Edmiston [storekeeper] has allowed his carter to supply the deserted females of that village with water. (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

At Heidelberg and the Moonee Ponds, the women were turning out boldly in the fields. Many of them accomplished a good day's work, and earned 3s. or 4s. a day. The wheat harvest was about to commence, and the Melbourne *Argus* of December 20th recommends the Victorian Industrial Society to offer their best medal to the woman who

shall be proved to have reaped the largest quantity with her own hands. (*SA Register*, 30/12/51)

Many diggers returned temporarily to their farming occupations at the end of 1851—'with a view to secure their harvest, which I am glad to state has been after all very generally reaped throughout the colony.' (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

I cannot at any price get a man to chop my wood, and I think myself fortunate if I can prevail on the black gins (natives) to work for half an hour. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 59—quoting letter from Melbourne, 1/1/52)

In December 1851, LaTrobe 'had to groom his own horse, feed it, &c.'—unable to keep a male servant. (*Illustrated London News*, 1/5/1852)

My Lord,

As nearly all my officers have 'sloped' for our extravagantly rich diggings, I am obliged to write my despatches with my own hand; besides having to clean my own boots, groom my horse, and do a little amateur wood-chopping, &c....

In short then, My Lord, my understrappers have all bolted, I have no clerks and no constables. High and low are at Mount Alexander and, between ourselves, are doing more real work in a day than they used to spread comfortably enough over a month. No 'Government stroke' now!...

Yours, in a hurry, as I fear the chops are burning.

C.J.L (parody in *Argus*, 1/12/51)

'...to meet an unexpected emergency'', the Government cancelled its recently-announced 25% pay rise to junior clerks—substituting it with a 50% pay rise 'for all', in an attempt to staunch the tide of the gold rushers. Police wages were increased by 100%, postmen's by 80%, from 1 October 1851. '...all individuals immediately interested will sign an agreement, that they will serve the Government until the end of the year, to which period only the increase is guaranteed.' In the event, the increase was extended indefinitely and further pay increases made. (*Melbourne Daily News*, 4/10/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 14/10/51)

In early October 1851, seamen were demanding £7 or £8 per month, that being 120% on the original current wages. (*Melbourne Daily News*, 4/10/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 14/10/51)

Seamen are now offered £80 for the run home; many want £90 to £105. (*Geelong Advertiser*, 15/12/51)

By mid-December 1851, the Victorian banks were having difficulty in raising bills or bullion to pay for gold. Consequently a low price was offered for gold and many diggers held onto their gold or sold it in neighbouring colonies or overseas. Also—'Many parties intend pursuing their usual avocations till the beginning of the wet season, and then taking another six months' spell at the diggings.' *Geelong Gold Circular*, 25/12/51

Gold fever—'During the first stage of the attack, a sufferer may be known by an unshorn beard, a dirty face, and an embryo bandit appearance. As the disease advances, the patient sticks a short pipe in his mouth, and assumes a red shirt and a pair of moleskin trowsers. If his symptoms are unchecked by a rise in his salary, all objects he views appear of a golden hue—excitement terminates in delirium—'one morn we miss him from the

'custom'd spot'—and the answer to all the anxious inquiries of his friends, is that he was last seen on a loaded bullock dray, provided with a straw mattress [sic], a tin pannikin, a shovel, and a cradle. (*Argus*, 6/10/51)

Gold discoveries in Melbourne.

Gold seekers from other colonies

...great accessions are now daily arriving from Van Diemens Land and from South Australia, both by the overland route and by sea, and even from the Turon workings in New South Wales. (LaTrobe to Grey, 3/12/51)

It is stated that the first draft had arrived at the Diggings [Ballarat], of upwards of two thousand people now on the road overland from South Australia, and that the contributions from Van Diemen's Land, for the next month or two will be at least as great. (*Argus*, 15/10/51)

19,180 arrived from neighbouring colonies (including NZ) from 1 January to 30 April 1852. (Return in *Further papers relative to...*)

Van Diemens Land

[Hundreds of gold-seekers leaving VDL.] This is only the beginning of the evil. In every part of the colony parties are preparing to leave; and the majority of the emigrants are hard-working industrious persons, a class the colony can ill spare. (*Argus*, 18/10/51 (ex-*Hobart-Town Advertiser*))

Several of the Launceston police have resigned their appointments and it is expected that many others will follow their example; fifteen pence a day is certainly no very great inducement for them to retain their situation. (*Argus*, 14/10/51 (ex-*Launceston Examiner*, 11/10/51))

News of gold discoveries in Tasmania—near Bothwell, at Fingal and Launceston—persisted through October and November 1851. (*Argus*, 19/11/51)

On 24/10/51, 299 steerage passengers arrived from VDL. (*Argus*, 24/10/51)

4,319 people arrived in Victoria from Hobart and Launceston between September 1851 and 15 January 1852. 1,747 of them were ex-convicts. (Governor William Denison to Earl Grey, 16/1/52)

4,624 arrived from VDL in January-February 1852.

From t'other side (meaning Van Diemen's Land). (Brown, p. 194)

... all the labourers have left. Here we do get convict servants, though we pay high even for these; for example, the class of servants we paid £12 for when we arrived (in 1850), are now £25 a year. (letter from VDL in *Illustrated London News*, 22/1/54, p. 58)

South Australia

From every quarter that the news of our gold-fields has reached, vessels are continually pouring in their living freight of gold-seekers upon our shore, and the cry is still 'they come': Adelaide is sending, we should imagine, her entire population... (*Herald*, 29/12/51)

The first shipping notices in the Adelaide press—'Gold at Melbourne' and 'The New Gold Diggings, near Geelong'—appear on 13/10/51, following the arrival of 'the most extraordinary news' (per Christina, 'the fine fast-sailing brig') relating the spectacular new finds at Ballarat. A further two ships were advertised the following day—also '1,000 Lyndon's best mining spades and shovels'. (*SA Register*, 13/10 & 14/10/51)

The Burra miners have resolved to send a deputation to report on the 'Diggings' in Victoria, before any general movement is made. (*SA Register*, 27/10/51)

Benjamin Annear and his cousin-in-law William Lewis left Burra for the goldfields at about this time. Ben's eldest daughter Selina recalled how 'they came back, so changed you would never have known them (scarcely)'. On their return, the men decided to try farming, so got a 'section' at Penwortham. But, Selina remembered, 'Pa soon tired of that life... so decided to go back again', to the goldfields. 'Now here was a difficulty, Mother firmly refused to be left alone so we all had to go.'

Early in the New Year of 1852, eight ships in Port Adelaide were bound for the diggings, storekeepers were accepting gold in payment for goods or were buying gold, and the words GOLD! GOLD! GOLD! were a common feature on the advertising pages of the *Register*.

[George Baker, of Adelaide, claimed to have received a letter from his brother Henry, in Melbourne, viz.—] ...those at the Diggings had thought proper to make a new law among themselves. No strangers are now allowed among themselves. None are tolerated at the Diggings who are not landed at Port Phillip from England as free emigrants or settlers. My brother writes that a large force is being organized and paid by the diggers. The force is chiefly composed of Irishmen, and paid to prevent new-comers from approaching the Diggings, on pain of death. (*SA Register*, 27/10/51)

[A public subscription was initiated for the search for and discovery of gold in SA] At this critical juncture... it is absolutely necessary to do what we can on the defensive, for if the necessity is *not* so extreme as that which has no law, it is nevertheless cogent and even imminent. ...we urgently recommend immediate efforts to discover the gold deposits which undoubtedly exist in this province, inferior, perhaps, to none in the Australian continent. (*SA Register*, 20/10/51)

...we do certainly exhort every one who may have intended to go over to the Victoria Diggings to just wait a little, and first see what turns up in that line in South Australia. [Same edition carried news of rumoured gold finds on the River Lilght near Kapunda, and on the Onkaparinga.] (*SA Register*, 1/1/52)

We regret that the information we have received from the reputed gold-field at Mitchell's Flat is not satisfactory; and we conceive that our duty to the community enforces on us the somewhat painful disclosure of the whole truth, as far as it is known to us. [The outcome of a rush the previous week, of 400-500 people, to Mitchell's Flat (on the Onkaparinga), to ground asserted by a Mr Stephen and the Crown Lands Commissioner to be auriferous. A hoax had been perpetrated.] (*SA Register*, 5/1/52)

There can be no doubt... that a great proportion of those who have been the first to rush to Melbourne are of a class whom we may be as willing to be rid of as to retain—the idlers, the dissatisfied, the reckless, and the wild. (*SA Register*, 23/10/51)

Police Court, Adelaide—5/1/52

Mark Emery, a crazy-looking creature, was charged with loitering about the premises of Mr Thomas Ottaway, Rundle-street, at half-past 1 o'clock that morning. He pleaded guilty, and stated that he had no means to provide a lodging... His Worship discharged the prisoner advising him to go look for work, or to return to the diggings. (*SA Register*, 6/1/52)

New South Wales

[By mid-December 1851, even NSW was showing signs of insecurity in response to the gold news from Victoria] It might appear at first sight that Victoria has completely outstripped this colony in the yield of her mines, but... [and] Although behind Victoria we cannot complain of the success of our own mines... (*Sydney Gold Circulars*, 13/12 & 19/12/51)

Gold News in England

What will this discovery be thought of in England? We are all very anxious to hear. (letter in *Illustrated London News*, 31/1/52, p. 93)

THE FIRST OF IT!—Private letters have been received in Melbourne from both England and Scotland, stating that the news of the discovery of gold in New South Wales had been received at Home, and had produced a great sensation. (*SA Register* quoting 'A Melbourne paper' of 1/11/51—but claims the report to be erroneous—news could not have been received from London yet)

[A digger wrote to his family in Sheffield] We turn up our nose at California and treat with contempt all the other gold mines in the world. Ours lies on the surface, and after a shower of rain, you may see it with the naked eye, and a child can put in a spade, and dig that with his little hands in one minute, which many of you in England wear out your eyes and heart in getting. (*A Visit to Australia and its gold regions*)

The *Illustrated News* says, the first specimen of Australian gold arrived on Thursday, September 18th... and was exhibited in the Jerusalem Coffee House. It seems of good quality. (*Argus*, 13/1/52)

Seventeen Tons of Gold have been gathered in Australia, and shipped for England within eight months—between May 1851 and the end of January 1852. Seventeen tons of gold! (opening lines of *Murray's Guide to the Gold Diggings*)

[This would be the report (perhaps) which sparked Victorian gold fever in England] Yesterday, the escort from Mount Alexander brought down the enormous quantity of 952 lbs. weight of gold, or 11,424 oz. (nearly half-a-ton). And we learn from an authentic source that 6,000 oz. more (a quarter of a ton) were brought to the Commissioner's tent to be forwarded by the same escort, but refused, for fear of overloading the vehicle. (*Herald*, 27/11/51, quoted in *SA Register*, 10/12/51)

The *Hero* was the first vessel to take portion of Victoria's 'golden harvest' home to Britain. Sailed from Geelong, c.11/12/51. (*Argus*, 4/12/51)

...in the first three weeks of April [1852], six ships—*Hero*, *Himalaya*, *Brilliant*, *Sarah Ann*, *Statesman* and *Kate*—arrived in London River carrying eight tons of gold between

them. This was indeed evidence of the new El Dorado! [The start of the *international* phase of the gold rush] (Bartlett, p. 95)

Brilliant arrived at the Downs from Port Phillip with 2½ tons of gold—22/4/52.

(*Illustrated London News*, index)

The extraordinary yield of the Victoria diggings now began to excite public attention in England. Six ships that arrived in London in April and May brought upwards of eight tons of gold, in addition to the large quantity previously received. (Lancelott, p. 129)

[London, June 1852] In ordinary social intercourse we never meet, now, with an indifferent man wondering ‘where Australia is?’ A knowledge of the Colonies... has been made familiar to thousands ...there is something like a colonial element pervading the atmosphere... (*Argus*, 3/9/52, report from London correspondent)

...a new moving panorama, presenting a voyage to Australia and a visit to the gold-fields, proposed to be opened at 309, Regent-street... [next to the Polytechnic—Admission 1s., central seats 2s., Gallery, 6d.—showings at 3 & 8 o’clock] (*Illustrated London News*, 14/8/52, p. 114)

[London, June 1852] ...maps of the gold regions, with yellow ochre all over, are to be had for a penny; but I was hardly prepared for such a revolution in Victoria, as that which I learnt had taken place, upon the unquestionable authority of an engraving; a desert scene, with an imposing fore-ground of camels and elephants, faithfully inscribed as ‘starting for the Australian Gold fields’. (*Argus*, 3/9/52, report from London correspondent)

The Great Exhibition

I suppose all England will be staring at Australia with all the eyes they have got, and well they may. They said the Exhibition was the eighth wonder, but this is the ninth, the best wonder for a poor man that the world ever saw. (Letter from ‘An English farmer’ from Cockermouth (Lake District) at Mount Alexander, October 1852, quoted in Mossman, p. 22)

Discovery of NSW gold was announced on 2 May 1851, the day after the opening of the Great Exhibition of the World’s Industry in London. (Hughes, p. 255)

Victoria had sent only one small token bag of flour to the Great Exhibition of 1851. (Serle, p. 369)

The gold ore in the Exhibition is from South Australia. (*Argus*, 13/1/52)

The world exhibitions... were ‘the nineteenth century’s official visiting cards’. ‘They announced the arrival of new members among the society of nations,’ writes Graeme Davison; they were ‘symbolic battlegrounds on which nations demonstrated their prowess and tested the strength of their rivals.’ (Griffiths, quoting Graeme Davison, ‘Exhibitions’, in *Australian Cultural History*, no. 2, 1982/3, p. 6)

Numerous well-heeled ‘sightseers’ made pleasure trips to the gold diggings in October-November 1851. (*Argus*)

A visitor to the diggings late in 1851 said he had ‘gone merely to see *the Great Exhibition.*’ (Lang, p. 9)

Captain Godfrey, who visited the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park before leaving England, declares the scene at the diggings to be quite as wonderful. (*Argus*, 8/10/51 (ex. *Geelong Advertiser*))

At one time I envied you the crystal palace, but now, I think, you must envy me the sight of the gold fields—25,000 men all at work for themselves, no masters... (Letter from SA settler, returned prosperous from the goldfields, March 1852—quoted in Anderson, p. 24)

In ‘Off to the Diggings’, Dickens drew a parallel between ‘the great wonder of the day in Hyde park’ (at Midsummer 1851) and the exodus for ‘the Golden Fair in Australia; the Great South Land’ (at Midsummer 1852). (Dickens, *Household Words*, p. 405)

...the fate of the Crystal Palace is sealed... ‘Let it perish,’ they say, ‘for it is too beautiful to last. Let it die with its objects, and its memory will survive. It will become mythological in ceasing to be actual. (*Illustrated London News*, 24/4/52, p. 319—the Crystal Palace was later reconstructed at Sydenham)

Ironically, the Great Exhibition nearly killed the Queen. When she and her consort were on a tour of the shell of the Crystal Palace, after the Exhibition finished, a heavy beam fell, closely missing the monarch. (*Argus*, date?)

Aborigines

Instead of the warlike and ferocious natives of the Sierra Nevada, the Australian miner will have to deal with a race of aborigines entirely subjugated, and by virtue of some inscrutable law of Providence verging to extinction. (*Times* of London, 4/9/51)

Instead of the ferocious Indians of California, the aboriginal race which yet stalks over the elevated table land lying between Bathurst and the vast interior offers the spectacle of savage man cowed and overawed by the influences of a civilization which he can neither comprehend nor resist, and awaiting in harmless and listless inaction that speedy extinction to which some untraceable cause has doomed him. (*Times* of London, 19/11/51)

As to the Aborigines, no one knows what has become of them. They melt away before the white man even when subjected to no ill-treatment, retire further and further from the central seats of the intruders, visit them less and less frequently, and at length disappear. (Wathen, p. 35)

Account of visit to Mount Franklin Aboriginal Reserve (‘Jim Crow Hill’) in 1857. Tribe originally numbered 500—now 60. (Westgarth, pp. 223-4)

In their native state... they are a very repulsive people, said to be the lowest of the human race, wearing very little clothing, and subsisting upon grubs, worms, beetles, roots, herbs, and indeed anything they can pick up, and having many curious superstitions... Their habits are so degrading, that any white person found living with them is severely punished by law. (Campbell, p. 108)

C. Rudston Read heard one old aborigine call out, ‘What business you limeys come and take my land and my gold? How you like if black feller go Lunnon and turn ’em out Queen?’ But this sentiment was almost certainly a parrot-like imitation of a colonial-promoted phrase and not based on any genuine political conviction. (Bartlett, p. 113)

Transportation

In the very first article upon the subject in the *London Times*, the discovery [of gold in NSW] was hailed as certain to produce cessation of transportation, steam communication, responsible Government, and extensive emigration. . . .in the hopeful contemplation of such advantages, we can cheerfully enough submit, for the present, to such minor grievances as scarce servants, thirty shilling loads of wood, or a sixteen-penny loaf. (*Argus*, 26/12/51)

I look upon the transportation question as settled; the Home Government will never think of sending convicts to a gold country, unless they are mad. (letter in *Illustrated London News*, 31/1/52, p. 93)

[Background to Anti-Transportation Movement]

The position of a labouring man in the colonies is already so much superior to that which he occupies in the mother-country that transportation has ceased to inspire dread, and a criminal gravely asked the judge the other day to increase the length of his sentence in order to make his deportation certain. Let it be added to these inducements the prospect of picking up gold without diving into other people’s pockets under the prying gaze of a policeman, and the temptation to crime will be perfectly irresistible; there will be a regulation run on the minor class of offences, punishment will be turned into reward, and that which is meant to deter will be the inducement to crime. The discovery of gold mines will arrest transportation to Australia. . . and gold, which has been the corrupter of many communities, will for once perform the duty of a purifier. (*Times of London*, 4/9/51)

. . . will any minister mock the honest poor by giving a free passage to a felon, and after two or three years’ rustication, a license to dig gold. (*Argus*, 16/10/51 (ex-*Colonial Times*, Hobart)

. . . those who, under Lord Grey’s new system of prison discipline and economical reform, receive a ticket of liberty (or conditional liberty) immediately after landing and lose no time in earning thirty shillings, the price of a passage, a good suit of clothes, and then proceeding to the opposite golden shores. Such is the reward of crime in England—a free passage and a fair chance of becoming gold medallists! (*Illustrated London News*, 3/7/52, p. 8)

[When did transportation end?]

Root of all evil

Gold

Root of all evil!—Gold, red Gold! . . .
God of the millions!—Gold, bright Gold!
With power increased an hundredfold;
Those left behind are wife and child,

What reeks he for their anguish wild?
The yellow Gold is brighter by far
Than she who *was* his guiding star.

Then pause, ere yet it be too late,
Ere the hearth-stone be left desolate,
Ere sever'd for aye is the holy tie
That bound they soul to her speaking ey;
Ere lunged in direst misery
Are those who trembling cling to thee.

—Adelaide, January 8, 1852 (*SA Register*, 14/1/52)

It behoves all persons... who have at heart the true interests of their adopted homes, to endeavour to mitigate the effects of the dangerous influences and infatuations that will ere long be but too rife, by representing in their various circles the dark as well as the bright side of the picture, so that the substance may not be foolishly abandoned for the shadow—the useful and honourable and dignified employments of ordinary pursuits for the uncertain, the unsatisfying, the in most cases finally unprofitable occupation of mere gold-seeking. ... Those persons will, on the whole, follow a much wiser and much safer course who keep steadily to their accustomed line of life. Men especially with wives and families should strenuously resist the temptation of the gold folly. Honest industry and an honest quiet home will bring a man more peace and happiness all the world over, than either the wild excitement of a bivouac at the gold diggings, or even the ultimate possession of an unblessed purseful of gold. (*SA Register*, 17/10/51)

Advising caution to South Australians tempted by reports of gold in NSW and Victoria, the *Register* quoted 'the poet' (Wordsworth?)—'Better to bear those ills we have,/Than fly to others that we know not of.' (*SA Register*, 26/8/51)

...the fascinating hope of standing a chance of realizing a little fortune by digging vigorously in search of ready-made gold will... overpower the better judgement and upset the ordinary notions of many an honest labourer. ... We can only hope that the fever will not assume a very malignant form, and that the febrifuge* advice that may be administered by the public press, and other, perhaps, more potent authority, will not altogether fail of effect. (*to drive away fever) (*SA Register*, 23/10/51)

[Some try to dissuade emigrants from going to the diggings] ...as if there were something moreally wrong in going there! Are we not told in the world of God that *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof? The silver and the gold it contains are His, for He made it...* and deposited these precious metals in it, as in a bank deposit, thousands and perhaps tens of thousands of years ago, that they might be searched for and found, and drawn forth, and turned to account by intelligent, enterprising and energetic men. (Lang, p. 5)

Let us hear no more then of the mawkish whining cant about gold being the ruin and the curse of every country in which it has hitherto been discovered,—as if there were anything either wrong or sinful in drawing money out of God's bank, the bowels of mother earth, any more than there is in drawing it out of the Bank of England, the creation of mere earth-worms. (Lang, p. 23)

It seems, indeed, a strange, almost startling fact, that... the great bulk of our inhabitants never seemed to dream even of the wondrous truth which was to burst upon them like a thunder peal; that they were living amidst, treading upon, masses and sands of gold... It almost seems to give countenance to the opinion of the diggers themselves, who assert that... the Almighty blinded the eyes of men until the poor of England had congregated in Australian lands, to enjoy the good He had prepared for them... It is, as is proudly and emphatically asserted, 'the poor man's land!' (Earp, p. 115)

Transformation

... Australia possesses that which is better than gold, and of which gold is but the arithmetical gauge and measurement... It has... every natural advantage to make it the seat of one of the most powerful empires that ever existed on the globe. But it has one great want—that of human arms. It needs but men... to become a Southern Britain, richer, and possibly happier than its motherland. (*Illustrated London News*, 22/5/52, p. 402)

In a word, what is there that is great and good and glorious which may not be expected of a country whose staple trade is gold? (Askew, p. 159)

Victoria... As an independent province of but one year old, and already the talk of the world... Once we were a sheep walk; now we are a gold field. (Bonwick magazine, p. 2)

Emigration

... it is impossible to regard the discovery of so vast an amount of gold in Australia otherwise than as one of the most important events of our time. It would seem to be established as a law of modern development, that when it becomes necessary that a race of people must spread, the soil to which they should be tempted is baited with gold. The impulses that knit men to their native country are powerful; but they cannot resist the glitter of actual gold thrown broadcast upon the surface of the earth. (*Times of London*, 2/9/51, in response to news of NSW gold discovery)

... if there is one word, which, more than another, is known all the world over... without an interpreter, that word is gold... (Kelly, p. 257)

When... the [northern] spring begins, there will be a gathering from every quarter of the compass, such as has probably never been seen before on the face of the earth. (*Times of London*, 19/11/51)

The world has become afflicted with gold fever, which threatens to exceed in virulence the famous 'railway mania' of six or seven years ago. The nations of the earth are stirred: the young and the adventurous, the needy and the greedy, the speculative, who never speculated before, and the insolvent and the bankrupt, who, by the excess and the folly of their speculations, have eaten themselves out of a resting place in the Old World... (*Illustrated London News*, 22/5/52, p. 401)

'Nothing was talked of but Australia and the wonderful inducement offered to emigration,' wrote Mary Howitt; in 'a period of over-population and misery in Europe', the discovery of gold in Australia seemed to her providential. Henry Kingsley, himself one of its victims, wrote of 'the Australian madness' of 1852'. (Pearl, p. 125)

Howitt—'tired and disillusioned after thirty arduous years of writing. Howitt was 60 years of age; the failure of his magazine, *Howitt's Journal*, had left him without money or enthusiasm... (Pearl, p. 127)

'If William could make a few thousands which would keep us in our old age!'—Mary Howitt wrote to a relative explaining the departure of her husband William (aged 60) for the Victorian goldfields.—'Oh darling, if you knew the wear and tear of brainwork by which if one makes 5 or 600 pounds a year one thinks one has done very well.' (Bartlett, pp. 98-9)

I would advise every working-man in this country [Britain] who can afford the means, to emigrate to Victoria. There any one willing may find plenty of work, and skill and perseverance are sure to lead to affluence and independence. (Askew, p. 164

...almost every obtainable vessel being engaged to carry out the thousands of the middle-classes, who have caught the 'gold fever' now so rife in Britain. (Lancelott, p. 129)

Thousands of persons of all classes were about to sail for the colony; and the stir and excitement, among the Highlanders in particular, were extreme. (*SA Register* quoting 'A Melbourne paper' of 1/11/51)

The spirit of emigration has found its way, it appears to the remote island of St Kilda, and stired up a desire to go to the Antipodes amongst a people who rarely ever visit places even so near as the main land of Scotland. How they have caught the infection it is hard to say, but the fever is running high, and I should not much wonder if the whole 21 families, or 110 souls of which the population has consisted for the last dozen years, should propose to migrate, like a flight of their own puffins. (*Illustrated London News*, 21/8/52, p. 122—reported by a Scottish emigration commissioner)

[From vessel ex-Mauritius] Intelligence being received by the brig *Blue Belle* from Adelaide of the 'New Gold Region' [NSW], many of the young Greoles of an enterprising spirit had determined on proceeding to Sydney... (*SA Register*, 30/10/51)

It was May before the thousands from the old country began to pour in, 94,000 arriving in the colony in 1852. (McKillop)

Arrivals in Melbourne by sea during July and August 1852 totalled 10,600—5,400 of them from the UK. Arrivals in September-October = 29,774—15,941 from UK. (*Further Papers relating to...*)

[London, 2/6/52] Three thousand persons left Liverpool for Port Phillip during last week, and the [Emigration] Commissioners intend to send eight ships [of 300-350 people each] a month to that colony. (*Argus*, 3/9/52)

About the latter part of August and the beginning of September the May and June ships from England... began to arrive. (Mossman (letters), p. 8)

... hitherto we have had them [emigrants] from the surrounding colonies; the stream is now commencing in earnest from England.... (Letter from diggings dated 2 September 1852, in Mossman (letters), p. 6)

It is stated in a Californian newspaper, that associations were being organised in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, for emigration to the Australian gold fields. (*Argus*, 27/8/52)

A third stage of the gold rush was now beginning. In the last four months of 1852 gold seekers, attracted especially by the extraordinary richness of Mount Alexander, flowed in from the British Isles and Europe. [Total arrivals about 15,000 a month.] (Morrell, pp. 221-2)

[Late 1852] ... the number of people pouring into the colony from all quarters, is perfectly astounding. They arrive by 500 and 600 a week... (Howitt, p. 11)

The population of Victoria increased during 1852 from 95,000 to 200,800. (Howitt, p. 156)

At the end of 1852, the population of the Mount Alexander field was reckoned at 27,000 diggers (based on licences issued), 3,000 women and children, and 5,000 business people, etc. (McKillop)

At the end of 1852, Caroline Chisholm estimated that 11,000 husbands had left wives and families behind in Britain—]... and much evil has already resulted from this desertion. (ed. note, Mossman (letters), p. 62)

Shipping arrivals: 1851—669; 1852—1657. (Howitt, p. 157)

Advice to emigrants

Three thousand copies of Samuel Mossman's first edition of *The Gold Regions of Australia* (published in 1852) sold within a month.

In his *Emigrants' Letters*, Mossman urged readers to beware 'the many *spurious nuggets* of pretended literature from the diggings which are now in circulation.' (Mossman (letters), p. 4)

A voyage to Australia is the working man's *only* road to fortune. (opening line of *Guide to Australia...* by Liverpool Merchant)

...creating capital out of character... [the possibility for emigrants in Australia] (Earp, p. 10)

[In the appendix to a book detailing the good fortune of three clerks at the diggings, the book's editor warns other clerks that—] Such men have rarely been successful at the diggings; the demand for their labour in their accustomed pursuits is very limited in proportion to their numbers, and we distinctly warn them that in rashly throwing up good situations at home, and trying their luck here, they are guilty of an act that is little better than sheer insanity. (Earp, p. 155)

[London, June 1852] It is getting quite common to see 'boots expressly for the diggings'; 'cradles' are exposed for sale... (*Argus*, 3/9/52, report from London correspondent)

[Howitt's London-bought cradle was the laughing-stock of the diggings] Indeed, whoever purposes to make a journey to the Australian diggings, if he be wise, will load himself with nothing in England, except it be a good light, waterproof tent, and a patent Ransom's cart, with narrow wheels. (Howitt, p. 34)

Nicholson's El Dorado Shirts—29, Ludgate-street, London
—White Shirts, El Dorado—Six for 36s
—Coloured Ditto, New Patterns—Six for 30s. (advert. in Mackenzie, p. 93)

...on my way to [visit] the [London] Docks, I learnt by the placards in the windows, that amongst the sundries needed at the 'Diggings', were telescopes, alpaca umbrellas, reading-lamps, toasting-forks, easy-chairs, mirrors, and key-bugles... (Dickens, *Household Words*, p. 406)

[What to take with you—] Tobacco for your own smoking, any musical instrument you play on, good humour, a close tongue about your own affairs, and a go-ahead spirit—these will carry you comfortably to Australia without much grumbling or quarrelling, and enable you to get on when you are there. (*Murray's Guide*, p. 94)

A single man should be in light marching order, and should endeavour to take no more clothes than he could, at a pinch, make up in a bundle and carry, groaning on his back for a mile....

A family should take no cumbrous furniture, no pianos, no mangles, unless proceeding to settle near friends in a sea-port of the colonies, where labor has become too dear to pay for making chairs and tables. A chair that folds up flat may be useful for 'mamma', so may a light metal bedstead; knives and forks, pewter plates and teapots will be useful on the voyage, and in town or bush; so will plated articles, and many little household things that weigh little, take up no great room, and sell for nothing at auction... Every party of not less than four should take a small three-pole tent without the poles.... Hats can be bought in the colony cheap enough; two caps, one to be blown away, will be sufficient for the voyage. (Dickens)

Wanted on Voyage

Cost of sailing to Australia from Britain—£18 to £25. (Lang, p. 1)

[London, 2/6/52] Three thousand persons left Liverpool for Port Phillip during last week, and the [Emigration] Commissioners intend to send eight ships [of 300-350 people each] a month to that colony. (*Argus*, 3/9/52)

Three ships arrived from Liverpool with about 800 passengers each—an average 58 people died on each. (*Argus*, 27/9/52)

On the day the ship sails there is often so much confusion and the cook is frequently so drunk, that there are no meals to be had: it is therefore well to provide a sort of pic-nic provision in a basket for the first day's dinner and supper. (Dickens)

[The Government Emigration Commissioners required that free emigrants outfit themselves with a basic kit of clothing] And they supply each emigrant in return for the deposit of one or two pounds, with a mattress, bolster, blankets, counterpane, canvas bag, knife, fork, and drinking mug.

In the Family Colonization Society's ships closets are provided with cisterns, pumps, and taps, in which, with marine soap, the emigrants can wash their clothes without being seen. This saves each emigrant at least thirty shillings in outfit—for two pair of stockings will, for example, do for the voyage... Each passenger is also required to provide a mattress three feet by six feet for a double bed, and two feet by six feet for a single bed; and the following articles:— Knife and fork, Table and tea-spoons, Metal plate, Half a bath brick, Two sheets of sand-paper, Two coarse canvas aprons, Hook pot, Drinking mug, Water-can, Washing-basin, Two cabbage-nets, One scrubbing brush, Half-a-gallon of sand, Hammer, Tacks, Leathern straps, with buckle, to secure the beds neatly on deck,

when required to be aired, Three pounds of marine soap, all of which except the sand, Bath-brick, and scrubbing brush will be requisite for every steerage and intermediate passenger in private ships. The hammer and tacks, with a few yards of list, are most useful. It must be remembered that at sea every thing not made fast with cords or nails rolls about...

With these precautions, good temper, good nature, and a quiet tongue, the voyage to Australia may be made pleasantly and economically. (Dickens)

[Choosing a ship—] Ventilation is a point of vital importance. Taking a berth in a ship to Australia is like taking apartments with no exit for two, three, or four months. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 82)

... we often remained on deck, drenched to the skin, in preference to inhaling the pestilential air of our small cabin, where not one-third of us could find room to sit down at the same time. (Campbell, p. 10—voyage from New York)

Just over my head were a lot of pigs; to hear them screaming and kicking as they rolled on to each other, I expected every minute to have one through on to me. (Skinner, p. 21)

... some reputed cheap passenger-ships... No sooner... does she get fairly to sea, than the vessel is turned into a floating pot-house, inducing drunkenness and quarrels among the motley congregation on board, and enticing the few remaining shillings out of the emigrants' pockets... (editor's note, Mossman (letters), p. 67)

March 17th, St Patrick's day, was a noisy one on board. A Mr Black sold spirituous liquors of all kinds; and you may suppose there was much fighting in the steerage. The doctor was nearly beaten to death in his berth. (Campbell, pp. 41-2)

Mrs A. Campbell (with her husband, sister and brother, and young daughter) endured a nightmare voyage on a poorly-provisioned, leaky vessel, with a despicable, tyrannical captain (formerly engaged in the slave trade) and crew, from New York to Melbourne (originally from Quebec).

The water for drinking, owing to its having been put up in bad and dirty casks, was, in two weeks' time, black, thick, and having an intolerable smell; and we were very thankful to be able to catch some of the nice sweet rain water. (Campbell, p. 10—voyage from New York to Australia)

A wicker-covered stone or glass bottle will be found handy for keeping the supply of water... (Dickens)

Among extra stores for comfort on the voyage, it is well to name effervescing powders, a few pickles, a bottle of really good lime juice (that usually supplied to emigrants is horrible stuff), a few boxes of sardines, or anchovies or potted herrings, and a little tea and sugar of the best quality, for use when the cook or steward is not ready to serve any out. (Dickens)

Our first meal at sea... was at least half-bone,... and as hard to cut as a cable. It was not only hard and dreadfully salt, but very bad... I myself saw some salt beef or horse quite green and stinking. A party of six had been served to-day to a pound and a half of bone with one pound of sinew on it. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 84—quoting a letter)

[On board *Circassian*, Hobart to Melbourne, May 1852] 9 May—Cabin chops stolen by steerage passengers. (Finlay, p. 2)

[Poor and insufficient provisions on ship] Don't you pity us? Everyone says this Company chose an appropriate name when they were christened 'The General Screw Company'. (Skinner, p. 13)

... the biscuits have such a horrible taste. I don't mind their hardness at all. There are two kinds, the best [her own] are nice and white and I like them very well, but we get the same as the sailors and they are almost uneatable.... I took a little coffee and some of my own biscuits. How thankful I am that I brought what I did with me. I can't manage theirs, nohow!! (Skinner, pp. 12-13)

Biscuits='hard tack'. These biscuits and other provisions on emigrant ships were reputed to have been old, stale stock that had languished on warehouse for five years and more—bought cheap by shipping companies.

... the single man should get married to a thrifty woman before his departure—one who would cheerfully emigrate with him to the land of promise. (editor's note, Mossman (letters), p. 63)

Women on board emigrant ship—wearing dresses of thin material with three or four flounces—'Sunday-go-to-meetings dresses'. (Fauchery)

Morning everyone busy writing journals. I hope they are all better hands at it than I am, or else they won't be worth reading—I fear—but there is such a sameness. There seems nothing to write about. (Skinner, p. 15)

[On board, *Circassian*, Hobartown to Melbourne, May 1852] Part of teetotal band among the steerage passengers. At dusk singing Negro melodies and other songs accompanied by concertina. (Finlay, p. 2)

We have a nice Band and it plays every afternoon and evening; it makes a pleasant change. (Skinner, p. 14)

[Introduction of steamships]

The commencement of steam communication—the event so anxiously looked for by the colonies as so advantageous to both countries—has not been very auspicious. Five steamers have arrived up to the present time [early 1853?], and none of them have achieved a passage much superior to that of many sailing vessels. (Earp, p. 162)

The voyage to Australia is performed in eight weeks by steam. [Costs a little more than by sail.] (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 87)

Arriving

William Howitt's first indication that his destination was near (other than the crew's say-so) was 'an aromatic odour, as of spicy flowers'. People said, 'Come on deck, and smell the land!'—'something like the scent of a hayfield, but more spicy. I expect it is the yellow mimosa, which my brother Richard said we should now find in flower all over the valleys.' When the mate cried, 'Light a-head!' at the sight of the light on Cape Otway,

the captain said, ‘Thank God! we have made no mistake then.’ — gives an idea of the perilous and guessable nature of shipping. (Howitt, pp. 1-2)

... a more uninteresting, low-lying, Dutch-like coast, with its uncouth-looking stunted trees scattered here and there, and low tea-scrub bushes coming close down to the belt of glaring sand, we agreed we had never before seen. (Polehampton, p. 24)

Five [vessels] sail all abreast and close together. Animating race to Williamstown. Band of music on board one next to us. Taunting slang from the bows of the vessels, one accompanied at intervals with vocal and instrumental music. (Finlay, p. 3—arriving from VDL, 15/5/52)

When William Howitt’s ship, the *Kent*, arrived in Melbourne in September 1852, the immigrants were anxious to be reassured that the goldfields persisted—or even existed. As the vessel was piloted into the port, the master of a passing vessel shouted, ‘Come along! We’ll show you the way to the Diggings!’ To which the *Kent* passengers cried, ‘Hurrah! There *are* Diggings then! It is no hoax!’ (Howitt, p. 2)

Ships undertook to carry passengers to ‘Port Phillip’, not Melbourne—the latter destination would oblige their being landed at Queen’s Wharf in the town proper, rather than at Liardet’s Beach or in Hobson’s Bay, off Williamstown. Sydney vessels guaranteed to land passengers at Melbourne. (editor’s note, Mossman (letters), p. 83)

There is not the slightest shadow of a shade of any quay, wharf, or warehouse at the harbour... except a single jetty, leading to a single public-house on the naked beach, three miles... from the town... The boat to take you to the beach, called Liardet’s Beach from the public-house there, charges 3 shillings each. ... The freight from London hither is 3*l.* per ton; from the ship to the wharf, eight miles, it is just half that sum, 30*s.* (Howitt, p. 4)

We heard many terrific accounts of the carelessness with which luggage was shipped into the steamer which meets the ships, with the almost certainty of breakage. But like many tales before and since with reference to the horrors caused by the diggings, it proved utterly untrue. We got our luggage on board with perfect ease, and landed it without the slightest damage... (Lord Robert Cecil, March 1852—Scott, p. 12)

‘Cattle would never have been put ashore in so reckless a manner. There was not a single lamp on the wharf... Boxes, bales, cases, fragments of machinery, bundles of diggers’ tools, merchandise of all sorts bursting from their confines and being trampled into the mud, men, women, large families, with the children all crying, now a dog running between your legs, now you running up against a horse who had also lost his master, and all this in a strange place, in the rain and dark, and nobody knowing anything you wanted to know...’ Horne passed his first night in Australia on the wharf at Hobson’s Bay, leaning against a packing case. Towards dawn, he crept into an abandoned rusty boiler and slept. (Horne, quoted in Pearl, p. 131)

[Landing point of most diggers was Liardet’s Beach. In 1849, Liardet’s hotel was described as—] ...a square building with a verandah round the four sides and palisaded. Liardet himself looked like a brigand, as he wore knee-boots, a red shirt, red cap, and had a wide belt around his waist with a huge buckle in front. We paid two shillings for a quart of black beer, called ‘Murphy’s Swipes’. (Henry Boyle, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 114)

We witnessed ‘the French-leave-taking’ [i.e., desertion] of the ship’s crew—passengers had to haul up their own luggage from the hold. (Clay, p. 19—August 1852)

The chief mate [of a new-arrived vessel]... had already detected symptoms of the *diggings mania* amongst the crew, and had armed the other officers and midshipmen with pistols, with directions to keep a sharp watch, and shoot any of the crew who might happen to be discovered in the act of deserting, and refused to return. Of course, such orders could not be carried out very well, and were much ridiculed. Anyhow, they had no effect on the crew, who deserted as fast as they pleased... At one time, however, something very like a mutiny ensued, in consequence of the efforts of the officers to prevent desertion; and though firearms were not made use of, some uncommonly hard blows were given and received with belaying pins, etc. The boatswain had his face fearfully cut about, and the second mate, in an attempt to prevent the desertion of our black cook, who was a regular giant, got such a shaking that for the future his discretion in the matter of arresting deserters was far more noticeable than his valour. Altogether, we lost about fifteen seamen in port by desertion. (Polehampton, pp. 30-31)

Melbourne

Sights & sounds

[Approaching town from Emerald Hill] It reminded us strongly of the situation and appearance of Nottingham... We hear that this resemblance has struck many. (Howitt, p. 7)

Melbourne on the river Yarra-yarra—‘a most extraordinary name, which I heard the Scotch and North of Ireland-men pronounce as they would imitate the snarling of a dog.’ (Sherer, p. 7)

(1852) Streets incomplete—not lighted—many unpaved. ‘A great deal of confusion arises from the want of their names being painted on the corners of the streets: to a stranger, this is particularly inconvenient, the more so, as being straight, they appeal all alike on first acquaintance. (Clacy, p. 21)

...unable to cross some of the streets without a plank being placed from the middle of the road to the pathway, or the alternative of walking in water up to the knees... we had arrived at a time when the colony presented its worst aspect to a stranger. [Winter 1852—unusually protracted rainy season] ...and the gold mines had completely upset everything and everybody, and put a stop to all improvements about the town or elsewhere. (Clacy, p. 19)

Labourers were so scarce that convicts in chain gangs were forming roads and footpaths—created a very bad impression on new arrivals, as they felt as if they were in a penal settlement. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 59)

I was surprised to see so few signs of it [gold] in Melbourne. I had read that most people had a patch in their back yard, and, that when any creditor was pressing for money, people had only to go and wash off a few dishfuls of dirt and pay with the gold before it was dry. (Thomas Coggan, *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 74)

Gold was as common in Melbourne as gingerbread at a country fair, and almost every tenth person you met in the streets had gold dust or nuggets in his pocket. ...gold was

exposed in many shop windows, without protection, save a frail piece of glass. In some of the shops in Great Collin's street, I saw nuggets as large as my hand, and gold dust to the amount of several thousand pounds sterling, exhibited in the windows. (Askew, p. 154)

Mr Hood [Chemist], of Collins-street, exhibits in his shop window, an ingenious miniature representation of hut, cradle, diggers, and washers engaged in their gold hunting avocation. (*Argus*, 4/10/51)

[Collins Street] The whole street swarms with diggers and diggeresses. (Howitt, p. 23)

... the human beings on the road [between Port Melbourne and the town] seemed all to belong to one family, so truly Vandemonian was the cast of their countenances. (Clacy, p. 16 (August 1852))

In every window—milliners, baby-linen warehouses, &c., included—was exhibited the usual advertisement of the gold buyer—namely, a heap of gold in the centre, on one side a pile of sovereigns, on the other bank-notes. (Clacy, p. 127)

The streets here... are crowded with rude-looking diggers and hosts of immigrants, with their wives, their bundles, and their dogs. (Howitt, p. 20)

A visiting poet, Mr J. Gordon, wrote a poem which began: 'Melbourne swarms with prostitutes and rats...' (Pearl, p. 135)

Horne ate his first Australian meal in a 'one-storied, yellow-ochred, impudently squalid place in Flinders Lane, a sort of gin-shop, beer-shop, lodging-house, eating-house, and coffee-shop all in one, where they also sold potatoes, tin-pans, and oats... and bought gold to any amount', where he was served, for 7/6, inedibly tough fried beef-steaks, bad potatoes, stale bread, rancid butter, and very muddy cool coffee. (Pearl, p. 132)

Accommodation

... in a little house, where we all slept in the sitting-room. There were myself and another gentleman on the table, two under the table, two before the fire-place, and the other on the sofa; we slept very comfortably... (Letter from a clerk, Thomas G. Atkinson, in Mossman (letters), p. 64)

[At a Melbourne lodging-house] Many of the beds held two huddled together, and here and there a complicated bundle with feet sticking out, looking like three. ...[One man] displayed a pair of immense legs from beneath his dirty blanket, decked in a pair of scarlet stockings with yellow clocks, a recent purchase perhaps from some clown at the circus at an exorbitant price. (Horne, quoted in Pearl, p. 132)

Two small rooms, wretchedly furnished, let for 4*l.* and 6*l.* a-week... The innkeepers here have turned their stables into sleeping-places, and a man gives 5*s.* a night for a third of a horse stall, good straw, a blanket, and a rug. One Boniface entertains nightly seventy of these five-shilling recumbents, netting the pretty sum of 17*l.* 10*s.* nightly for stable room. (Howitt, p. 5)

In about September 1852 the Legislative Council relaxed the act which outlawed the building of weatherboard houses within the city. (Letter quoted in Mossman (letters), p. 17)

It appeared eighteen months ago as if the age of the 'weather board' within the city itself was quickly passing away, to be succeeded by a far more durable and creditable style of building; but we are evidently, from necessity, retrograding, and 'weather boarding', or even unplanned broad paling, is now largely employed again in the construction of tenements... (LaTrobe to Pakington, 28/10/52)

A party of new arrivals in Melbourne was permitted to camp on private land at Emerald Hill—'how different from the other side of the hill, called Canvass Town, belonging to the government; there they charge each tent 5s. per week.' This party paid just 1s. 4d. per head each day for board—'coffee, mutton, and bread, and beef, coffee and bread'—no rent—'the owner of the land says he was only a short time ago a poor man himself, and has now made his fortune, and can afford to do without any thing from those first landed...' (Letter from JMA in Mossman (letters), p. 93)

Canvas town

Canvas Town was opposite the Customs House, on the south side of the Yarra. (McCombie)

...we arrived at a green eminence, called Emerald Hill, on which was an encampment of immigrants waiting for the roads drying that they might get to the Diggings. (Howitt, p. 7)

Canvas Town on the ground now covered by the Government Domain. St Kilda Road curved around the back of the present Victoria Barracks. (Greig)

In October 1852, LaTrobe legalised the existence of the notorious 'Canvas Town', which by the end of the year held 7,000 people. (Bartlett, p. 110)

Canvas Town also known as 'Little Adelaide'—inhabited by a number of families from South Australia. Government levied a tax of 5 shillings a week on each tent, 'built upon land as wild and barren as the bleakest common in England'. (Clacy, p. 25)

Finding a man taking down his tent, they [Annear family] arranged to put theirs on his frame. Water was got in barrels from the Yarra. (Ursella Mackenzie/Enid Paton reminiscences)

Tents of all shapes and sizes ranged in colour from white to patchwork affairs made from quilts, aprons, petticoats and bedding... Butchers, bakers, tailors, blacksmiths, doctors, surgeons, dentists, corn-cutters and apothecaries set up business... (Bartlett, pp. 110-11)

Rows and rows of tents formed streets in every direction; which streets were named after many of the best known London thoroughfares—Oxford Street, Holborn, the Strand, Regent Street, Bond Street, Liverpool Street, &c.... Many of the tents were placarded with titles. Thus there was the London Coffee Room, the Golden Lion Stores, the Dover Cliff Tent, the Coffee and Teacake Depot [probably a sly-grog tent, says Bartlett], and so forth. (Forde, pp. 44-5)

'Missing Friends'—R. Copley, from London, begs to inform his friends that he is encamped in the El Dorado Tent, South Yarra Encampment. Tents to be Let or Sold on reasonable terms. (*Argus*, 18/12/52)

Paid 18d. per night to sleep in tent lodging-house in Canvas Town. (Polehampton, p. 137)

The government charges 5s. per tent weekly for this occupation of the waste lands, or at the rate of 12*l.* a year.... The Canvass Towners are, I imagine, the first inhabitants of these colonies who have had the honour of paying a land-tax. (Howitt, pp. 5-6)

Canvas Town also called 'Miasma Villa'. (*The Emigrant's Daughter*, p. 20)

...the encampment... And oh! such squalor, such misery, and such a ground for imbibing the seeds of diseases, which may never again be eradicated from the system. It is pitiable to see well-dressed and genteelly reared females, young and tender infants as well as grown-up persons, crouching, and squatting in those miserable wigwams... (Earp, p. 177)

There were white, blue and brown tents, bed-tick tents, patchwork tents made of old clothes—quilts, aprons and petticoats—and bedding, squares and rounds, and triangles and wedges and pyramids... tents like tall sugar-loaves or extinguishers, and others of the squat moleskin form. (Horne, quoted in Pearl, p. 144)

The tents I saw in the vicinity of Melbourne were both elegant and comfortable. Some were neatly lined with druggetting, and had the greensward floor covered with carpets. (Askew, p. 164)

The tents to our eyes looked thin and white for out-door life, and in front women were frying and boiling at fires. (Howitt, p. 7)

In front of each tent was a hole for a fire, with a piece of bent iron over it for pots and pans. Wood-sellers and water-sellers drove their carts through the 'streets'. The whole settlement was strewn with rubbish, 'cast-away trousers, shoes, boots, bonnets, hats, bottles... broken articles of furniture, cooking utensils, all grimed with dust... and half-buried in the ground.' (Horne, quoted in Pearl, p. 145)

Bonwick called for a public cooking place (as on board ship), school, and missionary to the suffering multitudes at Canvas Town. (Bonwick magazine, March 1853, p. 206)

...tall, stiff gentlemen remain impassive amidst this first collapsing of their golden dream, and the ladies, those incorrigible ladies, starched up to the neck, busy themselves with their household cares in their everlasting flimsy dresses, always with three flounces. (Fauchery)

Deserted wives died of want in the canvas town 'Little Adelaide', south of Princes Bridge. (Clacy, editor's intro, p. 8)

In a country like this, with land illimitable, what think you of Government, and such an imbecile, spendthrift Government, charging 5s. per week per tent to such creatures, and appointing a staff of officers to collect this impost, the one-half of whose salaries the whole revenue from this source would not pay? Oh, it is monstrous!... Thousands, tens of thousands of sturdy artizans and labourers are poured upon her shores weekly—her gold revenue produces nearly £900,000 a year, independently of all other sources of income, and yet not a hovel, not a shed, not a free tent, has been appropriated for the use even for a night of those hardy adventurers, who have been wiled to her shores. (Earp, p. 179)

Immigrants' home

In about September 1852 the Government called for tenders for construction of wooden sheds to accommodate emigrants arriving in Melbourne in the coming spring. (Letter quoted in Mossman (letters), p. 17)

... homes of temporary refuge were erected by the Government, by the Wesleyan community, and by a newly formed Immigrants' Aid Society; and two large ships in the Bay—for ships, deserted by their crews, found it difficult to get away—were also hired for this purpose. (Morrell, p. 224)

The *Duke of Bedford*, a large ship from London, was lying nearly opposite Liardit's [sic] Pier. She had been fitted up for a board and lodging ship, and I was told the speculation answered very well... (Askew, September 1852, p. 129)

One of the structures used as temporary emigrant accommodation by the Government was a converted abbatoirs. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 28/10/52)

Institution for Houseless Immigrants opened on 10 December 1852. (*Argus*, 8/1/53)

[Advertisement] Ships Cabooze.—Wanted to purchase, a ship's copper, suitable to cook for a large number; apply to George Annand, Treasurer to Institution for the Houseless Immigrants. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

... a cold, cold place, even more freezing than the charity which suggested its establishment. (*The Emigrant's Daughter*, p. 19)

Rag Fair

Illustration: (Rag Fair) 'Hard up! compulsory sales'—Melbourne, December 1852. (Strutt, p. 64, plate 86 (b)—original in Parliamentary Library)

The Rag Fair was begun on the south side of Flinders Street, opposite the Customs House, on the ground running down to the river. (McCombie)

Ah! those were the times, and no flies,
When Rag fair was in all its glory;
When new chums sold buns on the wharf...'
(from Charles Thatcher song, 'I'll tell you about Emigration')

Emigrants' bazaar—stretched from the customs house 'about half a mile' to Princes Bridge—emigrants sold their surplus possessions—a double row of trunks and open cases with contents spread out on the ground—underwear, footwear, clothes, jewellery, umbrellas, etc. (Fauchery)

Our clothes, which had cost our parents a lot of money were sold at about 70 per cent under cost price. After we had sold them they were put upon trestles on the wharf for resale. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 56)

Black dress coats and black trousers are worth little or nothing here [Melbourne]. (Letter from JMA in Mossman (letters), p. 93)

£20 offered for a Colt revolver. £1 1s. for a canary. (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 45)

Rag Fair—selling every description of articles—books, accordians, watches, guns and pistols, from a needle to an anchor. Got to be such a rowdy place—much cheating, gambling and vice—had to be stopped. (Chandler, p. 61)

Rag fair began as a display of destitute migrants pathetically offering their possessions for sale—then regular traders moved in. (Serle, p. 67)

The shopkeepers of the city protested at the Rag Fair, and it was eventually suppressed by the authorities. (McCombie)

There is a fair called rag-fair held every day, where lots ‘sell off’ on landing, so as not to have the expense of warehousing. (Letter from JMA in Mossman (letters), p. 93)

Very few [immigrant diggers], in coming out, brought either sovereigns or bank drafts. They brought [to sell] whatever goods or manufactuers their special friends or acquaintances at home most sagely recommended [often completely inappropriate]... (Kelly, p. 266)

To command a ready sale and excellent returns, send boots and shoes, gala tartans, fire-arms, bottled ale and porter, port and sherry wines, a few Paisely shawls, picks, spades, shovels, &c., of good quality. (Letter from Bendigo, April 1852, quoted in Anderson, p. 23)

Is it to be wondered at, then that storage was as difficult to find as lodgings during the season of the Great Exhibition, or that rickety lofts brought in a larger revenue than the Brussels-carpeted private rooms at Mivart’s Hotel? ‘If this state of things continues long,’ remarked an old lag, ‘...there won’t be any damned corner left for storing away stolen goods.’ (Kelly, p. 266)

In November 1852, Thomas G. Atkinson rented a 3-room cottage in Collingwood for £2 10s. per week and erected a tent in the front garden which he ran as a warehouse for goods belonging to those heading for the diggings. His income from this source not only paid his rent but gave him a further 20s. or 30s. a week (he had a position as a postal clerk at the GPO). (Letter from Atkinson in Mossman (letters), pp. 65-6)

Kelly bought at auction a lot of passengers’ luggage, sold for non-payment of store rent. 53 packages, large and small containing clothing, silver, writing boxes, family portraits, jewellery. He paid £22 10s—contents were worth 100s of £. (Kelly, pp. 324-6)

In the square of the Customs House, unclaimed or damaged freight was regularly auctioned. ‘The various articles were thrown into heaps without any effort at order or regularity, and they were offered by the lot. In one place a heap of timber, in another a mass of bricks; here an assortment of iron and wooden houses, there a pyramid of paving stones.’ One lot at the Customs House auction comprised 20 dozen pairs of skates. The crowd shouted, ‘If we only had the ice!’ (McCombie, pp. 107-9)

Preparing for the diggings

[Advertisement] SYMONS & PERRY [Auctioneers]

Galvanised and japanned iron buckets

Prospecting pans, with rims and handles

Shovels, round and square pointed

Spades, best double strapped
Cradle plates, hoop iron
Tin pint and quart pots
Camp kettles
Tin dishes, round and oval
Cradle trowels, fossicking knives
Picks, maul rings, wood wedges
Horse and bullock hobbles
Leather dog collars and neck straps
Single and double blocks
Spur, tin scoops, fish hooks
Pocket compasses, oil cans, candle moulds
American axes and tomahawks
Powder flasks, shot pouches, and belts
Miners belts, knives and sheaths
Bullets and shot of all sizes
Tin colanders, tin basins
Britannia metal teapots
Salter's balances assorted
Butchers and cooks knives assorted
Dover knives, a superior assortment
Shingle hammers and twoels
Zinc mirrors, percussion caps
Bellows all sizes
Chamois skins, gold dust bags
Dram bottles

Also—

A quantity of camp ovens and covers

And

3 bales tether ropes and clothes lines

(*Argus*, 8/5/52)

[advertisement]

A GOLD MINE in the heart of Melbourne.

O! believe it or not, yet we have been told,

A truth that you soon will discover,

A mine has been opened more useful than Gold,

A clothes mine by Morey & Brother.

[Brighton House, 120 Elizabeth-street, near the PO] (*Argus*, 28/2/52)

[Polehampton took with him to the diggings] ...three shirts (one an outer one, of blue serge,) three pair of socks, two pair of moleskin unmentionables, a strong pilot jacket, and a strong spare pair of boots'—in a little oil-skin knapsack. (Polehampton, pp. 64-5)

By all means, ...provide yourself with good stout clothes and boots, a coat and trousers of oil-skin cloth, a roll of canvass for your future home, not forgetting a decent shooting jacket for Sundays, when you ought to appear civilised. (Bonwick, p. 4)

Have got all our providing bought now it consists of 2 Blue flannel shirts, 2 Caps, 1 pr Corduroy & 1 pair Tweed trousers, 2 flannel shirts, 2 pr flannel drawers, 2 Cotton dress shirts, 4 red cotton handkerchiefs, 6 pair worsted socks, pr Wellington Boots & pair long Working ones, Oil Skin Coat & Leggins, plaid & opossum rug, (this latter contains 72 skins and cost £5). (Arnot, p. 97)

Do not encumber yourself with too much luggage. (Bonwick, p. 3)

It is very desirable that everyone proceeding to Ballarat in search of gold should provide himself with two months' tea, sugar, flour, and salt; a cradle of four feet long, of the most simple construction, a few tin dishes, tubs in which to soak the clay, bucket, frying-pan, five-gallon pot, tea-kettle, quart and pints, bedding, large tarpaulin or tent, and some useful clothing. Anything more is lumber. (Letter from Matthew Hervey in *Argus*, 6/10/51)

[In Geelong] Thirteen pedestrians passed... this morning in company, dressed up in new tin dishes, tin plates, tin pots, tin pannikins, which reflecting the sun's rays, gave them the appearance of huge animated brilliants; two regular Westenders, were observed walking arm-in-arm past Dr Baylie's, each with a *demmed* pick and shovel in his hand. A gentleman sported his figure in Moorabool-street last evening, with a lady on his left arm, and a brand new spade in his right hand, which he used as a walking-stick; and one gentleman on horseback with an iron riding-whip, yclept, a crow-bar, was hurrying about the town, offering good old hands 12s. per day and their grub to go gold-digging for him. (*Argus*, 29/9/51)

DIGGINGS! DIGGINGS! DIGGINGS!

FAREWELL SPREE TO-NIGHT AT THE CITY BRIDGE HOTEL

MR WILLIAMS acquaints his friends that several of 'THE RIGHT SORT', WHO ARE JUST 'OFF TO THE DIGGINGS,' will MEET THIS EVENING at his House for a PARTING JOLLIFICATION.

Mr W. hopes that some of his merry acquaintances will join the jovial party, and make 'A NIGHT OF IT.'

Mr C. WALSH will sing in character 'Billy Barlow's Farewell on Going to the Diggings' (written expressly for the occasion, accompanied by OLD JOE on the piano-forte.

Don't miss this last Happy Meeting.

(*SA Register*, 13/1/52)

[Streets of Geelong] ...occasionally enlivened by the departure of drays, piled with a wondrous variety of the staff of life, besides several wooden nuggets [casks] containing spiritual comfort for those of the pilgrims, who might become weary by the way. (*Argus*, 9/10/51 (ex *Geelong Advertiser*))

Knife carried in sheath on belt, or in pocket—pannikin hangs at the belt with tin pot, threaded through the pickaxe, rests on shoulder with frying pan—the portable kitchen. Also tightly rolled blanket draped over shoulder and tied at end. (Korzelski, p. 61)

[Experienced Sydney diggers]... almost every man had a gun, or pistols in his belt, and a huge dog, half hound half mastiff, led by a chain. Each had his bundle, containing his sacking to sleep upon, his blanket and such slight change of linen as these diggers carry.

They had, besides, their spades and picks tied together; and thus they marched up the country, bearing with them all they want, and lying out under the trees. (Howitt, p. 12)

On Wednesday about noon we got underway, and with such a show of big dogs, rifles, pistols, and bowie-knives, as must have daunted the most heroic bushrangers. (Howitt, p. 37)

After a desperate struggle with my carpet bag I started, together with Sir Montagu, in a spring-cart for the diggings. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 12)

Conveyance

This long looked for, half dreaded event was now to come off; the ride of eighty miles 'outside of a horse' was to be undertaken... my first serious essay as a horseman. ('A Sailor's Trip from Melbourne to Mount Alexander' in *Argus*, 19/5/52)

[Ross tells of the amusement caused among diggers at Bendigo upon seeing two sailors on horseback, apparently for the first time, rolling from side to side in the saddle] ... they were subjected to much 'Joe-joe-ing' as long as they were in sight... I have noticed that if sailors, when practising to ride fell off, they would cling to the bridle and the mane, as if clinging to the rigging of a ship. (Ross, pp. 66-7)

Horse market at the top of Collins Street. Most of the animals are bush horses and have never had a bridle on or been in shafts before. (Howitt, pp. 23-4)

Unless positively obliged, spare yourself the anxiety of having your own conveyance. Otherwise a solemn warning—*beware of a gibber*, as that genus is not an uncommon one on the road. (Bonwick, p. 4)

['a rank jibber'—no good] He would not even pull an empty cart, so we tried burning bushes beneath him, but to no purpose, except to singe the brute. (Walter Wilson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, pp. 168-9)

Bought two horses to pull cart to goldfields—horses would not remand to commands in Polish—refused to pull. (Korzelski, p. 25)

[To Beechworth, ?May 1852] For a while we got along very well, though the roads were, beyond description, bad, till one of the horses, beginning to show symptoms of laziness, threatening to lie down in every mud-hole—finally did so, about nine miles from Melbourne, when he came to a hole sufficiently large and deep to almost engulf the whole of us. Persuasion and force were alternately tried, without effect. The animal seemed to have more affinity to the donkey than the horse, and was stubborn as a mule. Not a bit would he stir... [Husband and wife ended up in the mud—returned to Melbourne that night.] (Campbell, p. 59)

(June 1852) Awful cursing among the drivers of bullocks and bad horses. (Finlay, p. 8)

... a bullock-puncher is a type of humanity apart from his fellows... Cuts and curses are their [bullocks'] reward, cuts and curses their punishment. (Kelly, p. 177)

[Bullock teams] ... consist generally of eight or ten bullocks, drawing two abreast... It is an absolute article of faith here that bullocks won't go at all without swearing. The whips are generally young wattle trees, tough as whalebone, with a thong of bullock hide. You

often see them carrying a bundle of these young wattles in their drays, which they have cut in the swamps. They wield the whips with both hands, and lash animals unmercifully, accompanied with oud cries and oaths, calling out the particular names of the oxen... There is almost sure to be a Cockey, a Tiger, a Brindle, a Strawberry, a Lion, a Mulberry, and a Dandy. (Howitt, pp. 49-50, 63)

Bullocks—Names: Wellington, Nelson, Yallar-man (Yellow man), Waterloo, Lofty, Redman, Tiger. Cries: Yo! Wo! Wo-ho-hoy! Halloo! Bells fixed to bullocks' necks at night, when they are let loose to graze. Herd grazed around Howitt's tent, 'like half a dozen belfries in full swing.' (Howitt, p. 194)

On the road

It is an easy thing to say, 'I'll go to the diggings;' but no one knows what it means till he has tried it. (Howitt, p. 42)

Arnot travelled to goldfields on foot in large party (34), starting out on 2/8/52—met at cemetery corner. (Arnot, p. 98)

People go to and fro to the diggings [from Melbourne] very much as we used to go from Cardiff to Llandaff fair. (Letter in Mossman (letters), p. 11)

By the beginning of November 1851, diggers were arriving at Forest Creek in 'one continuous line'. (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

[Distances to diggings] ...are not those of the high roads in England, but approximately judged at by horses' legs. (Earp, p. 118)

The diggers' carts are piled with all sorts of diggers' apparatus—shovels, sieves, cradles, iron buckets, picks, axes, and the like. Behind hang whole heaps of pans, panikins, kettles, and iron pots, with a sprinkling of frying-pans. Upon the rest of the cargo lie beds and bedding, and often two or three women and some children. Under or beside the cart go a couple or more of huge dogs. (Howitt, p. 63)

...the cart is carefully packed,—the heavy tools and stores at the bottom, the gold washing-tubs and tent above, and the blankets and clothes of the party at the top. If there are (as is not uncommon) any women in the party, they are seated high above all, forming the apex of the pyramid. The frying-pan is stuck on to one side, and the camp-kettles hang jingling underneath. A white tarpaulin being spread over the load, the women mount to their place, and the cart is put in motion. (Wathen, pp. 53-4)

My experience of the roughness of Australian travelling was soon to commence, the leading driver carelessly striking a stump [just outside Melbourne], the dray was turned completely over, the wheels being uppermost. For a minute, I was petrified; what had become of the lady who had been seated on the top? was she now lying underneath crushed and mangled by the ton and a half of goods? ... I rushed forward and caught sight of the lady, sitting by the side of the road nursing her arm which had been bruised in her fall; fortunately she was somewhat accustomed to Australian life, and as the dray was turning turtle, she cleverly managed to roll over, and get away from the falling mass of goods. (Brown, p. 67)

[Among his fellow passengers to the diggings was a woman, who] ...supplied the shrieking whenever the cart dipped sideways into a hole. ... she had plenty of opportunities for the indulgence of this propensity. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 12)

We started in a spring cart, with a pair of horses, one in the shafts and the other outside in what they call an outrigger, an abominable contrivance, and one peculiarly Australian. Besides being delightfully adapted for bringing the wheel on the heels of the off horse, and causing him to kick (an accomplishment the Australian horses excel in), it gives you a most unequal power over the animals, so that you drive along in continual dread of one of them taking it into his head to make off, and inducing the other to do the same. (Campbell, p. 59)

[On the dray, travelling between Keilor and Digger's Rest] ...I was most dreadfully cramped for I had Harrie on my feet and my knees were jammed by boxes; but Mama was worse for she had Minnie on her knee, Frank kneeling on one foot while the other was under a large bundle, and she was sitting on the sharp edge of a box. However we were merry, we sang all the songs we could recollect and the time passed on quickly... (Birchall)

Men had to walk, women and children could ride where possible. In those days it was considered *safety in numbers*. We could only carry a very small lot of our belongings, *no furniture, but one box*. We had a pleasant trip on the whole, camping and cooking. When they came to a bad place the men with ropes helped the horses. (Selina Skewes)

[Lucy Birchall (aged about 10?) walked 52 miles on the way to Bendigo—her papa walked the next greatest part of the distance, 47 miles] (Birchall)

[Carts made of green timber] ...masses of boughs [with dry leaves] enclosing carts to prevent the sun shrinking their boards, and, still more, their wheels, which would otherwise soon fall to pieces. (Howitt, p. 139)

From the first discovery of the gold-fields our incessant cry has been 'police, police, police;' we still say 'police', but we also say 'bridges and roads, bridges and roads, bridges and roads.' (*Argus*, 13/3/52)

Through the Black Forest [in summer]... the road, which was a mere pathway through the forest, was not only a foot deep in dust and pitted with as many holes as a rabbit warren, but it was at times so narrow that the names of both wheels grazed the trees on each side. To complicate the navigation still more, it was intersected by large roots, and dotted over with stumps half buried in the sand. To lighten the cart we had to walk a great part of the way. (Lord Robert Cecil, pp. 14-15)

The long drought of 1851-52 broke at the beginning of May 1852. (ed note in Clarke, p. 39)

The extraordinary violence of the rains which ushered in the month of May at once interposed almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of transportation of stores, &c.... (LaTrobe to Grey, 10/5 & 8/7/52)

[Storm of 21 & 22 May 1852—much flooding and damage] ...a terrific storm of several days duration, which not only broke up the roads, but brought many hundreds of drays

scattered along the line to a dead halt, from the floods, and the destruction of several most important bridges which followed. (LaTrobe to Grey, 1/7 & 8/7/52)

Journey to Mount Alexander took 7 to 8 days during winter 1852.

Carting to Forest Creek and Bendigo in winter 1852 sometimes took three weeks from Melbourne—frequent bogging, breakages, over-turnings, hazardous creek crossings. Hill before Gisborne was called Break-neck because so many bullocks were killed there. toll at Keilor Bridge—Keilor Hill—Bald Hills. Big holes made in roads where bullock teams had been bogged. Bullocks and horses sometimes left to die in mud. Gisborne Swamp was 3-4 ft deep—then Black Forest—high, dry ground, but fear of bushrangers (‘sticking up’). Carters got between £95–£150 per ton to Bendigo. Feed very expensive (no chaff available)—horses cost £100. Carters carried grog in middle of drayload, packed around with other goods. Horses hobbled with iron, locked (at night)—bells also locked on. (Chandler, pp. 69-70)

[June 1852] Every half mile or so found a dead bullock or horse. Odour from them unpleasant. (Finlay, p. 10)

... the mysterious Black Forest, fourteen miles in extent. (Bonwick, p. 5)

Black Forest was burnt—as was much of the colony—by bushfire on 6 February 1851—Black Thursday. (Howitt, p. 39)

[Black Thursday] ... his excellency the governor, who was then on a country tour, was constrained to fly for refuge, with his small train of attendants, to a neighbouring lake, and remain on horse-back almost aswim in the water for several hours, while the conflagration was raging round the margin of the lake. (Kelly, p. 300)

[Black Forest] Such roads! no one that has not seen them can imagine anything worse. Now we were in a crabhole, places three or four feet deep filled with soft mud and water... Harrie [Harriet?, aged about 3] walked like a queen... (Birchall)

[In the morning] ...started before the others to take time as our feet were beginning to fag & get sore. (Arnot, p. 100)

[Black Forest] Before us, to left and to right and as far as the eye could see, there appeared: waterhole after endless waterhole; deep, muddy furrows; broken-down wagons; dead horses and bullocks; and clothes, baskets, and gear of every sort—all abandoned in obvious despair. (Gronn, p. 65)

It was in this vicinity [near Carlsruhe] that a facetious driver once declared ‘that he saw a pair of horns sticking out of the mud, and heard a voice from the earth telling him to be careful, or he would drive over him and a team of bullocks that was struggling underneath in the mud.’ (Brown, p. 121)

Illustration: ‘Martyrs of the road—1851’ Dead horses and skeletons beside the road to the diggings. (Strutt, p. 67, plate 89—original in Parliamentary Library)

[Black Forest] ...a terror to all those who had to plough or wade through its black, tenacious mud that adhered to you in a slimy, beastly, disgusting manner impossible to describe... (Clarke, p. 41)

Claus Gronn chose a pair of 'incredible' long, heavy boots, of the type he observed bullock drivers wearing, for his trip to the goldfields. At first, when Gronn was footsore, his mate scoffed at Gronn's boots. But in the mud of the Black Forest, the mate 'called on Heaven to witness his bitter regrets that the wrong man was wearing negotiable boots'. (Gronn, p. 65)

This forest was heavily timbered and, as the road was not fenced, as one road got impossible another was opened alongside of it till the road was hundreds of feet wide, of the same uncompromising substance, and the deep holes on each side of the large roots of trees proved fatal to the axles. (Clarke, p. 41)

Corduroy roads were constructed through the Black Forest swamp in 1855. Logs unearthed during road work in the 1960s were estimated to date back to the original corduroy road. (ed. note, Gronn/McDougall, pp. 65, 162)

... rattling over logs laid across the road of different breadths and with a space of nine or ten inches between each log we were shaken to bits. (Birchall)

[Spring 1852] ...the black forest which is a curious looking place, bad roads horrid!, passed over beautiful flowers, among them was a kind of Heath or --- pink, white & red, I pulled two to send home but from exertion and knocking about at camping they were all withered... (Arnot, p. 100)

Several men have been seen skulking near the roadside, well armed and well mounted, and though we have not heard of any robbery, their appearance has caused much uneasiness among those intending to return. The Black Forest, more than any place on the road, ought to be guarded, it is nearly nine miles long, a dismal looking place, and one where a gang is most likely to resort to, as they have an almost impassable country to fall back on. (*Argus*, 20/11/51)

... the roads swarm with bushrangers... (Earp, p. 161)

[New arrivals scared by stories of 'sticking-up' in the Black Forest] ... tales partly true, but to a great extent as purely imaginary as those of the terror-haunted forest in 'Undine'. (Polehampton, p. 28)

Highly coloured reports were general about the dangers from the bushrangers of the Black Forest; which reports, I have little doubt, were not discouraged, if not often got up, by the gunsmiths themselves. (Polehampton, p. 59)

...for our protection I carry brace pistols, camp Knife, Life preserver. Paterson a Rifle and Bowie Knife. Bettison, Brace pistols. Kelly my Ball Gun. that is the armour of my private party, but amongst the escort consisting of 30 or 40 more are plenty of Rifles &c. (Arnot, p. 98)

[Among his fellow passengers to the diggings...] There was a Californian digger... He wore a pair of pistols in his belt, and the words 'put a bullet through his brain' were continually in his mouth. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 12)

[Kelly was fleeced by a posse of gentlemen bushrangers on the road from the McIvor diggings to Melbourne, but escaped unharmed and robbed of just 16s. 6d. He felt—] ...a degree of pride at being in a position to boast of a bushranging adventure at the small cost of 16s. 6d.... (Kelly, p. 21)

[After Kyneton] ...came to a valley with a clean brook running thro' it, where we camped [Malmsbury]. [Nearly swept away by a wind coursing down the valley in the night.] (Arnot, p. 101)

No road from Sawpit Gully (Elphinstone) to Forest Creek—diggers from Melbourne had to come via Golden Point. (Leversha, *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 12)

Campaspe River was often called by the diggers the 'Cumpasity'. Coliban River= 'Columbine'. (Howitt, p. 190)

It was impossible that the necessary amount of provisions required could be conveyed by this route [Black Forest], owing to the state of the road and other routes were taken advantage of—namely, the Deep Creek road... and by Kilmore, through the Special Survey.

The [Kilmore?] road, through this being fenced and the ground black clay, was impassable even for empty drays. It junctioned with the Deep Creek road about four miles from [the Campaspe—the on to Bendigo, via Axe Creek]. (Clarke, p. 42)

Mount Alexander (the mountain)—'the great granite nucleus of the central goldfields'. (Wathen, p. 58)

Argus 'special commissioner' (Frencham?) called Mount Alexander and 'the Mount Byng of Mitchell' two separate peaks—the latter coming after the former on the road to the Bendigo. (*Argus*, 26/4/52)

Journey from Melbourne to Beechworth took 11 days in winter 1853. (Campbell)

[Howitt described the first swamp encountered on the road from Melbourne to the Ovens goldfield] Riley's Swamp was not merely a place deep in mud, but in mud as stiff as unbaked paste and as tenacious as glue. This was ploughed out, by the force of ponderous drays drawn by a dozen bullocks each, into deep trenches, and thrown up with ridges of a yard high. In the midst of this slimy chaos lay holes a yard deep, perpendicular in their sides, and filled with more fluent mud. It was a desperate-looking place. But through these oceans of viscid mud, and these slime-pits or mud-kettles, beautifully interspersed with huge masses of stone, the colonials plough their way, with their ponderous bullock trains, with the utmost nonchalance, though the ponderous vehicles tumble and reel about, bang, jolt, and jostle, as though they would every moment be knocked to pieces. (Howitt, p. 38)

William Howitt's *Land, Labour and Gold* was originally presented in letter form in the *Times*. (Mossman (letters))

[Howitt] ...unaccustomed, and probably unfit to encounter ordinary bush travelling, revenges himself upon the people and the climate of Australia in general for the disagreeables and hardships which he could not manfully content against... As to his theatrical condemnation of [more positive long-term colonists'] statements being 'a delusion, a mockery, and a snare,' I treat it as mere literary fustian and bombast. (ed note, Mossman (letters), p. 91)

... to avoid a [mud] hole, papa [husband] went round a tree; and not seeing a stout low bow [bough] projecting from it, I was struck down by it, bruizing [sic] my side severely. (Campbell, p. 61)

No sooner were we out of a bog than we were bouncing over these round, great stones, which, as hard as iron, protruded from the earth as thick as plums in a pudding... Mile after mile we bumped along over these horrible stones, two of us holding each a horse, and a third driving; for, besides the stones, which we did all in our power to avert, we had to guard against contact with stumps and with standing trees, between which frequently there was barely space to pass. (Howitt, p. 42)

The highway through Kilmore was 'a huge canal of mud, with boulder-stones at the bottom, varying from the size of a boy's head to that of the smooth skull of a young elephant.' (Horne, quoted by Pearl, p. 142)

All the way up the road is scattered with dead bullocks and horses, broken axles, dislocated wheels, drays smashed bodily, or fixed deep in bogs. (Howitt, p. 64)

Kilmore—'a dirty little town'. Euroa—'a dirty little village'. (Campbell, pp. 62, 65)

The fourth and fifth days of our journey passed without any change upon the up-hill, down-dale, and mud, mud, mud of before. (Campbell, p. 65)

[The day after arriving on the Ovens diggings, following a serious mishap at a river crossing on the last day of the journey] ... papa [the Police Magistrate], with bruized face and black eyes—the effects of the kicks from the horses in the creek, though looking as if he had engaged in a pugilistic encounter—[went] to sit upon the bench and adjudicate upon some assault and battery cases, to be brought before him at ten o'clock. (Campbell, p. 82)

The traffic on the road to the diggings is increasing to a degree almost exceeding belief. What with new arrivals, and successful diggers having refitted in town, making their way up with dray loads of all sorts of commodities, the road is literally one continued train of conveyances. The anxiety to get up a supply of everything before the winter sets in seems to have called into requisition every imaginable description of vehicle. (Edward Khull, Bullion Broker, Melbourne Gold Circular, 12/3/52)

... a kind of huxter's cart, drawn by four white bulldogs, which, notwithstanding repeated halts for a fight, in defiance of a stout whip, mercilessly exercised by their owner (a Vandemonian), reached the diggings, perfectly sound in wind and limb, on the fourth day from the moment of starting from Melbourne. (Gilfillan, p. 162)

[Winter 1852] ... the roads are so bad that bullock drays can't travel above two or three miles a day and according to the papers there are now about 1500 drays on the road between this and Melbourne. (Snell, p. 310)

During winter, carriers got £120–£150 per ton for carrying goods to Bendigo. (Clacy, p. 28)

September 1852—Cartage cost £70 per ton—had been £120—for about 70 or 80 miles—therefore, £1 per mile. (Howitt, p. 5)

Cost of conveyance to diggings varied according to season and condition of roads. In early 1853, cartage to Bendigo from Melbourne cost the low rate of 35/- per cwt. (Thomas Graham, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 81)

By mid-1852, the Melbourne, Mount Alexander, and Murray River Railway Company had been formed and a bill was in progress to enable its purpose to be realised. (*Argus*, 14/7/52) [Railway reached Bendigo in 1862—Serle, p. 238]

Overland route from Adelaide

Charles Holmes' party (of five, including his father, travelling by three horses and dray) took 39 days to travel from Angaston (in Barossa Valley) to Bendigo, travelling most of the distance (of 559 miles) along the Murray River—as far as Swan Hill, then south. Arrived on 5 May 1852. Averaged 14 miles per day. (Charles Holmes' diary)

In the cases of both Heath and Holmes (South Australians who travelled to Bendigo diggings in early-mid 1852), neither specified the 'diggings' which was their destination. Every station and landmark along their overland route was named; but not their goal. Simply 'the Diggings'. In both cases they followed the Murray to Swan Hill, then Lake Boga, across the Loddon, Hocking's public house (or 'Puplick House' in Heath's case), then about 22 miles to Bullock Creek, then 13 miles to the Diggings—presumably Bendigo? (Heath and Holmes diaries, Mortlock Library)

On the Overland route from Adelaide, native children would sing out to travellers, 'Are you off to the diggings?' (Ragless, p. 16)

We frequently got a native to go a distance with us as a guide, for which we gave him a stick of tobacco and 'plenty tucker', viz., damper and mutton, or a bellyful to eat. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 71—quoting letter dated 9/2/52)

... a Billy Bung is a Native name for any place that contains water that receives its water from the river and runs again into the river... (Charles Holmes' diary, p. 6)

Pedestrianism Extraordinary.—Two brothers, named Gee, have just accomplished, on foot, and in twenty days, the whole distance from Mount Alexander to Adelaide. (*Register*, 19/3/52)

Thirty-nine men have returned from the diggings, and those of them who intend to make another trip to the Victoria gold-fields will not do so, we are told, till March. The reasons assigned are that the water had become exceedingly scarce, and for the most part very brackish.... Of those who intend to return in March, many will take their wives and families. (*SA Register*, 22/12/51)

Life on the road

[Around Keilor, 1857] By far the most conspicuous object here, was the Scotch thistle, which seems to threaten the whole country round.... A measure is now in force for the extirpation of this noxious plant. (Westgarth, p. 196)

By early 1852, the Legislative Council was addressing itself to the problem of thistles—'...whose name [said Mr Westgarth] might be with propriety changed from the Scotch thistle to the thistle of Victoria.' (*Argus*, 17/7/52)

[Lucy and Frank (brother and sister aged less than 10?) beside their papa from Diggers Rest to the Gap Inn] During our walk across Keilor Plains we picked a kettle full of mushrooms. (Birchall)

... we found out that we had more material than was necessary, and were compelled to part with some more of our clothes... the storekeeper at Keilor... would not even buy them, but would barter, so we were obliged to let them go. As we were in the hands of the Philistines all we could get for a good pair of Wellington boots was half-a-pound of cheese and so on. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 56)

The forest round Melbourne, and up to the Mount Alexander diggings, consists, to a large extent, of small timber trees, generally about eighteen inches to four feet in diameter, and many of them charred black at the roots by bush fires. The country is generally sufficiently open to enable the horseman to gallop freely through the forest. (Caldwell, pp. 103-4)

[New Chums and Frontiersmen] ... the road [to Bendigo] last week was almost a continuous line of drays and pedestrians, the majority of the latter class showing, by their dress and manner of 'bushing', their recent arrival from England. Many of the late American arrivals were also to be seen upon the road, who evinced a little more tact and foresight in the arrangements for their journey than our newly-imported London friends. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

The first draught of scalding tea from our new pannikins, made us quite heroes of the bush. ('Sorrows of a New Chum' in *Bonwick* (magazine), December 1852, p. 82)

[Digger's Rest—second night from Melbourne] Little do those who pass this place now in railway trains, on holiday bent, know the number of 'new chums' who have boiled their billies, fried their chops, made their beds of bush leaves, and put their blue blankets over themselves at this spot. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 56)

...thro' the weary plains of Keilor... [Camped out for the night in the shell of a 'coffee house' under construction] (Arnot, p. 99)

... we found a favourite camping-ground [on road from Geelong to Ballarat], called 'Muddy Water Holes'. It was a strange-looking place, like the hastily deserted camp of a retreating army, many of the fires, still alight, eating into the trunks of the old trees against which they were kindled... (Kelly, p. 171)

Holmes' party, on halting for the night, 'baited' the horses—i.e., tied them up. (Holmes' diary)

As soon as the horses were unharnessed, Spotswood was cutting pot sticks, Richard making pudding, Thomas cleaning his gun, Ben had strolled away, George Wilson helping the cook, and that is a Saturday night on the road to the diggings. (Ragless, p. 28)

Had to put the tent up in the dark. No grass for the horses, lucifers damp, wood wet and everyone cross. (Ragless, p. 76)

... lolling on the unbroken carpet of nature beneath the starlit chandelier of the Southern Cross... (Kelly, p. 6)

Claus Gronn (ex-sailor) slept in his hammock on the road to the diggings. Raised him above damp ground and vermin. Sometimes arranged a lean-to shelter of long, leafy branches, leaning against a horizontal sapling slung above and parallel to the hammock. He slept (in winter) with a scarf wound around his head. (Gronn, p. 63)

Bullock bells ringing, and dogs barking all night... Hung our hammocks between the shafts and under the cart. (Finlay, p. 8)

The tinkling of the oxen's bells, which one hears at every encampment, gives somewhat of an oriental character to the scene. (Earp, p. 186)

Whenever we woke in the night it was very pleasant to hear the horses bell's now close at hand and now dying away till we could not hear them at all and then hearing them come louder and louder. (Birchall)

We halted that night near some water-pools, around and in the vicinity of which at least two hundred others were assembled, and wild and picturesque in the highest degree was the scene thus formed; the blazing fires, with forms flitting about, or seated in groups around, the animals feeding in the back ground; the laugh, shout, and, not infrequently, the loudly uttered oath... (Earp, pp. 126-7)

This uproar of voices and discharging guns, lasted for some two or three hours after camping, and then a silence fell upon the scene, interrupted only by the bark of a dog, the uneasy motions of the cattle, or the hurried exclamation and deep oath from some one whose slumbers had been interrupted by the cold nose of a bullock or horse touching his face. (Earp, p. 127)

The road was lined with travellers of all grades, from the wheelbarrow trundler with goods and chattels, to the common pedestrian with pick and shovel, tin dish, and blanket swag on back, and here and there a man and wife loaded to the utmost with necessaries for the venture, some of the children, and in many cases dogs, bearing their share of the burden... The road resembled a well-used ant track. (Derrincourt, p. 159 (road from Penrith to the Turon goldfield, NSW, 1851)

[December 1851] We met strings of diggers on the road every day returning from the diggings, who, when asked how things were looking at Forest Creek, replied:—'Plenty of gold, but no water. ...but the scarcity of water was of no consequence to us; what we wanted was gold! gold! gold! (L.H. Seedorf, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 78)

We stopped briefly for breakfast which we shared with another disgruntled young man passing en route for Melbourne after a fruitless week on the diggings. Soon all three of us were on our way to Castlemaine. Gold fever is as contagious as any other disease; the youth wasn't immune despite his setbacks and probably our untested enthusiasm fired him anew. (Gronn, p. 67)

Wayside inns and grog shanties

James Flett obviously likened the gold rush to a war zone. Writing of hotels established prior to the Mt Alexander gold rush, he called them 'peacetime inns'. (Flett, *Old Pubs*, p. 4)

It was said that the innkeepers at the villages between the diggings and Melbourne were netting on an average from three to five thousand a year... [A meal cost about 1 oz gold] (Earp, p. 139)

The Bush Inn at Gisborne was advertised to sale in October 1851—to be auctioned on 10 November. Its main stated advantage was that it was situated in ‘the finest hunting locality in the colony’. (*Argus*, 13/10/51)

Landlord of Bush Inn took £800 to £1100 per week. (*Argus*, 19/5/52)

[T]his Bush Inn is a famed place for robbers and bushrangers... (Arnot, p. 99)

An order came to town yesterday from a publican on the Mount Alexander road for 1,200 dozens of bottled beer. This man, I am told, actually sold 70 dozen in one day to the coming and going diggers, hundreds of whom call at his house every day on their route... (Letter of a Melbourne gentleman, 17/1/52)

Tulip Wright’s public house, on Flemington Road—renowned all over the colonies—sold nothing but bottled beer and cold meat. (Clacy, p. 30)

Before all the public-houses on the road, there lie heaps [of empty bottles], sometimes of many waggon-loads, and all along the bush you will find them, some dashed against the trees, and others still whole. (Howitt, p. 386)

The presence of bottles of various character, innocent and suspicious, is always on the trail of the civilized man. (Bonwick, p. 7)

4/- for two glasses of wretched brandy and 6/- for a bottle of muddy ale. (Snell, p. 316)

Port wine = ‘black strap’. (Bowden, p. 27)

‘Claret-spiders’ were popular—a ‘very pleasant compound... made with ice, lemonade and claret.’ Cost 18d. at a roadside inn. (Brown, p. 106)

[A traveller to the diggings had to use ‘the most obsequious behaviour’ to procure horse feed from the ostler at the Bush Inn—and likewise with the waiter to procure supper.] I was inclined to have used a different tone, but was significantly reminded by my friends that “in these gold digging times bounce won’t do” (‘A Sailor’s Trip from Melbourne to Mount Alexander’, in *Argus*, 19/5/52)

Dined at Mr F. Hull’s Coffee house [Taradale?], chops badly cut and fried by a miserable dirty, greasy sinner of a boy, and coffee far inferior to roasted wheat. (Finlay, p. 39)

The Birchall family stayed in a tent lodging house at half a crown a head (at Kyneton? Taradale?). It was the coldest night that winter, and their beds had only a sheet and a single blanket—mattresses were sacks, stuffed with straw. ‘Miss McAllister says that she does not think she had half a dozen feathers in her pillow.’ (Birchall)

[An inn on the diggings road kept by a Vandemonian] ... where the entertainment for travellers was of rather a rude description; and the landlord, land-lady and the whole houseful of customers seemed brutish in the extreme... (‘A Sailor’s Trip from Melbourne to Mount Alexander’, in *Argus*, 19/5/52)

[7/8/52—Coliban (‘Columbine’) Inn, Kyneton] I have noticed that at table there are generally 50 to 60 sit down at each meal. the table only holds 15 at once so that there are 3 to 4 table services at each meal, one would think that, eating a 3/6 Breakfast, dinner or Tea that all our neighbours would be gentry; Oh! no, Jack’s as good as his master here; your elbow fellow, perhaps, is a fine specimen of the ‘Homo’ in Johnny Ryan or Jock

Grossert style eating away most lustily, plenty of money they have, all diggers generally at these inns... (Arnot, p.?)

[At wayside inn] ...men in every garb and of various physiognomies, in which the decidedly scampish predominated... ('A Sailor's Trip from Melbourne to Alexander' in *Argus*, 19/5/52)

[Bush Inn (south of Black Forest), October 1852] ... seemed to be a strong force of women of so-so characters, some of them very young. (Finlay, p. 40)

Sawpit Gully (Elphinstone)—Closest licensed premises to Forest Creek. Outrageous prices charged for grog and supplies—first taste of prices on the goldfields.

Approaching the goldfields

[February 1852] ...camped beside the Wimmera [near Horsham] for breakfast. Richard tried digging for gold on the bank of the river, but no go. (Ragless, p. 25)

Trudging along road to goldfields—fellow traveller remarks that 'we are now in gold country'—no sign yet of workings—but 100 paces further on, 'the ground has been ransacked in some spots; further on still, the holes are closer together, and about ten minutes after finding these first traces of gold-seeking, ... the horizon widens and I am overlooking "The Ballarat Gold Fields".' (Fauchery)

Chapter 2: TENT LIFE

First impressions

... a sudden turn of the road brought us in full view of Ballarat, with Golden Point, and the creek; and I freely confess that no scene I have ever witnessed made so deep and lasting an impression on my mind as that which now presented itself; the great extent and inequality of the ground occupied by the tents so variously disposed, and the picturesque character of the scenery, and the vast multitude of human beings, making the ground actually appear as if in motion, affected the mind of the spectator as if he had realised some grand dream, or had at least got an entrance into fairy-land. [Goes on to say that his illusions were shattered within five minutes by the rapacious greed demonstrated by the diggers.] (McCombie)

... the scene upon our arrival at Golden Point was indeed wonderful, causing us almost to discredit the evidence of our senses. In every direction, the neighbourhood was covered with tents, huts, bark shelties [sic], and all kinds of contrivances to keep some sort of cover over head. The ground was burrowed in every direction, pits of all sorts of depths and shapes yawned in one's pathway, and in particular spots, the men were congregated in crowds, which at first induced in us the belief that a quarrel was taking place, but which turned out to be merely the gathering around some lucky find... There were not a few also who, like ourselves, were surveying the wondrous scene before us with blank looks of astonishment and dismay, for the first natural feeling was, that in such a crowd all the land must have been searched and all the gold found. (Earp, p. 128)

[Ballarat, September 1851] ... a body of well drilled men performing some gigantic work of art under the almost omnipotent will of Napoleon. (Matthew Hervey, letter to *Argus*, 6/10/51)

The hill at Ballarat is like an immense ant's nest. The diggers are burrowing, carrying, and cradling with intense earnestness, and in almost breathless silence. (*Argus*, 8/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

[Ballarat diggings] ... analagous in appearance to a large inn yard. The sound of the picks, cradles, &c., as the continual din of large steam engines... (Account of a Mr Highett, *Argus*, 8/10/51)

... the busy hum of man invading the territory hitherto given up to the beast or the savage. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 25)

The old favourite spots have been completely cut up, and present the appearance of monster entrenchments, or myriads of wells, with only narrow, winding, and dangerous paths—especially for drunkards or night-travellers—over the heaps of earth thrown up and piled between the holes. (D. McLeod, writing from Mt Alexander, 12/3/52, in *Register*, 7/4/52)

[Mt Alexander] My first emotions were those of indescribable sadness. I could not divest myself of the idea that I was standing in the midst of an immense grave-yard. The grim appearance of the diggers; the anxiety depicted in every face; the horrid stench exhaled from the slaughteryards... ('Confessions of a Gold-Seeker', I.X., Forest Creek, January 1852, in *Register*, 21/2/52)

As we came over the hills onto the diggings... the first thing we saw was a large number of holes like a burying ground with all new graves just opened... (Chandler, p. 104)

What a curious appearance the face of the Gold diggings have, at one time it seems to have been a forest for innumerable stumps of Trees 3 feet in height are sticking above the ground, then there is the Mounds and Holes, which latter were almost full of water just like a Church yard. (Arnot, p. 106)

The first view of the diggings reminded me of an extensive fair; but a nearer inspection suggested an idea more sad. The deep pits, so thickly strewn, seemed like so many open graves. (E.G. Day, writing to Mr S. Goldsack of Adelaide, from Mt Alexander, 21/2/52, in *Register*, 23/3/52)

[Like] ... a vast cemetery where everybody digs his own grave. (Céleste de Chabrilan, quoted in introduction to von Guerard, p. 17)

... the resemblance of the diggings to a city which has undergone the horrors of a seige, and been battered to the ground, is most complete... (*Argus*, 30/10/51—correspondent from Ballarat)

... you come at last upon the scene of scenes. It is quite a beehive. Men are flitting about in strange disguise. Heads are popping up and down in various holes around you. The population are diggings, wheeling, carrying or washing. (Bonwick, p. 6)

[Mount Alexander, February 1852] This is the most curious sight you can imagine, it looks something like the races. (Ragless, p. 33)

A gentleman from Bendigo describes the Diggings as like a country fair five miles long... (Howitt, p. 11)

Gronn likened the initial scene of the Mount Alexander diggings to a 'cyclorama'—a large picture on the interior wall of a cylindrical room—or curving along the back of a theatre stage—designed to appear in natural perspective to a spectator. (Gronn, p. 67)

Forest [sic] Diggings, 6th January, 1852.—The diggings is a queer place; no houses; nothing to be seen but huts stragglng for miles in all directions—all seeming happy... (Charles Jenkins, letter to Adelaide, in *Register*, 5/2/52)

[Tuesday, 24 February 1852] The day turned out hot and so all along the creek men were lying down under the shade of gum trees. Hardly a man to be seen at work until the middle of the afternoon. (Ragless, p. 38)

[Mt Alexander, 4/3/52] We came upon the spot and saw a scene which beggars all description. Thousands upon thousands of tents extending through the gullies for about 10 miles in every direction, lots of stores distinguished by flags, and slaughter houses which might be nosed a mile off, enough to breed a fever in the place—the ground full of immense holes, many of them 30 feet deep and the surface cut up by carts and midleg deep in dust. Ruffianly unshaved vagabonds strolling about with gallows plainly written in their countenances and the creek thronged with cradles and tin plans, and fellows washing in every direction. (Snell, pp. 277-8)

[Ballarat, winter] ... a perfectly confounding phantasmagoria of impetuous action and of mire. ('A Literary Visitor', quoted in 15?, pp. 38-9)

... bearded, begrimed men were feverishly burrowing like moles into the earth, scarring the face of nature; the air was filled with the discordant shouts of men, the noise of the cradle and the reports of firearms. (McKillop)

[Forest Creek, late 1852] It was a sight! Mounds of earth lying beside holes presented the dismal appearance of a graveyard, men washing dirt in tubs, carrying its color on their skin, hair, hats, trousers and boots, miserable-looking low tents their places of refuge. Where water was to be seen it was puddle. The whole scene to a new chum was one of unspeakable squalor, surpassing all that his eye had seen or his fancy woven. (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 47)

... in truth, no scene can be more revolting to an eye that is accustomed to the beautiful. ...no scene is less characterised by an air of wealth than a gold-digging. The tents have a wretched, rag-fair appearance, and they stand on a field composed of holes, and clay, and gravel heaps. Every tree is felled; every feature of Nature is annihilated. (Howitt, p. 139)

[Reaction of Mrs Campbell at first glimpse of gold diggings at Beechworth, May 1853] How plainly it all seemed to speak of the grovelling nature of man. What, thought I to myself, can man stoop so low as to burrow in the earth in this way—to risk health, and stand in the depth of winter, up to the waist in water, for such fleeting gains. (Campbell, pp. 78-91)

Diggers' camp

The whole scene, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with tents, the stores and bake tents being distinguished by a flag. The flats and the steep sides of hills were similarly occupied. (Rochfort, p. 53)

What a curious looking place this is certainly, the Town extends I am sure for 8 miles in one continuous line, then it runs up valleys in all directions... (Arnot, p. 107)

At this time, January, 1852, the diggers were at work in nearly every 'gully', from the Golden Point, where the road at this time entered, to the junction of the three creeks, where Castlemaine now stands. It is impossible to form an estimate of their number, but it must have been very great, as the whole of the valley, for ten miles, was crowded with tents; and great encampments might be distinguished through the vistas of the forest, which open up in every direction. The most imposing tents were those belonging to the Government, which had just been removed to the junction of the creeks. They were about twenty in number, pitched at regular intervals, and uniform in their proportions. (McCombie, pp. 39-40)

The stench of butchers' shops, or putrid meat, and skins frying on palings, or lying festering on the ground, was awful here. Blankets, clothes washed and unwashed, hung over tent-lines; beds were laid out to air; old tubs and boxes and tools were standing about; old rags, and bottles, and old sheeps' heads and bullocks' heads and feet, lay about everywhere; and with a host of huge, savage, and barking dogs, a sprinkling of goats and hens, a swarm of great, rough, hairy men, and, finally, a number of women and children complete this strange scene. (Howitt, p. 140)

On these diggings there are the most huge, savage, furious dogs kept that I have seen anywhere. At every tent is chained one or more of these stupendous brutes; and you must

be careful how you steer your way amongst the tents to keep out of reach of their chains. (Howitt, p. 188)

... the confounded bull and mastiff dogs chained to tents and drays, compel one to have the eyes of an Argus, to escape feeling their teeth. (*Argus* correspondent, 8/11/51)

[‘worried by dogs’] A digger was going to the store on [Saturday] night, with the intention of buying some potatoes, when he was attacked by two dogs (mastiffs) and literally torn to pieces... He is now lying in a precarious state. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

Immense numbers of these dwellings in endless variety of shapes and sizes, each with its uproarious dog—its designating flag waving—its big log fire burning—and some of its unshaven and savage looking inhabitants squatting in front—all combine to make up a sight harmonizing exactly with the trees I have before mentioned. (‘crookedest, ugliest and most miserable timber imaginable.’) (Thomas, p. 38)

... white tents... glistening through the trees. (*Argus*, 26/4/52)

The road, which winds along the creek through the diggings, is, from the constant traffic, ten times more dusty than even dusy Melbourne... The newly-erected tent does not, therefore, long retain its brilliant whiteness... In the same way, such trees as have escaped the axe are dusted to an unnatural brownness... (*Argus*, March 1852, quoted by Lancelott (quoted by Morrell, p. 216))

Digging party

Becoming partners—laconic formulation never goes beyond: ‘Will you work with me (or us)?—’Yes.’—’Very well.’—all arranged verbally on the road. When tired of each other’s company, they part—rarely ill feelings—sometimes meet up again, join up once more, leave again. (Fauchery)

Four is the best number for a party, and they should never exceed five, even when they own a dray, for all parties over that number can never arrange the labour satisfactorily, or long agree... (D. McLeod, in *SA Register*, 7/4/52)

... joined forced with two new companions, a man by the name of Jones and yet another Dick. (One name was usually sufficient for use on the goldfields.) (Gronn, p. 118)

[Worked at Campbells Creek from 1853-55] Most of this time I worked as a ‘hatter’, as the ground was very shallow and one could do without mates. (Thomas Carte, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 165)

Tent

Illustration: ‘The water hole on the Bullock Creek’—’The tent in the centre between two little trees is ours.’—tent strung between two saplings. (Snell, pp. 288-9)

After a brief space spent in a cruize [sic] for reconnoitring purposes, we pitched our tents. (Earp, p. 146)

Tents or buildings must be at least 20 feet apart and 20 feet from any creek. (Regulations, 1852—in Serle, p. 99)

Place it [your tent] neither in a low gully, nor on top of a high spur, but about half-way up a gentle slope, as you then have the breeze by day and avoid the night mists. (Lancelott, p. 32)

Putting up tent—cut off three more or less straight branches, 7 or 8 ft long—one is placed horizontally and fastened at the ends to the top of the other two, which have been solidly driven into the ground—then throw canvas across the ridgepole, pulling it from the bottom and making the two sides even—fasten four corners with ropes and little pegs—rear and front closed by strips of left-over canvas—takes less than two hours—just possible to stand up in the middle, inside. (Fauchery)

They usually stuck two upright saplings, with forked tops, into the ground, in a line with one another; a ridge pole was then fixed along the top, and the canvas thrown over; logs were placed along each side, and to them the canvas was nailed. Many had thick roofs thrown over the tops fixed to stakes, firmly driven into the ground to stay their tents, and prevent the wind from tearing them into fragments; a trench was dug round the outside to carry off the water; and sometimes the land was dug up for several yards around the spot. The interior was often in a most filthy and confused state, particularly when the domestic arrangements were presided over by bachelors.... Some of the tents... at a latter period, were most comfortable, possessing brick fire-places, and all the appliances of civilised life. (McCombie, p. 73)

[At Canvas Town] ... a slick, go-ahead Yankee, who announced, on a long and deep stripe of calico, that 'he was the inventor and sole proprietor of the patent, self-erecting tent.' [Kelly was given a demonstration, and concluded that the self-erector took longer than pitching tent by the conventional method.] (Kelly, p. 52)

[Hatters] They live alone in a tent often not more than six feet long, three feet high, and three feet wide... (Rochfort, p. 66)

We took plenty of tools, nails, screws, canvas, &c., for building our tent... We have built a splendid tent, with kitchen, parlour and bedroom, with a place for our cart and stable behind; of course in a rustic style, but comfortable. (*Emigrant in Australia*, pp. 71-2—quoting letter of SA party, 9/2/52)

[Late 1852] On arrival numerous notices will be found on the trees and elsewhere, announcing tents and other goods for sale. The most prudent plan for a party is to 'camp out' for a few days. By throwing a blanket over the limb of a tree, or over two forked sticks with a ridge pole, a tolerable tent can be made. (*Emigrants' Guide*, p. 121)

Wretched tents of canvas or calico, adapted neither to keep out the sun nor rain... ('A Sailor's Trip from Melbourne to Mount Alexander', *Argus*, 20/5/52)

The tents have a wretched, rag-fair appearance, and they stand on a field composed of holes, and clay, and gravel heaps... The tents are rarely handsome or clean; many are eked out with old sheets and blankets, and others with pieces of bark, and boughs, with all their withering leaves upon them, crisp with the sun; some are made entirely of poles covered with boughs with their dry evergreen leaves. There are also tents covered with boughs with their dry leaves, to deaden the force of the sun on the canvass... (Howitt, p. 139)

Purchased 'a greased tarpaulin, stretched on a frame of saplings, for £5' at Moonlight Flat, October 1852. (G. Duncan, p. 3)

We now bought a large tarpauling [sic], and made a fine tent; so big, in fact, that on the first windy day's trial we expected to find it blown away when we came home from work, and our dogs, looking ridiculously foolish, tethered to the naked posts. (Rochfort, p. 64)

Many had thick roofs thrown over the tops fixed to stakes, firmly driven into the ground to stay their tents, and prevent the wind from tearing them into fragments... (McCombie, p. 73)

Many tents have been lately stolen... and it was a serious thing for a hard working miner to return at night, wet and weary, to find himself a homeless wanderer. (Brown, p. 359)

[Tents] ... with all sorts of flags sticking out of the tops of them; boots, shoes, old hats, bones, in short everything you can mention, so as each party may recognise their own tent. (Letter from an English labourer's wife, Mt Alexander, October 1852—in Mossman (letters), p. 32)

[William Howitt tested his tent (brought from London) by erecting it in the garden of his brother's house in Collins Street. It proved itself thoroughly waterproof. Later, though, on the way to the diggings, it leaked dreadfully in a heavy downpour—] The canvass appeared good; but the Messrs Richardson of New Road will find it necessary to dress their seams with some waterproof preparation or to sew them tighter, to maintain their credit as tent-makers. (Howitt, pp. 23, 52)

[Rain storm] ... as their tents were well painted over the tops, they managed to keep themselves tolerably dry. (Clacy, p. 75)

New tents, with crimson paint still gay upon the round nobs of the centre posts. (Clacy, p. 25)

At Ballarat every man is his own architect. Here are tents and bark huts of the most primitive construction. A few poles and a stick athwart, overstretched with a few yards of calico, gives protection against wind and rain, or rather I should say are supposed to do, for I am much mistaken if whilst sleeping coiled like a 'cocoon' within the folds of a blanket, I did not feel a copious aspersion from a passing storm, followed by a small rivulet running along my bed instead of its own, and emptying itself into a lagoon at my feet; which novel situation was not counterpoised by the facility of taking an astronomical lesson gratis through a rent in the top of the canvass [sic]. (*Argus*, 17/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

... a trench was dug round the outside to carry off the water; and sometimes the land was dug up for several yards around the spot. (McCombie, p. 73)

[Heavy rain] Obligated to cut drains both inside and outside the tent to carry off the water. (Snell, p. 304)

Few diggers carried a tarpaulin to lay as a floor for their tents. (Howitt)

Illustration: 'Raining hard. Spell oh!' (Snell, p. 305)

Forest Creek 'boarding houses'—tents 24 ft long, fitting with 18-inch wide strips of bark to serve as beds. (Blake, p. 69)

There was no fireplace [in tent], that was a luxury to come, and for the present the cooking must be done on a stump burning in the open air. (Skinner, p. 64)

The fire was made in front of his tent, in a nail-keg pierced with holes, as they have no stoves. (Campbell, p. 51—describing domestic arrangements of Assistant Gold Commissioner at May-Day Hills (Beechworth), April 1853)

Cooking in the rain initially required the use of an umbrella... (Clendinning)

Without wasting time we set up house by building a chimney for the tent... (Gronn, p. 118—1855: experienced diggers)

Some of the tents... at a latter period, were most comfortable, possessing brick fire-places, and all the appliances of civilised life. (McCombie, p. 73)

Our tent itself is now accommodated with a substantial open fireplace, made of solid pieces of boughs, of about nine or ten inches diameter each, fitted together at the corners, and neatly plastered at the joints with clay. From this square frame springs an obelisk-like chimney of poles, covered with green bullock-hides, which, altogether displays a degree of shapeliness and neatness that may be looked for in vain far around.... Around the tent... we have put up a rail fence, to keep off wandering horses, and wandering drunkards in the night... (Howitt, p. 208)

The chimneys are extraordinary pieces of architecture; some built of horizontal, some of perpendicular timbers, up to the eaves of the tent, and then tapering away to some height, covered with bark, or sheets of tin which have lined packages. Others, again, are covered with bullock-hides, and some with sheepskins, and not put on in any orderly style. A considerable number are surmounted by dry casks—American flour-barrels—which make the upper shaft of the chimney.... (Howitt, p. 208)

Asphyxiation in tents from charcoal fumes not uncommon. (Serle, p. 81)

A charcoal fire [a plate of burning charcoal placed on top of the stove] was used to keep the tent warm at night. Left burning in a closed tent it could produce sufficient carbon monoxide to cause death. Carbon monoxide imparts to the blood a cherry-red colour which is visible in the skin. (Bowden, pp. 72-3)

One man accidentally smothered by having a charcoal fire burning in his tent, and two others who slept with him nearly dead and not expected to recover. (Snell (Bendigo), p. 306)

[Dangers of old trees blowing down across tents.] (Arnot, p. 129)

Huts

In preparation for winter 1853, many diggers built log or bark huts. (Bonwick (magazine), May 1853, pp. 271-2)

[May 1852] A week's rain [breaking the drought] has set this human ant-hill in a sad bustle; some peeling bark; others felling and splitting wood for slab huts; numbers quarrying and transporting stone for warm dwellings against the winter, each to be

furnished with a fire-place and chimney....

Another week, and stone, clay, and timber structures are far advanced. They vary from the rude primitive core, coated with bark, up to a rough attempt at the more modern cottage *ornée*. (Gilfillan, p. 162—10 & 17/5/52)

[Monday, 9/8/52] ...at last thro' thick and thin we came among the gold ground [Forest Creek], our first look out was to buy a house alias a log hut [bark walls with roof of coarse sacking, canvas door with string hinges] which we soon did for £6, nine of us joining together... [soon dwindled to 4] (Arnot, p. 105)

[Castlemaine, 1852] The trees in this neighbourhood are mostly stringy bark; almost all are peeled of their covering, as many diggers, particularly those who have their families with them, keep much to one part, and think it, therefore, no waste of time or labour to erect a hut, instead of living in a comfortless tent. (Clacy, p. 96)

... here and there a bark shed, in which no well bred dog would have deigned to reside, were the homes of numbers of families. ('A Sailor's Trip from Melbourne to Mount Alexander', *Argus*, 20/5/52)

Illustration: Interior of a digger's hut, c. 1853—pencil drawing by Henry Winkles (1800-1860), National Library of Australia. (Skinner, p. 62)

[Eaglehawk, 1853] ... we erected a log hut with a chimney, intending to make ourselves comfortable for the winter. (Thomas Graham, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 81)

Some huts are built of solid trunks of trees, laid horizontally,—in fact, the log-huts of America reconstructed here. The logs are notched into one another at the corners, and the interstices daubed up with clay. The roofs of these are almost flat, covered with sheets of bark, with logs upon the bark to keep it down. Other huts are made of slabs, placed upright, and the roof often covered only with canvas. Others, again, are covered with bullock hides. (Howitt, p. 208—Bendigo 1853)

Portable houses

[1852—Nathaniel Hailes (ex-Adelaide) had a store near the post office at Forest Creek selling (inter alia) cheap prefabricated huts.] They came overland in drays from Singlehurst's of Hindley Street who sent over complete 'houses', each with bed places for six persons, at a cost of £14 each! A 'house' for each party of eight cost a little more—say £16—and accommodation for ten rose to £20. These were prices in Hindley Street, but the price of transport of each of these ready-to-assemble huts was little more than that of a tent. (Blake, p. 69)

[Pre-fabricated wooden houses—50 ft long—constructed in Melbourne, to be used as boarding houses, etc. on the diggings.] They are put together with screw bolts and are so contrived as to admit of being erected in a few hours. (*Argus*, 26/3/52)

The urgency for house accommodation brought an immense and grotesque assortment of wooden and iron dwellings and warehouses, which are now extensively scattered about Melbourne, and considerably take away both from the appearance and the comfort of the place. ...this incongruous house-importation. (Westgarth, p. 137)

Furnishings

The interior was often in a most filthy and confused state, particularly when the domestic arrangements were presided over by bachelors. (McCombie, p. 73)

Where a woman shares a tent, tins are bright as silver, sheets as well as blankets on beds, dry sack or carpet on ground. (Clacy, p. 56)

There was a marked contrast between the tents where women were domesticated [domeciled?] and those where the parties were composed of the masculine gender only. I never saw more clearly exemplified the necessity of female taste in rendering domestic life comfortable under the rudest as well as the most highly civilised phases of social existence. (McCombie, pp. 71-2)

Mrs C. covered her bush furniture with large anti-macassars made of 'some pretty bright chintz' she had brought—and these much-despised articles, by gentlemen in other parts of the world, were here admired, and praised, as bringing with them traces of civilization and womanly refinement. (Campbell, p. 84)

[I] ...have been pleased to see a good many of the diggers possessing so much poetry that they have planted whole trees of the golden and black wattle, and nailed them up about their huts and the chimneys of their tents. (Howitt, p. 226)

... by driving four pegs into the floor and topping this with a fine slab of bark to give us a dining table to boast about. (Gronn, p. 118)

A bed or upturned bucket becomes a chair. (Korzelski, p. 59)

[Inside bark hut] ...hanging along the roof are Loaves of Bread, Mutton, pannikens [sic], a gun and Bundles of clothes... (Arnot, p. 108)

... we have one comb [between nine men] (Arnot, p. 108)

Beds placed at the end of the tent furthest from the entrance and at the longer side—kind of hammock made from poles and cross-pieces with two bags slipped on for a mattress. (Korzelski, p. 59)

...making-up our sapling and bag bunks... (Gronn, p. 118)

... for sleeping-places the occupants had four forked sticks sunk in the ground, with cross pieces all round, and over this bagging nailed on. This was a new wrinkle to me. (Derrincourt, p. 163)

Tents furnished by stretchers—a folding bed made by opened-out flourbag, stretched and nailed on two strong poles, or on a frame held up by stakes—protects sleeper from unevenness and dampness of ground. (Fauchery)

The beds should be raised a foot above the ground, so as to completely break the communication between the body and the earth. (Lancelott, p. 32)

[Arriving late at Mt Alexander diggings] A friend... allowed me to creep into his tent, and, having obtained the loan of a blanket, I rolled myself up in it, munched a biscuit which I had in my pocket, and then lay down on the floor, and soon fell asleep, thinking how many with feather beds and pillows would sleep less soundly. (Quoted in Murray, p. 70)

During the month that I was at the diggings I never had my clothes off, and slept on leaves and boughs strewn on the floor of the tent. (Letter from an Edinburgh shopman, in Mossman, pp. 69-70)

... when I turned in for the night I did not in the least feel the want of anything more luxurious than a gumleaf-stuffed mattress or blanket tent. Such a magician is toil! (Polehampton, p. 107)

I retired to roll myself in my blanket, and stretched on my bed of gum-tree leaves... (Fred W. Brogden, of Lincolnshire, in Mossman (letters), pp. 45-6).

[After felling trees for firewood] ...the leaves of the trees we collect for bedding... (Arnot, p. 113)

Gum leaves ('bush feathers') for mattress. (Serle, p. 72)

... stringybark is a good substitute for swan's down. (*Argus*, 17/9/51)

Pillows formed by placing boots in a bag. (*Bound for the goldfields*)

It was a bitter cold night and I was very glad when I wrapped myself in my opossum rug and turned in. (Snell, p. 281—first night on Mt Alexander diggings, 5/3/1852)

[Bought in Melbourne—August 1852] opossum rug, (this latter contains 72 skins and cost £5). (Arnot, p. 97)

Possum-skin rugs—imparts as much heat as a dozen blankets—sometimes contain 80 skins—at one time, such a rug could be bought for two sovereigns, but great demand of diggers had made them scarce—now cost £10—best come from VDL—they harbour insects in the summer. (Clacy, p. 141)

The diggers [at Beechworth] were very fond of shooting [possums] and making beautiful rugs of them, by sewing their skins together. (Campbell, p. 107)

[At Beechworth] The blacks used to come from the Mitta Mitta and Little rivers and sell opossum skins sewn into rugs with sinews. (McKay)

Cook/Tentkeeper

... the real glory of the diggings belongs to him, without whose efforts the pick would fall powerless, and the cradle rock not,—the cook of the party. ...the sorrows and the triumphs of the real hero of tent life!... If the party be large, a resident cook must be appointed, and the weakest or most useless is usually selected. He is at once the gentleman and the slave of the company. He is at home. He surveys the tents and its contents; they are his. He is the happy man to minister to the pleasures of the others. (Bonwick (magazine), March 1853, p. 241)

A bushman and digger must ...be able to pitch his own tent, but his own wood, light his own fire, cook his own mutton-chop, fetch his own water, and do all those nameless little things that are never thought of at home, because they never come under our notice. (*Emigrant in Australia*, letter from doctor at Fryers Creek, 1852)

... we proceeded to enter into arrangements respecting work and cooking. Five slips of paper were numbered one to five respectively, and put into a hat, and as we drew them,

so did each stand for cooking and housekeeping duty. I was number two, so that I had a day's work prior to my cooking day. (Earp, p. 130)

They drew lots [on Sunday] to see who was to be cook for the week. It fell to me. I commenced at once for they were all hungry enough to eat the cook!. (Ragless, p. 46)

[Cook duties] ...may be discharged week about by the different members of the party, unless one of their number should exhibit a superior talent for housekeeping to the others. (Lang, p. 9)

I have had two days at the cradle-washing, two days at the pit, and two days at the hut as cook; our tent being about three miles from the pit, but the water is near the tent for washing and domestic purposes. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 72—letter from Forest Creek, 9/2/52)

Morning

... the cold generally aroused me every morning between four and five o'clock. (Fred W. Brogden of Lincolnshire, in Mossman (letters), pp. 45-6)

...often when waking in the morning the upper clothes are covered with dew, coming thro' the tent... (Arnot, p. 112)

When I awoke this morning I found my head outside the tent and a big bull-dog staring me straight in the face... (Ragless, p. 25)

Business commences here [Mt Alexander] at half-past four or five, a.m.... (*Argus*, 3/12/51—letter from G.T.)

We diggers generally rise at 5 a.m.... (F. Hobson jnr to his father in Mossman (letters), p. 58)

It is common in some places for a fellow who first rises to come out and crow like a cock; this is taken up by others, and the diggings are soon wide awake. (Bonwick)

A sailor lad at Golden Gully [Bendigo] was accustomed to give us the eight bells on the frying pan. (Bonwick, p. 22)

[Telling the time] Mrs C. started a Sunday School which operated from 2–5 pm on Sundays. Children would be waiting admittance outside her house at midday, but 'it was no use my telling them not come so early... they always answered "that their parents had no clocks, and they were afraid of being too late."' (Campbell, p. 93)

We rise with the sun, about half-past four o'clock [late summer]... On rising, we perform our ablutions at the great log near the tent,—a fallen tree of some 200 ft long, which we have burnt through in the middle with our daily fire. We then go to work for about an hour before breakfast... (Howitt, p. 119)

At break of day the diggers arise; if it is cool some of them will fell a tree to warm themselves, whilst their mates are lighting the fire and preparing the breakfast. (H.A.K. in Mossman (letters), p. 42)

In its [Ballarat's] earlier days, before chimneys were attached to the tents, whole trees were felled and ignited, if only to fry some chops or boil a pot of tea... (Kelly, p. 231)

...in a morning, you may often see these ladies—and very often, too, smart young girls, not more than fifteen— ...chopping wood with great axes, which they do not seem to swing, but which rather swing them, as they cut splinters from the stumps which ornament this digger landscape. (Howitt, p. 210)

... one of Collin's American axes, as sharp as a raxor, and as tough as steel could be made... ...the servant [of some pompous wealthy new chums] was vainly trying to chop some wood with an English axe. (Brown, pp. 189, 191)

I rise from six to nine. I then prepare breakfast, by throwing two or three handfuls of tea into a kettle, and cooking chops of a quarter of mutton—the smallest quantity you can buy—and these with the damper, make a breakfast. (Letter from Mt Alexander, 16/5/52, quoted in Anderson, p. 15)

Our life was a very primitive one indeed—up at five—breakfast, cooked by one of the party at six, consisting of mutton-chops that had been 'all alive, oh!' fifteen minutes before—'damper' and tea boiled in a pot, sweetened with black sugar, and stirred with a stick. ('Notes of a Young Adventurer' (Irish), *Illustrated Times* [?], 16/6/1855)

When done boiling a leg of Mutton, the 'brae' we make brose with for breakfast, find it an excellent thing to work on as it sticks to our ribs, don't get so soon hungry as with Bread and Coffee alone. (Arnot, p. 127)

It is morning—...fires are blazing, steaks and chops are frizzling, pannikins are clattering, tea-kettles fizzing... (*Argus*, 17/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Clouds of smoke hung over the diggings as breakfast cooked. (Serle, p. 72)

[First camp on the road to the diggings—the anxious breakfast cooks rose at 2 a.m. to commence preparations—] ... for, 'be it known unto all female women by these presents,' that our combined efforts in this early stage of our experience, required three full hours to produce an undoubted fry for all the party, and a kettle of aromatic coffee, whose clear surface would reveal two well-burnt faces of red-nosed anxious cooks. ...the grounds wouldn't sink to the bottom... (T. Johnson, in *Bonwick* (magazine), October 1852, p. 7)

A good cook is recognized at the diggings as well as at a club-house. (*Bonwick*, p. 20)

Stores

Ballarat, at the time of my visit, was a digging, *et prætereà nihil*. There was no town, no township, no village, nor any trading nucleus at any particular spot or locality. Every flat and gully had its sprinkling of stores and butchers' shops, and some few their bakeries, but there was no great local central depôt from which they took their supplies. (Kelly, p. 198)

... in every case where the creek is joined by a creek or gully a similar line of tents may be seen as far as the eye can reach, and at the junction of these creeks or gullies with the Forest Creek, a little village or kind of township is formed, consisting generally of one or two stores, a ginger beer establishment, a butcher's shop, and in some cases at the foot of a large gum tree, a solitary dealer in nuts and lollypops. The largest of these townships or villages and the principal seat of all attraction is where the *Argus* and Post-Office is

stationed, and it is at this spot where the greatest quantity of gold has been diembowelled. The place is called Red Hill... (*Argus*, 14/1/52)

[Mid 1852] There are there [Forest Creek] one hundred Storekeepers, fifty-one butchers, twenty-five Smiths, sixteen Medical Gentlemen, fifteen Lemonade and Ginger Beer sellers, nine Lodging and Eating Houses, six Bakers, four Druggists, a Tobacconist, and a Barber. (Bonwick, 'Sketch of the Mines, in Bryce Ross's *Diggings Directory*)

Store-keeper—tent only differs from others by size and flagpole with fancy flag as a signboard. (Fauchery)

... those [tents] belonging to the stores have white, tri-coloured, and many coloured flags, flying from the forks of their ridge-poles. (E.G. Day, writing from Mt Alexander, 21/2/52—in *SA Register*, 23/3/52)

[Late in 1852, Bendigo had] ... a street of shops seven miles long, with large flags hoisted 'of every shape, colour and nation, from the lion and unicorn of England to the Russian eagle'. (Morrell, p. 226)

Every store in Victoria has a flagstaff in front, from the top of which streams the ensign, with its kangaroo, opossum, pick and shovel, or any other ingenious device which may suggest itself to the astute proprietor, while its bottom is encircled by a travelling collar, with a long scope of chain attached, to enable a fierce dog to sweep all the approaches in the front.... Store dogs are sufficient sagacious to discriminate between the quizzing loafer and the genuine customer. (Kelly, p. 200)

The stores were unpretentious buildings of calico or tarpaulins, the latter being in the majority as they were cooler than calico. (Clarke, p. 40)

These tents are made up of one tarpaulin after another, until all their goods are covered, and some of them go as far as slab walls and even a free display of fine fabric, roofed in with canvas. (Finlay, p. 18)

This store [at Forest Creek] was formed of pine boards stood on end, and meeting at the top, appearing like the roof of a house that had sunk to the eaves. (*Argus*, 20/5/52)

Three very commodious wooden buildings [single storey] are in course of erection, intended to be used as stores at Mount Alexander. [Erected on ground at corner of Russell and Little Collins streets and apparently transported intact to the diggings. Each measured 40 x 18 ft.] (*Argus*, 17/3/52)

The externals of a digging store are for the most part pillars of washing-pans, nests of buckets and Yankee tubs, cradles, and puddling tubs, interspersed with picks, shovels, gads, stone hammers, crow-bars, and bars of unwrought iron on the one side, confronted on the other by infirm stretchers, on which make-believe sacks of flour are reposing in silent proof of their great strength, being nothing, however, but sacks of imponderous bran, decorated with tin teapots and coffee-cans pendent from their hips, their middle and lower extremities embraced and bestrode by moleskin jacket and pantaloons. Side by side with the stretchers are coils of rope, with hatchets, hand-saws, and long ripping chisels, growing, like so many *lusus naturæ*, out of their centres, supported, contrary to all laws of association, except the rust, with flitches of oderous bacond and casks of travelled mess pork, and preserved fish in a state of decomposition. (Kelly, pp. 200-01)

The internals [of stores] generally consist of an odd medley of soft and hard goods, edibles and wearables, matches, jumpers, onions, Guernseys, pickles, side-combs, sardines, polkas, knives and forks, cigars, Glenfield's starch, tumblers, chocolate, crockery, clasp and butcher knives, worsted and percussion-caps, Windsor soap, preserved salmon, revolvers, bear's-grease and hair-oil, lobsters in tins, damp loaf sugar, muslins and calico, coffee in tins, blue and red blankets, second-hand confectionary [?], hammers and chisels, preserved fruits, reels of cotton, and red-herrings, with every variety of boots and shoes, from the high boot to the Oxford shoes, laced-up water-tights, with their thickly iron-shod soles, and women's leather-topped boots, and an infinity of other articles too numerous to mention. (Kelly, p. 201)

E. Sheppard, gold broker, chemist and druggist, Bendigo, November 1852. Stock included 'Medicines and Drugs, Cigars, White Wine, Vinegar, Sweetmeats, Children's Shoes and Toys, and an assortment of the most refreshing Summer Drinks. A good stock of Holloways Pills and Ointment always on hand. *Teech carefully* extracted.' (Blake, p. 141)

... everything required by a digger can be obtained for money, from sugar-candy to potted anchovies; from East India pickles to Bass's pale ale; from ankle jack boots to a pair of stays; from a baby's cap to a cradle; and every apparatus for mining, from a pick to a needle. But the confusion—the din—the medley—what a scene for a shop walker! Here lies a pair of herrings dripping into a pag of sugar, or a box of raisins; there a gay-looking bundle of ribbons beneath two tumblers, and a half-finished bottle of ale. Cheese and butter, bread and yellow soap, pork and currants, saddles and frocks, wide-awakes and blue serge shirts, green veils and shovels, baby linen and tallow candles, are all heaped indiscriminately together; added to which, there are children bawling, men swearing, store-keeper sulky, and las, not *least* women's tongues going nineteen to the dozen. (Clacy, p. 54)

The inside of their stores displays anything but order, a general confusion being the rule. (Finlay, pp. 18-19)

When drays failed to arrive, nothing left in stores but boots or saucepans. (Fauchery)

There is one principle they have adopted and adhered to with the greatest uniformity, and that is extortion. (Finlay, pp. 18-19)

No time for any bargaining or demur at the charges. 'Buy, or go as quick as you like,' is what every storekeeper's face expresses plainer than words. (Polehampton, p. 89)

Business did not require any very nice calculations, the plan was usually to double and treble the Melbourne price, and besides that, to add on the cost of cartage; on bulky articles, this last charge was often the principal expense. (Brown (storekeeper at Bendigo), pp. 159-60)

... no credit was given or required, as gold was abundant and it was an elysium for business people. (Clarke, p. 40)

Each has on his counter a pair of scales for the purpose of giving goods for gold instead of money. (Finlay, p. 19)

The store-keeper, the butcher, the blacksmith, the medical practitioner, the postmaster..., the Commissioner, the ginger-beer and lemonade-seller, the travelling pedlar, and the carrier, have each and all of them scales and weights for weighing the gold-dust or *nuggets*, generally tendered as payment. (Mackenzie, p. 50)

Money is treated as dirt here—as for coppers, people don't believe in such a thing. (Letter from JMA, in Mossman (letters), p. 93)

Half sovereign = 'canary' (Clacy, p. 91)

Halfpenny = 'mag' (Chesney, p. 269)

Food supplies

[Forest Creek, September 1852] We can live here comfortably p. week 20/- each which is cheap considering the price of provisions... [That day, found 10/6 worth of gold before breakfast.] (Arnot, p. 111)

Meat, 4d to 6d/lb; flour, about 1s 6d/lb (most expensive item); butter must be dispensed with, as it is seldom less than 4s/lb. (Clacy, p. 53)

... the sugar which is Hobart Town growth is awful black (Arnot, p. ?)

[Forest Creek, late 1852] Food prices: flour, £9-£10/cwt (100lb); sugar, 1s 6d/lb (scarce); tea, 3s; rice, 1s; coffee, 3s; tobacco, 8s; cheese, 3s; butter, 4s; honey, 3s 6d; candles, 1s 6d; currants, 1s 6d (very scarce); raisins, 1s 6d; figs, 2s 6d; salt, 1s 6d. (Clacy, p. 98)

Milk and butter were not procurable at Bendigo in winter 1852.

Here and there, at very rare intervals, a garden of a few feet square formed round a tent [and] the cackling of hens reminds one that eggs are to be had at something like a guinea a dozen. (Polehampton, p. 91)

Eggs were one shilling apiece—Mr Curry opened his cookbook and the first thing he read was: 'Take six eggs'. (Sarah Midgley, relating the tale of Mr Curry on the diggings—in Midgley & Skilbeck, p. 39)

It was common for hens kept on the goldfields to lay eggs without shells, as lime was hard to procure. (Howitt, p. 249)

CHEAP MEALS.—A facetious fellow just returned from Mount Alexander says that at the Diggings the price of a biscuit is 7d., a pint of water 2d., and the charge for *looking* at a cheese 3d. (*SA Register*, 21/2/52)

Cheese, butter, pickles, ham, bacon, sardines, and eau de Cologne, are enjoyed only by successful miners. (Bonwick, p. 21)

Pints of pickles were sold in Melbourne during the last week of January at 14s. to 15s. (*Register*, 11/2/52)

...being successful diggers I bought a little Pot of Bk Currant Jam cheap 2/6 only, we sometimes buy a luxury like this out of our own private purse, a bit cheese, raisins, treacle (1/- pot) &c. (Arnot, p. 112)

Cured fish of all kinds, sardines, cod, red and white herrings, were in such request for the diggings that money could scarcely procure them. But the 'Glasgow magistrates', whose

virtues were then without price, suffered a sad humiliation afterwards, through the over-
enterprise of their citizens. Within two years of this elevating estimate of their worth,
they might have been witnessed in cartloads upon the manure depôt near Melbourne, to
which port the supplies sent during the interval were supposed to have been sufficient for
the use of the whole southern hemisphere. (Westgarth, p. 135)

Plums and apples were available for sale at Forest Creek in February 1852. (Ragless, p.
38)

Itinerant apple seller at Ironbark Gully, Bendigo, in 1852, cried: ‘’Ere’s happles, happles,
Vandemonian happles, and them as dislikes the hiland needn’t heat them.’ (Clacy, p. 86)

One Sunday, a vendor made £57 selling apples to diggers congregated at the Post Office
‘square’ at Forest Creek. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 65)

Government refused to rent plots for vegetable-growing on the goldfields. Some diggers
ate docks, in lieu of other vegies. (Serle, p. 80)

Here and there, at very rare intervals, a garden of a few feet square formed round a tent,
enriched with a few precious exotics, such as wall flowers or primroses, is suggestive of
home... (Polehampton, p. 91)

Think as I haven’t tasted vegetables since last Jany. (Snell, p. 298)

Wild tucker

‘An Australian Journalist’ told would-be emigrants that: ‘Australia possesses scarcely
one indigenous fruit that is worth eating...’ (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 5)

‘Blackfellows’ sugar’—It is a species of manna falling plentifully from the white-gum. It
tastes very much like the second layer in a wedding cake. (Lord Robert Cecil—Scott, p.
31)

The only other articles of food natural there, are the kangaroos, emus, opossums, and
other denizen of the forest, a few snakes, some roots, and a worm, about the length and
thickness of a finger, which is abundant in all parts of the colony, and is taken out of the
cavities, or from under the bark, of the trees. It is a great favourite with the blacks as it
can be procured when no other food is attainable. (Clacy, p. 132)

[Awakened by a possum serenade in the middle of the night, Claus Gronn and mate shot
the animal and breakfasted off possum steak, grilled, next day.] It was edible, or our
hunger-sharpened teeth rendered it so, but it wouldn’t have gained any cook their *cordon
bleu*; too rubbery altogether. (Gronn, p. 63-5)

[Echidna] The flesh resembles pork, and is excellent eating; but we had no proper
stuffing; notwithstanding which it was very good. (Howitt, p. 287)

The wombat, or pig, is a stupid, flat-headed, thick-haired, root-gathering burrower.
(Askew, p. 451)

On the Sundays we went out hunting wild dogs, &c., besides making immense slaughter
amongst the opossums, pigeons, parrots, and quails, which formed our Sunday dinner.
(Rochfort, p. 68)

Shot a few parrots and cockatoos, which they roasted and pronounced nice eating. (Clacy, p. 38)

On his first night at Creswick Creek, Kelly was treated to ‘the remains of a jackass [kookaburra] pie’ and ‘buggers on the coals’. (Kelly, p. 251)

The general tameness of the feathered tribe is a subject of particular notice, and this very tameness is the cause of devastation among them, for man has peopled their solitudes, and the rifle, the fowling piece, the pistol and the stone are all instruments by which death and destruction are carried in [sic] among them. (Finlay, p. 24)

A kangaroo got into one of the holes just above us and was instantly killed, skinned, and cut in pieces. (Snell, p. 296)

[Beechworth, 1853] The kangaroo... are being driven before the face of civilisation, and are scarce. I saw only one. The emu, also... is disappearing. (Campbell, p. 107)

There used to be fish in the creeks, but our washings must have choked them all with gold dust. (Bonwick)

The damper and mutton stage

... the damper and mutton stage of the Colony [1851-3]. (Skinner, p. 55)

There being no bread obtainable, we had to content ourselves with mutton and damper three days a week and damper and mutton on the other four days.

... we had to Tea off the Everlasting Chops... (Arnot, p. 116)

The people do not live here the same as they do in England. Here you have meat at every meal you go to—morning, noon and night. (Letter in Mossman, October 1852, p. 53)

... meat in their early life must have been a stranger seldom seen at their table, and all concentrated and exciting foods, with spirituous drinks, were of necessity looked for but as occasional treats. When in Australia, the very reverse of this was the case; meat was the cheap article, eaten in large quantities, three times a day, taking spirituous drinks was the daily practice... vegetables, milk, and farinaceous foods, were the expensive articles and rarely partaken of. (Brown, p. 168)

Damper

[Bendigo, March 1852] Couldn't buy any bread (only two stores) but got a mutton pasty off a woman for 1/-. (Snell, p. 282)

[Mid 1852] There are there [Forest Creek] ...six Bakers... (Bonwick, ‘Sketch of the Mines, in Bryce Ross’s *Diggings Directory*)

The first real bakery at the diggings appears to have been established at Eureka (Ballarat) by Germans in early 1853. (Bonwick (magazine), February 1853, p. 167)

In Melbourne, bread cost 1s 4d, but cost increased with distance from town—half a crown at Kyneton. (Thomas Graham in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 81)

[September 1852—bread (9 x 4lb loaves) was costing the party about 18/- each per week—the wife of a neighbour [Scots] baked for them—didn't cook their own damper.] (Arnot, p. 125)

‘... a nicer lot of men—they were all men—you'd never want to see’—[lady goldrush pioneer]. For all that she is well on in the eighties, the old lady is handsome enough to make it easy to conjure up a vision of the bonny young Scotswoman sitting before a roaring campfire under the shadow of Mount Macedon, what time a gallant young barrister introduced her to the mysteries of making damper. (Walker)

[On the road, June 1852—Porcupine Inn (Ravenswood)] Met with three on their way to Bendigo. Flintoff, Batey and Evans, gentlemen in manners and education. Ludicrous handling of the Johnny Cakes. (Finlay, p. 11)

Johnny cake = damper.

The damper consists of dough, well worked, placed in the hot ashes of a wood fire, and, after remaining there a couple of hours, according to its thickness, it comes out as a sweet, well-flavoured loaf. (Letter from Mt Alexander, 165/52, quoted in Anderson, p. 15)

Taking a washing tin dish, and clearing off the dirt a little, six or eight pannicans of flour are thrown in; a half table spoonful of carbonate of soda, the like quantity of tartaric acid, and a spoonful of salt are then mixed together in a pannican, and then well mingled with dry flour. Water is then poured in, the whole thoroughly knuckled, rolled into a good shaped loaf, and tumbled at once into the warmed camp oven. Fire is applied beneath and a couple of hours or less will turn out a loaf fit to set before a queen. (Bonwick, p. 20)

[A damper is done when it produces a hollow sound when struck with a shovel.] It is well, when baked, to place it on its edge against a tree for a short time, as it is otherwise apt to become heavy. (Polehampton, p. 76)

Illustration: ‘Interior of our Tent on the Bullock Creek’—April 1852. ‘...by Jove while I've been sketching I've forgotten the damper and it's burnt as black as coal, there it is on the right hand side of the sketch.’ (Snell, p. 291)

We tried baking a damper with flour and water only, and our loaf had a fine strong crust, but the interior of it was of a gluey nature—fine stuff to stick to the ribs. (Thomas Graham, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 82)

... there was no bread to be got; there was plenty of flour, but nothing to raise it with. (Thomas Graham, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 82)

[Advertisement] **Gold Seekers** are recommended to carry with them CARLETON'S BAKING POWDER, by the use of which a Good LOAF may be MADE as quickly as a damper. Sold by C.J. Carleton, Rundle-street Dispensary. (*SA Register*, 1/1/52)

Some men will not take time to make a wholesome [sic] loaf, but content themselves with dry or fat Johnny cakes, which are simply of flour and water, or with the addition of greasy accumulation of cookery, hastily prepared in the frying pan. (Bonwick, p. 20)

Two kinds of damper: damper and fat damper. (Snell)

Instead of damper we occasionally made what are colonially known as ‘devils on the coals’, which I imagine are somewhat similar to Indian chupatties. They are convenient when there is not time to make damper, as only a minute or so is required to bake them. They are made about the size of a captain’s biscuit, and as thin as possible, thrown on the embers and turned quickly with the hand. (Polehampton, p. 76)

I breakfasted on ‘devils on the coals’ and bacon. (Polehampton, p. 99)

‘Bugger on the coals’—... a thinnish cake speckled with currants, and baked hastily on the glowing embers. (Kelly, p. 250)

Made batter cakes and fried them in bear grease, they were first rate. (Marks, p. 68)

[Advertisement]

BISCUITS FOR THE DIGGINGS.

Don’t go without Biscuits.

PARTIES going to the Diggings, Shipowners, &c. can be supplied with good BISCUITS at GOLDSACK’S LITTLE SHOP in Hindley-street. All who have returned say, ‘Don’t go without Biscuits.’ (*SA Register*, 23/2/52)

Each digger consumes, on average 10 lbs of flour weekly. (*Argus*, 26/3/52)

In March 1852 the population at Mt Alexander diggings was conservatively estimated by the *Argus* at 40,000. Fears were held that diggers would starve during the coming winter, being dependent on Melbourne for supplies [especially of flour]. (*Argus*, 13/3/52)

[May 1852] The first thing Charles Holmes and party did, on arriving at the Bendigo diggings, was to buy a bag of flour. They were shocked at having to pay £7 10s—yet why did they bring none with them on their dray, drawn by a team of three horses, all the way from Angaston? (Holmes)

[Bendigo, June 1852] Flour £18 per bag to day. (Snell, p. 303)

By October 1852, the colony was running desperately short of flour. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 28/10/52)

[Bought a 50-lb bag of flour at a store at Forest Creek, but had to throw it away—unfit for use.] I often think that any of the Melbourne refuse was considered good enough for the diggings... (Thomas Carle, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, pp. 163-4)

Articles such as flour, bread, sugar, &c. are excessively adulterated all over the colony. Here, if you buy brown sugar, the sand makes a large per-centage. If you buy a sack of flour, it is 20l., and full of lumps, being clearly American damaged flour mixed with good flour. (Howitt, p. 312)

... paid £9 for a bag of flour which judging from a specimen of it in the shape of a damper for dinner was of very bad quality. (Snell, p. 298)

Meat

First beef sold at a shepherd’s hut at Golden Point, about the end of March 1852—price 8d/lb. Mutton was very cheap—1s 6d to 2s 6d for a hind quarter, the butcher actually throwing the skins away. (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 20)

Mutton is sold at 2s. 6d. the fore-quarter, and 3s. the hind quarter; no weighing, no chopping, no jointing. You have no choice: 'Take that or nothing.' (I.X., 'Confessions of a Gold-seeker', Forest Creek, January 1852, in *SA Register*, 21/2/52)

[Bendigo, winter 1852] Leg of mutton cost 8s., beefsteak 1s. per lb. (Ross, p. 59)

Butcher would not sell less than half a sheep at a time—8 shillings—meat very good. (Clacy, p. 63)

[Had to buy lamb by at least the side (about 5s. per sheep)—butcher would not sell by the quarter—] ...as we lugged it home after our day's toil we were invariably saluted with cries of—'Ba-a, Ba-a!' (Henry Boyle, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 119)

Butchers sell lean sheep, in four quarters, at 6 or 7 shillings a quarter—only commodity whose price rarely changes. (Fauchery)

[Flies] ... deposit live maggots on meat immediately it is killed, and on game the moment it is hung up; and in a few hours those maggots are more than half an inch long. (Howitt, p. 68)

The mutton we can scarcely eat, it is so fat, but now there is fresh beef here; but when you boil that fresh it is not very palatable with a piece of damper. (*Argus*, quoting letter from Ballarat digger, 15/10/51)

... meat had to be killed and used immediately [or else it would be fly-blown and alive with maggots], and beef and mutton were always tough, from being eaten so soon after killing. (Campbell, p. 104)

Wretches they are—much worse than India rubber or gutta percha. (Howitt, p. 130)

The sheep are at present an indifferent 40 to 45 lbs. (Finlay, p. 15)

Bought half a sheep for 7/-, not much larger than a good sized cat. (Snell, p. 295)

[Bendigo, March 1852] ... got a mutton pasty off a woman for 1/-. (Snell, p. 282)

[On the road, June 1852] In company with a Hobart Town man, taking up a sausage machine. (Finlay, p. 9)

[Diggers were suspicious of mutton pies or sausages, when recognisable cuts of meat were so readily available. Kelly wondered at this 'suspicious fastidiousness'] ...for dogs were too highly prized to be used indiscriminately, and the 'feline seasoners' were then unknown in Victoria, cats being positive curiosities. (Kelly, vol. 2, p. 15)

Bob found a sheep in one of the holes this afternoon and took him to the tent and killed him. (Snell, p. 306)

Butchers

Butchers on Moonlight Flat, Forest Creek, mid-late 1852: Hulxbarrgar, M. Ferris, M. Fertis, John Hayward, William Stuckey, Peter Carroll. (Bryce Ross's *Diggings Directory*)

... merely sheds or shades, consisting of a flat roof of leafy boughs raised on four posts; meat, often not very attractive, hanging in quantities under it. (Howitt, p. 139)

But go into a butcher's shop! The air is black with all sorts of flies, and the sound is like thunder—you cannot hear yourself speak! (Howitt, p. 83)

In the morning... the butcher drives about in his cart, shouting, 'Beef or mutton? beef or mutton?' (MacKenzie, p. 50]

[Bendigo, June 1852] There are plenty of them here all doing well. They get the sheep at 12/- a head and sell them at 16/-. They average 20 to 30 each daily. (Finlay, p. 15)

It is reckoned that for the diggers at Mount Alexander... [about 40,000 in February 1852] upwards of 1,000 wethers are killed every morning. (MacKenzie, p. 50]

For daily consumption at these [Mt Alexander] diggings more than 1,000 wethers, besides we know not how many bullocks, were slaughtered every morning in February and March last [1852]. (*Emigrant in Australia*, pp. 65-6)

Sheep, which used, before the diggings, to be 4s. or 5s. each, are now 16s., and those picked ones—not picked for their fatness, but to get rid of them as scabbed or worn down with foot-rot. (Howitt, p. 130)

... the offals, garbage, &c., lying about and festering in the sun, as well as whole streams of putrifying gore, and mountains of bullocks' heads at the slaughter-yards, which send their foetid gases on the breeze far and wide... (Howitt, p. 263)

The offal is a great drawback, for innumerable as the dogs are here, they do nothing towards its consumption, and heaps of 3 or 6 tons of paunches lie beside the yard and surrounded by tents. Must make one exception, for the one next to us buries them in trenches. (Finlay, p. 15)

Outside the [cattle slaughtering] yard lay about 300 paunches in two large heaps, on one of which lay about 20 full grown calves, some with legs, others with their heads protruding through the womb, from all of which rose an effluvia nauseous enough now [July 1852] but which must be unapproached and contagious in summer. The hides seemed valueless, as they were carelessly hung on a fence, thrown on the ground and lying in all shapes. (Finlay, p. 25)

They get 6d for the [sheep] skin, but would let them go at 4d, taken away at once. Some of them will have $\frac{1}{4}$ acre covered with skins, and the wool dropping off them. (Finlay, p. 15)

Cooking equipment

Packing case serves as a pantry, protecting bread and rice from mice. Meat hung high on a tree or at top of tent pole, so dogs can't get it—it goes black, but lasts longer than hidden in tent.

Kettle or small cauldron for tea or coffee, frying pan, and large tin with cast iron lid for baking bread. (Korzelski, p. 59)

[O]ur cooking utensils are very deficient, a large 3 choppin pitcher which we call a Kettle answers for boiling our Tea water and making it, coffee, soup, porridge, plum duff &c. in a very useful pot, soon burn thro' tho' (Arnot, p. 112)

We bought a camp oven for 12/- off [f] a successful party who were about to leave the diggings. (Snell, p. 285)

Large joint of baked mutton—baked in a large camp oven suspended from three iron bars, fixed in the ground in the form of a triangle, about a yard apart, and were joined together at the top. (Clacy, p. 61)

Vesuvians = matches. (Chesney, p. 239)

What's on the menu?

[Digger leaving goldfields, disillusioned—]

You're welcome to your golden joys,

Your duffs, and Johnny cakes, and doughboys,

Your vile lob scouse, and milkless teas,

Your endless bacon fry and cheese... ('Song of the Early Digging Days', Bonwick (magazine), May 1853, p. 290)

... cooked some mutton and rice and made a plum duff and a damper. (Snell, p. 312)

... made a damper and baked a leg of mutton with a batter pudding made of flour, suet and water under it. (Snell, p. 293)

Bought some beef and had a fry. (Snell, p. 312)

... pitched into the mutton pie at a tremendous rate. ...made a mutton pasty—regular screamer. (Snell, p. 292)

Bob bought haf a sheep to day and made a jolly stew for dinner with lots of doughboys and onions in it and we bowsed ourselves out as tight as drums. (Snell, p. 305)

Cooked steak and onions with suet—smelled delicious, tasted dreadful—in the dark, cut up a piece of soap, think it was suet. (Chandler, p. 103)

... made some soup for dinner which turned out a mull, being woefully burnt. (Snell, p. 300)

[Another day, Snell searched all day without finding horse, then—] ...I returned to the tent very tired and hungry, just in time to see a dog walk off with our boiled shoulder of mutton which I had destined for dinner, made some doughboys and boiled... The meat the dog had left was blown full of maggots by the flies and is scarcely eatable... (Snell, p. 294)

Sometimes the joint of meat catches fire and it is difficult to extinguish it before the fat has burnt away. (Clacy, p. 61)

It was a solid meal, consisting of damper, mutton, and potatoes—the two latter half cooked in the embers of the camp fire. We ate these provisions in a species of widened pannikin, something between a wash-hand-basin and a soup plate, ingeniously constructed so as to be inconvenient in either capacity. Such a conventionality as a tablecloth was, of course, not to be expected. [Lord Robert Cecil, dining in the Commissioner's tent at Bendigo, March 1852—Scott, p. 52)

... to day being Sunday we Could not Cook any Victuals for breakfast dinner or Supper. So our meals we had hard buiskits butter and Cheese... (Holmes, p. 24)

Polish and others make European-style broth for [Sunday] lunch, of meat, potatoes and cabbage, and dough [dumplings]. Not the English—they prefer plum pudding on Sundays. (Korzelski, p. 68)

Plum duff

Currant damper (Snell, p. 314)

I was one of a party who partook of a golden plum pudding, prepared for our Christmas dinner in 1853. About half-an-ounce of fine gold was washed out from the gravelly bed of Forest Creek and mixed with the other ingredients of the pudding... (J.F. Hughes, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 3)

Eating the meal

... a passable substitute for the genuine bakery was soon sustaining the burden of a mutton chop and enduring the incisions of a bush-knife. ('Sorrows of a New Chum' in *Bonwick* (magazine), January 1853, p. 123)

Pannikin serves as spoon. Knife and fork—many go without fork, using fingers for eating straight from frypan—wipe fingers on boots after eating, to preserve boot leather. 'The tin pannikin, frying pan, and knife substitute then for all dishes, plates, cups, glasses, goblets, silver fruit knives and all table service.' Knife carried in sheath on belt, or in pocket—pannikin hangs in the belt with tin pot, threaded through the pickaxe, rests on shoulder with frying pan—the portable kitchen. (Korzelski, p. 61)

... the chops can be picked out of the frying pan, placed on a lump of bread, and cut with a clasp knife that has done good service in fossicking during the day. (Bonwick, p. 19)

There are great quantities of flies here, and will not shift will you kill them. When we are getting our meals the victuals are black over with them, and, every mouthful one takes, two or three or half a dozen go into the mouth at the same time. The only method of keeping them off is by wearing veils, and it is rare to see a person without one; so you may be sure how nobly we look. (Letter re. Forest Creek, in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 54)

We ate these provisions in a species of widened pannikin, something between a wash-hand-basin and a soup plate, ingeniously constructed so as to be inconvenient in either capacity. Such a conventionality as a tablecloth was, of course, not to be expected. [Lord Robert Cecil, dining in the Commissioner's tent at Bendigo, March 1852—Scott, p. 52]

All the thanks I get

... always mess with your partners, as slight dissensions are commonly talked away at meals. (Lancelott, p. 32)

Woe be to him [the cook], however, if his mates return in an ill-humour. Then will his ear be greeted with, 'My eyes, this ere biled beef *is* rope-yarn:'—'How many gum-leaves did you put in to soak?' 'Do you call *these* fritters?' &c.... Ah! if they only knew the trouble you had had! how the fire wouldn't burn that morning—how many maggots you had to pick off the beef before boiling—how the pudding got more dust than spice through the wind—how the camper got burnt while you were wiping out the dishes with that rag that had sone so much service of the kind, and all because the water was scarce—how you

were puzzled to make that soup, with nothing to put in it—how the vinegar-keg had leaked on the sugar-bag—how that stupid bullock put his dirty foot into your last dish of clean water, just as the boiling kettle for supper gently glided off the log, and deliberately lay down in the ashes...—oh! did they know all this! ... The wounded hero, sinking in the arms of victory, cries, ‘Thank God, I die happy!’ How much more reason you, who only killed—a laughing jackass, that you shot by mistake to mix with the parrots in a pie,—you, to throw yourself upon your leafy couch, close your eyes, and sleep in peace. (Bonwick (magazine), March 1853, p. 241)

Many a hearty laugh do I get at the ridiculous figure cut by some of these young fellows when officiating in what I may term the woman department.... The duff [special Sunday pudding] is generally served in a bucket; and if there be anything wrong, the *cook* is not a little chaffed for it. (F. Hobson jnr to his father in Mossman (letters), p. 58)

Restaurant

There is one respectable eating-house [Maine’s Restaurant?—Bryce Ross’s address] near the *Argus* office, where a good meal can be had for 2s. ... The price of a cup of coffee is 6d., and with a slice of currant cake, 1s. A newspaper also from the aforesaid *Argus* office is 1s. (E.G. Day, writing from Mt Alexander, 21/2/52, in *SA Register*, 23/3/52)

Tea

... making tea in a quart-pot, as the diggers do,—that is, putting the tea and sugar into the tin, and boiling them for a while on the fire... (Howitt, p. 118)

... tea boiled in a tin-pot with brown sugar and without milk. This is, undoubtedly, the best method for making tea; the boiling without a lid on the pot effectually destroying the astringency of the beverae, so nauseous when there is no milk to soften it. (Mundy, p. 601)

... the great art of making bush tea is in not allowing the water to boil more than two seconds after the tea is in, then some black sugar is added, and if the whole is stirred round with a stick of gum tree, you have a flavour given to it which is not to be found in the best tea rooms of England. (Brown, p. 73)

Pannikin holds about a pint—tin, not enamelled. (Clacy, p. 32)

Two or three panikins, that is, from a quart to three pints, are thought no extraordinary quantity for one person... [after a hard day’s travelling or labour] (Howitt, p. 66)

Coffee replaces tea for breakfast—once kettle is emptied of the first draught of coffee, kettle is filled again with water and put on the fire to get the rest of the coffee from the grounds—‘Coffee Number 2’, to be had at work—dirty in colour, thin, and without aroma—diggers call it ‘cafio’—the ‘fio’ at the end is supposed to describe its thin consistency—but it is a good thirst-quencher at work—similar procedure with tea, only tea retains its original name, ‘quite undeservedly’. (Korzelski, pp. 64-7)

Possums were fond of tea-leaves—would enter tents in search of them. (Skinner, p. 102)

Some bushmen, I know, prefer water in which the leaves of the gum tree have been resting for a considerable time, but my own taste never became sufficiently educated to prefer this addition. (Brown, p. 73)

'How many gum-leaves did you put in to soak?' (Bonwick (magazine), March 1853, p. 241)

Post-and-rail tea = flavoured by a collection of sticks, rather than tea leaves.

Jack-the-painter tea = a preparation of leaves which taste like a mixture of copperas and verdigris. (Howitt, p. 133)

... a tour in search of sufficient passable water for the evening meal and that of the following morning, but very frequently the 'cup that cheers' had a strong flavour of gum leaves. (Thomas Graham, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 82)

... we had a most comfortable supper, not forgetting, as we could not get milk, just to soften our tea with a wee drop of brandy. (Brown, p. 195)

Taken in tea, brandy became 'French cream'. (Bartlett, p. 130)

[When dining with another party of diggers—] ... the usual billy of tea was set down, and in pouring it into the pannikins I observed its resemblance in color to the tea we had been in the habit of drinking in the old country [Scotland], and said to myself:—'This must be a party of lucky diggers, since they can afford a supply of milk to their tea.' But soon I learnt that this clayey-brown liquid was the nearest approach to the crystal stream obtainable in that neighborhood. (Thomas Graham, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 81)

The tentkeeper's day

The diggers' habit is, in the morning at an early hour to go to the nearest creek for a bucket of water, which only at this time deserves the name, owing to the rest it has had from the washers during the night... (Thomas, p. 39)

As soon as they were gone [to work] I washed the plates and sprinkled the floor and the greater part of my day's work was done. (Ragless, p. 46)

I staid at home, buried 50 sovereigns and 1 lb of gold to avoid being robbed, made a damper and baked a leg of mutton with a batter pudding made of flour, suet and water under it. (Snell, p. 293)

Quarrelling was as common as breakfasting. (Sherer, p. 165)

An extravagant gentleman digger left his partners at Bendigo, disgruntled at that week's 'caterer' of the party's refusal to purchase some bottles of mixed pickles at 4 shillings a bottle. He could not bear more meals of mutton without 'something to render it eatable.' (Clacy, p. 69)

Mr Curry and his colleague couldn't agree about the washings up—he wanted to dirty all the things and then have a regular set-to, but the other wanted to wash up after every meal. (Sarah Midgley—Midgley & Skilbeck, p. 39)

Claus Gronn and his mate fell out over the matter of a match—a precious commodity, not to be wasted. Gronn advised his mate to move out of the wind when trying to light a fire and the mate took up his belongings and decamped. (Gronn, p. 69)

Horse-keeping

... the heavy expenses of horse-keeping. (Earp, p. 147)

... after a little search finding a convenient spot to pitch our tent, we hobbled the horses, committed them to old 'Chance's' care... (Earp, p. 128)

A bell for a horse's neck, to find him in the woods, cost one guinea—worth just 18d. in London. (Howitt, p. 289)

Horse feed (hay) increased from £2–£5 per ton to £14–£20 per ton between pre-goldrush and May 1852. (Statistical return in *Further papers relative to...*)

[Horse] Feed in the dry season is confined to oats and bran for the horses; and these at such prices as to make the weekly cost of a horse from £3 to £5. (Bonwick, p. 16)

Oats are being sold at the diggings at Mount Alexander at 9d. per lb., or 30s. per bushel, and difficult to obtain; several creeks in which water was expected to remain had suddenly dried up, and the greatest distress was occasioned in consequence; horses were a drug, and were starving in great numbers. [An earlier report had put the cost of keeping at horse in feed at 20s. per week] (*SA Register*, 1/3/52)

[May 1852] Our poor old horse Charley begins to look miserably thin and what to do with him I don't know for there is scarcely a blade of grass about the diggins [sic] and oats are 30/- per bushel. (Snell, p. 301)

[Bendigo] 18/4/52—All the feed for horses being eaten in our neighbourhood, we had to take Charley a mile and a half to grass this evening and every evening afterwards. (Snell, p. 293)

Some men close their work early, and take the beasts perhaps or five miles to some scanty pasture, and stopping there in their 'possum rug for the night, bring them in the next morning. (Bonwick, p. 16)

There is not a blade of grass anywhere around here [White Hills], for the horses: and we have sent them to a paddock, fourteen miles off. (Howitt, p. 208)

20/4/52—Bob... lost himself in taking the horse out to grass. (Snell, p. 294)

At almost all the diggings there are boys, whose sole employment is, to take charge, from evening till next morning, of the miners' horses. One of these boys will come to your tent in the evening, lead away your horse, put him on good grass during the night, and next morning lead him back to you; for which services you pay him one shilling. There are boys whose earnings in this way amount to about £2 or £3 a week, each. (Mackenzie, p. 53)

Boys and girls, running about the woods and diggings, looking after bullocks and horses. Aged from 8 or 10 to 12 years old. (Howitt, p. 194)

Out all day looking after [i.e., for] the mare. Met upwards of 50 men looking for stray horses. The horses in general very poor, saw upwards of 20 dead ones. The feed scarce, only one flat of 300 acres with any grass at all, and above 300 horses on it. (Finlay, p. 17)

[Winter 1852, Bendigo] Saw a great many dead horses in the course of my ramble. (Snell, p. 311)

I have not yet been able to walk into the open forest without having to run the gauntlet of heaps of dead horses [and bullocks] that make the most horrible stench. People seem to regard worn-out horses as criminals... (Howitt, p. 22)

Three of the five horses belonging to the Ragless party disappeared the day after they arrived from Adelaide at Forest Creek. They were found eight days later and 'They look much better for their eight days holiday.' (Ragless, p. 41)

13/4/52—Up early and found the horses about a mile from the tent. [Matter-of-factly]

14/4/52—Got the horses rather late.

15/4/52—The horses out far from the tent.

16/4/52—One of the horses came to the tent.

17/4/52—Got 'Squire' close to the tent. Went up the Gully and caught the other two. (Ragless, pp. 66, 68, 70)

[Bendigo] 17/4/52— ...lost the horse and it took us till 11-o'clock to find him.

19/4/52—Job to find Charley this morning...

20/4/52—Bob... lost himself in taking the horse out to grass.

Horse lost on 26 April—diggers searched for two days, then wrote out notices and nailed them to trees, offering £1 reward for his recovery. Found him on 29 April 'on top of a high range about 5 miles from the place where we lost him'. (Snell, pp. 292-5)

BENDIGO DIGGINGS

BIRD'S REGISTRY OFFICE for the Recovery of Lost Horses and Bullocks... (Bryce Ross's *Diggings' Directory*)

[Mt Alexander] No less than eighteen persons complain of having their horses taken; and numerous cases of hobble pilfering occur. (*Argus*, 19/11/51)

During 1852, the *Argus* featured an average two pages each day of horses 'Stolen or strayed' from the diggings.

The neighbourhood

Everybody seemed to bear an amount of good feeling for his neighbour I had never seen so exhibited before. An old bachelor told me, with all due respect for myself, that 'this was owing to the almost entire absence of the female sex, they being generally mischief-makers and chatter-boxes'—a doctrine I am rather disposed to believe in. (Campbell, p. 90)

...many of the diggers averred that the appearance of women and clergymen led to the decadence of the goldfields. (W.H. Wilson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 158)

[April, 1852] The first thing that struck me was the number of women and children about. I certainly never expected to see these domestic comforts in such profusions... ('A Sailor's Trip from Melbourne to Mount Alexander', *Argus*, 20/5/52)

[Clunes, 1851] They have now a population of from seventy-five to eighty, and among them are four women—'devil a less!'... (*Argus*, 13/8/51)

At Bendigo, Sheepwash, Emu and Bullock Creeks, there are 15,000 diggers, plus about 10,000 women and children. (*Argus*, 26/4/52)

... under *births*, a Mrs. [] brought a little daughter to have a peep at the gold, and is doing well. There are about twenty women on the creek. (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

[Mary ? (later Jackson, then Lawrence) claimed that she (aged 11) and her mother (a nurse) were the first white women at Forest Creek. They arrived with Mary's brother in 1851 [?], when (she claimed) 8,000 men were on the field—] ... and when the diggers... saw us, there was great excitement. They threw down their picks and shovels and cheered. 'A petticoat! A petticoat!' they roared in one lusty shout of welcome, and came rushing towards us... After hundreds of hearty handshakes, and further rounds of cheers, the diggers got their axes and cut down several trees. Inside a couple of hours they had built for us a most comfortable 'mia mia'... The diggers came in crowds to see us... In a few days a cosy hut was erected for us... (Lawrence)

And who does not remember the first woman on the goldfields? They say women are curious, but if ever a woman was a curiosity it was then, for all the men left off work to gaze on her. (William Ottey, *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 58)

Female Gully, near White Hills in Bendigo—shown on Chief Commissioner Wright's map of Bendigo, June 1852 (in Flett, p. 240)

The question then was, what would be done with me? which was becoming such a common one, that I was often tempted to think, 'I was more trouble than I was worth'—in the backwoods of this colony, at any rate; and the people on the road seemed to participate in the idea, for I was gazed on, sometimes as a strange animal, and at others, notwithstanding, my claim to toughness, as a brittle bit of porcelain to be labelled 'glass, with care'. (Mrs A. Campbell, p. 64—feeling a nuisance on the dirty road to the Ovens diggings in May 1853—sick of mud and bridgeless creek crossings.)

[Letter (Mossman says: 'I am very doubtful... of its authenticity) of September 1852 from a young lady of Dublin who] ... could play polkas, sing ballads, speak French and a little German, was a capital horsewoman (only I had no horse), and once in my life had composed a waltz, and written sixteen chapters of a novel, which broke down from my not knowing how to get my heroine out of a terrible scrape. [Accompanied her brother and his friends to Australia—donned men's clothes as] ... I felt that to [go] in my own proper costume and character would be to run unnecessary hazard. ...even in my palmiest days I never was treated with greater courtesy or respect. Of course, my sex is generally known and I am called 'Mr Harry', an abbreviation of Harriet... many a nugget is thrust on me whether I will or no, in return for cooking a pudding or darning a shirt... (Mossman (letters), pp. 2-3)

Thirty-nine men have returned from the diggings, and those of them who intend to make another trip to the Victoria gold-fields will not do so, we are told, till March.... Of those who intend to return in March, many will take their wives and families. (*SA Register*, 22/12/51)

... it is now getting the fashion for good housewives to follow their lords to the mines... (Bonwick (magazine), February 1853, p. 169)

The filth, the disorder, the domestic misery gave place at the presence of a female to cleanliness, regularity and comfort. (Bonwick, p. 27)

... sweeteners of human life... Few facts are more apparent on the gold fields than the ameliorating influence of woman. Her presence is the harbinger not only of comfort, but of moral progress. (Bonwick (magazine), May 1853, p. 281)

At the end of 1852, Caroline Chisholm estimated that 11,000 husbands had left wives and families behind in Britain—]... and much evil has already resulted from this desertion. (ed. note, Mossman (letters), p. 62)

Caroline Chisholm 'carried on what amounted to a traffic in women'. In the township of Castlemaine everybody who wanted to take a woman and proved that he had £10 could get a woman and a dowry of a similar amount, with a tent and two blankets. With a dowry like that one could begin digging. After spending the dowry, the men would abscond from the bare tent, leaving there the unfortunate women—'temporary wives'. (Korzelski, pp. 132-6)

[The sight of a pair of young married sisters who (with husbands) occupied neighbouring tents at the diggings] It was altogether a sight enough to make a bachelor rush madly to town, and throw a big nugget at the feet of the first damsel who would promise to come up and make his tent look as pretty. (Bonwick (magazine), January 1853, p. 130)

[Visiting a recently satin-robed digger's bride at the diggings—] He found her disrobed of her satin glory, with a dirty cap half concealing a black eye, a short pipe in her mouth, and barely sober enough to utter these memorable words, 'I'm a *Derwenter*, and I don't care know knows it.' (Bonwick (magazine), November 1852), p. 53

... there were... no decent women there, only a few of the 'Vandie's' wives. (Clendinning—opinion of her brother-in-law)

The women on the diggings were not, as a rule, of a very fascinating description, very many of them being of the lowest order of Irish. (Polehampton, pp. 107-8)

[By 1860s at Ballarat] ...the class of residents on the field had become so superior to those of the working class, whom we had found there on our first arrival, to whom all species of employment for women seemed perfectly natural if they could carry it on with success. (Clendinning)

You see a good many women... and some of them right handsome young girls. They all seem very cheerful and even merry; and the women seem to make themselves very much at home in this wild, nomadic life. (Howitt, p. 64)

Mrs C. joked about 'considering myself a heroine, roughing diggings life, all for love.' (Campbell, p. 82)

Wild the life is, certainly, but full of excitement and hope; and strange as it is, I almost fear to tell you, that I do not wish it to end! (Mossman (letters), pp. 2-3)

Vast number of females going up, many of them having a very respectable appearance indeed. (Finlay, p. 40)

There is no lack of handsome mantillas, polkas, smart bonnets, and parasols. I have seen some diggeresses going about here in a peculiarly tasteful costume: a white wide-awake hat, with broad ribbon; a neat-fitting polka or jacket, made like the body of a lady's riding habit, and a handsome dress beneath... It is a costume which weems quite made for the diggings, and which, I expect, will become very popular. (Howitt, p. 210)

Polka jackets—common garments worn by women on the goldfields. (Bonwick (magazine), February 1853, p. 186)

There are some hugely fat women on the diggings; the life seems to suit them. (Howitt, p. 186)

Pets

... a pet cockatoo, chained on a perch, makes noise enough to keep the 'missus' from feeling lonely when the good man is at work. (Clacy, p. 56)

Martha Clendinning had brought a canary in a cage from Ireland, and was known at Ballarat (early in 1853) as 'the lady who has a canary hanging in front of her tent'. (Clendinning)

A dog would have been a tentkeeper's steadiest companion.

Dogs feature largely in John Rochfort's account of the diggings in 1852-3. Always they are surly and loyal to their masters, guarding their tents, or the men themselves when they lie ill. (Rochfort)

On these diggings there are the most huge, savage, furious dogs kept that I have seen anywhere. At every tent is chained one or more of these stupendous brutes; and you must be careful how you steer your way amongst the tents to keep out of reach of their chains. (Howitt, p. 188)

... the confounded bull and mastiff dogs chained to tents and drays, compel one to have the eyes of an Argus, to escape feeling their teeth. (*Argus* correspondent, 8/11/51)

[‘worried by dogs’] A digger was going to the store on [Saturday] night, with the intention of buying some potatoes, when he was attacked by two dogs (mastiffs) and literally torn to pieces... He is now lying in a precarious state. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

Immense numbers of these dwellings in endless variety of shapes and sizes, each with its uproarious dog... (Thomas, p. 38)

Now and then as one strolls along, a peep at the interior of some tent more blessed than ordinary, reveals quite a domestic scene, due to the presence of the digger's wife and family, with perhaps a favourite cat—a rare and precious animal on the diggings at the time [1852] I am speaking of, though common enough after an enterprising individual imported a dray-full from Melbourne, which he sold at a pound a head. (Polehampton, p. 90)

Cats were prized almost equally with gold. (Gronn, p. 96)

Mice were a great nuisance at Bendigo in the spring of 1853—'They swarm on the diggings'. Traps were hard to come by. Mice made a nest of Howitt's copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ran over hands and face at night. Cats cost £2 10s. (Howitt, p. 249)

Selina is given a cat and sells it for £1 to a German who had entertainment gardens. (Probably Sydenham, behind White Hills cemetery.) (Ursella Mackenzie/ Enid Paton reminiscences)

Neighbours

[At White Hills, Bendigo, 1852] We soon got a bit settled and others came around and a shop. (Selina Skewes)

[end 1852] There is now something like a settled population. Religious worship is regularly maintained,—Public schools are forming,—and the ladies of professional men, Government officers, storekeepers, and respectable diggers, present the charm of polite and polished society to those auriferous wilds. (Bonwick, in Bryce Ross's *Diggings' Directory*, p. 12)

Society is being formed. The novelty of a woman's presence is passing away, and associations and visits are not unknown. (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852), p. 89)

thair was a great deal of ruffans thair and ...they drank and fought each other we ware not molested tho suronded by them (Davenport, at Ballarat, p. 260)

thair [was] 5 of them 2 was rowdays 3 was what we may say stead men so they devided the 2 went away and 3... stoped and was a party and very good neighbours (Davenport, at Ballarat, p. 260)

[In her husband's absence, his no-good partner, Walker, pressured Sarah Davenport to retail sly-grog from her tent.] i said no firmley but quiteley they bosted what injury they wold do if i wold not i wold not nor i did not... (Davenport, p. 264)

[On another occasion, 'vandamoinan' neighbours tried to cheat the Davenports out of their share of a jointly-owned horse and dray. Sarah stood up to them where her husband would not, and threatened to break one of the horse's legs.] i shold not have been so perseveary but my husband seemed so exiteted and i did not wish him to be disapointid (Davenport, at Ballarat, p. 262)

George Powell committed assault with intent on Mrs Martha Green and her neighbour Mrs Wilson—their tents were in Little Bendigo, Forest Creek—husbands out diggings. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

Maria Beams, 'a respectable elderly woman', charged with stealing £140 and 2½ oz of gold from William Davis. Davis and Maria's husband John were miners working together and living near one another at Golden Point. Maria Beams had a conversation with Mrs Davis about some spiced beef, outside the door of the Davis tent, then, on the pretext of borrowing an ink bottle, stole a bag containing the valuables from under the bed. When searched by her husband, two matchboxes were found in her pocket, one containing 26 sovereigns and two half sovereigns, and the other two one pound notes. Davis dragged some waterholes in a nearby gully and found his wife's bag containing a ring, two ten-pound notes and one sovereign, as well as two stones, used to sink the bag. Maria was sentenced by Redmond Barry (at the first circuit court sitting in Castlemaine, in December 1852) to 20 months imprisonment in Melbourne gaol. 'He would not be severe with the prisoner, as he had no intention of deterring females from coming on the

diggings, inasmuch as he considered that the presence of females greatly conducted towards the refinement and good order of society here.' (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

[Aborigines camped across the creek from the Ragless party's tent at Forest Creek] The men here... are fond of white clothes... The women wear their hair long and keep it in good order with a red or blue braid tied around their heads. But they make the same dismal corroboree as the other natives of South Australia... The noise of the blacks beating their waddies are making some of us cross. (Ragless, pp. 57-8)

Children

... groups of dirty, idle, mischievous children were continually running wild all over the [Beechworth] diggings. (Campbell, p. 90)

[Bendigo, November 1852] With reference to the children... I cannot but pity the hundreds of both sexes and all ages—surrounded as they are with vice, and language the most corrupting, carelessly running about, uneducated, and I fear, in many instances, almost uncared for, most of them shoeless and wretchedly clad. (Letter from a VDL colonist in Mossman (letters), p. 61)

[Boys] ...are dressed in a pair of moleskin or corduroy trousers, yellow with the gravel or clay of the diggings, and immensely wide,—being their fathers' cut shorter, and often worse for wear; a pair of strong shoes, and no stockings; a coloured shirt, that has perhaps been washed sometime; if the weather be cold or wet, a coarse, short, wide coat, much too big, and an old dingy wide awake, which, having belonged to their fathers, is also much too big, and apt to blow off, and which, therefore, from constantly being pulled down tight on their heads, has got the brims stretched straight all around... (Howitt, p. 194)

Jenny, Kitty and Lizzy Ennis, aged 11, 9 and 6 years old. Collect their father's three horses from the bush on Bendigo outskirts each morning and bring them back for grazing each evening. Also drag timber home for fuel. In wet weather, pinned up their frocks around their waists, showing their flannel petticoats. On their way to and fro, gather gold from old washdirt around abandoned holes, or in gravel of the road. Make about £3 (1 oz) per week. Their family hopes to make enough in two or three years to return to VDL and buy a farm. (Howitt, p. 203)

Ursella Mackenzie (nee Annear) recalled picking up specks of gold on miners' heaps after rain—White Hills, 1852-3.

Want, however, is not known here; even little children can rumage [sic] about; and many of them come to the stores with little bits of gold, for which they receive 5s. or 6s., as the case may be, and which they almost immediately expend in sweetmeats or some such rubbish... (Letter from a VDL colonist in Mossman (letters), p. 61)

A Word to Young Fossickers.—Look out for the biggest nuggets you can... We knew a tiny little fellow that would bring his father about an ounce a week, by cracking stones on Specimen Hill... We have known others earn a good sum by looking after horses in the evening, blowing the blacksmith's bellows, minding tents, helping in stores, &c. (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 91)

School

[At White Hills, Bendigo, 1852] Also a large tent for a church and Sunday School where we all went in due time, my brother, sister and myself. (Selina Skewes)

Meeting held on 10/10/52 at Forest Creek to discuss the establishment of National Schools on the diggings. At Mt Alexander, a Sunday School presently had an attendance of 60 children. Mr Miller, Inspector of National Schools, spoke: 'As the diggers were of a migratory tendency, they proposed to have large and commodious tents lined and made comfortable for the purposes of schoolrooms, liable to be removed at a moment's notice...' (*Argus*, 14/10/52)

The National School Tents are being erected at Forest Creek diggings. (*Argus*, 11/2/53)

Forest Creek National School commenced in a large tent on a 'slight eminence' by Adelaide Flat. 'National School' painted on tent. Another National School appeared at Fryers Creek. (Blake, pp. 141, 155)

The Government bore two-thirds of the cost of the school and the residents one-third. Fees were payable in advance—under 8 years 1/ per week, under 12 years 1/6 per week, over 12 years 2/ per week, adults 6d per week. School hours were 9am to 12 noon, and 2 to 5pm, and adults could have one hour's tuition every night. (?)

[National School, White Hills/Bendigo.] Rush leaves Bendigo and Mother [Ursella] has to go to school alone. School is conducted in a large tent, lined with dark lining. Wind between lining and tent is described as 'black man' [or 'black woman'—RMcA] by mischievous school boys and, when all alone in the big tent (the schoolmaster comes in seldom) causes great shock. As week's schooling was paid for, she had to complete her week as solitary scholar. (Ursella Mackenzie/Enid Paton reminiscences)

HEALTH

Climate

Fever, ague [malarial fever], dysentery, the scorching heat of summer, and the biting cold of winter, which scourge the Californian miner, are unknown to the Australian. (*Times* of London, 4/9/51)

The hot weather of Australia generally possesses this delightful peculiarity, that, far from occasioning any sense of exhaustion or lassitude, it produces in the spirits and bodily powers a cheeriness and vigour like what we northerners experience in a clear, calm, bracing forest. ... fine weather is the rule and rain the exception, so that whatever you have planned for work or pastime you may for three hundred and twenty days out of the three hundred and sixty-five, pretty assuredly perform. 'It is a great blessing, too,' as Colonel Mundy justly remarked, 'to be able to go abroad in any ordinary indoor dress, instead of piling on extra pellicles, graduated according to season. Here the family of clogs, goloshes, umbrellas, &c., imported from Europe by the careful emigrant, are hung up as monuments'! (*Emigrant in Australia*, pp. 14-16)

When the dustwinds blow, when the sun burns three times hotter than the statement of 'the climate of Devonshire' led them to expect, when the cramp or the dysentery seizes them with diabolical pangs, when the mosquitoes puncture them, and the flies drive them almost mad, 'Is this,' they exclaim in fury, 'your heaven upon earth? is this your delicious climate? this your Australian paradise?' (Howitt, pp. 84-5)

[6/11/52] Summer has not reached us yet; but it is now hotter than I ever knew it in England. Yesterday the hot winds blew very strong, and such a sight of dust I never witnessed before; but if it is not any worse I don't mind. (Letter in Mossman (letters), p. 62)

The bush caught fire on Friday, and caused some alarm, as it came very near the tents. The wind, dust, and heat was very similar to the well remembered Black Thursday. (*Argus*, 17/12/51)

[September 1852] The dust is blown about in clouds, so that a person can scarcely see any thing about him; it penetrates into every place, and, while working, I have felt it grinding in my teeth. Most of the men... wear veils. (Letter from an Edinburgh shopman, in Mossman (letters), p. 67)

The dust was absolutely unbearable. It hung in a dense cloud about the cart, getting into eyes, ears, mouth, and nose, stopping respiration utterly and clinging to hair, whiskers, and beard as if it were flour. The particles were so small that they penetrated through the thickest clothing and choked up every pore of the skin. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 15)

... scarcely a person ventures out without a veil before his face, or a wire goggle before his eyes, to screen them from the dust. (Letter dated 13/11/52, in Mossman (letters), p. 78)

There are many frequent hurricanes of hot winds, that bear about with them clouds of hot sand and dust, so injurious to the eyes that all who are obliged to be out have to wear veils of gauze to protect them. ...it is not unusual to see parrots and other birds screaming and gasping on the branches of the trees, and dropping on the ground lifeless, with the intense heat. (Thomas, pp. 30-31—quoting letter from Murdering Flat, 20/12/52)

A sandstorm in Melbourne was known as a 'brickfielder'. (Armour, p. 46)

... parched by the blustering brickfielders... (*Emigrant's Daughter*, p. 17)

... terrific bursts of roasting granulated atmosphere... Following the general example, I tied my head in a veil during those visitations, and thus baffled the drifting stones and pebbles; but if I had sewed it up in a pillow-case, I believe the finer dust would have found its way into the lungs, leaving enough in the cavities of the mouth to supersede the necessity of tooth-powder; and I remember, when stripping in the evening of the first memorable 'brick-fielder,' that I felt an involuntary pang of horror, thinking that the sharkskin aspect of my legs was the incipient symptom of elephantiasis. ...my next emotion was one of wonder at the close coat of gravelly mail in which they were encased.... The ears, of course, got pauged with balls of dust, and streamlets of coagulated mud trickled down the cheeks from the eye-corners until they lost themselves in the forest of beard at the lower extremity. (Kelly, pp. 300-01)

[Kelly considered (after five years' experience of the colony) that by 1857 the climate of Victoria was changing. He claimed that—] Rains are becoming more equably diffused over the seasons, and hot winds are being gradually driven back into the interior by the increased humidity of the climate... [due to the increase in cultivation and agriculture and] ... enhanced by the millions upon millions of water-holes spread over the colony in the several diggings, which fill with water during the winter season and contribute largely to the general humidity throughout the remainder of the year... I would therefore impress

upon those cuirous and investigating people who abound in the British Isles, the necessity of paying Victoria an early visit if they desire to revel in the abandon of hot winds, for I conceive their last appearance may be anticipated at no distant season. (Kelly, pp. 293-4)

[Kelly noted the aging effects of the Victorian climate, especially on women—] I have in many instances seen lovely, blooming young creatures, the incarnations of health and perfectibility, whose physical elasticity suffered deplorable impairment. [His recommendation?] ...always an advocate for considerable disparity in the ages of betrothed couples, I would the more strenuously recommend it in matrimonial alliances in Victoria. (Kelly, p. 294)

[31/7/52] To-day... has presented a novelty to the eyes as well as the feelings of the dish-washers in the shape of a heavy fall of snow, or to use the expression of an unfortunate digger who was thus employed, 'it rained snowballs'. (*Argus*, 5/8/52)

14/8/52—Heavy showers of snow at Forest Creek. (Arnot)

Sickness

The general health of the people at the Gold Field has thus far, under God's good providence, been preserved in a remarkable degree... no remarkable amount of sickness has been reported in any quarter. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 5/11/52)

Disease of the eyes and of the bowels prevail at the diggings. Last summer [1851-20 four out of every five persons at the Victorian diggings suffered, more or less, from one or the other of those distempers. (Mackenzie, p. 55)

We sunk six very deep holes, which was not an easy task, particularly under a burning hot sun, and sometimes hot winds that would almost roast a piece of beef. I had the skin entirely burnt off my nose, which was very sore. Each of us had the dysentery very bad... Then there are sore eyes—every one more or less. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 74—quoting letter from Forest Creek)

Beware of bad water and sod[a] damper... Attend to cleanliness, guard against sudden chills, and lie not upon the ground. (Advice in Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 86)

Dysentery

... dysentery, an intestinal inflammation signaled [sic] by abdominal pain and chronic, bloody diarrhoea. (Marks, p. 234)

There have [been] two children died on the creek since my last, from dysentery, and boards are so scarce, that boxes are brought to make coffins of. (*Argus*, 29/11/51)

Diarrhoea, merging into dysentery, no doubt carries off a great number of infants; but, on the other hand, they are not so liable to many other complaints: small-pox, for instance is practically unknown. (Brown, p. 167)

A poor fellow died from dysentery on Wednesday; his remains were interred in one of the gulleys [sic. I believe this is the first man that has died of that complaint. Many are returning to Melbourne to obtain medical advice and a good home. (*Argus*, 15/1/52)

Dysentery raging fiercely at Mount Alexander. (*Register*, 8/2/52)

In attacks of diarrhoea and dysentery, much mischief is done by persisting in the use of soda-damper and fat mutton; broths, arrowroot and leavened bread ought then only to be taken. (Advice of Bonwick's doctor friend, R.T. Tracy, Esq., M.D.—Bonwick, p. 25)

Arrow-root—'when under bowel attack' (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 86)

Attack of gastroenteritis—took draft of brandy and cayenne pepper. (Henry Morgan)

[After a severe bout of dysentery] I rose from this sickness after many weeks, the shadow of my former self, hair fallen out, teeth loosened and a figure shrunken and bent with weakness. (Skinner, p. 67)

Water and sanitation

The number of deaths from dysentery is really frightful, water getting exceedingly scarce, there being none fit to use except at the Commissioners', and how long this will last is uncertain. (*Argus*, 23/3/52)

The water is very nasty, being strongly flavoured, like much of the Australian water, with the essential oil of the 'stringy bark'. It is certainly unwholesome, and one among many causes of the dysentery prevalent here. Though it did me no harm it completely upset Sir Montagu's internal arrangements. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 25)

Forest Diggings [sic], 6th January, 1852—... many are leaving on account of the scarcity of water and dysentery, which is very prevalent, through drinking bad water without previously boiling it. (Charles Jenkins, letter to Adelaide, in *SA Register*, 5/2/52)

Diseases of the bowels are supposed to be here produced by the impure water, which the digger is obliged to drink. Were I to describe the only water, with its disgusting admixtures, which is accessible to several of the encampments I have seen, the description would be totally unfit for publication. (Mackenzie, p. 56)

William Hitchcock on one occasion described Forest Creek as nothing better than a sewer—or a public water-closet. (Bowden, p. 30)

Heaps of refuse from the tents, and offal from the butchers, putrifying in the sun, deform the landscape and offend the senses. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 27)

Butchers simply disposed of offal by throwing it into abandoned shafts where flies bred in countless millions and helped to spread disease. (Bowden, p. 9)

Plenty nuisances here. Butchers throwing their offal up in heaps, horses and bullocks dying, with many others you can fancy. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 72—letter from Forest Creek, 9/2/52)

... dogs, the scavengers of the miners, were to be seen in every direction, feeding on the meat and half-picked bones, which, but for the immense number of those animals, and the crows, ravens and hawks, would have produced pestilential fevers... (Hall, p. 25)

'Wangaratta Gold Field'—The water is plentiful and good at Reid's Creek. A party of knowing fellows who came from the Mount direct... on no account would return to perish like dead saplings on the hills. (*Argus*, 10/4/52 (letter))

... unless rain falls within ten days, the creek will be dry; and at the present time, I can only compare it to what parts of Flinders-lane used to be like in 1845—not water, but mud. (*Argus*, 5/11/52)

Water cost 6d. per bucket (nailcan full). Party of Germans sank hole about 70 ft deep at end of Adelaide Flat, where they got a good supply, but brackish—hailed it up with windlass from morning till night, for sale. (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 20)

We have sold water enough at the diggings [sic] at 1/- per bucket to keep us in butcher's meat. (Snell, p. 290)

Up to Sunday night, little rain had fallen at the Diggings, and half-and-half, (*i.e.* mud and water,) was selling at 1s. the bucket. (*Argus*, 30/4/52—the day before the drought broke)

The sure precursors of summer, ginger beer, lemonade and ginger pop shops, as well as itinerant vendors of the same, jostle the traveller now at every turn. (*Argus*, 6/11/52)

[Bendigo, March 1852] Cart with flag selling lemon syrup by the glass. (Snell, p. 282)

More than one 'lemonade seller' or 'coffeeshop' owner flaunted other enticements than the humble beverages on his sign. (Blake, p. 142)

[Advertisement] Notice to Miners at Mount Alexander.

Owen Fisher begs to inform his friends and the miners generally, that he will be at these diggings, with a TEETOTAL BOOTH, and a fresh and extensive supply of teetotal drinks, by Christmas, when he hopes to enjoy the same amount of patronage as was bestowed on him at Ballarat. N.B.—Filtered water will also be on sale. OWEN FISHER, Cordial Manufacturer, Swanston-street, North, Melbourne.

Residents at Forest Creek relied on water from disused holes, as creek itself too thick and muddy from cradling. (*Argus*, 14/9/52)

Many of these holes are filled, or nearly so, with water, filtering from the creek. It is black as ink, and has a stench as of a tan-yard, partly from the bark with which they line the sides of their holes. (Howitt, p. 95)

... I regret to observe that at Golden Gully, where there is the finest water-hole, some eighty or ninety cradles are daily emptying their contents into it, which cannot fail in a short time to choke up the spring... (*Argus*, 14/1/52)

A curious circumstance in regard to sores exists here, it is almost impossible to get them healed... some think it arises from the mineral water we wash in and drink. (Arnot, p. 117)

Insects

One result of these sanitary problems was a heightened infestation of insects, from fleas to mosquitoes. (Marks, p. 203)

... flies annoying, green gauze is in great demand, most of the diggers using it during the day. (*Argus*, 6/12/51)

... the myriads of flies attracted to the various camping-places by the immense number of pieces of animal food in a state of putrefaction, which are scattered in every direction.

These flies are very numerous, and stick to your eyes, enter your nose, and frequently go down your throat whenever you venture to open your mouth. The only protection against these tormenting insects, which the diggers have been able to interpose, is a green veil. (Mackenzie, p. 55)

[Bendigo] ... this country is if possible more plagued with flies than South Australia. The mosquitoes left us about 6 weeks ago and were succeeded by millions of March flies, large black rascals that pitch on us by hundreds and nip a little bit out of your flesh like a prod with a bradawl, these fellows are just gone and now we have large blow flies with yellow tails about us all day spoiling our meat... (Snell, p. 294)

Our blankets and flannels hung out to air, in a short time, would be fly-blown and alive with maggots. (Campbell, p. 104)

[Blowflies] They blow your blankets or anything that has a particle of woollen in it. (Howitt, p. 100)

[T]errible annoyed by a small fly, thousands of them are flying about they bite generally on the wrist or about the ankles, the pain is like that of a leech but momentary, draws the blood, no inconvenience is felt till 24 hours after, when the wound inflames and gets most uncomfortably itchy, and next day it ends in a scab just like the head of a pin and then no more of it... (Arnot, p. 131—11/10/52)

... mosquitoes who bite like furies... (Earp, p. 109)

We found the smoke of dry cow-dung—an elegant bush remedy—burned at the door of the tent, in a great degree prevent the intrusion of these pests; but this was not many degrees better than the evil. (Polehampton, p. 96)

[W]e are much troubled with ants and wood vermin, they come out of the wood we bring in for firewood, they crawl upon us in our beds and every place (Arnot, p. 114)

... all night we are troubled with ants & fleas creeping over us, while at our sides a regular corrabery [sic] among the mice is being held. (Arnot, p. 130)

[Bendigo] Of a night we were very much annoyed by centipedes and tarantulas, which are very numerous. [Centipedes about four inches long, their bite—] ... sometimes resulting in mortification... Tarantulas [have] a body nearly as large as a walnut: they often drop off the trees on you when camping beneath. (Rochfort, p. 54)

... at night our slumbers are disturbed every half minute by a sensation like a hot spark falling on the skin. This proceeds from a species of flying ant who gets into the bed clothes and directly you move whips about a quarter of an inch of his sting into your hide and charges you nothing for it. (Snell, p. 294)

[In tent at night] ... a large ant stinging me with such force that I awoke with a start and cry, as if I had been shot, much to the astonishment of my mate. [Other types of ants included the 'pis-ant' and giant-red (1 inch long)] (Polehampton, p. 103)

Ants of an inch long are quite common. They do not—like the English ones—run scared away at the sight of a human being—not a bit of it; Australian ants have more *pluck*, and will turn and face you... Often when my organ of destructiveness has tempted me slightly to disturb with the end of my parasol one of the many ant-hills..., I have been obliged, as

soon as they discovered the perpetrator of the attack, to take to my heel and run away as if for my life. (Clacy, p. 134)

Found our mutton this morning covered with ants, little fellows that emit the most abominable smell I ever encountered. (Snell, p. 295)

[Ballarat] ...is free from musquitoes and sand flies, which abound at Mount Alexander to an almost unheard-of extent... (*Argus*, 17/11/51)

Bad eyes

[Sand flies] ...not bigger than a pin's head. (Polehampton, p. 131)

Prevalent in the ironbark forests—venomous, causing an extreme reaction (lump, infection, scarring)—sting horses as well as humans. (Howitt, p. 268)

... the [sand] fly, which is often small and black, seeming to have an attachment to some persons, whilse he totally avoids others. [Often bites those seeping on the ground in the open—bits on and around eyes, causing dreadful swelling.] (Brown, p. 173)

[Bullock Creek, Bendigo, 1852] Slept on the ground there which gave us bad eyes. (Snell, p. 286)

[At Mt Alexander/Bendigo] Two out of three were suffering much from inflammation of the eyes, caused as they supposed by the flies... (*Argus*, 19/5/52—but referring to before the rain)

[Ophthalmia] This very common complaint upon the goldfields is said by some to be caused by the flies laying eggs in the corners of the eyes; others, however, attribute it to the hot sand storms. (Campbell, pp. 104-5)

[In summer] As many as can crowd into the corners of your eyes settle there, and continue biting till they are so sore that you can hardly see. In a moment one will deposit a maggot inside the eyelid, which causes it to swell till it is almost as large as your fist: this is called the 'blight'... I knew a man who lost all his eyelashes, and several who have lost their sight altogether, from this cause. (Rochfort, p. 64)

Ophthalmia = conjunctivitis. (Bowden, p. 31)

A blight in the eyes has appeared among the diggers, which has been the cause of compelling several parties to break up, and come to town for medical advice. (*Melbourne Gold Circular*, 7/2/52)

But the flies and the fly-blight!... Almost every third man that you meet up the country in summer is half blind through them... Some of our party have had their eyes much inflamed for a week or more, when they have swelled up like two great eggs, just as if their owner had been fighting; and then they turn black. In a morning the sufferers cannot open them till they have been washed with warm water. Our dogs have suffered too. (Howitt, p. 128)

[Sandy blight] ...seemed like an epidemic and numbers became perfectly blind for a time. Those afflicted had a most loathsome and disgusting appearance from the constant and offensive discharge from the eyes. The pain from this affliction is almost

indescribable, the sensation being somewhat similar to what you might suppose you would feel if your eyes were stuffed and lacerated with gravel. (Clarke, pp. 16-17)

[At Elwood in the 1880s, during a summer of drought and sandstorms] We children got sandy blight, which was epidemic. Our eyes were sore and soon little hard bumps came on our eyelids, which stuck together. It was very painful; our eyelashes came out and the lids were red and swollen. (Amie Stirling, pp. 79-80)

The blight still continues very prevalent, closed eyes and swelled cheeks have become quite the fashion. (*Argus*, 11/2/52)

[Ophthalmia]...partly attributed to the flies, which certainly torment the vision, and 'infect the air', but it is perhaps as much to be referred to the large presence of putrefying gases from decaying animal food, which is exposed abundantly and, [owing] to some peculiarity of the the soil similar to that of Bermuda, which is known particularly to affect the sight. (Liverpool Merchant, p. 105)

Blight in the Eyes

Sir—Permit me to offer a word of counsel on this disease, peculiarly an Australian inflammation. Caustic, sulphate of zinc, sugar of lead, opium and other lotions will not cure this malady, which is simple if treated simply. I have found the following a never failing relief:—Dip a muslin handkerchief into cold water, fold it, wet, four times thick; do not let it be dripping wet, and lay it in this state on the eyes, forehead, and temples, covering this with a double thickness of flannel. Keep this on an hour at a time, and when taken off, bathe the eyes with a little cold water; wipe the eyes gently dry, and repeat, if needful, three times a day. (Letter from YBA in *Argus*, 5/2/52)

My mother treated us with the Chinese remedy of frequent bathings in a solution of weak tea. This had to be used several times a day, and at night we went to bed with bandages soaked in tea on our eyes. It was several weeks before I was able to see, and my eyes were weak for a long time after. (Amie Stirling, pp. 79-80)

Certain Cure for Blight and all inflammatory diseases of the Eye, by the use of Russel and Turner's Celebrated Eye-Water. (*Argus*, 27/10/51)

Other illness

[May 1852] Found my legs very sore especially about the shins and ancles [sic]. Think as I haven't tasted vegetables since last Jany. it must be a touch of scurvy. (Snell, p. 298)

[Scurvy in sailors] Their blood vessels leaked, making the men look bruised all over, even in the absence of any injury. When they were injured, their wounds failed to heal. Their legs swelled. They suffered the pain of spontaneous haemorrhaging into their muscles and joints. Their gums bled, too, as their teeth loosened. They gasped for breath, struggled against debilitating weakness, and when the blood vessels around their brains ruptured, they died. (Dava Sobel, *Longitude*, Fourth Estate, London, 1996, p. 14)

Erysipelas also seems to be very prevalent amongst the diggers. (*SA Register*, 8/2/52)[An infectious skin disease, aka 'St Anthony's Fire' and 'the rose'—skin feels hot and stiff—accompanied by fever and delerium. Most common on the face—infection probably admitted through cracked skin around mouth or nostril. In protracted cases, the tongue

becomes brown, dry and cracked and ‘low muttering delerium sets in’. Life-threatening in the elderly and alcoholics. *Could it have been confused with sunburn?*]

Pleurisy and rheumatic fever were greater hazards on the Ovens River than the dysentery of the lower country. (Bartlett, p. 10)

[Melbourne, 24/12/52] Influenza has been very prevalent here for a month back, numbers of people cut off by it... (Arnot, p. 140)

Health carers and cures

[Doctors] ...generally have a flag flying and a small board hung at their tent with capitals on paper ‘Dr Mason’... (Finlay, p. 19)

Doctors as £5 fee to attend a patient. (Mackenzie, p. 55)

[Dr Barker (digging and doctoring at Mt Alexander) had his tent ransacked during his absence one evening] ... not only of the gold, but of his surgical instruments, drugs, and wearing apparel. The only thing left was a copaiba capsule, with a pin stuck through it into a stick, which was fixed in the ground. And to make matters worse, the rascals turned the back part of the sign board in front, and wrote on it in large legible letters, ‘Barker’s occupation gone’. (*Argus*, 27/12/51)

[Sick, weak and lonely in places where few or no other women were around] How one longed for mothers and sisters at such times, and envied the poorest woman at home who in sickness generally have some relative near. (Skinner, p. 84)

In 1852, it was common for women to take responsibility for laying out corpses, as well as attending births and ministering to sick diggers. (Bowden, p. 74)

Margaret Preshaw—daughter of Dr P.—was one of the earliest women on the diggings and acted in this capacity. (Gronn)

Sympathy is a prevailing feature at the diggings, for the moment an accident occurs to any of the diggers, their sympathy is immediately displayed by rendering assistance in one shape or another. Charity is another virtue which is extensively practised when any case of real necessity or helplessness comes before them. I recollect an elderly man who was disabled by rheumatism, and whom a few of the tents around him supported until they saw he would not recover here, and resolved to forward him to Melbourne. To do this money was collected by subscription, and a snug conveyance was secured for him to Melbourne. (Finlay, p. 23)

[Advertisement]

IMPORTANT TO PERSONS LEAVING FOR THE ‘GOLD DIGGINGS’

If you wish to preserve a good state of HEALTH, provide yourself with a few boxes of DR. GRAHAM’S ANTIBILIOUS AND DIGESTIVE PILLS... (*SA Register*, 5/1/52)

Holloway Pills and Ointment claimed to ‘Cure the Uncured—Scrofula, Ringworm, Bad Legs, Bad Breasts, Burns, Bunions, Bit of Mosquitoes and Sandflies, Chilblains, Corns, Cancers, Contracted and stiff jings, Elephantiasis, Fistulas, Gout, Glandular Swellings, Lumbago, Piles, Rheumatism, Scalds, Sore Nipples, Sore Throats, Scurvy, Sore Head, Tumours, Ulcers, Wounds, and Yaws.’

I imagine that it is the excessive cost of regular medical treatment which causes the diggers to take Holloway's pills so universally, and in such amazing quantities. They are the digger's established nostrum. He takes them by handfuls; and when his dog is ill, he gives them a few dozen as a dose. Holloway's ointment is in scarcely less repute. If Professor Holloway had only the diggers for purchasers he must make a fortune. (Howitt, p. 386)

Death

Dr Godwin, an acquaintance of Howitt's from the voyage out, died on the Ovens Diggings. He was buried on a hill in the bush. 'Like those of his fellow slumberers, his grave was surrounded with a rude paling, but without any inscription.' (Howitt, p. 103)

Little babes came into the world, and were not baptized—went out of it, and were buried like dogs. (Campbell, p. 91)

... a palisado inclosure of a grave. One often sees these enclosures in the Bush. There was no stone or inscription to this, as there scarcely ever is. (Howitt, p. 88)

... lie in the wilderness, enclosed with one of those square pallisade fences which mark the diggers' graves. (Howitt, p. 138)

... graves surrounded with a rude paling, and on the post at each corner placed a square turf, the digger's monument. (Howitt, p. 313)

[In the late 1850s] In traversing the gold diggings, in the midst of busy miners, and within sight of the fume and smoke of the steam engines, the unoccupied traveller will often see small spots of ground enclosed by a slight fence. These are graves. But hundreds have been called to their last account, around whose remains no such protection has been raised. (McCombie, p. 172)

[October 1852] Poor Mr Menge, a well known German mineralogist and linguist, late of South Australia, has gone the way of all flesh, and was buried at the diggings' cemetery, Forest Creek. He has been ailing for some time. (*Herald*, 23/10/52)

June 1, 1852—There have been a great many deaths at the diggings; and the Commissioner (Mr Wright) has just had a cemetery fenced around, about half a mile from headquarters. [Templeton Street] (F.N., letter in *Illustrated London News*, 22/1/53, p. 58)

Chapter 3: DIGGING

The mine! that is the one centre of attention, the goal of all hopes, the dream-land where the sun rises! They disdain the gold stamped with the emblem of the State to dream of winning the gold that bears no effigy. (Fauchery)

The Restless Mantle—sequence of rushes

Clunes

[July 1851—Captain Dana was dispatched by the new Colonial Government to inspect the locality of the alleged Pyrenees goldfield] Of the ‘diggers’ some had cradles, the majority, however, still adhering to the tin dish, and the average earning of all round might be entertained at about 10s. per diem; some of the cradle-men of course realising considerably more, and the dishmen less.... The ‘digging’ is laborious employment and it is supposed that a company would pay far better than any body of diggers can expect to do. [*Adelaide Times*, 20/8/51)

[At Clunes] A most remarkable gold-seeker, is a solitary German, with three different sized hammers, and two knives; with the former he pounds the rock into small pieces, from whence with the knives he removes the small particles of gold. (*Argus*, 13/8/51)

[At Clunes, in August, an Irishman named Peter (pron. *Pather*)] ...had not obtained sufficient gold to pay for his ‘threepenny halfpenny planet’ (meaning the candle used while cleaning the dust), and that he should be off splitting and fencing, as he felt assured he could knock more gold out of timber than quartz... (*Argus*, 16/8/51)

Ballarat

[Ballarat] ...was the earliest gold-field of any note, and acquired great celebrity during September and October 1851. (Westgarth, p. 133)

Ballarat, after languishing during December and January, appears to have revived in mid-February, when diggers found gold beneath the supposed pipeclay bottom. (*SA Register*, March 1852)

A new working, called the ‘Eureka’, nine miles from Ballarat proper, of considerable richness... [was] discovered in the course of the month of May. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

Ballarat New Diggings, July 1852—about 800 people. (*Argus*, 5/8/52)

Ballarat reviving at end of 1852—also Creswick’s Creek. (*Argus*, 4/1/53)

Mount Alexander

word came one day that mount Alexander was the place many a time in my quitate momeyts I think of that day when the word cam such paking up all was bussel (Davenport, Ballarat, October 1851, p. 260)

The Mount Alexander gold-field then [November 1851] took the ascendant for a short interval, but only to transfer the restless mantle to the Bendigo district. (Westgarth, p. 133)

The gold at Forest Creek was easy to get, as the sinking was shallow and the gold well distributed: water was plentiful at the time... (McKillop)

The term Mount Alexander was at first applied to Forest and Friar's Creeks, including Bendigo, the Loddon, Campbell's and Barker's Creeks, but in course of time it was found necessary to be more specific, and these diggings came to be designated by the distinguishing titles of Forest Creek and Bendigo. (McCombie, pp. 31-2)

Red Hill [Chewton] covers about two acres of ground—was the first found, and is still [September 1852] considered the richest auriferous spot near Mt Alexander. (Clacy, p. 52)

[Forest Creek] New arrivals still continue to pour in by hundreds, both from town and the Bendigo, all destined for Moonlight Flat and the neighbouring gullies. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Bendigo

[Bendigo] Termed by an Australian writer, 'The Carthage of the Tyre of Forest Creek'. (Clacy, p. 48)

At end of May, many diggers leaving 'the Mount' for 'the new diggings beyond Bendigo'—Eaglehawk. (*Argus*, 1/6/52)

... immediately after the rains set in at the close of April there was an evident movement towards the Bendigo district... The large extent of additional ground which has since been opened throughout the whole breadth of the range on all sides of the Bendigo Creek, and the surpassing richness of the surface workings, has now drawn to that quarter the bulk of the population, amounting probably to about 40,000 souls. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

Others

... new digging lately discovered within three miles of the McIvor Inn [Heathcote]. (*Argus*, 8/5/52)

Favourable accounts from Daisey [sic] Hill [Maryborough] begin to turn attention to that quarter. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Ovens diggings

Ovens diggings—sometimes called the 'Sydney goldfield' or 'Sydney diggings' by dint of proximity to Sydney road.

A sample of the most beautiful Gold that has ever appeared in this Colony reached Melbourne this week by post, from a new Gold-field, near the Ovens river. It is on Reid's creek, 15 miles in length, the bed of which is filled with auriferous deposit. There is no digging, it is all surface washing and the Gold produced is as fine as the finest gunpowder. (*Melbourne Gold Circular*, 10/4/52)

Only about four or five licences had been taken out for Reid's Creek [Beechworth] (most diggers had already 'sloped to the Mount')—issued by Clerk of Police Court at Wangaratta—no commissioner on the ground. Visit by LaTrobe in early May. (*Argus*, 8/5/52)

In early December, about 4000 persons on the Ovens Diggings. (*Argus*, 10/12/52)

At the end of 1852, diggers were heading en masse for the Ovens. Argus correspondent at Forest Creek estimated 25 per cent of diggers were talking of leaving for there. (*Argus*, 4/1/53)

... gold here, especially at the new diggings [Reedy Creek], is not obtained without much harder labour than at the Mount or Bendigo... (*Argus*, 10/12/52)

The Rush

‘Hurrah! hurrah! and now for the diggings,’ shouted H□□. ‘I have seen them work, and I know all about it.’ [H. was one of a group of stockmen who sold cattle at the diggings in September/October 1851 for 1 oz per head.] (Earp, p. 103)

Since the commencement of this gold revolution society in the antipodean regions has become almost as migratory as the Bedouins. (Jameson, p. 80)

... no sooner does a man pitch his tent in the most secluded spot, than he sees others coming after him. His smoke betrays him, or the discolouration of the stream where he works his gold... Cautious diggers, therefore, never wash at a stream, if they are not actually working in it; but resort to some pool, or take water from the stream and run it off another way. (Howitt, p. 115)

We have begun to destroy the beauty of this [Yackandandah] creek. It will no longer run clear between its banks, covered with wattles and tea-trees... A little while, and its whole course will exhibit nothing but nakedness, and heaps of gravel and mud. We diggers are horribly destructive of the picturesque... [Within two weeks of discovery] These valleys which, when we came up them, were so solitary, and so dense with tea-trees and wattles shrouding the courses of the streams, are now all studded with tents. The trees are felled by thousands; the creeks are laid open in long stretches to the day, by the tea-trees and scrub being cut down. There are carts and bullock-drays going to and fro with stores; there is a beaten road where we dragged away the fallen trees out of our path; the forest echoes to the plaspheymy of the bullock-drivers; there are stores and a butcher’s shop at Nine-Mile Creek; there is a doctor’s shop; and there is to be directly a Government Camp there. These revolutions here are about as rapid as the shifting of scenes in a theatre. (Howitt, p. 114-17)

Rumour in early 1852 that the Germans had a secret ‘El Dorado’ not far from the Bendigo goldfield. The rumour had wide circulation, and was a revival of an earlier rumour re. secret German gold mine in the Dandenong Ranges, pre-1851. (McCombie, p. 74)

[On New Year’s Day 1853, a rush set in—the flat named New Year’s Flat] This rush, viewed from the Bald Hill, was the most animated sight of those stirring times that I ever witnessed. The area then allowed was only 8ft. square per man. One can easily picture to himself the scene presented by that number of men almost simultaneously breaking ground within the limited area of that flat. (G. Duncan, p. 4)

It is no uncommon thing to see a whole flat turned up in a single day. Some ‘coon’ starts it by finding gold, or, at any rate, saying so, when the news spread like wildfire. (Rochfort, p. 65)

[£1200 worth of gold found at 10 ft sinking on Pennyweight Flat in week ending 2/9/52—caused rush to begin following week] (Arnot)

Moonlight Flat rush, September 1852—An estimated 30,000 diggers arrived in a month. One traveller passed 1,028 people heading for Forest Creek as he rode between Elphinstone and Kyneton one afternoon. (McKillop)

The Directory gives one Store on the Loddon, where formerly a dozen stood, and we have a dozen where a few weeks ago none existed. (James Bonwick, in Bryce Ross's *Diggings' Directory*, p. 10)

[Exodus caused by lack of water] ... it is already curious to see that where crowds of tents stood the other day, there now stand only solitary chimneys and the poles and blocks of trees over which the tents were stretched. The place looks like a destroyed village, with only a few fragments of the abodes remaining. (Howitt, p. 266)

Claim marking

The first claims granted at Anderson's Creek (Victoria Diggings) in early August 1851 allowed 30 feet of ground to each digger. (Flett, p. 35)

Gold licence entitled diggers to a claim of 12 ft [8ft] square for one man, 12 ft x 24 ft for two men, 18 ft x 24 ft for three men, and 24 ft square for four men as a maximum. (McKillop)

However big an association of miners, it may only claim four men's ground. (Fauchery)

Not permitted to dig for gold in vicinity of towns, villages, and habitations built before discovery of mines—mining prohibited within a radius of one mile all around. (Fauchery)

Digging for gold not allowed within 10 ft of edge of any public road. Tents or buildings must be at least 20 ft apart and 20 ft from any creek. No working on Sundays. (Serle, p. 99)

Peg corners of (roughly) allocated space—draw a circle in middle (about 3 ft diameter), then dig shaft within it. (Fauchery)

[E]ach man is entitled to have 8 square feet. two men 16 feet square generally a round hole is sunk in the middle of this claim 4 feet in diameter. (Arnot, 6/9/52)

Claims allowed were 8 ft square, and no driving. (Henry Boyle, *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, pp. 118-19)

Illustration: “New Chum” marking out his “Claim” on the diggings’, title page of Polehampton.

... swarms of men suddenly appear upon the place, all engaged with their picks and spades in marking out the turf into squares of eight feet, or, if for more than one person, of twelve or sixteen feet. The mode of making a claim is simply this: each man traces out one or more of these squares, and sticks a stick down at each corner, and turns up a sod in the middle of it [same as for a bush grave—see above]. That is taking possession; and work more or less must be done in it every day, or it is forfeited. (Howitt, p. 96)

To retain possession, a claim must be worked daily—usually a spade or pick would declare occupation. (Serle, p. 73)

[I]f you don't work (or thro' out a stone) in a hole during a space of Twenty four hours, any one can go into it. (Arnot, p. 125)

Shepherding

Shepherding was a more common practice in Ballarat, where successful claims followed, albeit in an unpredictable manner, an underground stream or *lead* of gold.

To idle and potter about on one's claim, to be ready to justify its possession—until yield from adjacent holes is known, then you decide whether, according to your relative position to them, your claim is worth working or abandoning—while one of the party shepherds the claim, the others cut wood, etc. (Fauchery)

[Charles Thatcher's song 'Shepherding' details the boredom of days spent shepherding a claim. It begins—]

The first thing we'd pitch out about four shovelsful of soil
Then all knock off and have a spell from this laborious toil.

[About ten o'clock, they'd toss a coin to decide who'd be the unlucky one to mind the claim while the rest went to a grog shop, played cards, pestered the Chinese, watched a fight, and drank some more, before returning at 4pm. The song ends—]

But often after shepherding for many and many a day,
We'd find the blessed line had slewed, and gone the other way.

Tools

Miner's equipment, Ballarat—iron shovel with short handle, shaped like a spade, smallest pick, fairly strong rope, washing-dish, bucket and tub. (Fauchery)

Parties going away generally stick up catalogues of their effects on trees, and when they are to be sold, one of the party mounts a tub, or a friend who has got a 'gift of the bag' and goes on selling to the highest bidder, the same as if he were a licensed auctioneer. Tools and implements necessary for the diggings sell well, but wearing apparel is very apt to be sacrificed. (Finlay, p. 34)

[June 1852] I wrote out a notice offering our horse and cart for sale... mean to fix this to a tree down the Gully tomorrow.

Our notice of the sale of the Horse and cart was torn down to day—so wrote out a fresh one and nailed it to a tree.

Sold cart to day for 10 oz of gold, and our horse Charley for 10½ oz. (Snell, pp. 305-6)

[After the rain began in late April 1852] (27/4/52) No one seemed inclined to remain at the diggings. After consultation it was agreed to hoist the flag and sell off the traps and return to our homes.... Flag up all day; no sale effected.

[Next day] Thomas and George had commenced an auction ['oxcion'] sale before I was up. When I went out there were about 15 men around buying picks and shovels ['pecks and shuvels']. (Ragless, p. 74)

[Upon arrival at Forest Creek] ...bought spades and picks, Prospecting pans & all at 5/- each 2nd hand... (Arnot, p. 106)

...two men working steadily in the creek, taking the bed out with a long Cornish shovel... (Rochfort, p. 57)

Lucky diggers were generous in lending tools to new chums who had none. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 58)

[Forest Creek, October 1852] Picks, shovels, puddling tubs, and cradle cost respectively 20s., 25s., 50s., and £5 each. (G. Duncan, p. 3)

[New rush to Forest Creek, late 1852] Every consumable article is rising on the creek... As for tools and cradles, any money asked is given. A cradle which ten days ago would not have been worth £3 is at the present date worth £10... owing to the many arrivals, who come unprepared, and have to pay pretty dear for a fit out. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Tools are dearer up [on the goldfields] than in town. A cradle may be carried in parts without much trouble. (Bonwick, p. 4)

... the tools of hardware,—shovels, picks, dippers, working cradles, &c., which had been puffed off to us in London, as being on the true Californian principle, we should have been infinitely better without. The cradles... were the laughing-stock of the diggers; and many of our fellow-travellers broke theirs up and burnt them. (Howitt, p. 34)

[When the tent of a gang of alleged robbers at the Ovens was searched] ...no more than three tools were found clearly proving that the parties were not bona fide diggers, and of the three, two were bran [sic] new and the pick had become completely rusty. (*Argus*, 20/12/52)

Blacksmiths

Blacksmiths are making their fortunes; some picks cost 10s. per week to keep them in good order. (*SA Register*, 19/12/51)

[At a new rush] The blacksmith is always one of the first on the ground, and presently extemporises a forge out of a few loose stones or turf-sods. (Wathen, p. 50)

Their forge and bellows are generally under some temporary shed, while some stand altogether exposed. (Finlay, p. 20)

Beneath clay [at Eaglehawk] was a strata almost as hard as iron—technically called ‘burnt stuff’—which robbed the pick of its point nearly as soon as the blacksmith had steeled them at a charge of 2s 6d a point. (Clacy, p. 65)

Miner’s main tool is a bar sharpened at both ends—one end is sharpened to a point, the other like a hoe, one inch wide. Pointed end used to break up gravel—blunts very quickly, sometimes two or three times daily—blacksmith charges 6d for sharpening one end. (Korzelski, p. 48)

MacTaggart, shopkeeper (of a ‘Johnny-all-sorts’ shop) next to government buildings at Forest Creek, 1851—the best-paying thing he had was his grindstone, for he charged 6d. for grinding a butcher’s knife or axe—1s. if he turned the stone himself. (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 11)

Our blacksmith is on the spree and we have to sharpen picks, etc. ourselves. (Henry Morgan)

Shafts—shape

Inexperienced miners dug holes that became progressively narrower, like funnels.
(Fauchery)

The shafts for the first few months of the rush were round, and it can be imagined that those sunk by professional men, Cockneys, etc., were not likely to meet with the approval of the experienced miner. When the Cornishmen arrived on the field in 1852, they started the oblong shafts, and very soon their example was generally followed. (McKillop)

[A miner] ... might leave his claim overnight to find it 'jumped' next morning, and the hole, which had been a round one metamorphosed into a square one, thus rendering it difficult to recognise his own claim. (Thomas Carte, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 164)

[Kelly] ... peered down the clean, straight dry shafts, rounded and perpendicular as the tunnel of a steamer, or into the wet ones, squared and slabbed with mechanical accuracy. (Kelly, p. 181)

... shafts are regularly 'slabbed' down the sides with small split boards of the stringy-bark tree, and the pit is in the form of a square for the conveniency of this operation. This process is necessary, alike to sustain the sides of the shaft and to arrest the water oozing out of the porous layers of materials by means of a clay puddling behind the boarding. (Anderson, p. 71)

Very unpleasant working in rain or soon after, as every place round is clay, and the rope, bucket, pick and spade handles, your feet and hands, in fact all is clay. Majority of holes closed in by logs and clay, except a small hole in the centre which is generally covered with a sheet [of bark?]. (Finlay, p. 22)

Strata

Illustration: 'Section of Strata at Sailor's Gully, Forest Creek, South Australia'—lithograph by John Rochfort—frontispiece to Rochfort—shows miner in shaft, with dog sleeping on his master's shirt at ground level. (State Library of Victoria—copy on my file)

(personal narrative of one of a party of five young men from South Australia at Fryers Creek during winter 1852—'the secondary stage of the diggings in that locality')
...we paid our license fee, pegged out a claim, and started to throw out the soil to get at the gold-bearing strata beneath....Next day we continued our excavation, and got through a layer of gravel. Below this was a bed of very hard concrete, with boulders of granite and quartz, which our picks made very little impression upon. We were three days breaking out this compact layer, and terribly blistered our hands in the constant pounding at it. At length we were through it, and began to see gold in the dirt among the boulders which overlaid the wash, and got a few ounces to encourage us. Next day we were on the washdirt, and then we had the cradle at work daily, and got good gold in sufficient quantity to keep us going on in good heart.

We continued washing until we had cleared the claim down to the slate rock. Having carefully scraped the bottom, we cleaned up and took stock of our earnings. We found we had made in 23 days £360, or £72 each, which, though noting like as much as some were getting in our vicinity, we were content with as a beginning. We set to work sinking another hole, and, our hands being used to the toil, we could get on faster, and so got gold

more rapidly. We sunk here seven holes, from which, on squaring accounts and paying expenses, we found we had netted the sum of £3400...

All parties who visited Mount Alexander for the purpose of digging for gold, I mean such gentlemen as have resigned government and mercantile situations, I would advise to watch the operations of the diggers at Red Hill; and if they think they can endure the labour necessary to reach the vein at a depth of 20 or 22 feet, through a surface as hard as the shell of an Egyptian pyramid, let them doff their coats, set to work and prosper. (*Argus*, 14/1/52)

The hills... principally consist of a hard and almost impenetrable substance... and the usual means of sinking are 'gads', ie. iron wedges, driven with heavy hammers, for no pick could stand it ten minutes without becoming perfectly useless until re-pointed and steeled. To sink three inches a circumference of a dozen feet through this substance, is a good day's work for two good diggers. In some of these hills, they sink upwards of thirty feet, and you may imagine the disappointment when it happens that not a speck of gold is found on the rock after such hard toil to get down. (D. McLeod, writing at Mt Alexander, 12/3/52—in *SA Register*, 7/4/52)

When William Hall's party finally broke through the yellow cement layer in their shaft (after a week's hard work), he made them a bowl of (brandy?) punch in a wash-basin. (Hall, p. 27)

[Eaglehawk] At the particular place where I worked, the sinking was from 7 ft. to 8 ft. First though a hard crust of pebbles and quartz of a dark and burnt appearance, which seemed to indicate that at one time—a remote period—these stones must have been subjected to great heat, as the melted gold lay under them in little pieces, on top of the chalk in yellow seams, and sometimes embedded an inch or two in the chalk. (Ross, p. 62)

[At the White Hills (Bendigo) ... the miners who worked there were whiter than millers; this was caused by their having to go through a layer of chalk before reaching bottom. (Ross, p. 57)

Gold—nuggeting

When I reached this chalk bottom I would, with my penknife, pick from the crevices and seams little pieces and small nuggets of gold, and put them in the matchbox. Even by this simple method I was able to get sufficient gold to pay me well. (Ross, p. 62)

... as much as fifty-two pounds weight of gold has been washed from a pocket or small dip in the pipeclay. (Clarke, pp. 18-19)

[During dry weather] Arriving at the hole, which, by the way, may have taken him and his mates a week or more to sink, he descends, and lighting a candle and his pipe, he lays himself out at full length on the rock which forms the bottom of his hole, and whilst he blows out the fragrant wreaths from his dudeen, he quietly amuses himself... by digging out with the point of his knife, such nuggets of the precious metal as may offer themselves to his view... the earth containing them is gathered up in a pocket handkerchief, and I have more than once seen two ounces washed out from a

handkerchief full of stuff, whence the large pieces had been previously picked. (*Argus*, 29/4/52)

Treachery in his mate—When, after diggings some time, he and his mate had arrived at a vein of rich mineral, his mate, who seemed to have been the keener hand of the two, used to send him to a waterhole to wash worthless material while he himself was snugly ‘nuggetting’ (picking out nuggets with a penknife or oyster-knife) on his own behalf. This seems to have been a very common trick. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 24)

Oliver Ragless and party conveyed their first load of washdirt to water by means of a pocket handkerchief. (Ragless, p. 33)

The others brought a small handkerchief of earth [from Spring Gully, Forest Creek] and washed it inside the tent and it produced 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces. (Ragless, p. 62)

Undermining

The general practice of distinguishing a particular drift or layer as more auriferous than the mass of material met with in sinking, led to the custom of driving, or undermining, in order to throw out this drift. (Anderson, p. 70)

The Burra miners are I hear doing well, sinking shafts far deeper than any ordinary gold-diggers would venture to go, and then burrowing away right and left, beneath neighbouring holes, much to the dismay of their proprietors and contrary to the laws of mining, which are here a dead letter. (Letter from Mt Alexander to a gentleman in Adelaide, dated 9/1/52—*SA Register*, 23/1/52)

[Moonlight Flat] There were generally one or more fights daily among the Tipperary Boys and the Cornishmen. The latter, as soon as they bottomed, would drive like rats and undermine the Irishmen’s claim and remove the washdirt. The ground being wet enabled the Cornishmen, who were expert miners to excel all others in driving. The Tipperary Boy would suddenly drop through with a yell into the drive of a Cornishman and be up to his neck in water. A crowd would gather, and woe betide the Cornishman if he were caught. (Thomas Carte, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 164)

[Thatcher’s song, ‘The Bendigo Milling Match’]

The miners left their picks and spades,

And began to crowd around.

Two diggers were in loud dispute

Each in a towering passion;

And they both agreed to have it out

In the Colonial fashion....

[Chorus] Bow wow wow! Tol de rol de riddiddy. Bow wow wow! [a common Thatcher chorus]

[Song ended—] Poor Sydney’s [man from Sydney] luckless cocoa nut

On a lump of quartz descended

Which sewed him completely

And there the scrimmage ended.

[Tipperary Gully, Bendigo, May 1852] Dropped upon a pretty good bit of ground in my hole but couldn’t get very much out of it before the party in the next hole broke through

the partition between us and stopped my proceedings in that quarter.... [Two days later] Returned to Tipperary gully and went on undermining in my hole. (Snell, pp. 296-7)

McCombie described a claim which undermined the pillar between claims (or the neighbouring claim as well) as 'arched'.

A poor fellow has just been carried past on a sheet of bark. I fear there is but little hopes of him. While undermining the earth fell in, and he was dug out a short time after, but, apparently in a dying state, bleeding profusely at the nose, eyes, and ears. (*Argus*, 12/12/51)

At Vaughan (or 'The Junction—junction of Fryer's Creek and the Loddon), late in 1852, three young Canadian brothers were smothered by the caving in of a cutting, intended as a drain from the last deep hole on Fryer's Creek to the Loddon River. Their father, looking on, was the only one of the party to survive. The locality was thereafter known as Canadian Point. (G. Duncan, p. 4)

Accidents—shafts

The old favourite spots have been completely cut up, and present the appearance of monster entrenchments, or myriads of wells, with only narrow, winding, and dangerous paths—especially for drunkards or night-travellers—over the heaps of earth thrown up and piled between the holes. (D. McLeod, writing from Mt Alexander, 12/3/52, in *Register*, 7/4/52)

Drownings in deserted mine holes—usually drunks falling in at night—two or three a week in Bendigo during winter 1853. (Howitt, p. 214)

As we were at dinner, and it was quite dark, there was a cry outside of 'A boy in a hole! a boy in a hole!' Seizing the candle from the table, out we rushed; and there, in a digger's deserted hole, ... was, not a boy, but a girl of eleven or twelve years of age. [Rescued by a pole supported by two men—had been rounding up a goat.] (Howitt, p. 213)

In the bush around Beechworth/Yackandandah, the natives had already dug 'shafts'—holes 10-15 feet deep, circular and perpendicular—in pursuit of wombats. These proved a hazard to early prospectors. (Howitt, p. 117)

Saw a poor horse today just after he had fallen into a hole. The hole was a round one about 5 feet in diameter, and 14 feet deep, sloping down underground where he fell concealed all except his head and neck. [Pulled out by means of blocks and rope.] (Finlay, p. 23)

Found dog drowned in a hole—had been fighting with a larger dog and the two had tumbled into a watery grave. (Henry Morgan's diary)

[1854, Campbells Creek] ... Bill and I erected a winch to begin clearing an old mine-shaft. It was a hard, filthy job, for it was now a rubbish-tip. (Gronn, p. 72)

A deserted gold hole in the rear [of a store] standing in the lieu of a refuse pit, which on some future day, long after nature has skinned over the orifice, will probably present curious matter for contemplation to unborn naturalists. (Kelly, p. 202)

Windlass

In a shallow shaft (less than about 16-18 ft) earth was pulled up by bucket and rope. Deeper than that, diggers used a pulley set between three sticks arranged in triangle, or a wooden windlass cut and turned in a couple of hours with an axe. (Fauchery)

[At Moonlight Flat] A man working in a hole was killed on the spot by the windlass having broken and falling on his head. (*Argus*, 14/10/52)

Diggers calling up from holes to mates: 'Bucket!', 'Aye, aye,' (comes the reply, or 'Pull up!' or 'Washing stuff!'—meaning gold found on the bottom. (Korzelski, pp. 55-7)

Carrying washdirt

When the stuff is dug up in any quantity, it is carried in buckets, in bags, in wheelbarrows, or in carts, to the nearest water... [for cradling]. (Lang, p. 10)

... besides the enormous mass of persons stationary at the cradles, there is a moving population, from the various holes to the cradles on the water side, equally numerous. Some carry the earth on hand-barrows, made of two long wooden handles and a sack sewed long wise, on which they carry it. Some use wheel-barrows; others a piece of bark as a sledge, on which they place a bag full of earth, and draw it along the ground. Some carry it in sacks on their back, while the tin dish washers, of which there are hundreds, carry it in their tin dishes on their heads. (*Argus*, 27/10/51)

[On a rich claim] While wheeling the dirt to the river, down a steep incline, some boys used to follow me, sweeping up what was spilled from the barrow, and at times slyly dropping a stone or other obstacle in my way to cause an extra jolt and increase their sweepings. (Derrincourt, pp. 211-12)

As the tributary creeks of the Loddon are fast drying up, horses and drays are in great demand to convey the soil to that river, in some cases a distance of four miles off, to be cradled. (Letter from Mt Alexander to a gentleman in Adelaide, dated 9/1/52—*SA Register*, 23/1/52)

[March 1852] The earth has to be carried in bags from the holes to the carts. (Snell, p. 290)

During summer 1851-2 some storekeepers advanced parties all necessary tools and provisions and the use of horse and cart to carry washdirt to water, for one-third share of gold obtained. Other diggers paid 15 shillings a load (small) for carting of dirt. (*Argus*, 20/5/52)

[Forest Creek, January 1852] ... many of the diggers have to cart for two and even three miles, and even then the water is so thick that you might almost cut it with a knife. (Letter in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 70)

I went carting [washdirt to water] The dust was knee-deep and rose in tremendous clouds. I had to stop until it settled or I may have driven into some of the eight-foot-square holes and 20 feet deep. (Ragless, p. 44—March 1852, Forest Creek)

Cradling

... the 'Californy cradle', in diggers' parlance... (Earp, p. 122)

According to Wyld [?] the cradle was pioneered by the Chinese in Borneo and Hindoos in the Dekkan. (quoted in Cassell's *Emigrants' Handbook*, p. 73)

As we topped the ridge... my companion suddenly said, 'Stop and listen.' I pulled up my horse and heard as I imagined the rushing of some mighty cataract. 'It is the cradles,' said he; and so it was—the grating of the gravel or rubble on the metal sifters of five hundred rockers... (Mundy, quoted by Morrell, pp. 204-5)

... the sound that was ever present was produced by the 'simultaneously moving to and fro, rock, rock' which 'produced a noise like low rumbling thunder'. (Strutt, p. 8)

[Ballarat, 29/10/51] In a confined space of a few hundred yards are to be seen thousands at work, busy as bees, with the same sort of hum—the rumbling of the cradles. (Murray, p. 58)

[Buninyong] ... the confused roar of upwards of 500 cradles at work by the stream side... (Mossman, p. 92)

... the loud laugh mingles with the rattling of stones in the hopper, the grinding of cradles and splashing of water. (Bonwick, p. 14)

All the earth which we judged likely to contain gold we carted down to the water hole alongside of our tent and put about half a load at a time into a large tub of water to soak, this was well stirred up with a shovel and the muddy water poured off the top. The earth was then passed through a cradle and rocked backward and forwards, one person pouring water in constantly until all the clay and lighter portions of the stuff are washed out of it. (Snell, p. 284)

Down in the creek the cradles stand so that the men can work with a stick in one hand the handle of the cradle in the other, shaking and beating at the same time. (Ragless, p. 33)

The man who works the cradle does so with his left hand, and, to save stooping, has a handle to it breast high, and in his right uses a short round stick like a porridge spurtle in stirring the contents of the sieve, and then in breaking the harder lumps. The ladler again uses for his purpose a sugar scoop or small tin fastened to a pole, which saves him wetting his feet. (Matthew Hervey, letter in *Argus*, 6/10/51)

... occasionally you will see a woman employed, with her clothes held between her knees, rocking a cradle with the untiring energy of man... (Letter from Golden Point, Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51)

... I saw a man [Charlie Wilson] rocking a cradle with one hand, and with the other, with a quart pot stuck in the fork of a short stick, baling the water on to the dirt as he rocked. I at once... bought a saucepan. In the handle I inserted a piece of round wood, and although at first I found it rather awkward to rock and bale water at the same time, I by patience and practice got into the swing of it, and could do half as much more than by the former system. Others seeing this improvement followed example, utilising old lobster tins, and such like, in one instance a long-handled frying pan being pressed into service, as also old boots nailed to a stick. These were the rude expedients in vogue at the onset of the rush on the Turon. (Derrincourt, p. 169)

Bought a cradle for £2 9s. (Snell, p. 283)

... some of the cradles are more like coal scuttles than anything else, others are made in the shape of an ugly boot... they are jolting machines, not cradles. (*Argus*, 27/8/51)

[Buninyong] One man made a cradle from bark stripped off a tree. (*Argus*, 26/8/51)

A successful party on the Ovens had a green-painted cradle. (Howitt, p. 95)

A cradle may be carried in parts without much trouble. (Bonwick, p. 4)

[June 1852] Saw two men drawing a cradle on wheels with luggage. (Finlay, p. 9)

One day we saw a drunken digger carrying his cradle thru town on his head. (Howitt, p. 187)

Miners, camped some distance from their claims, carried their cradles home on Saturday nights. (Derrincourt, p. 170)

Cradles/rockers should be at least 4 feet in length. (Specifications given by a Californian miner in Murray, p. 43)

... shovelled the earth into the hopper of the cradle as required and beat it with a stick to break the lumps as much as possible, but as the surface was of a clayey nature, it took a considerable amount of beating.

The cradles had but one slide, and notwithstanding the greatest care the dirt would set hard on this slide and the gold run over on to the bottom of the cradle, and a great proportion of it would be lost. (Clarke, p. 14)

But the cradle... was found very ill adapted to liberate [the gold] from the stiff clays of the Victorian Gold-fields. (Wathen, p. 71)

Mr Bush, an American, was practising the Virginian rocker, assisted by quicksilver, on the Turon during my visit... (Munday, p. 615)

Tub-puddling

Tubs for puddling were introduced—i.e., a hogshead cut in two made two tubs. These readily were sold from thirty shillings to £2 each... Those that could not procure them, hollowed out logs and made troughs by putting ends in them. They answered the purpose intended but were very cumbrous and not nearly as handy as a tub. An ounce of gold to the tub containing four buckets was considered payable. (Clarke, p. 18)

Tub-washing—easiest of miner's tasks, also last of them—put contents of four or five buckets of washdirt in tub (half beer barrel or brandy cask)—then fill it to brim and turn earth over and over with a spade—first lot of water, reduced to mud, is thrown away and replaced three or four times until only stones and gravel remain in bottom of tub—separate further with huge strainer or sieve—then empty fine residue into large tin dish, then wash at pool or creek. (Fauchery)

Sometimes diggers remove their boots, tuck up their trowsers, and step into the tub, and crush the washdirt about with their feet. The better the puddling is, the easier and more profitable is the cradling. (Clacy, p. 68)

Tin-dishing

... put the dirt in my handkerchief... —having no bucket or other means of carrying it but my dish—took it to the creek, washed it out, and obtained a fair quantity of finer gold... (Derrincourt, p. 165)

Many of the poorer classes of diggers at first commence operations with a common tin-dish, and after a few trials seldom fail to acquire a peculiar knack of so turning the wrist and hand, that every twist sends from the edge of the dish a portion of water, earth and sand, the whole of the heavier matter drawing towards the centre. (Earp, p. 124)

[A 'riddle'] ...similar to a common colander: This is filled with dirt and placed inside the tin dish, which is half-full of water. The dirt is then stirred about with the hands till the gold and small pebbles have passed through into the dish. the large stones left in the riddle are then examined, to see if there are any nuggets which would not pass through the holes; the contents of the riddle are then thrown away. (Rochfort, p. 56)

I begin to look with veneration on a cradle, and regard a tin dish with awe, and a colander as a sacred utensil, debased when applied to culinary purposes, ever since I saw twenty-three pieces of gold, too large to be riddled through its perforations, taken as a portion of one cradle yield... (*Argus*, 10/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*—first weeks at Ballarat)

Summer

I would again urge upon all intending comers, to pause and think, for many will rue the day they came gold seeking in the dry season. (*Argus*, 7/1/52)

[As the rush to Mount Alexander began in earnest] The water is falling rapidly in the Creek. (*Argus*, 1/11/51)

The ground is now beginning to assume almost a dreary aspect as much of the bustle that formerly distinguished it is now wanting, many having knocked off work through scarcity of water [Many others leaving for the Melbourne (Easter?) races] (*Argus*, 26/3/52)

Fryer's Creek and the Loddon appear to me to have fairly become the summer diggings, fully one half of our population being located at these two places. (*Argus*, 20/12/52)

In early summer (1851-2) some 15,000 diggers were at work at Bendigo—in April 1852 largely deserted due to lack of water. (*Argus*, 26/4/52)

[Bendigo] ... enquired the way to the water, 5 miles down the gullies—walked down—found a creek called the sheep wash with hundreds of tents pitched and every water hole thronged with cradles and tubs—no chance of shoving in even a pannikin, the water as thick as treacle and fast being used up. (Snell, p. 282)

I think, on such exceedingly rich fields as those of Ballarat and Mount Alexander, where there are immense forests of good firewood, that so long as the diggers can be supplied with water for domestic use, even if they had to cart it a few miles, it would pay parties as well to burn the auriferous earth as to wash it, and it would not be nearly so dirty or unpleasant a process. The clay and soil, when once subjected to a strong heat, could be very easily pulverised [then sieved and (in effect) dry blown]. (*Argus*, 6/11/52)

[Shortage of water at Forest Creek—According to report at Ballarat, at Forest Creek] ...they are reduced to the Mexican process of burning the soil, by which means the *dust*

is all lost... and the nuggets... are very much deteriorated in value by having passed through the fire... (*Argus*, 17/11/51)

Winter

Rain came on 1 May 1852 (after a light shower or two on 27 April), and many flocked (back) to the diggings. Rained for two days solid. (*Argus*, 3/5/52)

Very unpleasant working in rain or soon after, as every place round is clay, and the rope, bucket, pick and spade handles, your feet and hands, in fact all is clay. Majority of holes closed in by logs and clay, except a small hole in the centre which is generally covered with a sheet [of bark?]. (Finlay, p. 22)

Popular belief that alcohol counteracted effects of working in wet conditions. (Serle, p. 82)

[An early digger wrote home to intending emigrants] A little spirits to revive your own, after leaving the cradle, would not be amiss. You cannot keep yourself dry. (Murray, p. 18)

The constant rains of August and September [1852] drove many of the steadier hands from the deeper working... (LaTrobe to Pakington, 5/11/52)

Creek working

Wherever a stream is being worked, it is a great point of ambition to obtain a license [claim] for any portion where there is an angle in the bank; should a mass of rock project its rugged front into the stream, it is a lucky man who works that spot; or, should the roots of some old tree have crept into the bed of the creek, still more fortunate is the holder of the claim considered. The rationale of all this is, that at all these spots... a species of eddy is formed, which allows all the gold which the thick waters have hitherto held in suspension to sink... to the bottom... and, as may be supposed, some of the richest pockets have been found at or about such places as these. (Earp, pp. 121-2)

After dinner I waded the river to Golden Point, taking with me an old knife and spoon, as I was told that after a heavy rain, such as we just had had, gold could be freely picked up in the creeks running from the mountains to the river. Out of the crevices, I 'fossicked' some dwts of gold, pocketing the roughest pieces, and stowing the rest away with the dirt in my handkerchief. ...on washing out next day I found I had about one ounce for the afternoon's crevicing, as the digger's termed it. (Derrincourt, p. 169)

Fossickers

... I saw many old men on Mount Alexander who were making a handsome thing by going about among the deserted holes and heaps, 'fossicking', as it is called there, and solely with a tin dish... ('A Sailor's Trip...', *Argus*, 20/5/52)

[Holes filled with water after the first rain of 1852] ...small clusters of from two to four men may be seen in a stooping position, with their heels drawn up to their elbows, in the act of shaking about and twisting tin dishes after a very peculiar fashion. (*Argus*, 8/5/52)

There was a camp of blacks at Myers Flat and during and after every shower of rain, in the gullies... they could be seen picking up gold from the red clay and heaps of mullock round the holes. Each one would get a few penny weights... (Clarke, p. 39)

A Word to Young Fossickers.—Look out for the biggest nuggets you can; but beware of looking over a man's washing heap. (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 91)

The word 'fossicker'... is generally applied to individuals who go about looking for gold in abandoned claims, and even in pits while in the course of being worked by their rightful owners... But the term is often applied towards those diggers who work singly without robbing those belonging to others; and even... to the old hands on the diggings. (McCombie, p. 87)

Fossickers who steal gold from others' claims risk 'having a pike driven through his brains'. (D. McLeod, in *SA Register*, 7/4/52)

Night fossickers = 'candle-lighters'. (Bartlett, p. 74)

'Candle-lighting' = stealing by night from shafts and holes. Also sneak-thieving. (Blake, p. 142)

In late 1852 (August+), 'illegal fossicking' (stealing washdirt from bottomed holes) was rife. Organised gangs pretended to work claims in popular localities, waiting for holes to be bottomed and momentarily unguarded. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Fossicker.—We understand that this digger's term has got into town, and is used as a provokative of a most scandalous character. [Perhaps as a taunt for men wooing other men's wives in their husband's absence at the diggings?] (Bonwick, November 1852, p. 53)

Digging party

... the tribes of cradlemen, and the tin dish helotry... (*Argus*, 3/9/51—ex-*Geelong Advertiser*)

Usual number in digging party—between four and six: one as tentkeeper, one to dig, one to bale and operate windlass, one to carry washdirt, one or two to cradle.

... gold here, especially at the new diggings [Reedy Creek], is not obtained without much harder labour than at the Mount or Bendigo: strong parties of at least eight are required on account of the incessant necessity of baling the water. (*Argus*, 10/12/52)

[Worked at Campbells Creek from 1853-55] Most of this time I worked as a 'hatter', as the ground was very shallow and one could do without mates. (Thomas Carte, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 165)

The Bendigo diggings are suitable for persons working singly, being generally very shallow sinking. ... in many cases [hatters] do better than parties of three and four. (Rochfort, p. 66)

[Germans from SA] They generally depute a relative or a son out of each family, as they can be spared; and the great object of accumulation seems to be the augmentation of the paternal estate or the improvement of their farming operations. (*SA Register*, 14/1/52)

Mr Menge is going by sea to Melbourne to meet an overland party of fifty Germans, who have agreed to search for gold, collectively, under his superintendence. (*SA Register*, 10/2/52)

There were women gold diggers, too—and not the sort they write songs about...

Women were among the first to dig for gold at Bendigo. Mrs Kennedy (wife of the Ravenswood station overseer) and Mrs Farrell (wife of another Ravenswood employee) were two of the first three to pan gold on Bendigo Creek in October 1851. (Mrs Farrell's husband Patrick was the third.) (Bowden, p. 57)

we had not been thair maney days when me and another wife whent a looking round the hills we had each a knife and a tin plate to get goold if we shold find anny ...we got a tub and pick and spade and washed one tub full we caried down to the creek to wash in a buket and washed it and finished in a tin dish first tubful yealded about 3 ounces the next 4 we was in high glee when both her husbands party and my husband and sons [aged 13 and 15] came and to work they went and so we had to give in but we had made 7 ounces it was fryday ...

we started again on monday morning I say 'we' for I had to help my sons was yong and my husband was but weak so to encourage them I helped to wash the stuff for the goold ...we was making about 8 ounces per day when we had got about seventy 70 ounces nothing wold do for my husband but he wold come down and down he did com I felt quite disapointed but was forced to comply ...

the troopers came one day and asked me to shew my licence I looked up at them for I was in the creek and they was on the bank of the creek 'have you got your licence?' I said 'my husband has got a licence and the Parson made us one he will be hear soon' 'you must have one' I said 'the Parson made us one are you goin to devid us?' Mr Street was one of them he rode of lauging and the troopers folled him (Davenport, at Mount Alexander, early November 1851, pp. 262-3)

A girl about sixteen worked regularly with her father and brother at the head of Eaglehawk. (Clarke, p. 50)

I like the diggings very well. I have washed myself about a pennyweight of gold besides a match box full of specimens. (Birchall—letter to her 'Grandmama' from Sailors Gully, Bendigo)

A man and his wife who had left their country for their country's good, worked as mates in Long Gully, the woman working at the windlass and washing the dirt... (Clarke, p. 49)

... went up Church Hill Creek [Sofala, NSW], where I saw about twenty women and children with all the energy of the men. I followed the creek about a half-mile, and on returning stopped where a young, tall and slender girl (Rose Hinton by name) was working by herself. [Derrincourt set to work as her 'comrade', in neighbouring claim. In another place on the creek...] Next me, on the other hand, were a woman and her two daughters... (Derrincourt, pp. 170-71, 177)

Mr T.C. Riddle, of law-reform notoriety, has started a Gold-digging Company, in which he intends to allow a large number of *ladies* to have shares. What the gentleman's drift is, I cannot exactly ascertain; but I have no doubt he will appear to much advantage as the

generalisation of the old ladies' digging corps. I would recommend him to take a mangle or two up, and some scores of washing tubs. (*Argus* (Geelong correspondent), 1/12/51)

Mining companies/leases

... there are no men employed on weekly wages as in the Diggings of New South Wales, but all were on a 'lay' or share of the gold raised. (*Argus*, 20/5/52, 'A Sailor's Trip...')

The prejudice against capital, which experience shows to be nearly inextinguishable in the theories of many working men... (Anderson, p. 83)

That kind of gold-seeking... which unsettles the habits of a population, and represses the other pursuits of industry, is not likely to endure very long in any country. It must give way in time to scientific mining... (Fabian)

The whole of the mining operations... are to be characterised as slovenly and wasteful in the extreme. (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

As far as I have been able to judge from a survey in the neighbourhood of Mount Alexander, from Fryer's Creek to Bendigo, the gold scramblers will soon disappear, and we shall have the refuse to ourselves. (Evan Hopkins, Manager of Port Phillip Co., 29/7/52)

Working Gold Companies.—The English people who occasionally direct their letters to 'Melbourne, South Australia', have in equal ignorance started various gold companies; or rather, some sharp ones have induced susceptible souls to take shares. Several arrived at Sydney, armed with most awful crushing machines, enough to paralyse every quartz rock in our Cordillera.... But the Port Phillip and Colonial Gold Company is under the control of a gentleman who really understands what a gold country is, and how to manage the affair. He has above a hundred men. These will not receive wages, but take work on *Tribute*. The company will find quarters, tools, &c., and receive a certain share, according to the agreement; if a good place, perhaps of one-half; if otherwise, not a fifth. (Bonwick, October 1852, pp. 9-10)

The men of the Port Phillip Gold Company are successfully cradling at Fryer's Creek. (Bonwick (magazine), February 1853, p. 192)

Port Phillip Co. established no gold *mines* in its early years—only acted as a large gold buyer and had some of its indentured labour work alluvial gold on its behalf. In fact, the Port Phillip Co. manager, Evan Hopkins, doubted the existence of payable gold reefs in Australia.

[May 1853] The Port Phillip Company has had very fine melting and assaying offices erected on its own premises, where all the gold in the colony can be melted and assayed with dispatch... (*London Mining Journal*, 15/7/54)

In October 1852, LaTrobe issued regulations under which large tracts of land which had already been worked for gold may be occupied under yearly leases—'an improved system'. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 5/11/52)

Port Phillip Co. was granted leasehold of 'worked out' ground at Fryer's Creek in October 1853. Petition from Fryer's Creek stated that 1500 diggers would work the area in summer. (Serle, p. 220)

The Port Phillip and Colonial Gold Company, complains of our mining laws and miners' prejudices as among the causes of its non-success. The chairman, at a late meeting in London (7/8/1856), stated that 'Australia was the only country in the world where protection was withheld from mining companies and their servants.' (Westgarth, p. 174)

Quartz-crushing machinery introduced at Forest Creek early in 1852.

Diggers opposed the introduction of machinery—tried to smash up early steam engine at Bendigo. (Serle, p. 221)

[The digger occasionally] ... emerged from the lower regions of the earth for a few minutes' smoke and rest, an indulgence which every man was of course free to give himself when he liked; as the word 'master' was not to be found in the vocabulary at that time, though I expect things have altered a little since the quartz-crushing companies have started. (Polehampton, pp. 88-9)

Quartz mining

First gold discovered at Mount Alexander in quartz at Specimen Gully.

Quartz mining commenced 'in the ranges' about two miles from Forest Creek in early November 1851. [Specimen Hill? Quartz Hill?] (*Argus*, 10 & 14/11/51)

[Specimen Hill, 1852] ... pieces of quartz impregnated with gold were plentifully strewn on the surface. This spot was a customary Sunday resort in search of these curiosities, but without the remotest idea of extracting the gold therefrom. (J.F. Hughes, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 2)

Luck

Before breakfast we washed a load of gold earth and got 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces. This gold was the talk of the table and caused two or three bets about the weight of it. It was a curious sight to see gold being handed around the table. (Ragless, p. 41)

[Forest Creek, October 1851] ... the greater part of the diggers, on seeing a stranger prospecting as they call it, desist from work, and complain of the poverty of the soil, although they are probably getting two or three pounds of gold daily, and often considerably more. (Hall, p. 17)

... four out of five, when asked, 'What success?' will answer, 'Why, I can't complain!' (*Argus*, 29/11/51)

Up this morning by 5 o'clock, kindled the fire, made tea & got breakfast, and away over to our 'the hole' (new chums unlucky at first are along [sic] time getting gold out of a hole, and expect always the next one to be the hole) in our case, this was 'the hole', for by driving into the hole, and at the end of our days work, Kelly & I netted nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ lb weight of gold or value of about 'Eighteen guineas'. [Lever Gully] (Arnot, p. 123—17/9/52)

A negro discovered a huge gold nugget beneath the false bottom of old shaft on his first day on the diggings—in shock: livid pallor with white lips standing out from a grey mask—speaking softly, like a man who has just committed a crime. (Fauchery)

[Discoverer of 28-lb nugget at Bendigo] He soon began to drink; got a horse, and rode all about, generally at full gallop, and when he met people called out to inquire if they knew that he was ‘the bloody wretch’—that was his phrase—that had found the nugget’. At last he rode full speed against a tree, and nearly knocked his brains out. He is a hopelessly ruined man; and I fear that will be the fate of hundreds, if not thousands, who will stumble precipately on more gold than they have sense and prudence to deal with. (Howitt, p. 11)

James Thomas Harcourt, who ran a private lunatic asylum in Victoria for some years, stated at a trial in the Victorian Supreme Court in 1862, ‘that it was a “common feature” with Victorian lunatics to secrete their own excrement in their pockets and say it was gold.

The Attorney General: Is that confined to the mining population?

Witness: Not by any means. (Goodman, p. 201)

On Wednesday [28/7/52] a party took from one hole on Steele’s Flat in the short space of one hour and a half 1300 ounces of the root of all evil. (*Argus* (Daniel Bunce), 5/8/52)

A ‘juggler’—a jugular (rich) vein of gold. (Wathen, p. 56)

Jeweller’s shop.

[19/3/52] This morning I went to the Commissioners and got three more licences. While I was there, two men came up to the outer tent to deposit some gold. It was tied up in two or three handkerchiefs—I should think there was about 10 lbs weight, at least. When I crossed the creek I saw a man washing a dish of earth with about half-a-pound in it. Today we washed two loads for half-an-ounce. Benjamin went up to the holes for a load and lost the horses. He did not get home until dark. A few minutes before he came, the horses came up to the tent. The party is rather dull this evening. (Ragless, p. 48)

Up we came here a week past Friday put up the tent on Saturday wich is 11 feet long by 6 broad an *struck in* (the common phrase for making a commencement). on Monday we have done Very well Gold is easy to get here A man with one hand a tin dish can make a living here. We got twenty-two ounces in four days. [4 men] (Letter from John Anderson, Forest Creek, 19/1/52 (courtesy Mrs M. Dight), from Anderson’s Mill book)

French sailor named Antoine—had a share in a very rich shaft (his fifth such)—went to Melbourne and came back with nothing to show for his 42 lbs of gold but a pair of nugget earrings—his luck continued. (Fauchery)

A little shrimp of a fellow, about the size of an Esquimaux Indian, with no earthly implement but a two-forked stick and the ghost of a dilapidated frying-pan; and, would you believe it, the insignificant little varmint did a stroke to the tune of about £5 in half a day... (Letter from Ophir, NSW, May 1851—quoted in Murray, p. 17)

One digger, met in a bar, claimed ‘his claim in Canadian Gully [Ballarat] was so rich that, on combing his hair after coming out of the drive, it was always good for two ounces.’ Another claimed to pay his expenses in town ‘by washing out his finger-nails when he got there.’ (Kelly, p. 173)

... the honest and industrious do not always obtain wealth, while the 'lucky vagabond' is daily adding to his store. Why these things are, the Theologian can perhaps say. (E.G. Day, writing from Mt Alexander, 21/2/52—in *SA Register*, 23/3/52)

It affords me much pleasure to note that the Adelaide diggers in general have obtained, and still continue to obtain, more gold dust than others. (Chief Commissioner Alexander Tolmer, writing from Mt Alexander, 28/2/52—in *SA Register*, 16/3/52)

Ragless and Wilson party—arrived mid-February 1852, departed 30 April. Total gold shared by party of seven was approximately 45 lbs 8 oz (7 lb 1 oz, or 85 oz each—worth more than £300). Expenses ex-Adelaide to departure from Mt Alexander amounted to £10 each. Considered a fair, but unexceptional yield. (Ragless, pp. 70, 76)

In five months, Earp's party of five netted gold worth £3,900 (after expenses) from seven holes sunk at Golden Point, Forest Creek. The first hole was cleaned out in 23 days, clearing £360, of £72 each. A further three months' digging yielded £913 each, after expenses. (Earp, pp. 135, 147)

Even the aborigines are wealthy in these times. I met a party of them at Bullock Creek well clothed, with a good supply of food, new cooking utensils, and money in their pockets. One remarked, with becoming expression of dignity, 'me no poor blackfellow now, me plenty rich blackfellow.' (Bonwick, pp. 18-19)

Shicers

'Ding'd' it = gave up on a hole. (Snell, p. 299)

Bob's hole no go. (Snell, p. 303)

Shicer—from German 'scheissen' = shitter.

'Shishars' = shicers.

... they desert the holes as shicers, devoting them to the Queen with certain execrations, and the ceremony of dashing down stones, which are designated the 'Crown Jewels'. (Kelly, p. 213)

We proclaimed the hole a 'duffer', having had the honor, in common digging parlance, of sinking another 'for the Queen'. (J.F. Hughes, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 4)

Among early Victorians 'duffer' commonly meant not a dull-witted man but one who exploited dull-wits—and, more particularly, tricked them by selling them 'duff' things in a way that made them think they were being exceptionally fly. (Chesney, p. 268)

'Munchausen holes'—holes from which mythical fortunes have been taken—salted holes. (Howitt, letter to *Times*, quoted in Mossman, p. 88)

No luck

[Joseph Parker joined the rush] ...but, as I only got an ounce a day, and sore eyes, I left after a few weeks' trial. (Joseph Parker, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 128)

'Will you sell your cradle?'—... a very common question..., implying a hint that the party is going to give it up as a bad job. (Lang, p. 9)

... they were sore on the subject of a phrase with which it appeared they had been fretted by the villagers and upward passengers on the road—'Have you sold your cradle?' was a verbal dagger in their bosoms. (Religious Tract Society, p. 176)

Now, Sir, the average rate at the diggings is five making their fortunes, 45 making good wages, and 50 starving out of every 100. (AR, letter to Adelaide from Mt Alexander—in *SA Register*, 1/3/52)

Thomas Woolner, after six months on the diggings, wrote 'All the accounts we read in the beginning of 1852 were quite true, but we were just eight months too late.' [Woolner came out with Howitt, Horne, etc., arriving at the end of 1852] (Pearl, p. 138)

In 1853, nine out of ten migrants would have resolutely worked on the diggings, the tenth would have gone into business—by mid-1855, proportions were reversed—9 out of 10 migrants 'speculating in something or another'—tool-handles or lemonade—and the tenth, stripped of all resources, kept to his pick, unwillingly. (Fauchery)

I have met Burra miners, who state that, so much do they dislike the inconveniences of residing here, that they would gladly return to the Burra, could they make sure of 40s per week on tutwork. (Letter from Mt Alexander, 30/3/52, in *SA Register*, 14/4/52)

Return of the Furnace Men of the Burra Copper Works.—Forty-three men connected with the works of the Patent Copper Company have returned from an unsuccessful trip to the diggings, and are now seeking to get employment at their former occupation. (*SA Register*, 20/3/52)

Advices received in England from the English & Australian Copper Co. in Burra of 22/3/52 told that 'the whole of the men who had left the company's works had returned from the gold diggings, many of them without having obtained any gold, and a number of the miners who had left the Burra Burra Mines had also returned. Labour generally was more plentiful, the men were working much more steadily, and were more easily managed. Those who returned were being employed at reduced rates. (*Argus*, 13/10/52)

Luck or perseverance?

[September 1852] Gold-digging is a complete lottery now... (Letter from an Edinburgh shopman, in Mossman (letters), p. 67)

... some getting pounds' weight in a single day, and others being weeks about a speck. ('A Sailor's Trip...', *Argus*, 20/5/52)

As far as I saw it, it appears to me to be a farce, calling gold-digging a lottery. On the contrary, I believe it to be quite as legitimate an occupation as any of the more ordinary pursuits of life. To a man of perseverance and ordinary intelligence, the chances are in his favour of its proving quite as gainful as any other business. Those who speak disparagingly of it are generally of that class whose want of industry and energy has caused them to be unfortunate. True it is that at all diggings there are more bad holes than good; but then holes are soon sunk, generally in less than a week, and often in two days; and if they don't turn out well you must go to work cheerfully, and with good heart, and sink more, till you do get a good one, and then one prize will be found to pay amply for twenty blanks. (JEC [James Erskine Calder] in *Illustrated London News*, p. 387)

One party from Port Fairy stated that they sank 49 holes (average 28 feet deep) before finding their first gold at Mount Alexander. In their 50th they got half an ounce; in their 51st they got gold worth £1,500 each. (*Argus*, 5/8/52)

Kelly & I sunk one of our claims, and bottomed it, found nothing, bad luck, never mind, 'never give up'... (Arnot, 7/9/52)

but

[Working hole on Dinah Flat, 3/10/52] ...owing to the trifling specs of gold in the bottom, have given us a disgust for the diggings [sic], and have resolved to give them the grand kick. (Arnot, p. 127)

As an old hand at the diggings, let me strongly recommend all new comers *never to despair*... for the chances are ten to one that, by due patience and perseverance, they will gain a prize—a true digger's pocket. (Forest Creek correspondent in *Illustrated London News*, 22/1/53, p. 57)

... must live in hopes of doing better—*nil desperandum*. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 73—quoting letter from Forest Creek, 9/2/52)

Nil Desperandum—one of the most common names of (particularly) reefs on the goldfields.

[Impression: The six-jinx—The first six holes or six weeks were duds—those who persisted thereafter were almost certain to meet with success.]

Avoid excitement; vehement exultation at good fortune, or extreme depression from want of success, wear men out faster than labour. Make up your mind to a certain result, and never mind single days, and still less single cradles. (Lancelott, p. 32)

... success depends more upon the man than the locality. (ed. note, Mossman (letters), p. 102)

[Forest Creek, October 1852] We have been now nearly two months at the diggings, and, like most new-comers, have found that the gold is not so easily obtained as imagined.... Provisions of all kinds are, of course, rather dear.... But we can generally manage to earn in a day as much as will clear our expenses for the week.... If I can make £1000 (which I think I can do in less than a twelvemonth, at moderate luck), I shall return [to England]. (Letter from WE, young gent, in Mossman, pp. 33, 35)

[John Ruskin drew an analogy between the challenges and rewards of reading a good book and the act of gold mining] When you come to a good book, you must ask yourself, 'Am I inclined to work as an Australian miner would? Are my pickaxes and shovels in good order, and am I in good trim myself, my sleeves well up to the elbow, and by breath good, and my temper?' ...the physical type of wisdom, gold. (John Ruskin, *Sesame & Lilies*, 1867)

Hard work?

... the hard navigator-like trade of a gold-seeker... (*Illustrated London News*, 3/7/52, p. 8)

... avoid shepherds and stock-keepers, and professional men, clerks, and shop-keepers; for the former, although used to roughing it, have a unconquering antipathy to continuous labour, and the latter are both mentally and boidly unfitted for so hard and precarious a life. The best diggers are farm-labourers, excavators, sailors, brickmakers, and miners. (Lancelott, vo. 2, p. 31)

...even regular labourers and navvies will require all their energies, their bone and muscle, to endure their ordinary degree of labour under the *extraordinary* force of the sun for six months in the year. (Howitt, p. 29)

[First day digging] A couple of hours' hard work carried us down nearly three feet through the soil... As for my back, I verily believed I should never stand upright again during life..., and the others were all much of a muchness. (Earp, p. 129)

The work here I cannot call laborious. The first day or two will blister hands, and make one's back ache. The nights are cold and uncomfortable, and those who have been used to a drawing-room or stationed behind a desk would think it 'demmed disagreeable' and laborious, but I can assure you that carpenters, bricklayers, and such trades, work harder in Melbourne than here... (*Argus*, 8/1/51)

as my husband had never been used to rough work [cabinet maker by trade] his hands blistred and he began to swell very puffey he was (Davenport, p. 258)

It's only the first blister that hurts—terrible, immense, as big as the two hands it invades—also back ache. (Fauchery)

The constant work of the pick blistered our hands to such a degree, that it was no uncommon thing for us to have the handles clammy with blood, whilst the pain was excruciating, and in addition, the labour of throwing out the refuse stuff, joined to our working in so confined a space, made our arms, backs, and loins ache most fearfully. However, we kept each other up, and played our parts manfully, few words of complaint being heard, and those invariably with a laugh. (Earp, p. 132)

[T]he sore hand that mostly all comers have is a very serious disease, two of our mates have had a touch of it, a good many more going about with their hands tied up, it begins by swelling the whole hand & wrist, a great heat is felt caused by the inflammation, which continues 10 days or so till the part (palm of the hand below the fingers) is ready for lancing when matter and coagulated blood comes out, poultices both before and after lancing are required, it is generally a month till the patient is able to work his hand again, Often the fingers get so stiff that they never have the same use in them again (Arnot, p. 129)

Thank God, we are all well, except our hands, which, if the skin is broken any way, fester. Almost every person has had bad hands and knucles knocking them against the sides of the pits. Iron-stone and quartz cut like glass, and are very poisonous indeed, so there are many things to put up with. My scribble is so bad, few, perhaps, will be able to read it, but my hands are so stiff and sore that I cannot do much better. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 73—letter from Forest Creek, 9/2/52)

Sprained my wrist with the jar of the pickaxe against the lumps of quartz. (Snell, p. 283)

I have seen many here I know, who come strolling about looking over cradles and in holes with their hands in their pockets, and when they are asked how they are doing, they say they have been unsuccessful. There are nearly as many idlers as workers. (Letter from Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51)

All that is wanted here are men that are willing to work. (Letter from a carpenter, 6/11/52—in Mossman (letters), p. 62)

... Ballarat at least was no field for the amateur or 'prentice digger. (Kelly, p. 181)

... every digging has its 'New Chum Flat' or 'New Chum Gully', christened because of the shallowness of the sinking and its supposed suitability to the Johnny Newcombes, or amateur diggers. (Kelly, p. 210)

Working day

Fauchery had as a partner 'An old and good hand'—working 6am to 4pm every day. (Fauchery)

Diggers took to their claims each day a bucket of tea. (Thomas, p. 39)

...not being home to dinner, or having a wife or 'ony' bairns to come out with our 'Kail' we took the pitcher (pot) some coffee, sugar, cold mutton chop and damper... (Arnot, pp. 115-6)

We then go to work for about an hour before breakfast; and so on through the day, only allowing ourselves a good hour at dinner time. (Howitt, p. 119)

... work till two—then dine—same as breakfast [chops, tea and damper], rest an hour, then work till evening [about 6pm]... (Letter from Mount Alexander diggings, 16 May 1852, quoted in Anderson, p. 15)

[A diggers song, set to the tune of 'Coronation'—in part:]

We dig and delve from six to twelve,
And then for relaxation,
We wash our pans and cradles' shelves,
And turn to mastication. (Bonwick, pp. 21-2)

Lunch consists mainly of rest on a heap of earth—and perhaps tea and bread. (Korzelski, p. 68)

Gold

The gold of Victoria is remarkably pure, its fineness varying between 23 and 23½ carats: that is to say, with only from 1/24th to 1/48th part of natural alloy or impurity. The gold of New South Wales is usually less pure by about four per cent., and that of California is still less valuable. The purest of the Victoria gold is that of Ballarat... (Westgarth, p. 127)

Along the Loddon, digging is not worth a fig, the gold being so leafy and light as to float out of the tin dishes. (*SA Register*, 30/3/52)

The Ovens gold has always been distinguished for the minuteness of its pieces... (Westgarth, p. 182)

8 lbs of Mount Alexander gold fetched a low price—'by reason of its having been procured in dry diggings, and being in a very dirty state'. About 60 persons digging at Mount Alexander. (*Argus*, 16/10/51)

Rumour at Anderson's Creek that someone found a lump of gold 'as large as a French bean'! (*Argus*, 16/8/51)

[Found on the Turon goldfield] ... the largest *pepite*, or water-worn piece of solid gold, which has yet been found in the Australian Gold Fields. (*Adelaide Times*, 28/8/51)

These are the 'pepitas' of the Spaniards (*pepita*, seed) and the 'nuggets of Australia, a term imported from California, the derivation of which baffles our knowledge. (Religious Tract Society, p. 158)

[Origin of the word 'nugget'] It originated at the Ophir Diggings in New South Wales, and is probably a corruption of 'ingot', which is itself a corruption of 'lingot'—a little tongue.... In California, the word lump is generally used, and sometimes the Spanish word *pepite*. (*Argus*, 5/3/52)

[Thomas Coggan was shown his first nugget by a woman named Dodge, a friend of his sister's and a former seller of sly-grog at Forest Creek. It was] ... a really beautiful one, something between a lady's watch and a leg of mutton—that is, the size of one and the shape of the other. (Coggan, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 75)

Later, when working his first claim at Forest Creek, Thomas Coggan and his partners bottomed a hole and found in the washdirt 'nuggets, some of which were, without exaggeration, as big as ants' eggs.' (Coggan, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 75)

One man's findings at Mount Alexander in October 1851 comprised particles ranging upwards from 'smaller than the head of a pin' to 'nuggets of about the size of a Turkey-bean'. (*SA Register*, 6/11/51)

[First weeks at Ballarat—23 oz found in one week, for whole goldfield] ... I saw twenty-three pieces of gold... taken as a portion of one cradle yield; three of the pieces were as large as peas, and the remainder about the size of swan-drops. I have seen half-an-ounce turned out from one tin dishfull taken from the cradle! (*Argus*, 10/9/51 (*ex-Geelong Advertiser*))

[A 1-oz nugget was found at Buninyong, resembling] ... a dried up Windsor Bean. (*Argus*, 3/9/51)

... lumps of some size, usually varying from the dimensions of a nut or gooseberry to a pin's head. (Religious Tract Society, p. 158)

The Largest Lump of Gold.—The largest yet found in Australia is that called (on account of its size) 'the King of Nuggets', from Forest Creek, Mount Alexander, in the colony of Victoria, weighting 27 lbs. 6 oz. 15 dwts.... It is eleven inches in length and five in breadth. (Fabian)

[A gold nugget weighing 27 lb 7 oz was brought to Melbourne from Mount Alexander on 26 November] it is the largest piece of solid gold on record.... The nugget bears a singular resemblance to an Egyptian mummy... [Another described it as 'about the size

of an average foot’] The nugget was subsequently purchased by a Melbourne licensed victualler at £4 per oz. and he realized £40 a day by exhibiting it. (*SA Register*, 8/2/42)

[28-lb nugget found on Bendigo diggings, 1852] The Government here have given 1600*l.* for it, and presented it to the Queen.... It is a very singular mass, but will look well amongst the treasures of the royal palace.... Just at one edge is the mark of the pick where the digger struck it. (Howitt, pp. 11-12)

[See account of discoverer of 28-lb nugget, above]

... specimens of gold in quartz matrix... were eagerly sought after by parties sending mementoes of the gold fields to their friends in England and elsewhere. (*Argus*, 14/9/52)

... finest sample of Buninyong gold I have yet seen or heard of; it is imbedded in a quartz pebble, about the size of a pullet’s egg. (*Argus*, 19/9/51)

Quartz specimens veined with gold—names given: like ‘a wee fattie piece o’ beef’, ‘chuckie stafies’, like ‘Marine soap’. (*Argus*, 26/8/51)

... beautiful samples of gold in quartz... One of them in particular was most *unique*; the gold, running in veins through the quartz, formed the perfect resemblance of a tree—trunk, branches, leaves, and all, complete. It has been named the Royal Oak... (*Argus*, 29/4/52)

Where did it come from?

Queer theories on origins of gold: that it grew from a certain kind of clay; that it was created by lightning; or that in ancient times it had rained gold. (Serle, p. 32)

Various are the opinions of Australian geologists as to what is the origin of gold. Some speak of a volcanic scattering of a shower of yellow crystals... (Askew, p. 436)

The greatest puzzle for all scientific investigators of the gold questions is, how the gold got into the solid rock at first.... Neither Murchison, Lyell, Brewster, or the Rev. W.B. Clarke can tell us where the gold came from *at first*. ‘Volcanic action’, ‘internal fires’, and such expressions, are only improvised fig-leaves to conceal the nakedness of the profoundest science when dealing with final causes. (*Argus*, 5/8/52)

A live toad was dug out of sandstone at a depth of thirty feet in Adelaide Gulley [sic], this morning, where we may presume he has been imbedded for ages—probably since the globe [gold?] was first deposited in this locality. (*Argus*, 28/4/52)

One digger declared he had found a petrified beef-steak and another ‘roared out that he had got a fossil church, steeple and all’. (*Argus*, 26/8/51)

... another discovery I made in the course of my fossicking career... which is, that mushrooms do not spring up from sheep ordure, for I saw the chumps and grooves of them covering the tumuli of pipeclay thrown up from the bottom of deep holes, at a level where sheep never trod... I never saw mushrooms exceeding them in perfection... (Kelly, p. 210)

[Reverend Clarke (geologist) announced discovery of a goldfield situated around Lake Omeo. He pronounced that—] ...the district of Lake Omeo [situated ‘at the foot of the Australian Alps, near which flows the River Mitta Mitta, which has its source from the

Snowy Mountains'] is the *matrix* of the Australian gold field, from whence has flowed the auriferous deposits at Mount Alexander, and the other gold regions now so celebrated for their grand results. (*SA Register*, 8/2/52—quoting Kilmore correspondent of the *Argus*)

Many diggers dreamed of finding 'the original nugget'—'the real mountain of *gould*, the father of the interesting and numerous family of nuggets'. (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 102)

Does it Grow?—If we cut off the head of a cabbage we calculate upon a few sprouts after... Now many are anxiously asking the question, whether our ransacked gullies and hills will in the course of time again glow with the bloom of gold. (Bonwick (magazine), March 1853, p. 236)

Storing & dividing the gold

[Initially] Gold washed from tin dish and cradle is accumulated in a pint pot. (Matthew Hervey, letter in *Argus*, 6/10/51)

The gold washed every day is dried, then dust and other light impurities are blown off, bits of iron are removed with a magnet, and the rest is minded by one of the miners until Saturday, when it is divided between partners. (Korzelski, pp. 68, 84)

Gold dried by being placed in a spade over a quick fire. (Clacy, p. 65)

It may be well to intimate to those who are the successful gold seekers, that the practice now in vogue for drying the gold in tin pannikins, dishes, &c., over the fire, is most detrimental to the value of that precious metal, and the sawder [solder] and tin melt and mix with the gold, thereby rendering it 5s. or 6s. per ounce of less value. (*Argus*, 14/10/51—ex-*Geelong Advertiser*)

... the digger's treasure chamber,—a matchbox... (Bonwick, p. 14)

... the savings' bank of the miner... (Patterson, p. 314)

I also carried a congreve wooden matchbox to put the gold in. (Ross, p. 62)

... the digger's usual treasury, a German match-box. These round boxes hold on average 8 ounces of gold. (Clacy, p. 65)

The common lucifer-match box,... when choke-full of gold-dust offers a strong contrast in value when compared with its original contents. (Kelly, p. 204)

... then store in wooden matchbox or spectacle case—most common receptable, through some have contrived fancy containers—matchbox holds 10, 12, or 14 ozs—if too small, a pannikin was used—could hold about 10 lbs of gold. (Fauchery)

[One party] ... obtained a round lucifer box full of clean gold in 4½ hours... (*Argus*, 14/11/51)

...obtained a fair quantity of finer gold, all of which I tied up in a rag, securing it with a bit of bootlace, while the coarser bits I had put loose in my pocket, dirt and all. (Derrincourt, p. 165)

It is really most absurd to see rough, illiterate labourers come with their ounces and pounds of gold tied up in a bit of dirty rag, and sometimes to see them turn out of their dirty pockets, among bits of tobacco, bread, &c., 20s. or 30s. worth of the loose grain that have escaped the fragile package. Most of them bring it in the little round wooden match-boxes... (Gold buyer at Mount Alexander, November 1851—quoted in Murray, p. 73)

[A party's gold is] kept perhaps in an old pickle-bottle, which must then be quietly secreted under the earthen floor of the tent, or elsewhere. (Wathen, p. 64)

[In March/April 1852, the Ragless party commonly left their tent unattended all day, in order to work their six separate claims. On 2 April—] ... came back to the tent at sunset and found it was all right. It had been left alone with £250 worth of gold.... [10 April] Left the tent without a minder. (Ragless, pp. 60, 66)

Dogs feature largely in John Rochfort's account of the diggings in 1852-3. Always they are surly and loyal to their masters, guarding their tents... (Rochfort)

... without any other protection than the bark of a dog. (Bonwick (magazine), March 1853, p. 205)

[Mary, aged 11, on Forest Creek in 1851—was a 'pet' of all the miners.] One night I wrapped a cloak round my head and peeped into the tent of four Cousin Jack miners who were great friends of mine. They were examining their gold on a table at the time, in the candlelight. In a flash four revolvers were levelled at my head. 'It's only me,' I cried out, thoroughly scared. They brought me inside and lectured me in a kindly fashion. 'Never do that again, little lass,' said one of the big fellows in a broken voice, as he patted my head. 'My God, I nearly pulled the trigger that time!' (Lawrence)

[NSW] Next claim to ours was the property of a gentleman who hired men to work it, and instead of banking each day's proceeds he, professing some knowledge of phrenology, selected one of his men, by feeling his bumps, to act as gold receiver for the week. But, alas for the ingratitude of the human kind! on Saturday night receiver, bumps and gold had disappeared together. (Derrincourt, p. 204)

On Saturday, partners divide the week's gold. (Korzelski, p. 68)

Store open and busy until midnight on Saturday. (Sherer, p. 80)

Gold selling/buying

Gold buyer at Mount Alexander purchased 600 oz in November 1851, paying on average 57s. (£2 7s.) per ounce. (Murray, p. 71)

[Early 1852] Payments at stores in gold = 55s. to 58s. per ounce. In Melbourne, gold sells for 62s. to 65s. per ounce. (Earp, p. 140)

There was no standard gold price, the average for many years being £3/4/6 to £3/11/6 per ounce. It was a common thing for parcels of gold to be sold by auction in the metropolis, and no mint being in existence, the bulk of the precious metal was sent to the old country. (McKillop)

In September 1852, LaTrobe announced his intention of imposing an export duty of 2/6 per ounce on all gold exported. The gold price immediately dropped and there was a general outcry, causing the plan to be abandoned. (McKillop)

[1851] There were numbers of gold-buyers with little tables like those of gamblers, and ticketed—'Gold bought, £2-16/- per ounce.' The Government had not then tested or valued the gold. (Henry Boyle, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 119)

[Bendigo, July 1852] Each [gold buyer] has his name on a large scale on a paper pasted by the tent, and a flag of some distinguishing colour some 10 Feet above the tent. (Finlay, p. 19)

[Gold broker's shop, Melbourne] On entering, you see on the counter three or four pairs of gold scales of different sizes; also a large metallic tray, on which he spreads the gold while blowing off the foreign matter and extracting minute particles of iron with the magnet. There is also a hammer and a small iron block, on which pieces of quartz containing gold are pulverised in order to liberate the metal. A loaded revolver is within reach behind him. (Wathen, p. 41)

Gold was bought by the storekeepers at £2-6/- per ounce. They used to sift it on to a piece of brown paper, the sieve not being of the finest quality. The siftings were thrown into a box under the counter. The storekeeper always remarking:— 'You must be more careful next time in bringing it in clean.' As a rule these men were the most successful diggers. (Yandell in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 20)

He produced a round wooden match box, half filled with gold dust. The storekeeper turned it out upon the paper, and began to blow at it; then putting it on to a fine sieve, shook it three or four times to make the dust pass through; it was afterwards transferred to the scales, and the value given to the digger, who proceeded to purchase his flour and groceries. ...my eye fell upon the dust on the counter, that the storekeeper had blown out of the digger's gold [and] ...upon looking more closely at it, I observed innumerable little grains of gold that had been blown out with the dust... [The storekeeper] laughingly assured me that it was worthless, and that I must be a jolly new chum, to take notice of such a mite of gold, it was all bosh, he swept the dust, that had been so exciting my attention, to the earth. (Brown, pp. 138-9—Brown went on to become a storekeeper himself.)

Tricks of gold-buyers—greased pans on scales, hid gold in long fingernails. (Serle, p. 77)

... a [Bendigo] storekeeper... who has been in the habit of robbing the diggers of their gold by means of false weights and *finger nails* [was informed on as a sly grog dealer and his store and stock seized]. (*Argus*, 27/8/52)

Among some... dealers in gold, several cases of roguery have recently been detected: one set of scales and weights being kept for *buying*, and another for *selling* the precious metal. (Mackenzie, p. 51)

Every party of diggers should, for obvious reasons, be provided with a set of small scales and weights of their own. Gold is bought and sold only by troy weight, and the reader who has diligently learned his tables at school is no doubt aware that

24 (grs.) grains make	1 (dwt) pennyweight
20 pennyweights	1 (oz.) ounce = 480 grs.
12 ounces	1 (lb.) pound = 5760 grs.

People are apt sometimes to forget... (*Emigrant in Australia*, pp. 30-31)

Troy weights: 24 blanks = 1 perriot; 20 periots = 1 droit; 24 droits = 1 mite; 20 mites = 1 grain; 24 grains = 1 pennyweight; 20 pennyweights = 1 ounce; 12 ounces = 1 pound. (Bonwick (magazine), October 1852)

Troy (from Troyes, a market town in France) weight was introduced into England by William the Conqueror. (Mackenzie, p. 51)

Gold escort

[Ballarat, late September 1851] This party [successful] applied for an escort and were told by Capt. Dana that he would see them d[] before he would give an escort to such a lot of fellows! The gallant captain was told that the escort was applied for in virtue of licences paid for Government protection... (*Geelong Advertiser*, September 1851, quoted in *SA Register*, 13/10/51)

[Petition to LaTrobe] ... the necessity of an escort for gold, which can only be sent in small quantities, at great risk, by the Mail... (*Argus*, 17/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

First government gold escort—from Ballarat to Geelong, c. 26/9/51—consisted of an officer of the Mounted Police, two troopers, and two of the Native Police, and was accompanied by a Gold Commissioner—nearly all the gold was government property—licence fee payments. (*Argus*, 40/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Regular government gold escort from Ballarat to Melbourne and Geelong introduced in early October 1851—departed every Tuesday at 6am. (*Argus*, 2/10/51)

First gold escort from Mount Alexander in about second week of November 1851. (*Argus*, 19/11/51)

In the first six weeks the escorts took 120,000 ounces down from Forest Creek. (McKillop)

One Assistant Commissioner at each of Castlemaine and Bendigo had sole duty of managing the so-called 'gold-tent', the receipt and despatch of all Government or private gold to town by escort, &c.... In common with all other Commissioners on the ground in any way connected with the management and custody of the revenue, they enter into bond and give security for the faithful performance of their duty. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

W.M. Bull, son of Commissioner Bull of Bendigo and Castlemaine, had this memory of his childhood at the Camp. As a lad he often went into the gold office to see the gold being packed for escort. The gold, he says, was placed in canvas bags, some of which were very much worn by constant use. The official, when he came to a well worn bag, would drop it heavily on the bench, and as a matter of course, the bag would burst, and a quantity of gold would be scattered about. This gold was left there and the rent in the bag was covered with sealing wax and it was despatched that way. (McKillop)

When diggers deposited their gold for escort, its weight was rounded down to the nearest half-ounce (10 dwt).

The digger paid sixpence per ounce by the Melbourne escort. He lodged his gold with the Commissioner and obtained a receipt for it, and that receipt when presented at the Treasury in Melbourne was cashed. (McKillop)

Miners given a (common paper) duplicate of the (parchment) ticket attached to their packet of gold sent with the escort—e.g.

BENDIGO CREEK

No. 2772

Date, 8th of October, 1852

Name, Mr. A□□

Quantity, 60 oz 10 dwt

Consigned to, self. (Clacy, p. 128)

One of the Government commissioners occasioned immense confusion at the Colonial Treasury in Melbourne by weighing gold sent by escort with avoirdupois ounces, and giving receipts for it accordingly. (*Emigrant in Australia*, pp. 30-31)

From 29/12/51, gold carried by escort could be collected from the Treasury between 10-2 Monday to Wednesday and Fridays, and Saturday 10-12. (*Argus*, 27/12/51)

To obtain his gold at the Treasury after escort to Melbourne, a digger had to produce a receipt, identify himself and describe the parcel. Those who failed to convince the authorities on any one of these counts forfeited the gold. (Bartlett, p. 86)

One [villain] filled a gold-bag with shot and sent it down by the Escort Company; he then sold their receipt for a good round sum and decamped. Since then the company have opened and examined all the bags; but previously they used only to weigh and seal them up without opening. (Rochfort, p. 66)

By New Year 1852, the gold escort was bringing 10,958 oz from Mount Alexander and just 35 oz from Ballarat. (*Argus*, 1/1/52)

The largest quantity of gold taken by escort in the world up to that time left Castlemaine on 28 July 1852—83,592 oz, or 3 tons. (McKillop)

At their height, the Mount Alexander diggings sent down 110,000 oz in one week. (Howitt, p. 354)

First escort to Adelaide from Forest Creek, March 1852. (Blake, p. 71)

[SA Government set the price for an ounce of gold at £3 11s on 28/1/52] When a South Australian absentee adventurer bears in mind that every 22½ ounces of gold-dust that he brings back will buy him an eighty-acre freehold property of virgin soil, he will feel a mighty encouragement to industry and economy while at the Diggings, and an irresistible motive to return as soon as he has filled his bag with the potential metal. (*SA Register*, 29/1/52)

Overland escort to Adelaide ceased on 21/12/1853, after 18 trips. (Blake, p. 201)

Gold escort from Bendigo—July 1852. (Clarke)

Government escort from Forest Creek commanded by A. Templeton. Left Forest Creek at 6 am each Tuesday, halted at Karlsruhe (24 miles) police paddock to change cart horse, and ended first day's journey at Mount Macedon police station, on north edge of Black Forest. Next day, after a change of horses at Deep Creek (Bulla), the escort reached Melbourne at 1.30 pm. Night camp later changed to (what is now) Gisborne (Bush Inn), on the south end of the forest. (Blake, p. 73)

Uniform of Private Escort is plain blue frock coat and trowsers. Headquarters are at Montgomery Hill, Forest Creek. Government escort uniform is blue with white facings—headquarters by the Commissioner's Tent, Forest Creek. Both escorts charge 1% for conveying gold. (Clacy, p. 57)

Private escort—first conveyance to Melbourne—departing Mount Alexander. They look a fine set of men, and are well mounted... (correspondent to *Argus*, 28/6/52)

The Melbourne and Mount Alexander Escort Company, commenced in June 1852, *guaranteed* safe conveyance of gold—unlike government escort—no liability. (*Argus*, 24/6/52)

[The Government gold escort] This was unpopular for two reasons: its gold-carts were slow, lumbering vehicles..., and the digger who claimed his gold at the Treasury in Melbourne had not only to produce his receipt, but describe the parcel and identify himself. This was not always possible, and some hundredweights of gold fell into the Government's hands. (Pearl, p. 141)

Because its chairman was Mr C.R. Dight, the Private Escort was popularly known as 'Dight's Light Horse'. Dight was a member of the Victorian Legislative Council... [Died a short time after the escort commenced—company dissolved] (Pearl, p. 141)

Richard Henry 'Orion' Horne was made captain of the Private Gold Escort service within four weeks of his arrival from London. (Pearl)

[Private gold escort—each of four gold carts had] ... a Yankee driver with a long whip, long pistols and a long bowie knife in his belt. These drivers wore long beards, with wild coarse hair straggling from beneath their wideawakes. (Blake, p. 138, quoting Pearl)

In November 1851, escorts conveyed 30,439 oz from Ballarat and Mount Alexander; in November 1852, 349,185 oz were conveyed. (Bonwick (magazine), January 1853, p. 119)

Gold yields

A table compiled by Mr Khull, Melbourne bullion broker, states that 4,175,247 oz were raised from Victoria's gold diggings in 1852—at £3 10s an ounce, this raised £14,163,364. (ed. note in Mossman (letters), p. 94)

Westgarth, President of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, and Khull, a bullion broker, make the yield of 1852 the maximum of four and a half or four and a quarter million ounces. The yield for 1853 three million. (Morrell, p. 230)

Gold minting/currency

If you come out, bring coined money, sovereigns in preference; bills and bank notes have to be discounted, the former at very heavy rates—fifteen and twenty per cent being not unusual.

There are endeavours being made to obtain the establishment of a mint (or mints, if possible), for the purpose of coining our gold, and thereby avoiding the enormous tax which we pay to the mother-country in the shape of freight and difference of price. (Earp, p. 148)

... we should immediately establish an assay office; it is a most ridiculous thing for us to pay 8s. or 10s. an ounce for having our own gold converted into a medium of commerce: why not have it purified here, and run into ingots or bars of various weights, so that it could be used as money. (*Argus*, 20/9/51—supporting *Geelong Advertiser*)

The price of gold has... been sometimes greatly depressed in consequence of the comparative scarcity of coin in the colonies. The people and the government of New South Wales earnestly petitioned the Secretary for the Colonies for leave to establish a mint at Sydney; but Earl Grey, with his usual perversity, refused their rightful request upon the most frivolous pretences. The consequence is that the hard-working miners lose a fourth or more of the value of their gold.... The standard for gold coin is eleven parts of fine metal and one part of alloy.... The value of pure gold being to that of standard as 12 to 11, its price per ounce is £4 4s. 9-3/4d. Australian gold is generally above the standard [averages 23 carats fine], yet it has been sold on the ground for as little as £2 5s. an ounce, and at Sydney its highest average is £3 5s. An assay-office has been established at Adelaide, in South Australia, and by act of the Colonial Legislature gold ingots are made a legal tender at the rate of £3 11s per standard ounce... In England it would sell for £4 1s. 3d., or upwards. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 31)

Petition from the Legislative Council submitted to the Queen on 31/7/52 (received in London 21/10/52), requesting the establishment of a branch of the Royal Mint at Melbourne.

‘To Her most Gracious Majesty the Queen

This humble petition of the Legislative Council of Victoria—
SHOWETH,

THAT there has been discovered in the colony of Victoria one of the Richest Gold Fields in the world, which has yielded from its occupation in September last the large quantity of upwards of forty-eight tons of the precious metal.

That it is a very general opinion that this Gold Field is inexhaustible...’ (LaTrobe to Pakington, 31/7/52)

[November 1852] Many men with their families have evidently come up here now to settle permanently, for to exhaust the gold at the Mount will take many years yet—1880 won’t see it out. (*Illustrated London News*, 22/1/53, p. 57)

Chapter 4: TIME OFF

Evening

At sunset they all leave their work and go to their miserable tents, almost smothered in dust. (Ragless, p. 54)

Most diggers washed and shaved at night. (Serle, p. 72)

An 'Irish wash'—a scant/brief wash? (Gronn, p. 62)

Usually didn't indulge in soap—just went to creek or water hole and rubbed off as much dirt as you could—soap was an 'extra' in those days. (Chandler, p. 103)

[Forest Creek, 25/4/52] The folks at the diggings are not the same since the rain has fallen, as those who wish to be clean can keep so now the rain has led [sic] the dust. (Ragless, p. 72)

After we supped we lay at the entrance of the tent to watch the movements of the men around us.... How welcome to the digger is the cool delicious breeze of the evening, with its magnificent sun-set, and balmy sweets after the intense heat of the day; with what proud satisfaction he looks upon his work; how pleasant his cogitations as he sits inhaling the fragrant weed or sips his pot of tea with the proud consciousness of approaching independence acquired by his own manual labour from the bowels of the earth. (Hall, pp. 21-2)

...work till evening, and home; then a general washing and changing of working clothes, followed by tea, varied with Yarmouth bloaters, &c. Cigar-smoking then commences, and we turn into a neighbour's tent and play chess and backgammon. Bed from ten to eleven... (Letter from Mt Alexander, 16/5/52, quoted in Anderson, p. 15)

About half an hour before sunset, every body, or nearly so, have gone home to their tents, where they spend the evening until bed-time in social chat or singing. (H.A.K., in Mossman (letters), p. 42)

We... leave off work when he [the sun] sets, about six [late summer].... After tea, we generally congregate round the fire, where I have manufactured and placed a long bench, and some of our neighbours often come and hold a chat. We go to bed early... (Howitt, p. 119)

Manilla [sic] was drained of cigars by the demands for the favourite cheroot, the only kind that was... then used in the colony, and the price for this article took a start of 200 to 300 per cent. (Westgarth, p. 135)

In England, I fancied myself a smoker—vanity, and delusion, and vexation of spirit! I was only learning, for there I puffed out a few cigars; here a short black pipe and strong tobacco is the style of thing, almost literally from morning till night, and from night to morning round again. (Earp, p. 78)

...as it is... familiarly called, 'blowing a cloud'... (Earp, p. 174)

The 'best flavoured' pipe I ever had. (Snell, p. 304)

A good fire, a short pipe, and a long story are the usual evening accompaniments [sic]. (Source?)

The evening's talk is about the work of the day, the probability of success, arrangements for future labor, and, too often, some coarse and spicy anecdote to sustain that excitement of spirit natural to men. (Bonwick, p. 27)

We always kept up a glorious fire before our tent, night and day; and as we had rolled a large clean log, well barked (for fear of centipedes) before the door, and had provided other sitting accommodation, our tent... became the fashionable evening lounge after the labours of the day had closed. ...we generally had ten or a dozen old familiar faces around our ingle nook, enjoying their pipes, and chatting of past days and future hopes. ...I never recollect to have spent happier hours than before that blazing fire in the forest... (Letter from Fred W. Brogden of Lincolnshire, in Mossman (letters), p. 45-6)

[Canadian Gully, Ballarat, November 1852] There is in the evening quite a rivalry amongst the diggers as to who shall have the largest fire—those welcome comforts which may be seen blazing through the trees for miles and miles after nightfall. (F. Hobson jun. to his father, in Mossman (letters), p. 59)

At night the effect is very peculiar; each tent has a log fire, and the reflection of the light cast on the countenances of the diggers, who stand around it smoking, is very striking... (Rochfort, p. 53)

I can fancy about 20,000 persons are here; it is a sight by night, so many fires, almost every tent having a fire. (Letter from Forest Creek, 9/2/52, in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 72)

At night, as far as the eye could see the camp fires of the invading Goths and Vandals were burning in two long, irregular strings of luminously iridescent beads. (McKillop)

At night... every one fires off his piece, and this, combined with the fires, the dark outlines of the tents among the trees, and the soft music of some guitar or corneopean from the tent of a digger of a somewhat more cultivated taste than usual, made a very beautiful and rather touching scene. (Letter, January 1852, in *Emigrant in Australis*, p. 71)

[Bendigo, April 1852] The Diggins [sic] look very pretty at night, thousands of fires in all directions, the flash of a gun or pistol every few seconds, two or three rows always going on, and every here and there the noise of a flute or fiddle playing... (Snell, p. 290)

The evening is spent in chatting, smoking, and reading the 'Argus' or some of Chambers's publications, over the rude fireplace of turf or stone which forms one end of the tent or hut. (Wathen, p. 64)

... our lantern at night, suspended from a string in the tent... (Howitt, letter to *Times*, quoted in Mossman (letters), p. 87)

... at night-time, when there is a light inside [the tent], the shadows of the occupants are thrown upon the tightly stretched calico, and the whole becomes a puppet-show for the edification of strangers outside. (Brown, pp. 348-9)

[At night] ...every one who is lucky fires a gun... (Letter from Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51)

[I]t is astonishing at night between 7 and 9 to hear the Rifles and guns that are shot off... of course we fire off too, let people see we have got such things also. (Arnot p. 112)

[Bendigo, October 1852—wholesale firing of firearms at night] It appeared strange at first, but I'm quite fire-proof now, and shouldn't wink if a pistol were discharged close to my ear without my being aware of it. (Letter from H.H. Hall, a WA colonist, in Mossman (letters), p. 30)

[Night-time discharge of firearms brings to mind] ...some of Milton's ideas of an encamped host of fiends. (Thomas, p. 38)

Silence follows return of diggers from day's work—doing chores, getting tea. Sometimes a dog squeals when brought to order by the cook's boot or a stick for getting too close to the frypan. Once diggers' hunger is appeased, silence is broken by talk, laughter, songs—then shooting begins, lasting well into the night—then sound of drunks, screaming and calling people out of their tents for directions—dogs growling and barking. (Korzelski, pp. 63-6)

[Clunes, 1851] The camps present a curious scene by moonlight. They have now a population of from seventy-five to eighty, and among them are four women—'devil a less!'—whose dulcet tones, combined with the music of a flute, and barking of dogs, the galloping of horses, and the laughing of the occupants of the various caboozes, prevented my going to sleep until long after midnight. (*Argus*, 13/8/51)

[Disturbed regularly during the night by drunks seeking directions] ...my only mode of getting rid of them was to promise them the speedy contents of a couple of revolvers, which generally proved persuasive. (Howitt, p. 233)

Diggers let off their revolvers preparatory to re-loading for the night. (J.F. Hughes, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 5)

The stupid custom of firing off guns, pistols, and revolvers night an morning is fast going out of fashion. (Bonwick, p. 22)

In the evening we fired our guns and pistols and my revolver of five barrels, making 13 barrels in a regular salute. (Ragless, p. 40)

[Bendigo—Bullock Creek] Precious rough place, no end of rows of firing guns at night. ...about 1500 shots are fired in the Golden Gully every night. (Snell, pp. 286, 289)

But night at the diggings is the characteristic time: murder here—murder there—revolvers cracking—blunderbusses bombing—rifles going off—balls whistling—one man groaning with a broken leg—another shouting because he couldn't find his way to his hole, and a third equally vociferous because he has tumbled into one—this man swearing—another praying—a party of bacchanals chanting various ditties to different time or tune, or rather minus both. Here is one man grumbling because he has brought his wife with him, another ditto because he has left his behind, or sold her for an ounce of gold or a bottle of rum. Donny-brook Fair is not to be compared with an evening at Bendigo. (Clacy, p. 56)

... yells, whoop, and shrieks, with dogs barking and fighting, 'make the night hideous'. (Letter from Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51)

We had the pleasure of sleeping several times during the first night, the intervals being agreeably employed in listening to the harmonious sounds produced by the firing of

pistols, the barking of dogs, and the tramping of horses in hobbles combined in chorus. ('Confessions of a Gold seeker', January 1852, Forest Creek—from *Argus*?)

It is no easy matter to sleep amidst the continual volley of fire-arms, joined as they are to the perpetual howling and barking of more dogs than one would think all the world contained. (JEC, in *Illustrated London News*, p. 387)

[Aborigines camped across the creek from the Ragless party's tent at Forest Creek] ...they make the same dismal corroboree as the other natives of South Australia.... The noise of the blacks beating their waddies are making some of us cross. (Ragless, pp. 57-8)

We had splendid concerts of frogs every night from the neighbouring marshes and ponds, the old bull-frogs playing the overtures in grand style. (Letter from Fred W. Brogden of Lincolnshire, in Mossman (letters), p. 46)

A serenade of frogs may be pleasant, but certainly not universally so; nor does a 'possum snarl chord agreeably with the boom of a bull frog's bassoon. But exhausted nature needs no wooing, and stringybark is a good substitute for swan's down. (*Argus*, 17/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Possums were fond of tea-leaves—would enter tents in search of them. (Skinner, p. 102)

Dogs, immediately on coming into the Australian forest, become perfectly frantic in the pursuit of opossums. The moment the night falls they are off, if they are loose, into the woods... (Howitt, p. 111)

... for upwards of an hour the discharge of fire-arms was incessant, then all became silent...—nothing but the shrill amorous cry of the male cricket, or the low, melancholy but pleasing cry of the Mope-hawk, broke the unearthly silence. (Hall, p. 22)

Mopoke/curlew—some people call it the 'Queer', 'More Pork' or 'Mope Hawk'. (Skinner, p. 102)

'Gillimockers'—kookaburras? mopokes?

Reading

The recklessness begotten by the wild and uncomfortable life... is peculiarly antagonistic to habits of reading and reflection. No retirement is to be found in the tent. Fatigue indisposes one for mental exertion, and there is not the great incentive to reading—a wish to please. (Bonwick, p. 27)

The evening is spent in chatting, smoking, and reading the 'Argus' or some of Chambers's publications... (Wathen, p. 64)

[H]ad our usual game of Cards and a study over 'Cook' he, Shakespeare, Milton and our Bibles forming our Library. (Arnot, p. 116)

[Rainy Sunday] Smoked and read the Bible all day. (Snell, p. 291)

[Sunday in May 1852] A dismal wet day—the rain poured steadily down and I sat in the tent thinking of home and my mother and sisters and feeling as damp as a frog—had a book lent me, Hogg's Weekly instructor—read a good deal of it. (Snell, p. 295)

It was curious that both in this, and in another digger's tent (the only two) which I entered, the only volume to be seen was a collection of what Mr Hartshorn [Rev. C.H. Harshrone, Cambridge librarian and antiquarian] would have called 'amatory verses of a voluptuous character'. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 29)

[Bendigo, August 1852] Three parties have joined to read books, which the storekeeper adjoining lets out at one shilling per book. The 'reader', Mr Boscombe, is exempted from subscription. We have read one entitled *Fanny the Milliner* by Charles Rowcroft Esq. (Finlay, p. 28-9)

Bendigo Store. Circulating Library—Messrs McDermott and Ashton, having received invoices of upwards of 1500 volumes of new, popular, and standard works, they are now prepared to lend them on moderate terms. Opposite the Argus Office, Bendigo. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Went along to the library and got out a book, the way they do it is, by depositing the value of the book, when you bring it back the money is returned 6d being charged p week for the read. Books sold at 1/- & 2/- at home are charged here 3/6 & 6/-, but we do not grudge 6d for the read of a book. (Arnot, p. 122—Forest Creek, 15/9/52)

Bonwick cried out for someone to establish a Digger's Reading-Room—as a precursor to a 'Diggings' Public Library'. (Bonwick (magazine), October 1852, p. 11)

[end 1852?] John Ferris, Bookseller, and Victorian Gold Miners' Lending Library, View Point [Bendigo] (Bryce Ross's *Diggings Directory*, p. 4)

Music & public entertainment

Amusements are not in harmony with the diggings. Men come there usually to work in earnest, and they have no time for play. Yet now and then a song is heard... At Bullock Creek a sick friend was charmed on the one side by Kate Kearney, and on the other by the whole range of Wesley's hymns proceeding from a most indefatigable Burra songstress. In one tent near me there was an occasional concert of a fife, a dish-bottom drum, and a primitive sort of triangles... (Bonwick)

[At night] ... every here and there the noise of a flute or fiddle playing Nancy Dawson, Jack's the lad, Paddy will you now, and similar tunes, make the place quite lively. (Snell, p. 290)

... we dance to the music of a German flute, played by a real German, or we sing glees and quartets... until midnight, and sometimes long after it. (A young lady from Dublin, who migrated with her brother and was tentkeeper for his party, quoted in Serle, p. 91—Mossman was doubtful of the authenticity of this account)

Persons who can perform on musical instruments should not leave them behind, for... a little music will contribute infinitely better than the coarse excitement of alcohol, to beguile the twilight hour. It will, moreover, create pleasing associations and remembrances of absent friends and scenes far away. (Jameson, p. 110)

French-Canadian diggers played *La belle Canadienne* on violin by fireside. (Campbell, p. 110)

[Bands of Czech musicians travel around the mines] ... a familiar song so often played on a harp, about love... (Korzelski, p. 59)

A band of music started [from Geelong] for the diggings this morning. They crossed the bridge over the dam, playing, 'The Girls we left behind us,' and I have no doubt they will materially contribute to the enjoyment of the sons of toil at Ballarat. (*Argus*, 29/9/51)

... the multitudes who are so engaged in their golden pursuits that even the party of musicians wasted wind and time on their first arrival at the Ballarat plains, in the vain endeavour to attract attention. (*Argus*, 8/10/51—ex-*Geelong Advertiser*)

[At night] ... two bands of music on each side the creek, parade with lively, but it must be confessed, antiquated tunes... (Letter from Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51)

[At the monster meeting on 15/12/51] Hore's band was heard in the distance, and as it approached large crowds made their appearance from the lower diggings, which were welcomed with hearty cheers. (*Argus*, 18/12/51)

Mr Ellis, the well-known caterer for public amusement at Cremorne-gardens, the Floragardens, and other popular places of entertainment, has just sailed from Plymouth in the *Coldstream*, for Port Phillip. Mr Ellis takes with him scenery, properties, and the necessary adjuncts for a portable theatre, to be erected at the diggings, a complete band of musicians, and a Thespian company. Mr Ellis was the originator of casinos* in the metropolis, and proposes to introduce them into Geelong and Melbourne and thus combine pleasure with gold seeking. (*Illustrated London News*, 10 July 1852, p. 19)

[*casino = a room for public dancing (*Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary*)]

Men who work hard must have some amusement, and for those who did not care for bagatelle, billiards, or drinking, there was nothing left but the dancing saloons, and these met with an extraordinary amount of success. It was a strange sight to see some forty or fifty couples of men, in their muddy clothes and heavy boots, solemnly dancing the Mazurka, which at that time was a great favourite. But there was one saloon which, in addition to a capital brass band, owned three German girls... and it was considered the highest possible honour to get a dance with one of these fair damsels. (Brown, p. 364)

Dancing partners, for the most part Germans, 'hurdy-gurdy girls', or 'hurdies' as they were commonly called, are spoken of with respect. [Cariboo rush, British Columbia, 1862—German hurdies, dancing for a living at 50¢ a dance, became an institution] (Morrell, pp. 131, 171)

[Charles Thatcher's songs] ... if circulated in England, would give a much better idea of life at the goldfields than most of the elaborately written works upon them do. (quote from a contemporary Bendigo correspondent)

Fantoccini (or 'Fantasina') was a portable (horse-drawn) marionette theatre, tall enough to allow the standing puppeteer to manipulate his string-puppets from above, in contrast to the Punch and Judy man, who worked his glove-puppets from below—introduced to London, c.1820—still going strong in 1850s—performed on street corners, accompanied by a man who played drum and pan pipes. (*George Scharf's London*, p. 40)

[Advertisement]

A Profession or Occupation.

Daguerrotype Portraits.—The Advertiser has for sale a complete chest of Daguerrotype apparatus, with some score of different sized plates and cases. The process is easily learnt, and may be practised by ladies. It would tell well at the diggings. (*Argus*, 21/12/52_

Drinking & drunkenness

A man in the colonies drinks as much in a week as a man at home does in a year; every one, men, women, and children, are all the same. I have seen an infant of *four* years old dead drunk. (Letter from EB, October 1859, in Mossman (letters), pp. 38-9)

Very drunk—'a long way out of the perpendicular'. (Leversha in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 14)

'On the spree' or 'On a spree'.

Popular belief that alcohol counteracted effects of working in wet conditions. (Serle, p. 82)

Now, if people in Melbourne, with comfortable houses, good water, and exposed to no hardships, find that the dryness of the climate compels them to drink, how much more necessary must grog be to the diggers, who toil in the hot sun, oftentimes compelled to drink foul water, are continually wet through, and live and sleep under canvass [sic]. (said to Brown at Bendigo, Brown, p. 142)

[Eureka, Ballarat] We in general have a keg of grog in the tent, and when the day's work is over, we can be merry over a glass of 'brandy hot'. (Letter from E.B., in Mossman (letters), p. 37)

[A 'jolly evening' around a campfire with neighbours at the diggings—Kelly's last night at Ballarat] ... drink was handed about in buckets, and I saw 'one big shout' of aerated stuff called champagne disgorged into a puddling-tub... (Kelly, p. 229)

All over Ballarat bottles broken and whole lie about in such quantities, that it is wonderful how horses go anywhere on the field without getting lamed. There was a pool down in the basin, not very far from the camp, into which literally thousands of bottles were thrown. Before all the public-houses on the road, there lie heaps, sometimes of many waggon-loads, and all along the bush you still find them, some dashed against the trees, and others still whole. (Howitt, p. 386)

Spirit selling is strictly prohibited; and although the Government will license a respectable public house on the *road*, it is resolutely refused *on* the diggings. The result has been the opposite of that which was intended to produce. There is more drinking and rioting at the diggings than elsewhere, the privacy and risk gives the obtaining it an excitement which the diggers enjoy as much as the spirit itself... (Clacy, p. 55)

Some of the stores managed to evade the [prohibition] law rather cleverly—as spirits are not *sold*, 'my friend' pays an extra shilling more for his fig of tobacco, and his wife an extra sixpence for her suet; and they smile at the store-man, who in return smiles knowingly at them—then glasses and bottle are produced. (Clacy, p. 55)

[Golden Gully, Bendigo] ...places where the initiated may obtain spirits at about 1/- per nobbler. (Snell, p. 289)

[Sunday, 1 August 1852] Numbers of drunkards reeling about in consequence of a new storekeeper having brought up a supply of spirits and selling it off at £1 per bottle. Several young gents of high standing in Hobart conducting themselves opposite to decent. Grog selling ought to be crushed. (Finlay (from VDL), p. 27)

One sly-grogger at Bendigo said, when asked by Howitt if he sold sly grog—'Oh! eye-water we sell; grog we don't pretend to know anything about. Eye-water! that's the stuff, you know. Eye-water!' (quoted in Bartlett, p. 162)

More than one 'lemonade seller' or 'coffeeshop' owner flaunted other enticements than the humble beverages on his sign. (Blake, p. 142)

Grog was hawked around the diggings in a tea-kettle. (William Ottey, *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, pp. 58-9)

Considerable difficulty was experienced in catching a woman on the Bendigo field who was long suspected of illegally selling liquor. She was thought to be a woman of very ample proportions but her size was due to an undetected tin-container that was closely moulded to her body and hidden beneath her clothes. It held two gallons of grog and was cunningly fitted with a tap which opened into a pocket of her dress. A Forest Creek sly-grog seller wore a similar contrivance. (Bowden, pp. 26-7)

A woman used to come up the gully [Sailor's] selling hop beer at 6d. a pannikin—the initiated could get something stronger. The dame had suffered from spasms in her chest, and she had been advised to get a curved tin to fit her chest, and by filling it with hot water she would get relief. With the wit of a woman she found that it would fit another part of her anatomy, so she filled it with spirits, with a conductor like tube of an infant's feeding-bottle, and by putting her hand into a side pocket she could bring the tube out and serve her customers. (W.H. Wilson (American) in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 158)

There are some hugely fat woman on the diggings; the life seems to suit them. (Howitt, p. 186)

First female on Forest Creek diggings, 1851—from Adelaide—reached Forest Creek after 4 days' march from Melbourne, wheeling a barrow in which she had a washing tub—she was soon surrounded by hundreds of diggers, who quickly ran her up a tent, and she started in the grog line—'She was a lady of colour, and the scenes witnessed at her place at night were something to be remembered.' (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 19)

The celebrated coloured lady, Mrs Finch, from Adelaide, had her tent and stock burnt on Saturday last for grog-selling... (W.H., 'Confessions of Another Gold Seeker', Forest Creek, 25/1/52, in *SA Register*, 21/2/52)

Big Poll the grog seller gets up every day,
And her small rowdy tent sweeps out;
She's turning in plenty of tin, people say,
For she knows what she's about,
For she knows what she's about.
Polly's good looking
And Polly is young,

And Polly's possessed
Of a smooth oily tongue;
She's an innocent face
And a good head of hair,
And a lot of young fellows
Will often go there... (Thatcher's song, 'Poll the Grog seller')

The 'amiable female' (fishwifish-sometime-sly-grogger) asked doctors to give her a written certificate that the state of her health necessitated the constant use of spirits—offered them £2. (Clacy, p. 67)

There is considerable evidence that many medical men freely dispensed liquor—they said as an anaesthetic or 'stiffener' for their patients. (Bowden, p. 27)

At the mines, brandy is all powerful. (Fauchery)

... the real strip-me-down-naked... [the brandy bottle] Kelly, p. 251

... the greatest curse of all was the fiery liquid that was sold under the name of brandy, for it drove many of the diggers mad and sent many to an untimely grave. (Thomas Carte, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 164)

Adulterated liquor known as 'tumble-up' and 'Seidlitz powder'. (Bowden)

One sly grog recipe called 'Blow My Skull Off' contained 'Cocculus indicus, spirits of wine, Turkey opium, Cayenne Petter and rum plus five times the quantity of water'—a wine glass full cost 2/6. (Blake, p. 64—quoting Read, p. 172)

Phlegm-cutter = a kind of mixed drink. (Kelly, p. 331)

During prohibition, liquor was commonly adulterated—tobacco used as base. (Serle, p. 82)

Spirits (diluted with water or something less innoxious) cost 30s. a bottle. (Clacy, p. 53)

Sly grog was, in nearly every case, badly adulterated, and 'soon had the diggers trailing their coats on the ground'. (McKillop)

Adulterated liquor was sold at 30/-, £2 and £3 a bottle. When asked what he meant by saying that liquor was 'manufactured on the goldfields', he [Dr Owens, testifying to the Select Committee into sly-grog activities in 1853] explained that it was not actually made their from illicit stills, but what was brought from Melbourne was diluted with an equal quantity of adulterants before it was sold. [Probably half the grog available on the diggings was made that way.] (Bowden, p. 25)

Prohibition on the goldfields abandoned in 1854. (Serle, p. 82)

Three licensed pubs opened at Castlemaine in January 1853 [1854?—Victoria in Urquhart Street, Albert in Forest Street, and Criterion in Barker Street. (Blake, p. 153—quoting *Herald*, 7/1/53)

Popular name for colonial beer was 'She-oak'—so named after the bush-made casks. (Gronn, p. 59)

... I only drank 'soft tack' [soft drink]. (Derrincourt, p. 189)

Mr Owen Fisher has opened a Teetotal establishment, which is well patronised by those who prefer the 'cup which cheers, but not inebriates'. (An *Argus* correspondent in Ballarat, 30/10/52)

Prostitutes

At the end of 1852, Caroline Chisholm estimated that 11,000 husbands had left wives and families behind in Britain—]... and much evil has already resulted from this desertion. (ed. note, Mossman (letters), p. 62)

A ci-devant digger informed us that when he was at Bendigo a lady had offered 'to be his wife' for the moderate charge of 1/6. These women are no rarities at the diggings. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 13)

[Party of revelrous diggers gathered around a campfire at Ballarat, 1853, broken up by] Two women, ...one called Princess, the other Mary Anne. ...disgusting demanour, the frightful blasphemy, and the revolting obscenity of these incarnations of fiendism. ...[they secured] a brace of unfortunate victims; incapacitated from excess. (Kelly, pp. 230-31)

Celebrations

Queen Victoria's birthday celebrated by improvised illuminations—on the eve of the day, thousands of fires (made from large heaps of dry gum branches with leaves still on, heaped in front of every tent) are lit simultaneously at the sound of the first shooting of the evening. Until the outbreak of the Crimean War, Americans and French would not take part, and their dark tents would make gaps in the illuminations—thereafter, they too lit up. (Korzelski, p. 69)

The night of the 5th November was commemorated here by a display of bonfire, and an incessant discharge of fire-arms for the space of two hours after dark. (*Argus*, 17/11/52)

[Guy Fawkes' Night, 1852] ... firearms discharged freely in commemoration of the 'Gunpowder Plot'. (Amos, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 181)

Polish (Catholic?) custom to fast on Christmas Eve—made hard work difficult. Christmas Eve a very sad occasion for the Polish on the goldfields—no way to keep up traditional celebrations: 'English have a very different way of spending the day'—quoits, talked, jumping competitions, and some drank. (Korzelski, p. 72)

SUNDAY

...no frost to night but a lovely sunset, have little time to enjoy the scenery, as no such idleness is allowed in Australia, Sunday is the only day we can enjoy anything like that. (Arnot, p. 112)

No working allowed on Sundays. (Serle, p. 99)

[In California] ...most gold-seekers appear to have been only too glad to escape the strictures of formal religion. They demonstrated a total disregard for the Sabbath... (Marks, p. 225)

[Ballarat] It is very disgraceful to see a great many of the people here, working on Sunday, digging and washing... I saw some of the policemen looking on at the time. (Letter quoted in *Argus*, 9/10/51)

on the saturday it was very wet raining heavy but some neither minded the day nor the rain for goold was on the surface and it was very tempting (Davenport, Mt Alexander, early November 1851, p. 262)

[Beechworth, 1853] I was grieved... to see that [Sabbath] was totally unobserved by the people around. Papa [Police Magistrate] had done what the law would allow him to, in putting down digging and washing gold on the Sabbath. Further than this he could not go; and the diggers took the day to wash and mend their clothes, fell trees, repair their tents, and when they had not these to do, spent it in drinking, gambling, and idleness. Of course, the children of such parents were not behind them, in profaning a day they knew little of the sanctity of; and groups of dirty, idle, mischievous children were continually running wild all over the diggings. (Campbell, p. 90—she began a Sunday school for girls, but abandoned it when too many—including boys—turned up)

Stores would oblige you with anything on the Sabbath, 'although they would not raise the canvas'. (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 26)

I saw no digging, and only one or two cradles rocking in a surreptitious manner, as if the owners were ashamed of themselves. (Polehampton, p. 87)

[Anxious to see how previous day's dirt would wash up—] Tried the stuff with a tin dish and found an oz. in the dish full. Washed a lot of socks, cleaned out the tent and in the afternoon went to a field preaching on the hill at the back of our tent. (Snell, p. 292)

The first sermon delivered at the Mount Alexander diggings, by Rev. Mr Sullivan of Kyneton, took as its text 16th chap Matt, 26 verse: 'For what profiteth a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul...' The service was but thinly attended... (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

Men accustomed to the wild freedom of bush life will not listen patiently to a half hour's harangue without point or meaning, and delivered in a tone of monotony and lifelessness... Diggers have neither wooden heads nor rocky hearts. In town a man goes to church because it is proper and respectable; at the diggings he goes from curiosity or a sense of duty. (Bonwick, quoted in intro to von Guerard, p. 17)

[C]ame down in time again to hear an excellent lecture by the missionary he preaches near our tent, he was curiously dressed, long boots, grey trousers, Black Coat & Vest, watch chain & keys dangling out of his pocket, eye glass & spectacles, crowned with a monstrous blue bonnet. (Arnot, p. 117)

[M]ostly all the preachers dig. (Arnot, p. 118)

Evening at Forest Creek—Rev. Cheyne marched up and down the rows of tents ringing a bell and exhorting diggers to attend the service at his Episcopalian tent. (Henry Britton, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 67)

Public meeting held at 'the Shepherd's hut, near the Post Office, Forest Creek' re. constructing a Church of England at the diggings. Subscriptions called for. (*Argus*, 23/3/52)

Collections received toward the erection of a church on the diggings were so generous that they enabled construction of two churches. (*Argus*, 26/3/52)

Gambling & fighting

... a preacher took up his position on a stump, and in earnest terms addressed the diggers, numbering some thousands; while on the outskirts of the throng some were busy at 'three up,' 'heading them,' and 'prick in the garter,' or some other gambling transaction, carried on with much wrangling and scuffling, ending in a regular stand-up fight. (Derrincourt, p. 168)

The Methodists held worship lower down the creek, while some unblushing scoundrel had a thimble-rig opposite. [Thimble-rig = A sharpening trick with three thimbles and a pea] (*Argus*, 10/12/51)

[Forest Creek, April 1852] ...a knot of Celestials, to the number of about a dozen and a half, who have congregated at Golden Point, seemly having cut 'Jos' since they left China, and not yet being converts to any other faith, spend the day, as, indeed, they do the whole of their spare time, in gambling. (Gilfillan, p. 160)

In nearly all the tents or huts I visited I found card-playing going on in all earnestness, and, in one the inmates were at 'three up' or heads and tails. (Derrincourt, p. 163)

The criminal class passed the greater portion of their daytime in gambling schools playing a game called 'three up' (i.e. tossing three pennies in the air and calling 'heads' or 'tails'). Large rings of these men could be seen congregated together from morning till night, Sundays not excepted. (Clarke, p. 25)

I myself have seen them sitting 'tossing' with each other for nuggets, or playing 'blind hookey,' 'all fours,' or even, when cards where [sic] not procurable, 'odd or even?' for their pieces of gold, the weight being guessed at nearly enough for their purpose. (Earp, p. 145)

An Act to restrain the practice of gambling was passed by the Legislative Council in January 1852. (LaTrobe to Grey, 16/1/52)

... every person who shall be found keeping or assisting in keeping, or gambling, playing or betting at or with any table or instrument of gaming at any game or pretended game of chance in or at any disorderly house, or any place upon Waste Lands of the Crown... shall, on being convicted thereof, pay for every such offence a sum not exceeding five pounds. (LaTrobe to Grey—assented to by Legislative Council, 6/1/52)

Sunday, 20 June 1852

Did not hear of any preaching near our tent today.... Several men fights relieved at times by dog fights, etc. (Finlay, p. 15)

[Bendigo, September 1852] Several dogfights in the neighbourhood today, over which several other fights were likely to take place. (Finlay, p. 34)

Illustration: 'Amusement at the Diggings'—cock-fighting, Bendigo, 1852 (Snell, p. 309)

Wood-cutting & chores

Six days thou mayest dig or pick all that body can stand under; but the other day is Sunday when thou shalt wash all thy dirty shirts, darn all thy stockings, tap all thy boots, drink all thy nobblers, mend all thy clothing, chop all thy firewood, make and bake all thy bread, and boil thy pork and beans, that thou wait not when thou returnest from thy long tour weary. ('The Diggers' Ten Commandments' in *Victorian Diggings and the Diggers*, quoted in Ragless)

Digging and washing gold cease in the early morn, the axe and the hammer ring continually, and the crash of falling timber booms over the hills. Some tasks are then performed, mending tents, repairing huts, gathering firewood, washing out mud-stained garments. The miners speedily put on a clean and civilised appearances, and there is a comparative calm through the remainder of the day. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 32)

Bonwick's digger's monthly magazine facetiously recommended that diggers ought to find themselves a wife to wash their shirts 'during the forthcoming season of dust and puddling pools'. (Bonwick (magazine), November 1852, p. 51)

Illustration: 'Bob's shirts set on fire, which he had washed and hung to dry. (Snell, pp. 314-15)

... catching up on countless household chores or knocking off work to carry bricks, as the saying goes. (Gronn, p. 110)

Washing clothes, extending tents, cutting wood for fire, baking bread. (Fauchery)

Sunday, 20 June 1852—Among and around the tents today appeared like a dockyard, from the sound of axes falling, lopping and splitting. (Finlay, p. 15)

American axes better and more popular than English. (Serle, p. 79)

All around us stood plenty of stumps of... trees cut off about a yard high, American fashion... (Howitt, p. 7)

The diggers seem to have two especial propensities, those of firing guns and felling trees. It is amazing what a number of trees they fell. No sooner have they done their day's work than they commence felling trees... (Howitt, p. 98)

At home, few of these men ever handled a gun in their lives; here they all have them; and on Sundays are out, and firing at everything they see. They are dangerous sportsmen, these quondam labourers and cockneys... (Howitt, p. 189)

The English often cut trees without actual need. They do it simply for fun, because here they can indulge their liking for fuel which is as rare as saffron in their own land. (Korzelski, p. 68)

[Forest Creek, winter 1852] We were encamped in a lightly-timbered forest, and every night scores of the trees were felled. We always kept up a glorious fire before our tent, night and day; and... we had rolled a large clean log, well barked (for fear of centipedes), before the door... (Fred W. Brogden of Lincolnshire, in Mossman (letters), p. 45)

...one great drawback is to have [sic] to go so far for firewood as far as 2 miles sometimes (Arnot, p. 106)

[I]n the afternoon we set out on a wood gathering expedition, get a cross cut saw from our friend the butcher, and commence on a Tree perhaps 80 feet in height where there are a great many branches. What a splendid crash these mighty giants of the forest come down with, we cut as many logs about 18 inches long as we are able to carry... the leaves of the trees we collect for bedding... (Arnot, p. 113)

Fortunately wood is cheap enough, though the havock [sic] made in the Bendigo forests will certainly *clear the land*. (Bonwick, p. 19)

[Eaglehawk, August 1852] The hills on each side of the gully which might have been called thickly timbered [less than 2 months before], are now cleared a considerable distance up for firewood, and trees are barked for miles around for the closing in of chimneys, securing sides of tents and covering the mouths of holes from the wet. The tree they bark is called the box, much like gum in the leaves. (Finlay, p. 32)

[The native trees always look a] ...dirty, dingy green... Their faded look always reminded me of those unfortunate trees imprisoned for so many months beneath the Crystal Palace. (Clacy, p. 132)

The gold districts... are grown over in various degrees of closeness with the Gum, Stringy Back [sic], She Oak, Red Cedar, Peppermint Trees, all of the crookedest, ugliest, and most miserable timber you can well imagine. (Thomas, p. 36)

Bush rambles

Sunday, 20 June 1852—No regular digging going on, but odd ones with their pick and tin dish were seen prospecting. General practice to scour the country in search of new diggings. (Finlay, p. 15)

[Out prospecting for a place to sink, came to an untouched flat, which looked likely] I went botanising, such beautiful flowers, plucked a flower like honey suckle, also a yellow round flour [sic] like an orange, also a waxy heath looking flower very pretty pink & yellow & white petals [sic], and a great many others, above were cockatoos [sic], parrots and numerous birds with splendid plumage, I expect to enjoy the Sundays here, with my bible out in the woods among the flowers & feathered songsters (Arnot, p. 115—23/8/52)

I forget all about old scenes and friends at home, its all nonsense, the flowers have no smell or the birds have no song here, white crows we have not seen plenty of Black ones and Magpies, Geese like our own I have never seen a native nor a kangaroo [sic] yet, I thought also that there was little wood or trees in Austarlia, it is quite the contrary, we cannot walk 30 miles from here and be clear of Wood, Millions of acres are covered as far as the eye can reach (Arnot, p. 115)

We have begun to destroy the beauty of this [Yackandandah] creek. It will no longer run clear between its banks, covered with wattles and tea-trees... A little while, and its whole course will exhibit nothing but nakedness, and heaps of gravel and mud. We diggers are horribly destructive of the picturesque. (Howitt, p. 114)

The artist, Ludwig Becker, who died in the abortive Burke and Wills expedition, wrote, ““Grass does not grow upon a miner’s path” is a German proverb very applicable to the diggings. Here flourished once the noble forest. Children of nature here found shelter and a home.... “Eureka!” Suddenly there comes from the south a storm of human beings—the

peace of untold centuries is broken—the very frame of the earth is bared for hidden treasure—the ancient trees are felled for service of invaders, the saplings become the supports of dwellings...’ (Flett, *Pictorial History of Victorian Goldfields*, p. 40)

Bendigo has a noble ornament in the fluted, Doric-column like drunks of its magnificent iron bark eucalypti. There is majesty, there is even sublimity in the solitude of an iron bark forest. (Bonwick, p. 8)

[Bendigo diggings] ... characterised by a bewitching softness, the land being gently undulating, with no prominent hills or bluff jutting rocks to break the tone of harmony that pervades the scene. (*Argus*, 26/4/52—’Special Commissioner’)

Stringybark tree—wood is a source of fine indigo dye. (Westgarth, p. 200)

[I] ... have been pleased to see a good many of the diggers possessing so much poetry that they have planted whole trees of the golden and black wattle, and nailed them up about their huts and the chimneys of their tents. (Howitt called it ‘vegetable gold’) (Howitt, p. 226)

... Banksia, or as they oddly enough call them, honeysuckles... (Howitt, p. 17)

[Forest Creek] ... remarkable for the abruptness of the ranges that bound its northern bank, and the general boldness of its scenery... (*Argus*, 26/4/52)

[Forest Creek] On most of the hills, whose elevation has rendered them useless for the purposes of digging, may be seen a large number of very beautiful and interesting species of plants in full blossom. Among them several species of acacia or wattle, two or three species of criostemon, and its closely allied family boronia; two of the pretty coral like blossoming grevillea; two leucopogen, and several other of the natural family epcridoceous... but they are passed by the digging population without the slightest regard being paid to their beauty and odour. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Grandmother [Selina Annear, at Bendigo]... finds Australian wild flowers and calls them by names of English ones—‘cucko buds’ for Bulbine bulbose, ‘violets’ for sarsaparilla, ‘neatskins’ for Angvillania diocie. (Enid Paton reminiscences)

To those gentlemen who are more attached to the Goddess Flora than the Golden God Plutus, I could not recommend a better season than the present for making collections of the seeds of our indigenous flowers... (Daniel Bunce, Forest Creek—*Argus*, 10/1/53)

[Forest Creek, October 1852] Generally on a Sunday I ramble into the bush, where I remain until sun-down. (Letter from WE, a young gentleman, in Mossman (letters), p. 34)

... we heard a strange thump-thump approaching. Passing quite close came five large jumping animals whose tails and hind legs caused the muffled sounds. We decided they must be kangaroos. (Gronn, p. 65_

[Bendigo, September 1852] Met in with several of the native blacks, got them to throw the boomerang for a shilling. (Sent one up a tree in search of ‘opossum’ for amusement.) (Finlay, p. 36)

Newspapers

Great day of gathering on Old Post Office Hill—thousands gathered to get news from the *Argus*, which arrived every Sunday morning by packhorse—sold out in less than an hour, at 2s. 6d. per copy. (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 26)

Bought the *Argus* newspaper for 1/- [at Bendigo]. (Snell, p. 287)

Argus was most popular newspaper—advocated diggers' rights, land issues, etc.—anti-government. (Serle, pp. 143-4)

Post office & catching up with friends

[Mt Alexander, March 1852] ...the Post Office where all the gold diggers meet every Sunday to see their friends... (Snell, p. 281)

[I]t is astonishing how, go where you like, persons will be found that you know or they know persons that you know [from Home]. (Arnot, p. 113)

Married men, particularly young married men, are too much bothered with thoughts of an absent home, to realize the pleasures of the mines, which their mates of the bachelor order possess. To them the Post Office is the most sacred spot on the diggings. (Bonwick, p. 23)

At this time (1851), there was but one wretched post-office at Mount Alexander, kept by a private, irresponsible individual, in a tent. (Wathen, p. 75)

[1851] Weekly mail service ran from Golden Point to Melbourne every Sunday afternoon. Mailman named Kelly—2 horses and spring-cart—would carry two or three passengers at £6 per head. (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 12)

The *Argus* agent/correspondent, R.J. Howard, acted as postman between Kyneton PO and Forest Creek from his arrival in early November 1851. He charged 2d carriage per letter. (*Argus*, 16/12/51)

And now I must conclude [my letter], as I must not fill more than one sheet, for fear of overweight. (Letter from WE, a young gent, in Mossman (letters), p. 35)

In April 1852, a sheet of writing paper cost 3d. at Forest Creek. (Blake, p. 88)

Diggers urging government to establish post offices on the diggings, instead of licensing private individuals to run the mail service at exorbitant cost and in an unsatisfactory manner. (*Argus*, 8/11/51)

[Bendigo, June 1852] Posted a letter to Mrs Finlay [in VDL], paid 11d. (Finlay, p. 13)

Yandell sent 17 letters to parents in Adelaide—none ever reached them. Those who sent letters with the Adelaide escort were more fortunate. (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 21)

[Government postal services introduced at Bendigo at end of July 1852] The functions of the Post office have been negligently performed hitherto, and the public incredibly imposed upon by the two store-keepers... [Under Government management] no extortion will be practised and greater safety and regularity may be expected. (Finlay, pp. 24-5)

[The old Forest Creek private post office] At the time it was abolished there were left on hand no less than 6000 undelivered letters. (Gilfillan, p. 162)

When police raided a storekeeper for selling sly-grog, they not only found a large quantity of liquor but a cask containing many opened letters, the property of diggers who had never received them. The diggers considered that a heavy fine was insufficient punishment for his misdeeds [he was also in the habit of cheating diggers when buying gold], so they surrounded his store and cut off his trade by digging claims all round it, to prevent customers gaining access to his premises. (Bowden, p. 26)

Early in 1852, correspondents to diggers at 'the Mount' were cautioned not to address their letters 'Mt Alexander': mail addressed thus ended up at Porcupine Creek [Harcourt], closest to the actual mountain. Letters for the diggings were to be addressed 'Forest Creek'. (*SA Register*, March 1852)

In the diggings, especially, the post-offices require absolutely a great number of hands, for, owing to the unsettled and ever-moving population, there can possibly be no general domiciliary delivery of letters. Every man must attend and inquire for his letters.... You have to stand and jostle in a rude crowd for many hours before you can get up to the window. Nay, on particular occasions, for dogs... (Howitt, p. 360)

[At Mount Alexander Post Office there are] ...sometimes 5000 enquirers during the week, say 700 at least on Sunday from 1 o'clock until sundown. [PO opened from 8am to sundown on Monday and Tuesday, 8am to noon on Wednesday, 1pm to sundown on Thursday, 8am to sundown on Friday, 8am to noon on Saturday, and Sunday, 1pm to sundown.] ...while the office is closed, the post-master by way of recreation travels to Kyneton and back. [Paid £7 per week and has to pay for his own horse and feed (£2 2s. per week). Two staff at Forest Creek, one at Kyneton.] (Letter from R.J. Howard (*Argus* Forest Creek correspondent and originator of mail service), *Argus*, 5/3/52)

[Bendigo, August 1852] The list of letters [received] was suspended on three large boards from a post in front of the [Commissioner's] tent, and all who could read were busy scanning the list for their own names, while some who could not read were beseeching others to look 'if they pleased if there was any letters for Pat Murphy or Dennis O'Flannigan.'... The postage of Inland Letters is two pence, while all ship's letters are fivepence. You must bring change with you, for he [postmaster] never has any... (Finlay, p. 28)

... the old *Argus* office square... [Post Office Hill, Chewton—PO had moved to commissioner's camp] (*Argus*, 8/6/52)

A Private Post Office has been established at the Spring, near the sheep station hut, Fryer's Creek, for the conveyance of letters to meet the Government Mails at Kyneton twice a week.

Any letters directed Fryer's Creek, or Upper Loddon Diggings, will be conveyed from Kyneton direct... (*Argus*, 28/2/52)

NOTICE

Parties Addressing Friends at the Mount Alexander Diggings through the Letter Receiving Office of the undersigned (now established eight months,) must add 'To the care of Mr BRYCE ROSS, Herald Office, Forest Creek.' (*Bryce Ross's Diggings Directory*)

[Advertisement] Bendigo Directory.

In consequence of the great loss of time and inconvenience daily experienced by parties in search of their friends on the Diggings, an office has been opened on Bendigo Creek, at which persons desirous of obviating these difficulties, may have an opportunity of forming a Director for the use of their acquaintance, by registering their names and addresses. Charge for registering, or perusal of Directory, one shilling.

N.B. Red flag with blue cross, next the Bendigo Surgery, short distance below the mouth of the Golden Gully, and close to the intended site of the Police Barracks, western side of Bendigo Creek. (*Argus*, 20/5/52)

... unless you have a direct spot or signal to look for, it is impossible to find out any person. (*Argus*, 8/12/51)

When William Aberdeen opened an accommodation house on Forest Creek, he gave as its address: 'Blacksmith's Stone House Flat, Aberdeen's Bark Store, half a mile east of Commissioner's Camp.' (*Argus*, 30/6/52)

[E. Sheppard, gold broker, chemist and druggist, advertised his address in November 1852 as] Next to Messrs McDermott and Ashton's Store, on the Melbourne Road, Bendigo Creek. Flag—White, Red and White. (The word 'Medical' is written at the end of the Bark Hut.) (Blake, p. 141)

Dr Hannay Cunningham's tent (according to his advert in the *Argus*) could be distinguished by a golden ball on the top and he flew a square blue flag. (Bowden, p. 8)

Martha Clendinning had brought a canary in a cage from Ireland, and was known at Ballarat (early in 1853) as 'the lady who has a canary hanging in front of her tent'. (Clendinning)

... placards on the butts of trees... (*Argus*, 8/5/52)

Failing some better mode of inter-communication, trees of the forest were now converted into advertising stands. Every conspicuous trunk was covered with notices, often ill-spelt, in which friends informed friends how they might discover their abode; and wives notified to their distressed husbands that they had arrived, and were in anxious search of them. In a walk through the diggings you might see a hundred of these notices, beginning with the formula 'If this should meet the eye of,' &c. [equivalent to 'Missing Friends' column in newspaper] (Wathen, p. 76)

... when Joe wished to leave word for Bill where he was going to, and how to find him... he would stick a piece of paper on the trunk of some conspicuous tree for him;—in fact, all notices were put upon trees at that time. Some trees were literally covered with bits of paper, and so much were they respected that no one would think of removing them. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 58)

[Bendigo, June 1852] I wrote out a notice offering our horse and cart for sale and referring people to a tent distinguished by a pannikin stuck on a pole, mean to fix this to a tree down the Gully tomorrow.

Our notice of the sale of the Horse and cart was torn down to day—so wrote out a fresh one and nailed it to a tree. (Snell, pp. 305)

On the road [from Fryers to Forest Creek] I saw a notice nailed to a tree, telling me where to find my brother. I followed the directions and reached his tent, which he had purposely distinguished with two boughs. (Rochfort, p. 63)

[From a tree near Forest Creek] If this should meet the eye of my wife, or of the carrier who brought her and my articles from Melbourne, she will find me at Saw Pit Gully—or if any person can give any information of the same, they will greatly oblige

The Distressed Husband,
John Brown

(Wathen, pp. 76-7)

[Seen on a tree notice by the roadside]

if This Meets the Eye of James Crakinton, He Will hear of His Friend Tomass fawks at Mistre Snars Opposit the guvermint camp.

[also] this Notice—if should met the eye of George Cremland or George Terry, they Will find there friend Hennery grovener at Mr. Cordenes Coffee-Hause nere the Cammishaneres Camp, sine of the French Felag. (Howitt, p. 248)

Flags on tents etc. were commonly coloured cotton handkerchiefs on poles. (Howitt, p. 210)

Notices on trees, e.g. ‘California Ned is camping top of Long Gully; red handkerchief flying at ridge-pole, Sundays.’ ‘Bill Long camped near Barnett’s post office; red blanket tent.’ ‘Kingdom Come [a Cornishman called Thomas], working up this gully; blue shirt on windlass.’ (Henry Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 132)

Nicknames were common and once known by them, the unlucky recipients were seldom called by any other. There was My Lord Boots, Bull Pup, Mullock Head, the Countess of Mud, and many others equally striking and as in the crowd there were many sailors, who I fear, had run away from their ships to the diggings, there were any number of Sailor Jacks* etc. (Skinner, p. 82) (*Jack = a colloquial name for a sailor)

[Mention Dirty Dick]

Letter from Golden-street, Golden Point, Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51.

... every diggings has its Golden Point. (*Argus*, 26/4/52)

The locality from which I write, is called the ‘Forest Creek,’ although most of the hills and flats have specific names, such as ‘Golden Point’, ‘Adelaide Gully’, &c. The scenery is much the same as in our own ‘bush’, rather thickly wooded with gum and stringy bark, with a wattle of a smaller leaf and different style of foliage, called silver wattle. (E.G. Day, Mt Alexander, 21/2/52—in *SA Register*, 23/3/52)

Wattle Flat = Silver Wattle-tree Flat or Silver Wattle Flat—same as Wattle Flat worked by South Australians. (*Illustrated London News*, 22/1/53, p. 57)

[W]ent thro’ the diggings called Wattle Flat, considered the best on Mount Alexander... (Arnot, p. 112—12/8/52)

On every creek they have their Golden Point, Wattle Flat, and the like, and they are sure to have their Growler’s Gully, Poor Man’s Gully, and Sulky Gully, designating unsuccessful spots. (Howitt, p. 366)

[T]ook a ramble round to see our ship-mates. two of them have been very lucky, got 14 lb weight out of a flat called 'Penny weight' but for its richness they name it 'hunder weight flat'. (Arnot, p. 114—20/8/52)

Sunk 2 Holes in Speculation Gully [known as 'Spec Gully', off Pennyweight Flat] (Arnot, p. 121—8/9/52)

White horse gully or flat (a dead white horse is lying in it)... (Arnot, p. 126)

Bellyache Gully (Eureka district, Ballarat)—difficult and tedious working. (Bonwick (magazine), November 1852, p. 46)

Fortune Flat, Fryers Creek. (Bryce Ross's *Diggings Directory*)

Brine Tub Flat, Forest Creek.

Mr J.Z. Wilson will find his party by applying at Mark's Adelaide stores, Murdering Flat, Fryer's Creek. ('Missing Friends', *Argus*, 18/12/52)

Derwenters Mistake Gully, Pig Face Gully—Bendigo.

I do not know on what principle the Government of Victoria proceed in giving unmeaning names to places that before had native names full of meaning and often euphonious, or good rough names given by the early settlers.... Forest Creek [has been changed] into Castlemaine, in some mysterious connection with the memory of one of Charles II's sultanas. (Howitt, p. 352—May 1854)

[Mention also Bendigo = Sandhurst]

SUCCESSFUL DIGGERS IN MELBOURNE

I must say that a worse regulated, worse governed, worse drained, worse lighted, worse watered town of note is not on the face of the globe; and that a population more thoroughly disposed, in every grade, to cheating and robbery, open and covert, does not exist; that in no other place does immorality stalk abroad so unblushingly and unchecked; that in no other place does mammon rule so triumphant; that in no other place is the public money so wantonly squandered without giving the slightest protection to life or property; that in no other place are the administrative functions of government so inefficiently managed; that, in a word, nowhere in the southern hemisphere does chaos reign so triumphant as in Melbourne. (*Herald* (Sydney), 4/11/52)

Melbourne offered to people [diggers] of all nationalities the 'mirage of their homeland'. (Fauchery)

Christmas and New Year, 1851-2, provided most of the fuel for the legends of gross affluence. (Bartlett, p. 63)

... the temporary return of two or three thousand successful adventurers to the towns, at this particular season [Christmas/New Year 1851-2], the undoubted evidence afforded of their individual success, and the lavish expenditure which has followed, has rendered it, if possible, more general and irresistible... [to slope for the diggings] (LaTrobe to Grey, 12/1/52)

[New Year 1852, Melbourne—] ...crammed to the throat with people of all classes... (*Argus*, 7/1/52)

During Christmas/New Year 1851-2 only two foot constables were on duty after midnight in Melbourne. (LaTrobe to Grey, 12/1/52)

[Collins Street] 'The whole street swarms with diggers and diggeresses. (Howitt, p. 23)

... every day I witness rough navigating-looking men, who are termed 'successful diggers', riding about in open hired carriages, waving handkerchiefs, banners, &c. through the streets. (Letter from Thomas G. Atkinson, a clerk, in Mossman (letters), p. 65)

Successful diggers! (that is the phrase) are everywhere, either galloping along, rude figures as they are, on rude horses, or standing about the doors of public-houses. Everybody gallops here, or at least goes at a canter—which they call the Australian *lope*. (Howitt, p. 20)

They never walk or trot here, it is nothing but a gallop, and they go as hard as they can; they pay no respect to persons, so you have to look out. (Letter from JMA in Mossman (letters), p. 93)

Illustration: 'Successful digger'—...he buys a horse and never rides at any pace but a gallop. He wears a long beard of course and flings his money about like dirt, gets hard up in a week and returns again to work like a horse at the diggins [sic]. (Snell, p. 289)

... a fortnight in town was enough to reduce the product of a good hole to zero... (Fauchery)

I was talking the other day to one of a party of four, who said that the expenses of the four for the fortnight [in Melbourne] amounted to £1,000. He had the fireplace in his room filled with champagne, gave £35 for a musical box, and used to drink and dance until he could stand no longer. And then for gold rings, you would be surprised, Nearly all you meet have a thick ring on. I have heard it said it is a sign of a weak barrel when it wants so much hooping. If so, there is plenty of weakness here. (Letter from 'an English mechanic', October 1852, in Mossman (letters), p. 24)

Men down from the 'fields did not encumber themselves with new suits but advertised their affluence by wearing a top hat, kid gloves and patent leather boots with digger blouses and clean moleskin trousers. They smoked cigars, carried gold topped canes and wore rings on the fingers of each hand. (Bartlett, p. 66)

Men in rags are to be seen with their pockets full of gold, paying 2s. 6d for getting their shoes cleaned... (letter in Mossman (letters), p. 11)

... in a great many instances [gold earnings] being *shouted* away at the different inns in town or on the road, or wasted in extravagant dress, and becoming ornaments.

Tradesmen may be occasionally seen on Sundays sporting their gigs, dressed in the high style of □□□□ fashion... or strutting about the town with a silver mounted riding whip, chocolate colored kids, high-heeled Wellingtons, and very attractive four and nine—real Jack Brags; others may be observed with 'fair ladye' on either arm, patronising the jeweller, the draper, or as likely the gin shop. (*Argus*, 11/10/51)

The old Queen's Theatre, then [early 1853] the only one in the metropolis, the Salle de Valentino, in Bourke street, and two 'free and easys', the 'cider cellars' and 'coal-hole'

being the other places of amusement. (Robert Mitchell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 34)

Two circuses and one theatre—where the ‘ladies’ smoke short tobacco-pipes in the boxes and dress-circle. (Clacy, p. 21)

Kelly’s theatre pass (a disfigured penny) at the Queens Theatre was collected by ‘a corrugated Amazon smoking a black pipe’. (Kelly, p. 131)

At theatre in Melbourne, bottles of brandy were lowered from the gallery [‘gods’] into the pit by means of stock-whips and ropes made of handkerchiefs. (Kelly, pp. 134-5)

The third act [of Hamlet at the Queens Theatre] was transformed into a most amusing colloquy between the Danish Grave-digger and the gold-diggers from Eagle Hawk, made up of mutual inquiries about the depth of the sinking, and the return to the tub, which so tickled Hamlet that he gave up the soliloquy and joined in the joking. (Kelly, p.134)

THE PLAN OF THE CITY

With the sites of the Licensed Houses and the distances between them, may be obtained at the *Argus* Office. (*Argus*, 14/8/51)

[Geelong, 1851] Another class, of an inferior stamp, may occasionally be seen in some of the inns here with a small roll of notes in one hand, and a pot of half-and-half, or half a pint of gin in the other, treating all and sundry who come in their way. (*Argus*, 3/10/51)

Some public houses clear £14,000 per annum. (Rochfort, p. 62)

[The Bull and Mouth, in central Bourke Street, was the favourite resort of diggers] The bars were always full, the tap-rooms always crowded,’ reported one newly arrived Californian, ‘and in these resorts, at least there was no disproportion of the sexes. The women were as numerous as the men and asserted the equality of their gentle genders by as deep potations and as blasphemous and obscene vociferations as their rougher associates.’ (Quoted in Bartlett, p. 64)

[John Elsworth, a boot and shoe maker newly returned to Melbourne from the diggings, passed around a nugget for inspection among the Patrons of the Black Boy Inn in Little Collins Street] ... at length [it] came into the hands of [Eliza Watts], who put it into her mouth and as he had not been able to make her restore it, he gave her into custody. On being searched at the station house, the nugget was *non est*; and the Bench, therefore, considered that there was no more evidence in support of the charge against the prisoner, no case had been established, and she was consequently dismissed. (*Argus*, 29/11/51)

Diggers’ wives and weddings

In the guide books, under the head, ‘Who should go?’ it is said ‘*an unlimited number of respectable girls wanted.*’ In the first place, girls who have any respectability at all should stop at home. (Thomas, pp. 18-19)

... the jumper of a lucky digger produces the same flutter in the female circle, which the red coat of a soldier used to do. But ladies, beware. Be in no hurry to say, ‘Yes’. It is your day now. Know the man well first, and do not be dazzled with his gold dust. The future and family are before you. (Bonwick (magazine), October 1852, pp. 15-16)

And as to the prospect of getting married, that is become a very critical matter since the influx of adventurers. They are in a great measure extremely rude and vulgar. To marry any stranger here is a most hazardous affair; for many of these men have left wives at home. Nobody knows anything of them or their history, and numbers of them marry girls and go off to the diggings, and are never heard of again. One girl lately married a man who left her next day. (Howitt, p. 23)

As to girls marrying here—the great temptation—that is soon accomplished; for I hear that lots of diggers get married almost every time they go down to Melbourne to spend their gold. (Howitt, p. 94)

[A lucky digger in Melbourne on a spree] ...met with a woman one morning at eight o'clock, and before ten they were married. (Letter from 'an English mechanic', October 1852, in Mossman (letters), p. 24)

It is reported, however, that the clergymen are about to adopt stringent measures to check these irregular practices, and to interfere with the liberty of the subject in the freedom of marriages. The requisition of a certificate of character will diminish the sale of [marriage] licences. (Bonwick (magazine), October 1852, p. 13)

Two very healthy signs are displayed by the Australian diggers—the multiplication of marriages and the large consumption of the best articles of female attire.

At Port Phillip it is impossible to retain a tidy servant girl. The first luxury to which the successful gold-seeker treats himself on his return for a holiday is a wife, and the wife is then treated to the best gowns and shawls that the shops afford. A friend writes that the 'carpenters and smiths of Melbourne and Geelong will not let their wives be seen in a gown of less cost than ten pounds, with a shawl and bonnet to match.' (Fabian)

Their freaks and fancies are beyond description ludicrous. Nothing is too good—what do I say?—nothing is good enough for them!... Many of the shopkeepers have made large sums by asking exorbitant prices for common but gaudy articles, which they have had in store; and as gay colours and a high price are the test of worth, the price is immediately paid, and the worthless trash is admired, worn, thrown away, and more bought. (Earp, p. 144)

Some of the shops are very fair; but the goods all partake too largely of the flash order, for the purpose of suiting the tastes of successful diggers, their wives and families. (Clacy, p. 20)

[Geelong, 1851] Young misses, whose papas have been to Ballarat, begin to appear in neat new bonnets, with perchance a parasol, and strut about like India rubber dolls.... Several once respectable and sedate matrons are coming out strong in beautiful new silk dresses, with the additional advantage of being strongly perfumed, which, with their gaudy dresses, gives them the appearance of small walking flower-gardens. (*Argus*, 3/10/51)

... the females we almost invariably encountered were either of that strong-minded class who had caught their diggers *in vinculo matrimonii*, or were anxious to encourage diggers' attentions without the bother or conventional ceremony of forging the chain. These striking but unattractive women jostled you on the flagways, elbowed you in the shops, and rattled through the streets in carriages hired at a guinea an hour, arrayed in

flaunting dresses of the most florid colours, composed of silks, sarcenets, and brocaded satins, which had evidently been manufactured in the infancy of the power-loom, and low-classed, old-fashioned tabinets that had slumbered on the shelves of Dublin warehouses antecedent to the Union, but which now went off swimmingly as 'the newest and latest fashions,' in exchange for Ballarat nuggets. These women were also addicted to flowers and corn-stalks, and every tribe of those incongruous ornaments which meet in the common ground of a lady's bonnet.... Parasols were also a passion of theirs, and the more gaudy the hues the higher the price the shopman could extract. ...and, comical to relate, many of these women are so unaccustomed to their use as often to carry them at the shady side, leaving the sun to beam down on their brazen faces. Nor must I omit noticing the ponderous chains, the corpulent earrings, the handcuff bracelets, and the wide rings set with curiously-stained glass which they delighted in sporting... (Kelly, pp. 46-7)

You would laugh to see the digger's wives parading the streets in their finery. They are easily known, however showily dressed, by their clumsy shoes... They are first-rate hands for the drapers palming all their old stock upon. (Letter from an Edinburgh shopman, in Mossman (letters), p. 70)

Haberdashers are specially in the van of thriving tradesman, as the scene in the botanic garden testifies at hours of promenade. Former cooks, housemaids, and scullery girls are there, transformed into the wives of the fortunate gold diggers, sweeping along in a perfect blaze of finery. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 39)

I have myself seen a coarse, vulgar woman, dressed in the richest satin dress, with enormous gold rings on her equally enormous large hands, and holding a parasol like a mop, striding through the streets, laughing and talking, anything but quietly, with a man in dirty trousers and a blue serge shirt, very often with his sleeves tucked up. (Letter from Melbourne, 3/5/52, in *Illustrated London News*, 6/11/52, p. 371)

... stockingless ladies with princely shawls upon their shoulders—the coarsest forms adorned with delicate laces—hands and face not in the cleanest condition, associated with silks and satins. (Religious Tract Society, p. 190)

I recollect one woman—a bride, I imagine—dressed in light satin, and a profusion of gold chains, bracelets, etc., her face, hands and feet being ludicrously out of character with her finery. (Polehampton, p. 56)

I was certainly amused by the appearance of what we might heretofore have termed the lower class of females, by their gaudy appearance, accompanied with every description of ornament by way of rings, bracelets, brooches, chains, watches, etc., without the slightest regard to taste or arrangement. It was certainly annoying to come up to an elegantly dressed female, after indulging in every fanciful anticipating of beauty and refinement, to find, after a survey of your *beau ideal*, a set of the most ordinary and unprepossessing features, recalling to one's mind, associations of the factory, etc., imaged in a style displaying a vulgar flippancy and unrefined taste. (Finlay, p. 43)

It was very common to observe a fat, stumpy girl, redolent of the most odious vulgarity, decked out in the finest robes, which the lucky digger at her side had purchased at a very

considerable price; and aping what, in her imagination, should be the airs of a very fine lady. (McCombie, p. 101)

[A digger's bride] ...the most unsophisticated lump of barbarous ignorance that has ever been pitchforked into the world. (Earp, p. 179)

There has been a good deal of silly and snobbish sneering at this kind of outlay, which, if deficient in taste, is more honest, and shows more right feeling, than the extravagance so profusely displayed in 1844-5 at Richmond and Greenwich, at the Opera and less questionable resorts, by the directors, stags, and Capel=courisans, who were not digging gold, but only manufacturing scrip. (*Illustrated London News*, 3/7/52 (Fabian?))

...we saw a digger in his jumper and working dress walking arm in arm with a woman dressed in the most exaggerated finery, with a parasol of blue damask silk that would have seemed gorgeous in Hyde Park. She was a lady (so the driver told us) of Adelaide notoriety, known as Lavinia, who had been graciously condescending enough to be the better half of this unhappy digger for a few days, in order to rob him of his earnings. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 13)

'Melbourne swarms with rats and prostitutes,' wrote one digger. (Bartlett, p. 65)

One day I saw a digger parading the streets with a chain of sausages around his neck and a female on each arm, calling out like a madman. (Richard Thimbleby, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 194)

Many [Melbourne pub] landlords traded in digger marriages, in which the courtships only lasted a few hours, and kept comely barmaids to attract this sort of custom. ...the *Criterion* set up a 'Digger Nuptial Suite' of two rooms which was let almost continuously at £20 a day. (Bartlett, p. 65)

One of two of the most flourishing diggers' lodging houses could supply a young lady, who, for a consideration, would act the character of a model bride; the next requisite was a couple of carriages, with coachmen in gaudy liveries... The imitation bride often behaved with far greater decorum than the girl who plays the character in reality [that is, a real digger's bride, as described above]... In the carriages, a considerable party, very much overdressed, carried away by the intoxication of the golden era, misconducted themselves in every possible manner. They drove about the leading streets of the city to show off, and usually ended by a champagne dinner at St Kilda, or some other of the suburban retreats. (McCombie, p. 101)

The turn-out on all occasions is spicy. I have seen even the wheels of the vehicles (six in number) adorned with rosettes of love ribbons; the Jarvey and the horse covered with white so profusely that at a distance they might pass for a small locomotive pyramid of snow. ('A Sydney visitor', in Earp, p. 173)

... the whole party, excepting perhaps the bride and bridesmaids, smoking; and generally one, the drunkest of the party, leaning half over the back of the fly, bottle in hand, inviting the public in general to have a 'nobble'. One of these weddings frequently costs the 'happy bridegroom' £300 or £400. (Letter in Mossman, p. 5)

Pastrycooks are making small fortunes from mere wedding cakes, one about six or eight inches diameter costing £4 or £5; if it is £4, the digger throws down a £5 note, and takes a

handful of gingerbread-nuts as change. (Letter, September 1852, in Mossman (letters), p. 6)

Sometimes £400 or £500 have been spent before the honeymoon was half over, and at the end of that happy period many of the husbands had barely sufficient money left to carry them back to the diggings, while their wives were obliged to return to the washing-tub whence they were taken, and by which they could earn a good living till their husbands returned. (Askew, p. 157)

Chapter 5: CRY JOE! The spirit of the diggers

Diggers

From 1855, when miners' rights were introduced, the word 'digger' fell into disuse and the word 'miner' took its place. (McKillop, p. 24)

There was no element in the Victorian gold rush of 1852-53, as there was in the Californian rush of 1849-50, accustomed already to the makeshifts and hardships of frontier life. (Morrell, p. 223)

[Qualifications for gold-digging] ...ability to sleep under a tree in the open air, to drink water of all colours and almost every consistency, to go for a week unwashed and unshaved, and submit to be overrun with vermin, with a large amount of self-reliance to encounter dangers and content with ruffianism. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 32)

They are 'pioneers' of the day—the advanced guards of enterprise, working in the damp and chill, and exposed to every hardship; they have sacrificed their 'household gods' and given up all for a life of toil in the wilderness. ...they stand out in bold relief in the front of society, and proclaim abroad that they won a harvest from barrenness, and riches from poverty! that they wrenched gold, by labour, from rocks—a wealth which but for them would never have been heard of... (*Argus*, 30/8/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

[Laurence Potts [had been in California] addressed diggers at the December 1851 monster meeting] I see before me some 10,000 or 12,000 men, which any country in the world might be proud to own as her sons. The very cream of Victoria, and the sinews of her strength. (*Argus*, 18/12/51)

It will take a century to work this miscellaneous gathering of rude people out of the scum. (Howitt, p. 190)

Coarse and waterworn—diggers' character

Morality is almost unknown; it is not in the colonists' dictionary; a viler place cannot be conceived; nothing but oaths of the most loathsome form are to be heard; drinking and immorality are encouraged. (Thomas, pp. 18-19)

... the diggers on Bendigo [are]... the hardiest, the most spirited, the most persevering, and withal the most difficult to control of all the class of 'lucky vagabonds' in Victoria... There is a kind of bold off hand swagger about them that at once and at first gives you this notion. (*Argus*, 29/4/52—Special Commissioner)

'bounce' = aggression, argumentativeness.

The independent manner, and *who cares for you?* bearing of everybody, was especially noticeable.... In fact, there was a regular saturnalia [a period of wild revelry] going on. (Polehampton, p. 58)

It was believed that lack of a settled abode, family, or community connections made for irresponsibility and lack of care for fellows and the law. (Goodman, p. 117)

[Caroline Chisholm said] There are thousands and tens of thousands now at the diggings who have no earthly tie near them. They are fast losing all the associations of humanity. They are isolated beings, caring for no one around them. (quoted in Goodman, p. 161)

Sympathy is a prevailing feature at the diggings, for the moment an accident occurs to any of the diggers, their sympathy is immediately displayed by rendering assistance in one shape or another. Charity is another virtue which is extensively practised when any case of real necessity or helplessness comes before them. I recollect an elderly man who was disabled by rheumatism, and whom a few of the tents around him supported until they saw he would not recover here, and resolved to forward him to Melbourne. To do this money was collected by subscription, and a snug conveyance was secured for him to Melbourne. (Finlay, p. 23)

Doubly strangers

Germans known to be quiet and hard-working. (Serle, p. 75)

Two stout African blacks, who spoke English perfectly, and had been in that country... (Mundy, p. 610)

Had a claim dispute with a 'coloured gentleman, whose hair was tricked out with branches of trees to keep off the flies'. Referred to him as 'Snowball'. 'The sable brotherhood, of whom there was a considerable number at the diggings, were, in general, no favourites; being disposed to be vain, troublesome, and inclined to quarrel with their white neighbours. They were, for the most part, natives of America, and displayed all the failings of the citizens of the model republic, without either their virtues or intelligence. (McCombie, pp. 33-4)

Scandinavians at Campbell's Creek. (Serle, p. 75)

Party of Maoris—named Tatika, Jehova, Morka—held great respect for aged/grey-haired men. (Korzelski, p. 94)

Irish from Tipperary were called 'Tips'. (Chandler, p. 104)

Poor as rats at home, they are as rapacious as rats abroad. There is scarcely a year at home that there is not a piteous outcry about the poor, famishing Highlanders; but catch a Highlander out here that he has any feeling for an Englishman except that of—fleecing him. (Howitt, p. 67)

William McAuliffe stabbed in chest by Hindu named Samuel Nudder, at Fryerstown—Nudder had brother named Selim, shared tent with McAuliffe and wife. (Bowden)

Until the outbreak of the Crimean War, Americans and French would not take part in illuminations to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday—thereafter, they too lit up. Frenchman, asked why he did not join up to fight for his country, replied, 'Ha, if it was against England I'd join immediately.' (Korzelski, p. 69)

English acquaintances continually bothered Korzelski for a few days following the arrival of news that the Duke of Wellington was dead—'Do you know that the Duke of Wellington is dead?' No doubt Wellington served his country well, etc.—'but all this doesn't concern me sufficiently to be exposed for days to the repetitious listening to the sentence: "Duke of Wellington is dead."... And so they sigh now... but not so long ago, when he was a Tory cabinet member they used to break the windows in his home.' An American cut in on the continuous homage... 'What's the matter with you? You keep

pestering everybody with Wellington. If you haven't anybody better in your country you are very poor indeed.' (Korzelski, pp. 96-7)

... many papers reported that on the very day of the Duke of Wellington's funeral, an Australian nugget weighing 14 ounces, presenting in its natural shape 'a most perfect profile of the late Duke,' had arrived in England. (Pearl, p. 126)

Duke of Wellington died September 1852.

Americans joining in the rush for Australian gold now found it necessary to overcome Australian dislike for them, built up by the harsh treatment of some gold-seekers in California. They also had to disarm initial suspicions that they would bring their political baggage with them and attempt to overthrow the colonial government. (Potts, p. 4)

[A popular 'Australian Gold Digger's Song' expresses the anti-American mood]

The Yankees have for some years past, across the Atlantic wide,
Enjoyed themselves by singing songs about their golden tide...
Her miners, too, although so flash, are mostly seen, I guess,
To sport themselves in dirty drab—while we in scarlet dress...
Those drabites told us more than once, that we were villains all,
All rogues and thieves and vagabonds, deserving six feet fall...
We've oftimes been insulted by these Yankee Doodle Doos,
Who now would p'raps be glad enough to step into our shoes,
With all their boasted honesty, and work in our rich mines;
They'd better not, lest they might get infected with our crimes...

[Malone, quoted in Potts, pp. 4-5)

'showy and outlandish'—Californian dress, especially ornate silver-trimmed clothing some adopted from the Mexicans. (Potts, p. 30)

[August 1852] ... of all people in the world the Australians hate the Yankees, for the conduct of the latter to the former in California. [It appears that this dislike quickly wore off—bad feeling between Sydneysiders and Victorians was greater. Americans were regarded as too useful an element to allow bad blood between them and the British.] (quoted in Potts, p. 27)

A standing joke at the Americans' expense (following an overheard drunken conversation between two of them) was that Jesus Christ was an American—the English taunted them with it at every chance. (Korzelski, p. 97)

An American wrote home from the Eureka Lead at Ballarat—'These South Australian mines are much better than those near Sydney, but nevertheless they strike the Californians with disgust at first sight.' Othere Yankees implored their compatriots, 'For God's sake stay at home!'—though most conceded that the Victorian goldfields were richer than those of California. (Potts, p. 31)

Language/swearing

'rowdy', 'flash' = colonial words in common use on goldfields

'comeatable' = come-at-able = tempting, attractive

Excepting swearing, we noticed no prevalent manifestation of vice. (Bonwick (magazine), February 1852, p. 160)

Swearing is an almost all prevailing vice. The recklessness begotten by the wild and uncomfortable life, induces this licentiousness of speech. (Bonwick, p. 27)

Proceed where you will, oaths, execrations, and obscenity grate upon your ear. ('A Sydney visitor' in Earp, p. 171)

... every person who shall use any profane, indecent, or obscene language to the annoyance of the inhabitants or passengers in any public street or place, shall, on being convicted thereof pay for every such offence a sum not exceeding five pounds. (LaTrobe to Earl Gray—legislation assented to by Legislative Council, 6/1/52)

[Bloody]—I must be excused for the frequent use of this odious word in giving colonial dialogues, because general conversation amongst the middle and lower classes at the antipodes is always highly seasoned with it. (Kelly, p. 54)

[New chums striving to appear 'old hands'] ... soon add the stock of oaths peculiar to the colony (and *very* peculiar some of them are) to the 'home' vocabulary. (Polehampton, p. 60)

The language of the diggings is something inconceivable in its vileness, and every sentence almost is ornamented with the word bloody. That word they seem to think the perfection of phraseology; it is the keystone and stone of all their eloquence; it occurs generally in every second or third sentence; and, when they get excited, they lard every sentence with it profusely. [Also 'damned' and 'blasted' —and 'old'] (Howitt, p. 270)

A very great nuisance at night, is the disposition on the part of blackguards to carry on disgusting intercourse with one another on the opposite side of the diggings, in which language of the most awful and *beastly* description is liberally made use of. Now it is much to be regretted, as there are a great number of women on the diggings, many of whom are respectable females with their husbands, who, if they really understand many of the expressions made use of in the nocturnal parleys to which I have alluded, cannot avoid having their feelings utterly shocked. But my opinion remains as first formed, that if a respectable female comes up to the diggings, she would require to be *deaf* at night and *blind* through the day. (Finlay, p. 35)

... never, in the whole course of a somewhat motley existence, have I heard such brutal, filthy, and profane expressions as are—I will not say used—but in common use—on the Diggings, introduced of course into the Victorian vocabulary by some of the choicest selections from Van Diemen's Land. To let you judge of the extent to which this is carried, I may tell you that on more than one occasion I have been compelled to walk away to escape hearing the Port Arthur quotations of these gentry. Now the evil of this is, that gradually the ear becomes accustomed to these words of blackguardism or impiety; and when once this is the case the tongue is not long in appropriating that which the ear has gathered; and many and many is the man who has thus been both mentally and morally befouled by the unwholesome contact into which he is brought with liberated wretches with whom he has nothing in common, and whose filthy language had never met his ear but for the community of feeling and interest that makes all equal on the diggings. (*Argus*, 8/5/52—Special Commissioner)

Independence/Class/Freedom

... that feverish period of robust life, that has had no successor... (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 48—writing in 1882)

Life on the diggings [Bendigo, 1852] was very uneventful. (Ross, p. 66)

If your rheumatism leaves you (on the goldfields), boredom does not—a deep and obstinate boredom—bored by having to do tomorrow, always, what you have done today, and this for weeks, months, years. (Fauchery)

The wild, free and independent life appears the great charm. They have no masters. (Bonwick, p. 23)

[A young lady from Dublin who migrated with her brother, and cooked, washed and mended for his party, wrote—] Wild the life is, certainly, but full of excitement and hope; and strange as it is, I almost fear to tell you, that I do not wish it to end! (quoted in Serle, p. 91—Mossman was doubtful about the authenticity of the account]

[Canadian Gully, Ballarat, November 1852] The mode of living at the diggings is indeed *barbarous*; still there is something delightful about it. (Letter from F. Hobson junr to his father, in Mossman (letters), p. 58)

[At Sawpit Gully] We became elated and charmed with the ‘New and Happy Land’ sung of on shipboard. here we camped out, felled trees, lighted fires, roamed about shooting free from molestation of any biped. (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 47)

In the life of a digger there is a kind of Gipsy existence with a charm that is indescribable; one cannot call it ‘gambling’ or a ‘lottery’ or ‘speculation’. Whenever a digger was in any way successful, where was there a happier man? A feeling of continual hope permeates him, it never fades, and there are men even now [1887], who have been digging since the early day, though poor, in whom the feeling of hope still remains. The life is a life of freedom, which can almost be felt;—no rates, no shackles of any kind, in fact, it is a feeling that can only be understood by those who have experienced it—(a digger is the biggest democrat of democrats). (William Ottey in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 61)

Men would never leave off gold digging [in mid-1852] for any sort of good wages to go breaking stones on a road: those even that were obtained... required as many overseers almost as roadmakers to keep them at work, and then perhaps if they were spoken to would coolly tell him to go to the devil, and take themselves off into the bargain. (Read, quoted by Morrell, p. 220)

[Eureka, Ballarat, October 1852] ... we live a very jolly life. There is no master to order us about, and we can work when we like, and when we like we can let it alone. (Letter from E.B., in Mossman (letters), p. 37)

[After his day’s work] ... with what proud satisfaction he looks upon his work; how pleasant his cogitations as he sits... with the proud consciousness of approaching independence acquired by his own manual labour from the bowels of the earth. (Hall, pp. 21-2)

The store [at Bendigo] had been gradually filling with miners; rough and uncouth, their clothes deeply stained with clay, these fellows had a genuine look about them I had never seen before in the sons of toil. Their bearing was manly, independent, and free. (Brown, pp. 139-40)

[29/5/52] Met with several from the diggings who had formerly been assigned servants in V.D.L., now rolling in wealth. (Finlay, p. 8)

Sudden riches had had the usual effect of making vulgar people insolent. (Polehampton, p. 57)

All is confusion, selfishness, licence, and subversion of all respect for worth, talent and education. Brawn and muscle are now the aristocracy, and insolently bear their newly assumed honours. In fact, we have here the French Revolution without the guillotine. (Reverend Mereweather, Anglican clergyman in Melbourne, 1851?, quoted in Bartlett, p. 60)

... a sentiment synonymous with the motto, 'Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité,' was in the ascendant, which, in the infancy of police organisation and the prevalence of lucky diggerism, was frequently evinced in an over-affectionate manner, particularly to the gentler portion of the community. (Kelly, p. 46)

[Reflection on the 'heterogeneous mob' which made up the cabin passengers on his voyage back to VDL, contrasted with the 'select' group on the outward voyage] Here... is the grand realisation of Fergus O'Connor's dream of universal suffrage, *division of property*, etc., as well as bright evidence of that *harmony* which must exist on the universal attainment of that grand principle for which the French have often fought and bled, *Egalite*. (Finlay, p. 44)

There are no gentlemen in the colonies now. All barriers are broken down. There are only rich men and poor men; and as the latter may be rich within a week, every one is 'hail fellow, well met' with every one else. (Earp, p. 142)

[From Charles Thatcher song, 'Australia versus England']

No workhouse have we here,
No poor law coves so cruel,
No bullying overseer,
No paltry water gruel,
No masters to oppress
A wretched starving devil,
But here, I rather guess
We're all upon the level.

There is one thing I like—no bowing and scraping to my lord so-and-so, or my lady so-and-so here, no humbug of that sort; people address one another as *mate* or *chum*. (Letter from JMA in Mossman (letters), p. 93)

'Well, old man,' is a common salutation from one to another. (Howitt, p. 64)

'Good day, mate,' was the salutation of a blue-shirt. (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 47)

'Mate' is the ordinary popular form of allocution in these colonies. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 27)

Common greeting on the road was, 'Well, mate!' (Serle, p. 92)

They hail you as they pass with, 'Well, my lads, are you for the Ovens?' They come up and examine very freely everything you have about, and make the freest possible remarks on them.... Their extreme freedom of address is quite amusing to me. (Howitt, p. 64)

... it is impossible that such thousands of the coarsest, rudest, and most ignorant of the English population, well sprinkled with felons from Sydney and Van Diemen's Land, should thus meet together without being anything but agreeable and polite.... Their most courteous terms for anybody are, 'The man there;' 'The old man there;' 'The old woman there;' 'I say, old fellow!' 'Well, lad;' and so on. They enjoy, indeed, here a new liberty, of which they never dreamed before; how different to the state of the silk-stocking, crimson-plushed, livery-servants at home, who stand touching their hats at every word of their employers. Here, on the contrary, released from whatever species or degree of control they were accustomed to, these men run into the rudest and most impertinent licence. (Howitt, p. 189)

... more order and civility than I have myself witnessed in my own native village of Hatfield. (Lord Robert Cecil, in a letter)

... the man, who in former days might have pulled your boots off, or served you respectfully behind a counter, shakes hands with you, and very likely hails you by a nickname, or by no name at all. (Polehampton, p. 93)

'Mister—,' I one day heard one of these diggers say to his companion, laying a very strong emphasis on the Mister. 'Mister indeed! Who the d—'s he! We all *pays* our licenses, and are all men alike here!' (*Argus*, 29/4/52—Special Commissioner)

The honest independence of these fellows, I confess, I liked exceedingly. I never got a saucy answer from one of them; but not one of them will touch his hat to you. (Caldwell, p. 101)

[The digger occasionally] ...emerged from the lower regions of the earth for a few minutes' smoke and rest, an indulgence which every man was of course free to give himself when he liked; as the word 'master' was not to be found in the vocabulary at that time... (Polehampton, pp. 88-9)

'Song of the Gold Diggers'—Mary Helena Fortune (MHF)

Hurrah for the free new land!
And hurrah for the diggers bold!
And hurrah for the strong unfettered right
To search in the hills for gold!
Turn up the sods my strong free mates,
And dig with a fearless hand;
For there's not a castled lordling here,
In all this glorious land!
Dig 'till each sinew starts like cord,
'Till every vein is shown;

There's a mighty strength in our beating hearts,
 We are toiling for our own!
 Dig! 'till each pore its tribute gives
 Which the burning forehead craves,
 But never a lingering look cast back
 To the land where we were slaves!
 Oh! Clasp the strong arms in;
 Crush back the yearning thought;
 For it whispers the love of our Father-land
 Can never be sold or bought.
 The love of our Father-land, oh true!
 But her homes are cursed with pride;
 And her cottage walls are trampled down
 To make the palace wide!
 Breathe for a moment, one glad breath,
 Throw up the shadeless brow;
 Where is the paid task-master's eye?
 We were never men 'till now!
 Men with a right to toil!
 Men with a right to speak!
 And a strength we will never use, please God,
 To trample down the weak!
 Oh! brightly gleams the ore
 In the digger's cradle rocked;
 But 'tis found in a bank-till free to all
 In a coffer all unlocked!...

I feel like a king, only happier, if anything. At one time I envied you the crystal palace; but now, I think, you must envy me the sight of the goldfields—25,000 men all at work for themselves, no masters; all were poor men, or nearly so. (Letter from a SA settler, successful at Mt Alexander, March 1852—quoted in Anderson, p. 24)

The diggers are styled 'The New Aristocracy;' and the shopkeepers flatter them with the title in their advertisements. [Howitt called them 'more properly *hairystocracy*.' (Howitt, p. 35)

The Knights of the Checked Jumper, the new aristocracy. (*Argus*, 29/3/52)

BISCUITS! BISCUITS! BISCUITS!

For the new Aristocracy, at Potter's Baking Establishment, 155, Stephen-street. (*Argus*, 19/1/52)

The Golden Fleece Hotel, Pentridge—'a desirable resting-place for the "New Aristocracy".' (*Argus*, 4/7/52)

They have set themselves free of masters and servitude. They have enjoyed all the liberty, equality, and fraternity of what is called the new aristocracy—Diggerdom. Before they will lay down that charter of newly organised freedom, they will, many of them, if driven

hard, resort to outrage and to social disorganisation. Let the government look to it in time. (Howitt, p. 316—January 1854)

[When Governor Fitzroy paid a visit to the Turon goldfield] ... it was unanimously agreed among the diggers that he should be received by them in the red overshirts common among them. (Derrincourt, p. 187)

Such is the influx of people, so altered in their dress and appearance... that you can with difficulty recognise a former and most intimate acquaintance. This Colony has ever been considered as a leveller generally; but the diggings may be considered as the ultimatum upon that point. No aristocratic distinctions here—you cannot (from appearance) tell my Lord from a tinker; their deportment so assimilates with their person... (*Argus*, 8/12/51)

... if a man was seen wearing a black beaver hat (a bell-topper) he was regarded with suspicion, and looked upon as a ‘tother-sider’ [Vandemonian], but the true emblem of a gentleman who wore a cabbage-tree hat and sported a black cully pipe. (Joseph Parker, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 128)

Diggers’ appearance

... fellows, of all sorts, in dirty cabbage-tree hats: and with wild hair, huge beards and whiskers, and an indescribable colonial look. (Howitt, p. 159)

... the physiognomy of the *individual miner* is more or less uniform, and any shade of difference disappears under the blue woollen working shirt... and under the coating of mud that indiscriminately besmears barrister and sailor, gentleman and convict. (Fauchery)

[The ‘out-and-out miner’] Most common of all miners—unkempt beard, ragged clothes, navy in appearance—in fact, a badly dressed navvy. (Fauchery)

The men are savages in appearance, and often in their manners..., habited in the garb common to desperadoes, frequently begrimed from head to foot... (Religious Tract society (2), pp. 27-8)

...rough fellows, for the most part,—all shaggy hair, long beards, moustaches, and jack-boots; altogether not unlike a company of bandits or pirates. (Polehampton, p. 49)

... wild backwoods-looking fellows, in broad hats, rough coats, and dirty boots... (Howitt, p. 8)

Their sun-burnt countenances, large whiskers and moustaches, and cone-shaped hats, gave them the appearance of Italian brigands... (Hall, p. 22)

... looking more like brigands of the Abruzzi than Englishmen, with their slouched green or straw hats, jumpers and belts containing pistols, and in some instances the bowie knife, large whiskers and moustache. (Hall, p. 14)

[Thomas Woolner noted that] ...the people... mostly wear beards, carry firearms and are immensely independent: they dress something like the prints you have seen of red French Republicans, much of that loose air and swagger. (Serle, p. 68)

... as it seemed a part of the native manners to let the beard grow in order to look as ugly and terrific as possible, our chins exhibited an amount of clothing that might have frightened a Russian bear... (Sherer, p. 12)

They wore, for the most part, blue serge shirts, Jim Crow hats, and were very generally ornamented with a most astonishing superfluity of hair. (McCombie, p. 58)

His beard is a fixture of from two to six inches in length. (Serle (footnote), p. 69)

[New chums contrive to be taken for 'old hands'] ...by encouraging the growth of their beards and moustaches to a prodigious length, as well as by affecting a colonial style of dress, and wearing dirty, battered cabbage-tree hats... [Polehampton calls it an 'à la bush' appearance.] (Polehampton, pp. 60-61)

Three years were required to make an old chum, who was expected in that time to cultivate a moustache, and to wear a dirty, cabbage-tree hat. (Caldwell, p. 42)

Cabbage trees, red night-caps and blue shirts... a most motley group of hirsute mortals... (*Argus*, 17/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

My dress... is an old straw hat, worn on the passage out, a gala tartan jacket, canvas trousers, long boots, no neckerchief, dirty striped shirt, beard of four month growth, and face washed four days ago. (Letter from Bendigo, April 1852, quoted in Anderson, p. 23)

[On meeting a friend at the diggings, Kelly at first didn't recognise him] ... in his tawny [muddy] suit, with a long clotted beard dangling with small pea-nuts of ochre, and his face leprous with dried blobs of the same auriferous compound. (Kelly, p. 183)

Shaving is entirely dispensed with—all have turned 'beardies'; soaping a chin might lose a 'nugget', so beards luxuriate, and a ferocious crop of moustachios are coming on, as through the diggers are preparing for shearing time. (*Argus*, 17/9/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

They were a splendid lot of fellows, mostly young men, and with red shirts, white pants, and crimson scarves arond their waists, they made a brave show. (Mrs Mary Lawrence, in *Mount Alexander Mail*, 30/1/1914)

[A great gathering of '52 men, at Crooked River in 1865] ... all dressed in their best, and a picturesque garb it was, mostly sugarloaf drab sombreros, Crimean shirts, white moles, crimson silk sashes, nugget boots and black silk 'kerchief' tied in the orthodox sailors knot! (Jean Gamel's diary)

After the mid 19th centry very large coloured handkerchiefs ('kingsmen') were less common—mainly because snuff-taking was less popular. 'Gentlemen continued to use large handkerchiefs, but the enormous bandana, flourished and stuffed back in the pocket, sometimes with a corner picturesquely trailing, was on the way to becoming the half-comic property of an outmoded age.' Handkerchiefs were a popular target for pickpockets. 'A blue silk handkerchief was a watersman', a green-&-white a 'randlesman', a yellow-&-white a 'fancy yellow'. By the fifties black fogies—bought by their original owners for mourning—were the most sought after. (Chesney, p. 185)

After a bushranging and gaol-breaking career, Captain Melville hanged himself in his Melbourne prison cell in 18... with a blue-&-white spotted handkerchief—a kingsman'. (Bartlett, p. 133)

...there was not one per cent. of the olden species of hat called bell-toppers. Wide-awakes of sundry shapes, and cabbage-trees of every tint of dirtiness, were the order of the day. Neckties and bare necks were about on a par. Coloured shirts had banished their fair brethren. Coats were nowhere to be seen, shooting-jackets and jumpers monopolising the fashion. Trousers alone held their own, but they were as frequently stuffed inside long jack-boots, or suspended over laced-up watertights. (Kelly, p. 46)

... lace-up boots, duck and moleskin trowsers, common shirts and blue woollen frocks, which is the ordinary bush dress of the colonists. (Mossman, p. 128)

To give an expressive description of the appearance of the diggings, and of the manner and customs of the order of the Blue Flannel Shirts and Muddied Yellow Trousers would far exceed the limits of my present time and space, but as I have gone on to another sheet of paper, I had better fill it up with something on that subject... The prevailing fashion in the dress line are moleskin pants, blue flannel shirt, worn outside like a coat, and leather belt round the waist, containing knife, &c., heavy hob nailed shoes, and a cabbage tree hat, with a green or blue veil to keep off tormenting flies. (Thomas, pp.36, 38)

... bush attire; consisting generally of a blue or scarlet woollen shirt, worn à la blouse, with a leather belt around the waist, a straw or 'wide-awake' hat, and trousers and thick boots of coarse materials, and all of one colour, viz., that of the clay and mud with which they are covered. (Murray, p. 68)

Illustration: He wears a Cabbage Tree hat and a blue or green veil, a 'Jumper' of Red and yellow checker pattern, a black or bronzed enameled belt, trowsers at his own discretion... (Snell, p. 289)

They are generally rigged out in strong fustian trowsers, and stout shoes or boots; a blouse or cloth shirt, which they called a 'jumper,' tucked into their trowsers,—sometimes blue, often scarlet, and as often of great tawdry stripes of red and white, and blue and white, and, in fact, of all sorts of strange and flaming colours. (Howitt, p. 64)

Blue shirts and crimson shirts were also visible at intervals, and one shirt seemed to be of some drab colour, with great Orleans plums all over it. (Horne, quoted in Pearl, p. 132)

... two or three Jersey woollen vests will be useful. (Advice to American emigrants, in Jameson, p. 107)

His dress is a blue elastic vest, or *jersey*, like that worn by sailors, and thick moleskin trowsers. During winter he wears an outer coarse serge shirt. (Wathen, p. 63)

They almost all wear the dirty battered cabbage-tree hat, and have grim beards, and look as if they never washed. (Howitt, p. 64)

The diggings would be more tolerable if there would be cleanliness. But with water sometimes at a shilling a bucket, and that not easily obtained, the incrustation has to remain longer than agreeable. Coloured shirts last a good while without shewing decided blackness. (Bonwick, p. 22)

Yet it is, though a rough, still a happy dress, for I've no brushing no care for personal appearance, and no dread of grease-spots. (Letter from F. Hobson jun. to his father, in Mossman (letters), p. 59)

You may know the old diggers by the worn and dashed state of their appurtenances. (Howitt, p. 64)

Illustration: 'A quarrelsome vagabond' (Snell, p. 302—Our clothes are beginning to wear out. Tom Sharp cuts such a queer figure. (p. 310)

Illustration: 'Society at Bendigo'—Made a lot of sketches of queer characters at the diggings [sic]... (Snell, p. 299)

At Bendigo, winter 1852—Blucher boots cost 45s. pair, diggers' strong knee boots £4/10s pair. (Ross, p. 59)

Ready made shoes warranted to last a week 30/-... (Snell, p. 306)

... we ourselves have had our mining boots and other boots and shoes stolen [from luggage on board ship, during unloading]. The mining boots are indispensable to us, and cannot be replaced here at less than 9*l.* per pair, of their quality. (Howitt, p. 21)

[Boots cut to pieces on the journey from Adelaide] I was so footsore that I was obliged to work with my feet tied up in rags. (George Baker, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 110)

In the colonies [you need] good strong Wellington boots of the best materials, and not too light. Waterproof boots are a mistake; the water comes in at the top, and stays there until let out by a hole.... (Dickens)

Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo, was originally (December 1851?) called 'Yankee Boot Flat—diggers had to wear thigh boots. Later, the diggers surrounded a kangaroo which strayed into the diggings, and captured it. (Leversha, *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 15)

New chums

The people are very well behaved when the material is considered; but it is quite evident that they do not like gentlemen amongst them. (Letter from Ballarat, in *Argus*, 27/10/51)

[Not those with the affectations of gentlemen, anyway.]

Should any gentleman have the temerity to appear in the conventional chimney-pot hat he would probably be saluted with a polite request for the loan of his puddling-tub'. (J.F. Hughes, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 3)

... when my friend with the belltopper and thigh boots got noticed, a roar from the throats of 300 or 400 diggers shouting 'Joe!' was something to be remembered. The beauty of it was that my friend never for a moment thought that he was the cause of all this row—such a respectable-looking [?] and mud-stained, dirty-clothed ruffians, indeed. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 57)

... a very tall young man, who subsequently acquired the soubriquet of the Date Tree. He was dressed in a red Guernsey frock, a broad glazed belt, while a large brass S hook encircled his waist, and a pair of silver-mounted pistols were stuck in it; his hat was made of cabbage tree, with a very low crown, and a broad black ribbon attached to it, the ends

of which hung over his shoulders, and was worn jauntily; his handsome black whiskers and moustache were carefully brushed, and curled after the most approved fashion. [Started out with ridiculous notions of superiority over diggers.] (Hall, pp. 20-21)

[‘Romantic digger’] ...patent leather hussar boots, felt Cromwellian hat, shaded with parrot feathers, pistols in belt and double-barrelled rifle on shoulder. [Coarse quips fired at him by working miners] (Fauchery)

‘Who stole the donkey?’—a favourite piece of chaff here directed against white hats [Campites]. (At a time when white top-hats were commonly worn, it was believed that they were made from the skins of donkeys, and that donkeys were frequently stolen because the thieves could get a good price for the skins. Consequently, when rude boys saw a white top-hat, they would call, ‘Who stole the donkey?’) This was the only piece of incivility I met with while at Mount Alexander.... My black coat, which by the account of so many—even of diggers—was to procure me so much hooting, never excited the slightest notice. Strange that people should take such trouble to tell lies. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 20)

The diggers cried:—‘Look at him; you can smell the lime-juice.’ (George Robins, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 176)

‘This way to the diggings, you lime-juicers; this way!’ (Richard Thimbleby, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 192)

‘a bloody rubbishy gang of lime-juicers’—abuse hurled by wood-carrier after his paying passengers (across a flooded road) failed to help him re-load his cart. (Kelly, p. 76)

They [the ruffians] are, however, mixed up with a large amount of respectable men; though I do not see anything like that porportion of gentlemen that we were led to expect. (Howitt, p. 64)

I met the family of an acquaintance of mine, who is a clerk of the peace, and spent two or three hours of cheerful social intercourse with rational beings, which, after four days living among two convicts, a black native, a white ditto, and a Zumerzetshire boor, was very pleasant. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 70—letter, December 1852)

Unsuited for digging

In spite of the ‘diggings’ dress I had donned,—consisting of cabbage-tree hat, blue serge shirt, moleskin trowsers, and jack-boots,—I could not disguise from myself (nor, as I soon discovered, from others) the uncomfortable conviction that I was, so far as most kinds of manual labour were concerned, a thorough sham... I could not harness a horse, cook a beef-steak properly, nor make a damper... (Polehampton, p. 53)

It is evident that amongst the newcomers not one in ten is prepared to encounter the crush and labour of the Gold Fields, and that the great majority are probably totally unfitted and unsuited by previous habits, occupation or temperament to surmount the difficulties which must beset them in becoming colonists at the present time. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 28/10/52, quoted in Morrell)

Poetical dreamers, lazy loungers, frequenters of theatres, balls, clubs, taverns, political meetings, and coffee houses, and hard drinkers; who on following their evil practice in

the colony, meet a sure, swift and horrible death in *delirium tremens*, had better, at almost all hazards, stay at home. (Lancelott, p. 146)

[Howitt] ...unaccustomed, and probably unfit to encounter ordinary bush travelling, revenges himself upon the people and the climate of Australia in general for the disagreeables and hardships which he could not manfully content against... As to his theatrical condemnation of [more positive long-term colonists'] statements being 'a delusion, a mockery, and a snare,' I treat it as mere literary fustian and bombast. (ed note, Mossman (letters), p. 91)

I would say to this [clerk/shopman] class—'For goodness' sake, stop at home, and do not dishearten the industrious labourer with doleful tales about a place where you are not wanted, but which would be a paradise to him.' (Askew, p. 164)

New chums were to be pitied—fine delicate young men, from respectable families in London or other big cities—too little money for aristocratic career—younger son? (Fauchery)

If you are a dandy with good limbs and stout arms, as many of you know you have, from having surveyed them too often in the glass, and your means are too small to purchase your pretty clothes; instead of surveying yourselves in shop windows in Regent-street, be off and look at the diggings, or go to a sheep-station, with a flannel shirt over your shoulders; and far removed from Regent-street, pretty girls, and looking glasses, you will be perfectly astonished at the wonders you are capable of performing as a settler. (Shaw, pp. 282-3)

Deeds of heroism in the battlefield have been sung by poets innumerable, but the stern, dogged pluck of feather-bed reared youths, and of professional men breaking stones on the road, or enduring privations without a murmur, have passed unsung. (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 48—writing in 1882)

There are plenty of our shipmates here that wish themselves back in England; but they are those who could not wash their shirts when on board the ship, and that unpacked their boxes with kid gloves on. This is the class of people that we don't want here. (Letter from a carpenter, 6/11/52—in Mossman (letters), p. 62)

Men who have never before dwelt out of reach of an inn and a waiter have to learn now to camp under a tree, and cook a chop without a frying-pan. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 22)

[Recalling his first week living as a digger] ...trying to marry a miner's life and appetite to an ex-officer's standards and expectations, I shiver at the memory. (Korzelski, p. 71)

[A former lieutenant] ...with a blue military coat lined with scarlet, the only relic of his former profession, he had to become a kind of 'maid of all work' to a band of the roughest cast, light their fires, cook their dampers, and wash up their greasy tin dishes for his mates, two of whom were of the 'navvie' breed. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 29)

[Unlucky diggers] a magistrate, sells fruit for his living, a third keeps life and soul in him by making pies... (Earp, p. 16)

[Lines of unlucky diggers returning from Ovens goldfields, winter 1853) ... in their long, gaunt, half-starved faces, you could trace sickness, and the lines of disappointment and hope deferred. (Campbell, p. 67)

The Asylum for the insane had between seventy and eighty inmates, brought on by drinking and disappointment. (Thomas, p. 19)

James Thomas Harcourt, who ran a private lunatic asylum in Victoria for some years, stated at a trial in the Victorian Supreme Court in 1862, 'that it was a "common feature" with Victorian lunatics to secrete their own excrement in their pockets and say it was gold. (Goodman, p. 201)

[1853] Immigration was still going on at a fearful rate, and old gentlemen in spectacles, and other new arrivals, were seen sitting on their carpet-bags breaking stones on the road to the diggings, at twelve shillings and sixpence per day. (Rochfort, pp. 69-70)

[Thatcher's songs often end with the unlucky-digger protagonist on a road gang—e.g., 'The Bond Street Swell']

And if through the Black Forest
You ever chance to stray,
You may see him do the Gov'ment stroke
At eight bob every day.

There may be many carried away by mere enthusiasm, who will rue the day they abandoned the certain easy employments of civilized life for the hard navigator-like trade of a gold-seeker... (Fabian)

I had, contrary to the wishes of my wife, thrown up a good business, which would ultimately have led to independence, placed myself in the position of a rogue and vagabond, according to Act of Council, and sacrificed all the comforts of life, and the society of friends, whose moral rectitude and kindly feelings towards myself and family, had gained my esteem—and for what? (Hall, pp. 11-12)

Many, very many, are there who, after having thrown up good situations in one of the towns, have started to the 'diggings', have become disgusted with the fatigue and hardships incidental to the rough travelling in the bush and over mountain roads; and after a few days' trial of digging, with scarcely patience to dig deep enough to reach the stratum in which the gold is most plentifully found, have started back again with curses loud and deep, because, through unaccustomed labour, their hands were sore, or because they could not find a ten or twenty ounce nugget immediately they broke ground; and, again, because they did not like damper, or tea, sugar *and sugar bag* all boiled together. These are the men who grumble and do not succeed, and would wish other men to fancy that the fault lies, not in their folly, but in the country. (Earp, pp. 36-7)

We have seen sufficient already to show the falsity of the Arabian Nights' fables, which the Melbournians have circulated all over the world. The idea of walking up to Mount Alexander in a couple of days, and shovelling up a few sack-bags full of gold, and going home again, is very charming, and quite as true as the romance of Aladdin's Lamp. (Howitt, p. 74)

... the abandoned holes with lob sides and hen-nest bottoms... are in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the maiden essays of these kid-gloved, soft-handed, high-stooled,

counter-jumping, raisin-picking, tape-measuring, brief-drafting, special-pleading, demme-uttering gents, who were unable to settle down at their distinctive callings in Melbourne or the Pivot City without in the first instance providing satisfactorily, or perhaps painfully, to their aching loins and arms, that digging is 'a mockery, a delusion, and a snare' [Howitt]... (Kelly, pp. 209-10)

... doubtless he will swell the number of those whose lack of success in the colonies, and vituperations against them, are only equalled by their unfitness ever to have gone there. (Clacy, p. 70)

Structure of pre-goldrush society

The peculiar circumstances of Britain's 'Colony of Disgracefuls' had nourished a peculiar people. On the one hand were the upper classes whose inherited or acquired sense of superiority was buttressed by the knowledge that the Australian poor were not the respectable poor. Convicts, ex-convicts and bounty immigrants had, in respectable opinion, forfeited any right to be considered free-born Englishmen. (Bartlett, pp. 10-11)

A tremendous influx of diggers, gamblers, thieves, harlots, red republicans and would-be democratic politicians disrupted the colonial *status quo* based on an establishment of officers and gentlemen who held the whip hand in a very special sense over 50,000 or so convicts, ex-convicts and pauper immigrants. (Bartlett, pp. 10, 60)

Government

[A fictitious despatch from LaTrobe to Earl Grey, 1 December 1851—actually not far removed from the desperate tone of his real despatch of 3/12/51]

My Lord,

As nearly all my officers have 'sloped' for our extravagantly rich diggings, I am obliged to write my despatches with my own hand; besides having to clean my own boots, groom my horse, and do a little amateur wood-chopping, &c. I am, therefore, rather hurried, and shall consequently dispense with the amount of flummery which is usually introduced into documents of this sort, for the purpose of throwing dust into the eyes of that disgusting object, 'the people'.

In short then, My Lord, my understrappers have all bolted, I have no clerks and no constables. High and low are at Mount Alexander and, between ourselves, are doing more real work in a day than they used to spread comfortably enough over a month. No 'Government stroke' now! I would go myself and try my luck, but in confidence, I am not really quite so popular as you might suppose by the string of addresses which I sent you; the diggers are an unruly set, and might attempt something ridiculous, to show their attachment to me. Well, the officials all being off and getting tired of taking down the shutters at the Treasury with my own hands, I applied for assistance to the Legislative Council which you forced upon me against my advice. This was, of course, refused, as everything is sure to be refused by the uncultivated savages; and, therefore, I was obliged to break into one of the forty thousand bags of gold dust which I was keeping for you, and give a few nuggets to an old crawler that was going past, just to sweep up the offices and keep down the fleas a little. He is very slow and stupid, and therefore I think, with a little tuition, that he will make a capital Colonial Secretary or something. As to the nuggets you must not blame me as you know I would have sent you them all if I could. I

won't give old Snooks one more than sufficient to keep him from the diggings. I expect forty thousand bags more by the beginning of next month, so don't be cantankerous about a trifle.

Yours in a hurry, as I fear the chops are burning.

C.J.L

(*Argus*, 1/12/51)

Legislative Council prevented LaTrobe from redirecting any of the income from gold licences back into goldfields administration—e.g. law and order, public works, etc.—until Governor Fitzroy, of NSW, received authority from London to do the same—March 1852.

... the Legislative Council of the colony... decline to sanction any expenditure [e.g. increased pay to public servants] from the ordinary revenue under its control on account of any service which in its opinion is consequent on the discovery and search for gold, and that therefore extraordinary charges to a very considerable extent, if incurred at all, must for the time be carried to account of the revenue of the gold-fields... (LaTrobe to Grey, 3/12/51)

Sir John Pakington replaced Earl Grey as Secretary of State for the Colonies (i.e. head of Colonial Office) in about April 1852.

I anxiously look forward to the arrival of such instructions and suggestions as your Lordship may judge proper to make for the guidance of the Governor General Sir Charles Fitz Roy with respect to the gold fields of New South Wales. I trust that they may be received before the close of the year; and it is scarcely necessary for me to say that as far as they may be held applicable to the state of this colony I shall consider it my duty to be guided by them. (LaTrobe to Earl Grey, 10/10/51)

Some alarmists suppose that the Home Government will, on receipt of the intelligence from our gold fields, demand a fearfully oppressive royalty, or entirely prohibit the working of them. ...if our rulers contemplate such a monstrous piece of folly, they will require to send a force much greater than the whole of the standing army of England to enforce it... With fifty thousand gold diggers, who could be well armed and mounted within forty-eight hours' notice... we may then treat the power of England as lightly as she now treats our demands for justice. (Letter from J.M. Main to 'the editors of the English, Scotch, and Irish newspapers', in *Argus*, 4/12/51)

Should the accounts of the mineral wealth of New South Wales be confirmed, it will become the duty of the Government, in which all unsold lands and all mines of gold and silver in sold lands are vested, to make such orders as may be necessary for the regulation of mining enterprise... If the Crown suffers all who please to gather gold on its lands, it is a virtual abdication of its sovereignty... There never was a conjuncture more urgently requiring the intervention of the local authorities; but the Legislature of the Colony was expressly forbidden, by the recent Act of Parliament, from meddling with the lands of the Crown or the revenue derived from them, and the question, in all its integrity and all its difficulty, is left to be guessed at and solved as best it may be by the Colonial Minister and his advisers here. So much for the boon of local self-government which Parliament was so emphatically assured it had bestowed last year on the Australian Colonies! ...so pointed a demonstration of the folly of leaving these important Colonies without any

power on the spot capable of deciding on sudden emergencies... (*Times of London*, 4/9/51)

[LaTrobe's desperate despatch to Earl Grey of 3/12/51 was received in London on 6/4/52] That the successful prosecution of the search for gold will bring thousands and thousands to our shores, and operate an unforeseen but immediate change in the whole structure of society, is undoubted. The maintenance of the character of the colony as a British possession, subject to the laws and attached to the constitution of the mother country, and offering a suitable home and place of refuge, not only to the poor, indigent, or restless, but for the sober and enlightened middle classes, as had been hoped hitherto, depends in a great measure upon the power of the executive to assist good order and maintain respect to the laws, in the absence of which no really respectable person would wish to make it his dwelling place, however great the natural advantages. (LaTrobe to Grey, 3/12/51)

Executive Council: LaTrobe—Lieutenant-Governor, plus top government officials, William Stawell—Attorney General, Alistair MacKenzie—Treasurer, J.H.N. Cassell—Collector of Customs, William Lonsdale—Colonial Secretary. Other top government advisers were Redmond Barry—Solicitor-General, C.H. Ebdon—Auditor-General. (Garden, pp. 101-2)

Legislative Council had to pass all legislation before it became law—but Governor and Colonial Office had power of veto. Legislative Council also forbidden to legislate on Crown Land matters or 'imperial' issues which were handled by British Government. (Garden, p. 102)

Legislative Council—30 members, ten of them (Executive Council) appointed by LaTrobe (5 senior officials, 5 private citizens). Remaining 20 members elected by people who owned or occupied a property with an annual rent value of £10 or more, or who led a pastoral licence. (Garden, p. 102)

The government is supported by the squatocracy [sic], and opposed by all the other ocracies. (letter from correspondent to *Liverpool Albion*, quoted in Mossman, p. 102)

Legislative Council—'the House of the Squatters' (Speech by Dr Webb Richmond, quoted in *Argus*, 30/12/51)

[*Herald* was described by the *Geelong Advertiser* as] ...the sewer through which the Government waters ripple slowly to the sea of publicity. (*Argus*, 28/2/52)

[Mr Potts, addressing December 1851 monster meeting] The *Herald* describes us as a set of cut-throats and scoundrels; from that journal little else could be expected... (*Argus*, 18/12/51)

By February-March 1852, LaTrobe was sounding more in control of things.

[17/10/51—Earl Grey's response to Sir Charles Fitz Roy's initial despatches gave the instruction—] I am of opinion that the proceeds of the licences you have very properly required to be taken out and paid for by all persons who may engage in the search for gold ought to be regarded as a fund principally, if not exclusively, applicable to the expenses which will be entailed on the Colonial Government by this discovery; among these expenses there is none of greater importance than that incurred in the establishment

of an adequate police force for the maintenance of order amongst the seekers for gold, and for the enforcement of regulations which have been established. (Correspondence...)

... Earl Grey's despatch to Sir C. Fitz Roy seems to have set the Executive at work spending the gold digger's money... (*Argus*, 26/3/52)

In April, the government invested a good deal more infrastructure and manpower into goldfields administration—more stations, more commissioners, magistrates, constables—and pensioners. Also road and bridge building. (*Argus*, 21/4/52)

[W]hen we got up yesterday [to Forest Creek] we were informed that the Commissioner was wanting young men for policemen wages &c about 10/- a day Board & Clothes included. some of our ship's company joined, some went as labourers at same money on the roads &c. (Arnot, p. 106)

...two of our House Proprietors have gone off to offer themselves to the Commissioners either as Policemen or Road men and strange to say both were first Cabin passengers... (Arnot, p. 107)

From the first discovery of the gold-fields our incessant cry has been 'police, police, police;' we still say 'police,' but we also say 'bridges and roads, bridges and roads, bridges and roads.' (*Argus*, 13/3/52)

[Howitt says diggers paid £542,420 in licence fees and £50,184 in escort fees during 1852] And yet Government has actually done nothing whatever towards making roads, and thus reducing the ruinous price of all things that they need. There are no bridges, no roads, no anything. (Howitt, p. 130)

[Canvas Town] The Government charges 5s. per tent weekly for this occupation of the waste lands, or at the rate of 12*l.* a year. This is the first evidence of a Government in the country; for furnishing no quays at the harbour, and no roads up the country, nor any light or pavement in the streets, but mud up to the knees, you naturally think there is none. If there be a Government in a country, however, and fail to discover it in the shape of improvement, you are pretty sure to run your head against it in that of taxation. The Canvass Towners are, I imagine, the first inhabitants of these colonies who have had the honour of paying a land-tax. (Howitt, pp. 5-6)

Commissioners' Camp

They issued licences, settled disputes over claims, had magisterial duties, arranged for collection, weighing, safe storage and transport of gold and overall administration of their district. (Blake, p. 63)

[Bendigo, March 1852] From this camp the commissioner rules a body of 100,000 men; exacts their licence fees, punishes their offences, and guards their gold. For this latter purpose his only coffer is a tin paper box secured by a sixpenny padlock; and his coercive force consists of three policemen, two carbines and a sword.... It is much to the credit of the diggers that the feebleness and meanness of this establishment does not seem to have weakened their respect for constituted authority. (Lord Robert Cecil, pp. 25-6)

Geelong Advertiser proposed that the Government erect a placard outside the Commissioner's tent at Ballarat—'The highest taxation enforced here for the least services that can be rendered.' (*Argus*, 1/12/51)

[Commissioners' camp, Buninyong, 1851] ... a most wretched-looking wigwam, formed chiefly of leaves and bark. (Mossman, p. 92)

[Mt Alexander commissioners' camp, November 1851] The hilly, open forest land is in itself park-like, and on a rising ground the commissioner's establishment is placed, consisting of several tents and two or three gunyas, or bark huts, made by the native police after their own fashion. (quoted in Murray, p. 72)

[Mt Alexander commissioners' camp, February 1852] ... there are twelve tents in three lines. In front, there is a panel or two of fence with a man with a carbine marching to and fro. At one corner there is a large gum tree with a chain around to fasten the prisoners to. (Ragless, p. 33)

The Chief Commissioner at Castlemaine has far more glory and state than the Governor. The array of tents, and dash of horsemen, half remind one of the camp of a Tartar Khan. (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 106)

[F]ound the 'Camp' [at Castlemaine] to be a splendid place, quite a little town. the force consists of a Commissioner, Captain of Horse and foot police, Doctor, Clergymen, 100 Pensioners, Mounted and foot police, lots of Clerks and officers, that always hang on Government situations they all live in little tents shaped like a house, and formed in rows like a street, the great folks have each a tent to himself, the subordinates 4 to 6 in a tent, saw some of our fellow passengers that have turned police. easy time they have of it. (Arnot, p. 117)

[Castlemaine government camp, 1853] There are large wooden buildings as barracks for the military and police; similar structures, some of huge dimensions, serving as storehouses; and a jail composed of logs, with a bark roof, which as superseded the primitive mode of keeping offenders in durance—that of tying them to gum-trees. (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 26)

[Bendigo, 1852—Commissioners' camp situated on a small hill] The camp is capable of being well fortified at a few minutes' notice. (Rochfort, p. 54)

... immediately after the rains set in at the close of April there was an evident movement towards the Bendigo district... This circumstance has of course necessitated a re-cast of the Government arrangements, and a fresh distribution of the Assistant Commissioners and police force, under circumstances which preclude its being effected without much sacrifice and many difficulties. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

I fear that, notwithstanding all the efforts which have been made to erect quarters, the greater part of the Government staff, the police, &c., will have to pass the winter under canvas. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

Each [commissioner] had a tent of 8 ft x 12 ft, or 10 ft x 14 ft, lined with green baize; inside, on the earth floor stood a stretcher and box to serve as a makeshift table; on this rested an issue water jug and basin. That is all the Government supplied in way of furnishings. All officers used a common mess. (Blake, p. 63)

... we went to dinner, which we took in the Police Court tent, dining in our great coats and hats. ...[In the morning] In order to warm myself, I took a cold bath, and put on my flannels, which had the desired effect, went out in the rain to breakfast, which we took in the same guise as we had done our dinner... (Campbell, p. 51—her husband was Police Magistrate at Beechworth, April 1853)

[Glass and china ware were generally found to be broken when they reached the diggings] Of wine-glasses, I suppose, not a whole one could be found. At the officers' mess, they were called 'no heel taps', as they had to be emptied and turned upside-down after using. Some one tried the plan of planting his glass firmly in his bread, and this was looked upon as a grand invention, and adopted accordingly. (Campbell, p. 105)

Gold commissioners

... in conclusion, though your chief business will be to protect the interests of the Crown in matters of revenue, it will be an essential part of your duty to preserve the peace, to put down outrage and violence, and to protect the community generally. (Colonial Secretary E. Deas Thompson's instructions to NSW gold commissioners, 23/5/51)

March 1852—nine Assistant Commissioners at Mt Alexander (including Armstrong and Benjamin Baxter)—paid £300 per annum, plus forage and rations.

... the tawdry laced-coats and caps of this pseudo-military commission. (Howitt, pp. 318-9)

A commissioner orders a young man into the custody of a constable to receive an admonition for twice galloping past this officer, throwing dust about him, as he states, and as the complaint in chief, for taking no notice of him. The commissioner was upon an open camp, under a tree, reading a newspaper; he was in undress, but pleads that his commissioner's cap, which he had on, should have identified him. It does not appear that the young man saw either the one or the other. (Anderson, p. 38)

... petty tyrants encased in musical comedy uniforms. Young men for the most part they were, a-glitter with buttons and braid and eating their heads off at the expense of a community ill-fitted to subsidize such parasites. 'Prinking poninjays'* was our sobriquet. (Gronn, p. 105) [*Prinking = fastidiously adorned, dressed up. Popinjay = a conceited or empty-headed fop]

[Raffaella Carboni's recipe for 'a gracious gold commissioner'—] Get a tolerable young pig, make it stand on his hind legs, put on its head a cap trimmed with gold-lace, white-wash its snout, and there you have the ass in the form of a pig... (Carboni, p. 11)

...the perfidious mistake at head-quarters was,their persisting to make the following Belgravian *billet-doux* the '*sine qua non*' recommendation for gold-lace on Ballarat...:—
'Belgravia...

'First year of the royal projecting the
'Great Exhibition, Hyde Park.'

'LADY STARVESEMPSTRESS, great-grand-niece of His Grace the Duke of CURRY-POWDER, begs to introduce to FORTYSHILLING TAKEHIMAWAY, Esquire, of Toorak, see address, her brother-in-law, POLLIPUSS, WATERLOOBOLTER, tenth son of the venerable Prebendary of

North and South Palaver, Canon of St Sebastopol in the east, and Rector of Allblessedfools, West End—URGENT.’ (Carboni, p. 15)

The redeeming features of the officials and their administration are microscopical, and the evidence in favor of the damaging reports is overwhelming. There were some humane and honest men among the officials, but they were few in number, and were powerless to prevent the gold-laced tyranny, which was backed by a callous and grasping Government. The Commissioners and Inspectors were, in the majority of cases, military men, and were nearly always in uniform. Every day they could be seen riding about with swords jangling and all the other trappings necessary at that period to make up a military officer. Even military despotism in Russia today [1908] is more humane than that which existed on the goldfields in the fifties. Let every true Australian fervently hope and daily pray that never again in this country will a military caste or military domination exist.

...the ‘jackanapes manners of these idle young scapgraces’, as one writer puts it, were galling to the citizens and bred a hatred and contempt for Capism... They considered themselves an infinitely superior class. The ‘sacred Camp’ was a common expression of contempt... (McKillop)

Mr C.W. Nicholson, chief gold inspector at Forest Creek (‘nearly the only capable amongst all the incapables we are blessed with’) resigned due to ‘smallness of salary’. Diggers presented him with a ‘handsome’ testimonial—‘We cannot but contrast the untiring assiduity you have displayed in the discharge of functions more important, it appears to us, than the act of signing a name at the foot of a license form, with the utter incapacity, selfish apathy, and reckless disregard to our wants and requirements, exhibited generally by the local officials. (*Argus*, 14/10/52)

William Wright was appointed Chief Goldfields Commissioner in mid 1852—formerly Resident Commissioner at Mount Alexander—prior to that Commissioner of Crown Lands. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

Police

‘lick-spittles’—troopers (Gronn. p. 90)

Mt Alexander Commissioner Wright saw the foot police as the ‘lowest class’. (Blake, p. 65)

[Police at Mt Alexander, 1851] Originally black troopers—police camp moved to Pennyweight Flat c. Nov-Dec 1851 and notices were posted on trees that any person who joined police service would receive 12/- per day—black troopers then dispensed with. (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 12)

The native police, lithe and graceful as kangaroo-dogs... (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 22)

Native police wage was 3d. per day. (*Argus*, 7/1/52)

[March 1852] At [the new ‘Castlemaine’] head quarters, besides a proportion of the small force of foot or mounted police which it has been found possible to embody up to this time, a party of the detachment of the 11th Regiment in this colony... is stationed for the better protection of the Government property, stores, gold deposited for escort, security of prisoners, &c. (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

Mt Alexander Commissioner's Camp at first had only a small detachment of the 17th [?] Regiment in charge of a subaltern, plus a number of foot and mounted police, armed with Brown Bess flint-lock musket, controlled by several inspectors and sergeants. (Blake, p. 65)

In October 1852, there were 27 mounted and 23 foot police at the Camp at Mt Alexander, and 127 army pensioners... (Bowden, p. 9)

[Police] ...generally strong-built, rough-looking customers, they dress like the generality of the diggers, and are only known by their carrying a gun in lieu of a pick or shovel. (Clacy, p. 43)

... when the diggers address a policeman in uniform they always call him 'Sir', but they always address a fellow in a blue shirt with a carbine as 'Mate'. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 27)

[Mt Alexander, end of 1851] Police uniform: blue serge jumper faced with white moleskin. (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 12)

A serious detriment is experienced by the deficiency of police uniforms. ...unless in uniform the moral effect of a police is lost. In effecting an arrest or quelling a disturbance, I know from some experience that three or four police in uniform are more serviceable than a host in the promiscuous garbs that we have been forced to adopt. (Report of Superintendent of Police, dated 26/10/52, in *Further papers relative to...*, p. 280)

[Foot police, 1853?] ... clad in a blue blouse with a black belt round the waist, the shirt-collars turned down like schoolboys, and they have a schoolboy-looking cloth cap on their heads, and a wooden baton in their hands. (Howitt, p. 233)

[1853?] ... cabbage-tree bee-hive helmet of the mounted police... (Howitt, letter to *Times*, quoted in Mossman, p. 86)

[Foot police] Even when proper men could be found, accoutrements, and many of the appliances requisite or desirable to these ends were wanting. The very character of the service exposes them to temptation of various kinds, which it is no wonder that men of ordinary character or principle would scarcely be proof against. (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/7/52)

The constables as a body were a drunken lot, and frequently they were brought before the Magistrate or Commissioner for fighting among themselves. They insulted men and women, and behaved generally like the blackguards they were. Bribery, of course, was rampant... (McKillop)

The greatest evil arising... is the temptations which are offered on all sides to corrupt the honesty of a constable. (Report of Superintendent of Police, dated 26/10/52, in *Further papers relative to...*, p. 281)

The police [at Ballarat] are digging away, for without such permission they would desert in a body. (*Argus*, 8/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Henry Frencham denied that police are permitted to dig for gold—strictly prohibited. (Letter to *Argus*, 16/10/51)

By October 1852, some of the educated young men arriving in Victoria and finding themselves unsuited to gold digging were recruited instead to a new squad of police 'officers' to lead the ramshackle foot brigade. (*Further papers relative to...*)

[W]hen we got up yesterday [to Forest Creek] we were informed that the Commissioner was wanting young men for policemen wages &c about 10/- a day Board & Clothes included. some of our ship's company joined, some went as labourers at same money on the roads &c. (Arnot, p. 106)

...two of our House Proprietors have gone off to offer themselves to the Commissioners either as Policemen or Road men and strange to say both were first Cabin passengers... (Arnot, p. 107)

The first instalment of the new police of the colony appeared at the Ovens..., in the shape of five troopers and their officer, Mr Christian, all dressed in jumpers and straw hats. To the amusement of the by-standers they had a narrow escape of being apprehended as suspected bushrangers by the active Chief Constable of Wangaratta, who was at last with difficulty satisfied as to their real character. It is no doubt advisable that when police are pursuing bushrangers, they should lay aside their silver lace and other ornaments, in which certain police officers at Mount Alexander used to delight themselves... (*Argus*, 8/1/53)

[Beechworth, 1853—Police officers (inspectors and sub-inspectors)—almost one for every half dozen troopers] ... generally young, shallow-brained fellows [failed new chum diggers, most of them], proud of their uniform, treating the diggers overbearingly, and bring down invectives upon the Government through its servants.... An experienced sergeant would have done the duty with greater satisfaction to the digging population. (Campbell, p. 100)

Adequate police force by end of 1853. (Serle, p. 81)

Soldiers

[March 1852] At [the new 'Castlemaine'] head quarters, besides a proportion of the small force of foot or mounted police... a party of the detachment of the 11th Regiment in this colony... is stationed for the better protection of the Government property, stores, gold deposited for escort, security of prisoners, &c. (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

Mt Alexander Commissioner's Camp at first had only a small detachment of the 17th [?] Regiment in charge of a subaltern, plus a number of foot and mounted police... (Blake, p. 65)

... pensioners, real old warriors, the most of whom had seen the Peninsula war from its commencement, and who were gathered together from off the grants of land they occupied in Van Diemen's Land, and called into active service by the local government... to do the duty of soldiers or policemen... (*The Emigrant's Daughter*, pp. 20-21)

[Sir William Denison (Governor of VDL) agreed to send up to 200 military pensioners—non-commissioned officers and privates sent to VDL to serve out their time as convict guards, with the reward of a cottage and land—to the Victorian goldfields, for a period of not more than 12 months.] I have been the more willing to adopt this means of rendering

Mr Latrobe [sic] the required aid, as I found taht the excitement which had seized all classes of people in this colony had extended to many of these pensioners also, and although to some extent I might have prevented their emigration hence, yet I hardly consider it advisable to do so. (Denison to Earl Grey, 20/1/52 & 22/2/52)

From VDL, LaTrobe secured the services of 130 military pensioners who, equipped with only iron ramrods, guarded the offices, stores and gold tent at the Camp. (Blake, p. 65)

... 127 army pensioners (paid 2s. 6d per day to keep law and order and guard the gold). (Bowden, p. 9)

[Forest Creek, 18/3/52] At 7 o'clock this morning the Creek was alive. While we were sitting at breakfast, a hundred men were seen marching in the order of soldiers which took the attention of almost everyone. The morning was misty so that we could not distinguish them. I got the glasses out and found them to be armed with muskets fitted with bayonets. As they passed, the diggers laughed at them. (Ragless, p. 48)

The one hundred and twenty hardy looking sons of Mars, the old pensioners, add to the strength of the position [of the camp] as well as to its picturesque effect. (Bonwick (magazine), December 1852, p. 106)

The pensioners are very comfortably and rather tastefully clad, and, until near enough to examine the materials of which their dress and appointments are composed, have more the appearance of officers in undress than that of mere privates... Little occurs to trench on the even tenor of their repose, except a parade or two a day, and as many guards a week... (Gilfillan, p. 161)

... the most of whom were very old and infirm. Now and then the blast of an ancient bugler might be heard sounding... a cracked call, the notes of which sounded by evidently an asthmatic or broken winded musician doled forth most dismally, and then, generally in a half drunken state, the warriors paraded... and the poor old fellows hobbled through their evolutions... (*The Emigrant's Daughter*, pp. 20-21)

... soldiers of the line [old pensioners] whose chief duty was to act as sentries over the tent of the gold-office, and whose chief difficulty was to keep themselves sober. (Horne, quoted in Pearl, p. 149)

Any pensioner deserting, or being discharged for misconduct, his name will be submitted to the Secretary at War, with the view to stoppage of pension, and he will forfeit his land and cottage... (Denison to Earl Grey, 20/1/52)

The fact that these men are liable to be struck off the pension list by the Commissioners of Chelsea for any serious misconduct would afford a considerable security for their good behaviour under the temptations to which they would be exposed. (Earl Grey to Sir Charles FitzRoy, 17/10/51)

... they must not be trusted too far.... Intemperance is a reigning vice among them, and too much reliance must not be placed upon the restraint which their position as 'pensioners' may interpose... (LaTrobe to Grey, 8/4/52)

Old Pensioners finally relieved at Forest Creek by 140 men of the 40th Regiment (led by Captain White) in January 1853. (Blake, p. 153)

In January 1853, the pensioners were withdrawn and replaced by a detachment of the 40th Regiment, much to the disgust of the diggers who wanted reputable policemen, not troops. (Bowden, p. 9)

The maintenance of the character of the colony as a British possession, subject to the laws and attached to the constitution of the mother country... depends in a great measure upon the power of the executive to assist good order and maintain respect to the laws, in the absence of which no really respectable person would wish to make it his dwelling place, however great the natural advantages. ...I consider that no measure short of the presence of a force subject to military law and discipline will give that power to the Government, or feeling of security to the public. ...immediate steps should be taken to afford this security to the Colony, both as respects intestine disturbance or attack from without. Melbourne ought to be made the headquarters of at least one regiment. (LaTrobe to Grey, 3/12/51)

The rumour that Mr LaTrobe has sent for a supply of troops, has produced an extraordinary sensation among many people down here. And there seems every probability that the Government will ruin this noble Province. A man must be worse than a madman to venture on such an expedient at the present time; for the strength of the government consists most decidedly in the good sense and peaceable disposition of the diggers; if it once forfeits that, we are lost; and the miserable display of a few hundred redcoats, among a population of 15,000 armed men, mad in their search for gold, will be the first thing to alienate their respect for the constituted authorities. (*Argus* (Geelong correspondent), 12/12/51)

The introduction of the military into this colony was a measure connected with other and very different considerations than those of civil commotion. The rough hand of the soldier is a prompt cure; but it is a cure of the surface only, and it remedies nothing permanently any more than effectually. In so far as there have been grievances of a valid character to redress amongst the mining population, the presence of the military in this colony, available as they have been to encourage a resistant and unsympathising attitude in the authorities, has been a misfortune and a stumbling-block,—a misfortune alike to the soldier and the citizen of the same blood thus ingloriously brought into mutual strife. (Anderson, p. 50)

(It would be April before Earl Grey received LaTrobe's desperate despatch, and by the time troops actually arrived in late 1852, the goldfields would be a different place)

8/4/52—LaTrobe begged the Colonial Office for able-bodied soldiers, promising to reward them well. (*Further papers relative to...*)

Sir John Pakington (new Secretary of State for the Colonies) wrote to LaTrobe on 2/6/52, acknowledging and agreeing to his request for military men—he promised a detachment of the 40th Regiment ASAP. (*Further papers relative to...*)

[The *Aberdeen Journal* of 14 July told of the imminent departure for Australia of the 40th or Somersetshire Regiment (at that time in Cork).] Leave will be granted for small detachments of the corps, for a certain period, to work in the 'diggings'—also 10s. extra pay per day to officers and 3s. extra per private. (*Argus*, 14/10/52)

Also their contracts would be shortened? Two years in Australia being equivalent to three years served elsewhere? Or something like that.

Headquarters (officers) and five companies (one for NSW, four for Victoria) of the 40th Regiment arrived in Melbourne from Cork on board the *Vulcan* on 19/10/52. (*Further papers relative to...*)

Several desertions occurred upon their first arrival in Melbourne. (*Argus*, 10/12/52)

Introduction of gold licence

Gold Proclamation No. 1 stated that digging or prospecting for gold on Crown or alienated land was illegal. Proclamation No. 2 imposed the licensing system.

Commissioner Powlett, in charge at Clunes, wrote to LaTrobe on 16 August, suggesting that a licence fee of 30/- per month be charged. (Flett, p. 437)

Licensing system announced in Government Gazette of 20/8/51 (Proclamation dated 18/8)—introduced from 1 September. (*Argus*, 21/8/51)

Government Proclamation No. 2 was set by the newly-constituted Executive Council *before* the election of a Legislative Council took place. (*Argus*, August 1851)

[The *Geelong Advertiser's* correspondent was present at the first protest meeting re. licence fees, at Buninyong on c.26/8/51] I was never more struck with a scene in my life, and something whispers to me that it will be an important one. It was a solemn protest of labour against oppression... It is 'taxation without representation'... Here, a month ago, was but bush and forest, and to night for the first time since Australia rose from the bosom of the ocean, were men strong in their sense of right, lifting up a protest against an impending wrong, and protesting against the Government. (*Argus*, 30/8/51)

[At protest meeting] ...some men went so far as to dare the Government to molest them; and it will be no easy matter for the Government to disperse a couple of hundred men determined to preserve by force of arms, as is reported, what they consider a right. (*Argus*, 30/8/51)

[Buninyong, August 1851] 'It's more than the squatter pays for twenty square miles'* [said one man]... 'But you are a poor man.' (*Argus*, 30/8/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser* from Buninyong correspondent's report of protest meeting, 26/8/51) (*Squatter's annual tax set at £10. Digger's annual licence fee = £18)

Thirty shillings a month, for twenty-six days work, payable in advance, is the impost demanded by our Victorian Czar.... It is a Juggernaut tax to crush the poor... ...there has not been a more gross attempt at injustice since the days of Wat Tyler... it will be an indelible stain upon [the annals of Port Phillip]... the indomitable perseverance of these toiling men, who are to be cursed with a heavy tax, in return for the blessings they have proffered—a tax not levied for the exigencies of the commonwealth, but founded... on a mildewed and spotted remnant of the feudal period. ...the mere act of a Czar of Russia. (*Argus*, Buninyong correspondent, 27/8/51)

[J.P. Fawcner, in Parliament] ...was happy to hear the honorable member for Murray [Dr Miller] say, that he and the community were in a great measure dependent upon the labouring classes; as it was an announcement that he had not expected from a person

moving in the honorable member's sphere; whilst he thought that the words were rather at variance with the speaker's real sentiments. He appeared to think that the Government had no right to let people go and get the gold, and talked loudly about the lust for gold. The honorable member, however, told them nothing about the lust for principalities, whereby the people—the honest, industrious, and hard-working man—was shut out from buying a piece of land for himself... (*Argus*, 19/11/51)

The people say, 'Find us a gold mine, and here are two hundred guineas.' The Government says, 'Give me thirty shillings before you even begin to look!' The same thirty shillings would carry a man half-way to Bathurst, where every one knows that there is gold; while we have yet to learn that any one of our diggings is remunerative to the parties employed... Victoria may be depopulated; but thank Providence, no man shall look for gold 'illegally'. (*Argus*, 23/8/51)

[Buninyong, 1/9/51] We have no beef, no mutton, no butcher, no butcher's shop, no hay, no oats, no maize, no magistrates within 25 miles, no constables, no commonage—but plenty of rain, and shocking bad roads, so you see there is an abundance of negatives, and a fair sprinkling of positives. (*Argus*, 3/9/51)

A new gold field is reported to have been discovered within 53 miles of Geelong; but although the localilty is well known, it is considered prudent to say nothing about it at present... Were the secret divulged, we should have the Government vultures upon the unfortunate diggers directly. (*Argus*, 24/9/51)

Mention role of licence fee introduction in discovery of Ballarat goldfield.

(Once Ballarat gold discovered, much opposition to licence fees dissipated for the time being—when the fee was announced in August, gold yields had been poor.)

Licence fees appear to have first been enforced at Ballarat on Saturday, 20 September, when the Commissioner demanded payment of half the September fee. (*Argus*, 24/9/51)

Armstrong claimed to have granted the first licence at Ballarat. (Flett, p. 413)

Outrage at first (?) licences being issued on the Sabbath—Sunday, 21st September 1851. (*Argus*, 29/9/51)

Letter from a new digger at Ballarat in mid-October 1851 said—'No one is obliged to pay a license till they find gold.' (*Argus*, 27/10/51)

Buying a licence

... and there is a place where for thirty shillings you may procure the talisman of a license. (Bonwick, p. 7)

The Bearer [redacted] having paid to me the sum of One Pound Ten Shillings, on account of the Territorial Revenue, I hereby License him to dig, search for, and remove Gold on and from any such Crown Lands within the [redacted] District, as I shall assign to him for that purpose during the month of [redacted] 1852, not within half-a-mile of any Head Station.

This License is not transferable, and to be produced whenever demanded by me or any other person acting under the authority of the Government, and to be returned when

another License is issued.

Signed □□□□□□□□, Commissioner

[28/9/52] The new licenses have an engraving in the left hand margin, consisting of a spade, on the handle of which is suspended a bag of gold, a tin dish, and a shovel. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Licensing-days, the first ten days in each month... (Religious Tract Society (2), p. 25)

[1853] No licenses are to be demanded by the trooper before the sixth of a month or after the twenty-sixth. (Bonwick (magazine), January 1853, p. 125)

[Licences] ...only held good for the [calendar] month in which they were issued, so that men arriving on the goldfield towards the close of a month, say on the 28th, the licence fee held good only for the remaining two or three days... (Clarke, p. 21)

[Government Proclamation, 1/12/51] Any person who may arrive on the ground and apply for a licence on or after the 15th of any month will be charged half the above fee. (*Further papers relative to...*)

Licences issued at Mt Alexander, 1851—October, 221; November, 4,678. During mid-1852, the number ranged from 30,000 to 50,000 per month. (Bonwick, p. 33)

In 12 months from October 1851, 185,506 licences were issued on the Mt Alexander goldfield, raising revenue of £278,259. (Bowden, p. 9)

So great is the crowd around the Commissioner's tent at the beginning of the month, that it is a matter of difficulty to procure it, and consequently the inspectors rarely begin their rounds before the 10th... (Clacy, p. 43)

Usually the first ten days of the month are days of grace; after that, enquiries may be expected as to the possession of the document... The five pounds penalty is often not so bad as the loss of time [in procuring a licence]. (Bonwick)

I lost a complete day in going to the Commissioners' tent, waiting until they lunched at one o'clock, while the tent was shut; and in depositing gold for the escort, I was from nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. (Thomas McCombie [later a Melbourne gold merchant], in *Argus*, 30/1/52)

[Forest Creek, April 1852] After breakfast I started up to the Commissioner to get the licences. I reached there before the flag was up, but there were already 20 before me. On the flagstaff was a notice to the parties who wanted licences, to form a direct line along the fence. This saved me waiting all day for a great number took no notice of it. I pushed in behind 20 and after waiting for an hour, the flag was hoisted and they began to issue... After the 20 who were before me got their licences, it came my turn. I went around a post and walked along a path up to the tent. On the table stood a bright pair of gold scales and weights. Opposite these sat the Commissioner, and behind him sat his clerk, and beside sat an officer belonging to the XI Regiment, who added the weights in and out on the scales.

After I got my six licences, I made my way to the post office... I left a good many who would not get served that day. (Ragless, pp. 60-61)

Illustration: ‘Diggers Licensing, Forest Creek’, S.T. Gill painting—shows flagstaff, fence, and licensing tent. (see Ragless)

[Bendigo, June 1852] Licences all signed by the Commissioner previous, and applicants [sic] name filled up by the clerk. (Finlay, p. 13)

Instead of the thirty shillings for the monthly license, a man may pay half-an-ounce of gold. (Bonwick)

Half-ounce of gold was generally acceptable as licence fee. At the end of 1851, the Bendigo Commissioner tried to insist on ‘cash only’, but backed down in the face of digger protests—diggers refused to buy licences at beginning of January 1852. Diggers could only obtain cash to pay their licence fees by selling it at a greatly reduced rate (£2 10s. an ounce) at the stores. Even so, at 30 shillings (£1 10s) for half an ounce, the diggers were being paid under the Melbourne price for their gold. (Clarke, pp. 22-3)

Licence fee

Insufficient labour available for shearing and harvest—proposal included stopping the issue of gold licences for a time, or doubling or even trebling the licence fee. (*Argus*, 3/10/51)

[Already, by mid-November 1851, the government had ‘well considered’ the question of raising the licence fee, but] ...it had been thought that the excitement on the subject was so great, that if any attempt were made to raise the licence fee, serious outbreaks would occur. (Colonial Secretary, William Lonsdale, in Parliament—*Argus*, 19/11/51)

There is a general belief here that Government intend either to raise the licenses to £10 per month or cease issuing licenses. If such is the case it will be necessary to have a strong force here, for four out of every five appear determined, even at the expense of a scuffle, to resist the imposition, and those who do not speak of powder and ball declare that they will not assist in getting the crops in. They state they will not be forced to it, though I believe most of those who understand reaping intend to suspend digging voluntarily for a month or two, as soon as they have worked out their present claims. (*Argus*, 29/11/51)

(This turned out to be the case. The crops were got in in good order. The shortage of water at Forest Creek coincided nicely with harvest time.)

[3/12/51] I have to apprise your Lordship, that I have deemed it advisable, with the consent of my Executive Council, to decide upon raising the amount of the month’s licence fee, and propose to double it from the 1st January.

Three reasons may be adduced for this measure.

1st, The notorious disproportion of the advantage derivable under the licence system, to the public revenue, compared with the amount of private gain. [LaTrobe, visiting Mt Alexander in the first fortnight after the rush began, had seen fortunes being made before lunch.]

2dly, That the Legislative Council of the colony... decline to sanction any expenditure [e.g. increased pay to public servants] from the ordinary revenue under its control on account of any service which in its opinion is consequent on the discovery and search for gold, and that therefore extraordinary charges to a very considerable extent, if incurred at

all, must for the time be carried to account of the revenue of the gold-fields; and

Thirdly, to place some additional impediments in the way of those frequenting the gold fields who may not be in a position, or of a character, to prosecute the search with advantage to themselves or the community.

Whether it will have this effect remains to be seen; but I earnestly look forward to the introduction of some better system; for do what you will the present cannot be held to be any other than a scramble, and a scramble in which nothing but the most unremitting and breathless exertion enables Government, under every circumstance of disadvantage, to keep pace with the popular movement, and maintain, in appearance at least, some degree of public order and respect to the laws and regulations. (LaTrobe to Earl Grey, 3/12/51)

Proclamation, signed by William Lonsdale, 1/12/51, stated that, effective 1/1/52:

1. The licence fee for one month, or the greater portion of a month, will be three pounds.
2. Any person who may arrive on the ground and apply for a licence on or after the 15th of any month will be charged half the above fee. (*Further papers relative to...*)

[Proposed fee increase to £3] ...the effect of a clique in the Assembly [Legislative Council], who, alarmed at a petition which had been presented, praying for a revision of the electoral lists [i.e., pushing for the digger vote], had contrived to get the bill pushed through the House... (Earp, p. 130)

[Forest Creek Diggings, 8/12/51) It appears that the Government have determined to raise the license to 3*l* per month, and so sure as it does they will find 25,000 men to oppose them; but of this hereafter. A notice appeared on the Creek this morning to the following effect:

FELLOW DIGGERS!

The intelligence has just arrived of the resolution of the Government to double the license fee. Will you tamely submit to the imposition, or assert your rights like men? You are called upon to pay a tax, originated and concocted by the most heartless selfishness. A tax imposed by your Legislators for the purpose of detaining you in their work-shops, in their stable yards, and by their flocks and herds. They have conferred to effect this; they would increase this sevenfold; but they are afraid! Fie upon such pusillanimity! and shame upon the men, who, to save a few paltry pounds for their own pockets, would tax the labour of the poor man's hands!...

...But, remember, that *union is strength*, that 'though a single twig may be bent or broken, a bundle of them tied together yields not nor breads.' Ye are Britons! Will you submit to oppression and injustice? Meet—agitate—be unanimous—and if there is justice in the land, they will, they *must*, abolish the imposition.

Yours faithfully,
A DIGGER.

... What can induce the Government to act so madly, no one can conceive; this step will eventually break the only link that holds the crowds on the ground in order.... Men who have voluntarily come forward and paid the 30s license, without asking, will do all in their power to avoid paying 3*l*. I believe it is intended to swear in the leading or head men of each party as special constables; the Government think, by this act, to secure the services of the men connected with such specials; but they are mistaken.... It is a ticklish game the government are trying to play, and one, I think, that will not be *won easily*....

[December 9] ...bills have been posted all along the Creek, calling on the diggers to

meet this evening, at 7 o'clock, near the Post Office... by half-past seven, some 3000 persons were collected...

[Mr Potts addressed the crowd] ...Were they to be ridden over with an iron hand, to please the wishes of the squatters or any other class? Were they tamely to submit to have their hard earnings torn from their grasp, to enrich the pockets of a few? Or were they to come forward like men, and maintain their rights? (Cheers)...

...The *Herald*, in one of its leading articles, kindly terms us the scum of the Country...

[Resolution put] 'That a committee be formed to wait upon the Commissioner, requesting him to call a general meeting of the diggers from all parts of Mount Alexander, for the purpose of taking into consideration, the Proclamation of His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor relative to increasing the license fee from 30s per month to £3, and for other business connected with the diggings.'...

...Three cheers for the chairman, three for the diggers, three for their wives and families, made the valley echo for some time; and last of all, three groans for the *Herald*...

... One thousand handbills are to be struck off, and sent express to the various diggings... (*Argus*, 12/12/51)

At the Loddon a Prevention Tax Committee was formed—anyone paying the licence fee would be given twelve hours to leave the diggings. (Serle, p. 25)

A notice appeared in the Government Gazette of 15/12/51, signed by William Lonsdale, that the increase in licence fee had been revoked, pending consideration of a new taxing system—viz., a gold royalty. However, the notice was withdrawn the same day. (*Argus*, 16/12/51)

15/12/51—Monster Meeting at Forest Creek—how many diggers attended?

On 17 December (two days after diggers' 'monster meeting' protest) the notice rescinding the fee increase was finally issued. (*Argus*, 18/12/51)

The *Times* of London would raise your licence fee. It taunts our Government for being so weak as to yield to your remonstrances. (Bonwick (magazine), October 1852, p. 12)

[Late 1853] Following protests at the continuing high licence fees (Red Ribbon movement), the fee was reduced to 40 shillings for three months. (Blake, pp. 189-90)

Licences for all

If the Government Officers do not alter their mode of proceeding, with regard to the system of licensing, and adopt a uniform line of conduct in accordance with the printed terms of the licenses, they will accelerate catastrophe, for which they will only have themselves to blame. Lethargy, interrupted by fitful starts of interference, and that, too, mostly in the wrong direction, is the salient feature of their policy. (*Argus*, 11/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

... Mr Powlett (Mt Alexander Commissioner) insists on all and every person here taking out a license. This the diggers do not fancy. They think the cooks ought to be allowed to prepare grub without paying for it. (*Argus*, 5/11/51)

[Ballarat] Mr Armstrong, one of the Commissioners for the issuing of licenses 'to dig, search for, and remove gold', has been engaged all day, accompanied by two troopers,

each with a pistol in his hand, and a black fellow, in going from tent to tent, and enforcing the people to take out a gold license, whether diggers or not, including butchers, bakers, storekeepers, and others who are not diggers and have no inclination to dig... and this with a threat that, if not complied with, the tent would be cut down. (*Argus*, 21/11/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Proclamation, signed by William Lonsdale, 1/12/51, stated that, effective 1/1/52: ...3. All persons at the gold fields who are in any manner connected with the search for gold, as tent-keepers, cooks, &c., will be required to take out a licence on the same terms as those who are engaged in digging for it. (*Further papers relative to...*)

[This part of the proclamation, at least, seems to have stuck.]

Vagrant Act

In late December 1851 the government rushed through ‘A Bill for the more effectual Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons’—i.e., an amendment to the Vagrant Act—effective 1/1/52. It ruled that anyone found digging or trading on Crown land without a licence could be prosecuted as an ‘Idle and Disorderly Person’ and fined £50 or sentenced to six months’ gaol. (Hitherto, no-licence fine had been £5) The *Argus*, in publishing the Bill, referred it to the attention of the ‘thirty thousand vagabonds’ on the goldfields. (*Argus*, 26/12/51)

[Government passed an Act which] ...called upon all the diggers to act as constables [informers], under the penalty of being considered rogues and vagabonds, and being treated accordingly. (Earp, p. 130)

I had, contrary to the wishes of my wife, thrown up a good business, which would ultimately have led to independence, placed myself in the position of a rogue and vagabond, according to Act of Council, and sacrificed all the comforts of life, and the society of friends, whose moral rectitude and kindly feelings towards myself and family, had gained my esteem—and for what? (Hall, pp. 11-12)

A rogue or vagabond was a 2nd-offence idle-and-disorderly, playing unlawful games, possessing instruments of housebreaking, or ‘being found at night with face blackened wearing felt slippers and a felonious intent’—up to two years’ gaol, with or without hard labour. A rogue or vagabond who recommitted any of these offences could be sentenced as an Incurable Rogue, for three years’ hard labour. (Goodman, p. 77)

[During the debate on the Vagrancy Act Amendment Bill, J.P. Fawcner did all he could to de-rail proceedings—e.g., in one late-night sitting] Mr. FAWKNER proceeded to read extensive passages from several books, and having occupied the time of the House for one hour, sat down, repeating his determination to oppose the Bill in all its stages. (*Argus*, 24/12/51)

Vagrant Act defeated (in January 1852?) by the aid of Messrs O’Shanassy and Fawcner and pressure from miners’ representatives—United Miners’ Association. (*Argus*, 5/2/52)

Digger hunts

When Armstrong was Commissioner at Ballarat in 1851, he constantly scoured the surrounding districts, as far afield as Creswick and Daylesford—in search of unlicensed

diggers—‘It was my duty to look after [for] men working without a license.’ In evidence to the Rewards Board in 1864, Armstrong told how, in 1851, he had hunted down unlicensed diggers in new localities: ‘I was aware that he was out in that neighborhood [Creswick], and I made it my business to go out every day, and it was only by the water being discolored running from where he had been washing that I found out his claim.’ (Flett, pp. 411-13)

F. Kawerau, applying in 1864 for a reward for the discovery of the Daylesford goldfield, told how Armstrong had ‘paid us a visit to collect licenses’ within a few days of their commencing digging at Wombat Flat, in October 1851. Before Armstrong’s visit, ‘We were there in considerable dread of Mr Armstrong at that time, and of course we acknowledged his authority when he came.’ (Flett, pp. 398-9)

The mode of collecting this tax, however, has done more to make it unpopular than the amount of the tax itself. In levying it, the tax-gatherer and the tax-payer are brought too violently, and nakedly, as it were, face to face. In England, twice a year suffices for seeing the face of the tax gatherer.... You are not liable, any day and any hour, and for any number of times on any one day, to be called on by this not very fascinating character, and compelled again and again, and as often as he pleases to demand it, to show your last receipt. (Howitt, p. 217)

My friend, the digger, said, that what he felt as one of the greatest evils of the digging life was the constant and close contact into which they were brought with the police.... ‘Three and four times a day I have been summoned to show my licence, and threatened with handcuffs if I murmured. It is,’ he added, ‘a common saying, “A man has no home in this country. His only chance is to get money, and spend it elsewhere.”’ (Howitt, p. 365)

[At Sawpit Gully (Elphinstone), April 1852] ... a notice is to be conspicuously exhibited here, warning all parties to at once take out licenses, or that having passed this spot they will be liable to be seized. [Assistant Commissioner to be posted there] (*Argus*, 21/4/52)

[Thatcher song, ‘Where’s Your License?’]

The morning was fine
The sun brightly did shine,
The diggers were working away;
When the inspector of traps,
Said now my fine chaps,
We’ll go license hunting today.
Some went this way, some that,
Some to Bendigo Flat,
And a lot to the White Hills did tramp,
Whilst others did bear
Up toward Golden Square,
And the rest of them kept round the camp.
Each turned his eye,
To the holes close by,
Expecting on some down to drop;
But not one could they nail,

For they'd give 'em leg bail—
 Diggers ain't often caught on the hop.
 The little word Joe,
 Which most of you know,
 Is a signal the traps are quite near;
 Made them all cut their sticks,
 And they hooked it like bricks,
 I believe you, my boys, no fear.
 Now a tall, ugly trap,
 He espied a young chap,
 Up the gully a-cutting like fun;
 So he quickly gave chase,
 But it was a hard race,
 For, mind you, the digger could run.
 Down the hole did he pop,
 While the bobby up top,
 Says, 'Just come up,' shaking his staff—
 'Young man of the Crown,
 If yer wants me come down,
 For I'm not to be caught with such chaff.'
 Of course you'd have thought,
 The sly fox he'd have caught,
 By lugging him out of the hole;
 But this rucher no fear,
 Quite scorned the idea,
 Of burrowing the earth like a mole.
 But wiser by half,
 He put by his staff,
 And as onward he went sung he—
 When a cove's down a drive,
 Whether dead or alive,
 He may stay there till doomsday for me.

Thatcher (generally known as 'the digger's poet' and vulgarly pronounced 'Thrasher')...
 satirised and caricatured the 'pompous demeanour of the gold-laced officials with effect.
 (J.F. Hughes, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 5)

... the police were very vigilant, and seemed to enjoy their periodical rambles after
 diggers' gold licences. (Amos, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 182)

Licence hunting became a pastime, just as kangaroo hunts are to the squatters in the back
 country. When... some military or other notability visited the Camp... he was taken by
 [the Campites] digger hunting as part of the entertainment prepared for his delectation.
 (McKillop)

'£5 forays'—licence hunts. (*Argus*, 29/4/52)

Inability to produce licence for inspection—first offence, £5; second offence, £15; subsequent offence, £30. (Serle, pp. 98-100)

Those caught without licences paid an on-the-spot fine of £5 to the Commissioner—or went to the ‘logs’. Those who paid their £5 never knew what became of it. Had to take out a licence within 24 hours. (Henry Boyle, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 119)

An immense order for handcuffs and leg-irons is now in course of execution in Birmingham. A large quantity has already been shipped to Melbourne. (*Illustrated London News*, 26/2/53, p. 155)

There were no gaols or lock-ups to begin with, and unlicensed diggers were chained to large logs, and in some cases to trees. At the Castlemaine Camp, an enclosure was surrounded by a high sapling fence, and inside were a number of heavy logs with large iron staples at convenient intervals. (McKillop)

An attempt at robbery was frustrated last night, and the thief secured by the police, who bound him with a strong rope to a tree, in absence of a Station House. (*Argus*, 11/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Apprehended robber chained to a tree (at Ballarat) awaiting trial in Melbourne. (Henry Frencham, letter to *Argus*, 16/10/51)

Diggers unable to pay the fine can work it out on the roads. (Clacy, p. 43)

I met a lot of policemen with several prisoners, walked off for not having licences and for presenting firearms and throwing stones at the police... there had been a regular shindy in the gully. (Snell, p. 300)

[Bendigo 1852] A mounted policeman rode up the gully this morning informing those who wanted licences that the commissioner had pitched his tent at the foot of the golden Gully—this was rather more courteous than we expected after seeing the numbers walked off and fined at Mount Alexander. (Snell, p. 298)

... by a system of the most arbitrary, heartless, insulting conduct on the part of the Commissioners and police towards the general body of diggers, the whole management of the goldfields came to be characterised, not as English, but as Russian [pronounced ‘Rooshian’]. The system of hunting up licences was styled ‘Man hunting, and the foot-police ‘Man-catchers’ and ‘Bloodhounds’. It was a system that raised the indignation of high-spirited freeborn men, and excited the universal hatred of the people, as a cold-blooded, un-English, un-Christian despotism. (Howitt, pp. 218-19)

Nothing can exceed the avidity, the rigidity, and arbitrary spirit with which the license fees are enforced on the diggings, and the eagerness with which Government sends off a batch of Commissioners and police to collect tax on every newly-discovered digging... These things naturally grate dreadfully on the spirits of the digging population... especially when they see the arbitrary, Russian sort of way they are visited by the authorities... These things are not only true, but too true, and too common, and are creating a spirit that will break out one of these days energetically. (Howitt, pp. 130-31)

Mr Rawnsley [commissioner at Fryer’s Creek?] has made himself extremely unpopular by his uncourteous manner and arbitrary acts. At Freyer’s [sic] Creek rumours even of tar-and-feathering have been heard... [Commissioner Wright was compelled] ...to

prevent Mr Rawnsley from doing further mischief, by removing him from Forest Creek. As a sample of his mode of dealing, Mr Wright related to me his device for luring an unlicensed digger from his stronghold in his hole. He asked him if he had a licence, and on the digger's replying in the negative he said, 'Come up, then, my good fellow, and I will give you a licence,' and the moment the digger had emerged from his hole on this invitation he seized him by the collar crying out, 'I arrest you in the Queen's name for not having a licence.' (Lord Robert Cecil, March 1852, p. 30)

[mid-1853] At Campbell's Creek, a police inspector, 'suffering a virulent infection of the licence-hunter's bug', demanded licences from everyone: miners, storekeepers, passers-by, even the local school teacher. Caused much anger, protest, and revolt. (Blake, p. 176)

[Bendigo, 1852] A Dr Mason arrived from Forest Creek... an elderly lady for his wife. Wears a belt with a double-barrelled pistol in it. An anecdote is told of her when at Forest Creek. The constables got wind the Doctor had a boy without a licence, and came to apprehend him. The Doctor was absent, and the lady not feeling inclined to give up the boy, stood in the tent door with her pistol and dared them to cross her threshold. She carried her point. (Finlay, p. 16)

Licence evasion

A group of aborigines digging at Forest Creek could not produce licences when challenged by police. They refused to take out licences on the grounds that they were the rightful owners of the country and the gold really belonged to them, and not the Queen. (Bowden, p. 20)

Story from the diggings of an illiterate native trooper out inspecting licences—first digger in party of four shows him a £1 note (engraved side folded in); second holds up a copy of the agreement between members of the party; third shows him a receipt for a mare he had just purchased; the fourth showed him a nugget, which was his reward for his illiteracy. (*Argus*, 7/1/52)

'doing the traps' = tricking the licence inspector. (*Argus*, 7/1/52)

'Traps' = police—'an obsolete sobriquet at home' (Kelly, p. 185)

'... it was considered the height of enjoyment to bamboozle the police'—e.g., When a digger saw an unlicensed fellow being pursued by a trooper, he ran in the opposite direction, as a decoy. The trooper followed him instead and, catching him, demanded his licence. The digger coolly produced it. The unlicensed digger, meanwhile, made his escape into the scrub. When the trooper demanded to know why the licensed man was running, he replied that 'he knew of no law that prohibited a man running on the goldfields'. (Brown, p. 145)

A Cornishman called Thomas—but known as 'Kingdom Come'—never bought a miner's licence. On one occasion, he retreated to his tent and the trooper was put off by the notice out front: Beware of the Dog! (Henry Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 132)

Told by an unlicensed digger with muddy hands that his licence could be found in his waistcoat pocket, the Commissioner chose not 'to insert his fingers amongst a mixed

heap of half chewed tobacco quids, pieces of rotten string, and time-worn tobacco pipes'... (*Argus*, 16/10/51)

... we had only one license between three of us, and we used to pass it from one to the other. ('Golden Point', in *Bendigo Advertiser*, 7/3/1888)

Joe!

When they were on the war-path we got timely notice by signals... (Amos, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 182)

[In NSW] At Ophir on Summer Hill Creek, where there were still a few hundred miners, we are told, the croak of a raven was the signal for one of an unlicensed party to shoulder the rocker and hide somewhere among the rocks or gulleys... (Read, quoted by Morrell, p. 207)

The practice of [licence] evasion begun in the New South Wales fields, spread to Victoria: the signal was now the cry of 'Joe' and not the croak of a raven. (Morrell, pp. 218-9)

As the commissioner and troopers moved up the gully in search of unlicensed diggers, the diggers 'made it a point never to let the cry of 'Joe! Joe!' subside for a moment. [When the commissioner finally moved off, it was] ... to the tune of 'Joe! Joe! Joe!' and expressions of regret 'that he would have to drink the royal family's health after dinner at his own expense. (Kelly, p. 194)

It was the howl of a wolf for the shepherds, who bolted at once towards the bush: it was the yell of bull-dogs for the fossickers [sic] who floundered among the deep holes, and thus dodged the hounds; it was a scarecrow for the miners, who now scrambled down to the deep, and left a licensed mate or two at the windlass. (Carboni, p. 16)

To a grog-shop then we would repair,
and drink with other chaps;
And if they were out for licences
we'd stand and joe the traps... (from Charles Thatcher song, 'Shepherding')

... a cry which means one of the myrmidons of Charley Joe, as they familiarly style Mr LaTrobe... (Howitt, p. 220)

Joe! Joe! Joe!—from C. Joseph LaTrobe or Yo! Yo! Yo! (Serle, p. 100)

Joe is a term of opprobrium hurled after the police ever since the diggings commenced, but the derivation is still a mystery. Some commentators trace it to the Christian name of Mr Latrobe [sic]; but this is an error; the ex-governor was never personally unpopular, except with the editor of the *Argus*. (Kelly, p. 191)

... next week we shall have to pay thirty shillings per head, and for this our imbecile Governor, Joe, only allows us eight feet square to each man.... Oh! how I wish I was a good writer. Gammon, I wouldn't walk into Joe! (*Argus*, 9/10/51—quoting a letter from Ballarat)

I knew Joe Mc□□ [Taggart] at Forest Creek. Joe was a storekeeper, and a sneak [informer]. He used to give the police information about the diggers who were hiding

from the troopers out collecting the license fees, and they burned his effigy... McTaggart was the original of the term Joe', which became the password of the diggers all over the country on the approach of the police. (Lawrence)

[mid-1852] M'Taggart's Stores, Red Hill [Chewton]. (Bryce Ross's *Diggings' Directory*, p. 3)

...a Johnny-all-Sorts shop next to the Government buildings, kept by a very eccentric character whose name was MacTaggart [a Scotsman].... 'There are only two things I have not in stock... fresh pilchards and snowballs.' (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 11)

'a person named McTaggart, of Adelaide repute' sold Adelaide newspapers about the diggings (they being property of Bryce Ross) and denied it, keeping the proceeds. Case was dismissed in court. 'Well, really, this is a pretty state of matters... if men like McTaggart can commit such breaches of the law with absolute impugny... (Bryce Ross, letter to *Argus*, 12/6/52)

Fire which burnt Port Phillip Gold Mining Company buildings at old Post Office Hill on 28 December 1852 also burnt the store of Mr McTaggart. According to McT, he had bank notes to the amount of £3,000 in a box in his store 'which, in his humane anxiety to save two horses which were in his stable, he could not find time to save. ...circumstances lead us strongly to believe that Mr McTaggart is certainly over-estimating his loss by a great deal.' Buildings were closer together than the stipulated 20 ft. (*Argus*, 1/1/53)

The word 'Joe', at this time acted like magic on the diggings; its origin has never been explained, but I have been informed that the word is from the Hindoostanee word 'Jas', meaning to go!... When the word was called out on the diggings everyone looked around quickly as if it had been the word 'fire!' (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 57)

[California] One sure daily marker was the odd plaintive cry of 'Oh Joe' that spread in the evenings through California mining camps and eventually across the western mining frontier. Reportedly based upon an incident in which a prospector fell into a hole and called upon his partner for assistance, the call would drift from cabin to cabin through the waning light and darkness. (Marks, p. 181) [Possibly from Oh Job!—This Old Testament figure was the personification of poverty, stoicism and patience—'I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not so patient' (Shakespeare, Henry IV)]

[Crying 'Joe!' as a warning of licence inspector approaching] ...was treated as an offence or derision of the authorities and a fine of £5 was inflicted on those who could be proved guilty of this heinous and aggravating offence—or, at least, so it was defined by the powers that were. (Clarke, p. 34)

Magistrates ruled that in all cases where a person called another person 'Joe' in the streets of Melbourne, they would be liable to one month in prison. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 57)

['Joe!' also used in derision of new chums, etc., as in Charles Thatcher's song 'Coming down the Flat' (to the tune of 'Coming through the Rye')]

If a body meet a body
Coming down the flat,

Should a body 'Joe' a body
For having on a hat?
Some wear caps,
Some wide awakes,
But I prefer a hat—
Yet everybody cries out 'Joe',
Coming down the flat.

A gentleman appeared before the City Bench yesterday, to answer a charge made against him by two of the mounted police for 'cooying' in Bourke-street, at twelve o'clock on Tuesday night. The defendant proved the occurrence to have taken place in Lonsdale-street, and not in Bourke-street, as stated by the constables, and was discharged. Mr Hull remarked it was to be regretted that the police were not better acquainted with the persons of their citizens, as it was unnecessary to arrest a person of the defendant's respectability, if he gave his address. He, however, did not approve of the practice of cooying, and would not 'cooy' himself. (*Argus*, 29/4/52)

Joe! died out with the gold licences. Even afterwards the cry was sometimes used to hail female passers-by, when women were still scarce on new diggings. The practice soon wore off. (Skinner, p. 65)

Lawlessness

In such a crowd, one half utter strangers to the other and to the colony, met together in a wild tract of broken forested country, full of secluded hollows, honey-combed with hundreds or thousands of ready-made graves, under such strong inducements to cupidity, disorder, and crime the imagination is free and unrestrained to picture the extent to which crime may... prevail in secret without the possibility of discovery... (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52, quoted by Morrell, pp. 217-8)

[Ballarat, October 1851] They are just beginning to rob up here; and as there is sure to be a choice assortment of scamps coming up to the ground, we expect to have to keep a sharp look out. (Letter quoted in *Argus*, 9/10/51)

Crimes of the most fearful character and degree abound on all sides; the roads swarm with bushrangers; the streets with burglars and desperadoes of every kind. In broad daylight, and in our most public streets, men have been knocked down, ill-used, and robbed... At night, men dare not walk the streets, and thieves appear to be so thick upon the ground, and to be so unceasing in their operations, that we feel certain they must often rob each other... We have all the evils of Lynch law without its vigour or its promptitude... (Earp, p. 161)

... the adventurers and off-scourings of all countries... (Campbell, p. 100)

[New Year 1852] The [Mt Alexander] field now became the general rendezvous of a mixed multitude, amongst which the expiree population of Van Diemen's Land, returned Californians, and the most profligate portion of the inhabitants of this and the adjacent colonies, became broadly conspicuous. (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

[At Mt Alexander] Ruffianly unshaved vagabonds strolling about with gallows plainly written in their countenances. (Snell, p. 278)

... a population plentifully besprinkled with lawless vagabonds from all quarters of the globe—Pentonville and Millbank ‘penitents’, Vandemonian and other clerks of St Nicholas—whose very gait proclaims a tale of lengthened years in gyves [shackles or fetters]. (Gilfillan, pp. 160-61)

thair was a great deal of ruffans thair and they seemed to be the luckes but they drank and fought each other we ware not molested tho surounded by them (Davenport, at Ballarat, p. 260)

These diggings have been as peaceable as could well have been expected, considering that the majority of the diggers are from Van Diemen’s Land; in short, we have the sweepings of every nation of the universe. (Letter from ‘an English [Cockermouth] farmer’ at Mt Alexander, 1/10/52, in Mossman (letters), p. 23)

[VDL] ...but the sieve through which the refuse of England, polluted by crime, passed on to the auriferous regions... (*London Mining Journal*, 1/1/53, p. 37)

There is the prospect apparently of an... almost fabulous among of auriferous acquisitions; and there is consequently the absolute certainty, not only of an immense inundation of immigrants from all quarters, but also of an enormous preponderance of adventurers of the most lawless and abandoned character.... The vicinity of one still penal colony, and the fatal aggravation of the conditional pardon system, may well fill the hearts of the free settlers in our gold districts with apprehensions of similar calamities to those which have fallen upon California. [This piece was followed by a ‘dreadful narrative’ from the *Daily Alta California*, reporting a lynching by the Vigilance Committee.] (*SA Register*, 17/10/51)

Apart from the natural effects of a rich gold-country, in drawing together a population of at least a very *adventurous* character, our near neighbourhood to the island into which Great Britain so recklessly persists in pouring the criminals from her crowded jails, has very seriously affected the composition of our community. From this source many thousands of the greatest wretches alive have reached our shores... (Earp, p. 160)

[On 24 October 1851] ...no less than 299 steerage passengers arrived in Melbourne by four different vessels from Van Diemen’s Land, to the apparent displeasure of the good folks there. (*SA Register*, 6/11/52)

... in 1852, 5,180 felons who had been convicts had come over to Victoria, and 2,097 who had been conditionally pardoned,—making a total of these vermin in one year of 7,277. (Howitt, p. 231, quoting VDL government return)

Convicts Prevention Act, 1852—Prevented escaped convicts or convicts with conditional pardons (released before full term because of good behaviour—allowed to go anywhere but back to Britain) from entering Victoria from VDL. Vandemonians blamed for most crime. Bushrangers known as ‘Newcastle pets’ after their ‘patron’, the Duke of Newcastle (Secretary of State—Pakington?), who disapproved of the Act. (Serle, pp. 127-8)

Short hair denoted a recently released convict—‘old lag’. Lachlan Maclachlan (‘Bendigo Mac’), Police Magistrate at Bendigo from 1853, would tell the constable in charge of a prisoner in court, ‘Turn him round and take off his hat!’ (Clarke, p. 43)

Ex-convicts—now that gold has made them independent, they boast of their former bad deeds. Vandemonians liked to contemplate their past and showed great loyalty to VDL. (Serle, pp. 77, 82)

‘On the other side’—as the Vandemonians call Victoria, and as the Victorians call VDL. (Howitt, p. 430)

... the dregs of the colonies, ex-convicts from Tasmania and New South Wales for whom hanging would have been too good. There was no doubt they were scoundrels of the deepest dye to whom crime was a luxury. This was incontestably proved from the fact that although gold was so easily obtained, they would sooner steal and take the consequences of their crime than obtain money honestly by labour. (Clarke, p. 24)

Horse-stealing one of the most common crimes on the goldfields.

A tent, at the Old *Argus* Office Square, was cut through while the hut-keeper, a woman, was employed in fetching wood, and the whole earnings of six months hard labour in Gold stolen therefrom. (*Argus*, 5/8/52)

Outrages and robberies are still of frequent occurrence, and every day they become more and more daring. (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

All the letters [*Argus* despatches?] from Mt Alexander dwell upon the lawless condition of the place, and the deeds of rapine and bloodshed that disgrace it. (*Emigrant in Australia*, p. 66)

[Mt Alexander] ... in a most horrible state, for want of police protection; men challenging each other the whole night long; pistols and guns exploding; dogs barking; horses galloping about in hobbles, and in the midst of all this confusion and noise, the only ‘soporific!’ one has, is the knowledge that three or four real ‘vagabonds’ may be abstracting the gold from below his pillow. (*Argus* Geelong correspondent, quoted in *SA Register*, 8/2/52)

[William Hatfield—released from prison (serving a sentence for a felony) in mid-1852] It appears that he staid but a short time in Melbourne; and after supplying himself with numbers of rings and other trinkets, he proceeded to the Gold Fields. In selling these rings at night to the gold diggers, in their tents, he observed where they deposited their money and gold, thereby knowing in what direction to make his incision into the tent to abstract the same. For an offence of this nature he was soon apprehended, committed, and now convicted. On his person at Mount Alexander was found about 700£ worth of gold, besides notes, altogether, I believe, to the amount of near 900£.

He effected his escape from Gisborne on the way down to town, by breaking through the watch-house, and made his way into Melbourne.

On the second night after I again effected his apprehension. On his person was a large nugget of gold weighing 1 lb 3 oz 12 dwts, and about 175£ in cash.

He subsequently requested to see me privately, when he informed me that he had a ‘plant’, which he would make over to me, as it might be ‘sprung’ whilst he was in gaol, and he would sooner that I had it than any one else. I subsequently proceeded with him and some police to the heaps of broken stones prepared for the roads lying in front of the Government offices, one of which he proceeded to turn over, and abstracted three bags of gold, in weight nineteen pounds.

Thus was taken from this man somewhat about 2,000£ worth of property, collected in two or three months. (Edward Sturt, Superintendent of Police, Melbourne, to LaTrobe, October 1852, in *Further Papers*)

Now we have to sleep with loaded pistols under our pillows. All this, however, I rather like. (Letter of January 1852, in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 71)

[Sly grog shops]... are... infested by a set of pick-pockets and midnight robbers, who, sleeping all day, prowl about the tents at night to ease the hard working digger of his gold. (*Argus*, 5/2/52)

A tent was 'shook'—i.e., robbed. (Howitt, p. 232)

Possums were fond of tea-leaves—would enter tents in search of them. (Skinner, p. 102)

Self-protection

When one armed gang stuck up the owners of a tent and escaped with a large parcel of gold, the Commissioner had no police on hand to pursue the thieves. Angered at his powerlessness, he authorised diggers to shoot on sight anyone who tried to enter their tents. After that men indulged in a nightly salvo of firing to warn marauders a lively reception awaited them. (Blake, p. 63)

...in general all the men who went to work the gold mines carried a revolver, a sort of pistol with six bullets with which you very often miss a man point blank. (Chabrilan)

I always lay with plenty of firearms within reach, and my door barricaded with a heap of tins and kettles... (Howitt, p. 233)

... without any other protection than the bark of a dog. (Bonwick (magazine), March 1853, p. 205)

On these diggings there are the most huge, savage, furious dogs kept that I have seen anywhere. At every tent is chained one or more of these stupendous brutes; and you must be careful how you steer your way amongst the tents to keep out of reach of their chains. (Howitt, p. 188)

... the confounded bull and mastiff dogs chained to tents and drays, compel one to have the eyes of an Argus, to escape feeling their teeth. (*Argus* correspondent, 8/11/51)

A good dog is a priceless treasure on the goldfields because miners sleep soundly after heavy work—average price of a pup, £1, more for a grown dog; good dogs fetched £2 10s, £5, and even £10. (Korzelski, pp. 62, 122)

Dog thieves active on the goldfields. Howitt and party's dog was stolen—worth £20, would be sold readily for £10. (Howitt, p. 214)

Beauty [dog], also, had several admirers; and finding I would not sell him, one of the diggers attempted to steal him, much to my dog's disgust, and his own too; for Beauty's teeth met in his wrist, and would have stopped there, had I not run out, on hearing the uproar, and released the unfortunate culprit. (Earp, p. 145)

[Howitt's dog, Bob, was eventually carried off] ...by distemper and influenza, which rages here occasionally. In Melbourne they were carting dead dogs out of the streets by loads, and the disease has affected them throughout the whole colony. Poor Bob! (Howitt, p. 178)

I purchased a dog-skin bag at Bathurst. (Mundy, p. 610)

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It is dangerous being out after dark; indeed, few do, as it is a system if any one approaches a tent after dark to fire at them... Notices are stuck up to that effect, and it is generally understood. (Letter from Forest Creek, 9/2/52, in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 72)

... it was not safe to be moving about among the tents after dark; for if, by accident, you happened to pass too close to a tent, you ran a risk of being laid hold of by some watch-dog, when his owner would quietly put his head out and shoot at you, without asking any questions; so, not wishing to take any pills without the doctors advice, we waiting till daylight. (Rochfort, p. 53)

Everybody is armed to the teeth—if one really does run a risk, it is not from bushrangers. Every evening, rifle and pistol shots—infernal uproar—there are enormous chances of being killed by one's neighbours. (Fauchery)

The new arrivals—some of whom had possibly never fired a gun in their lives—frequently armed themselves to such an unnecessary extent, that they might very easily have been mistaken for bushrangers themselves, equipped as they often were, not only with guns and pistols, but also with daggers, or long knives, and wearing jack-boots and huge beards by way of imparting a ferocious aspect to their countenances. (Polehampton, p. 59)

Firearms were in great demand and fetched a high price at the diggings. Henry Boyle exchanged a 'pepper-box' pistol (one of a pair purchased in Sydney for 30 shillings) for a horse, which he sold next day for £25. (Boyle, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 119)

Fryers Creek

The 'Friar's Creek' workings, more especially, have been signalized by these infractions of the law... (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

... at Fryar's Creek... quarrels, dissensions, bloodshed, and danger of the direst description reign supreme. The government is palsied, whilst the ill-doer runs on a career of unchecked crime and rapine... (Letter from Fryer's Creek, in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 73)

[Three or four men] ...went into a tent belonging to a man and wife at Fryer's Creek, and while the husband was straining his eyes to get an honest nugget, these vagabonds, after a

vain resistance from the woman, tied her hands and feet to the bed fittings and gratified their brutal desires! [Husband offered a reward of £100, dead or alive.] (*Argus*, 8/10/52)

Fryer's Creek had already acquired a shocking reputation. 'Nests of crime' and sly-groggeries flourished near Murderer's Flat and Choke'em Gully. Diggers had nightly firing practice on the Flat. When a drayman was robbed and left tied to a tree all night, the miscreants turned out to be three constables from Fryer's Creek police station. (Blake, p. 64)

John Bowman, a Swede residing at Fryer's Creek, was accosted by five men on his way from Spring Gully to German Gully. He was held by the throat while one man cut out his trouser pockets, in which were 3 x £1 notes, some silver coins, and a digger's licence for November. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

Mr G.H. Wathan, the geologist, was a few nights since eased of a very valuable gold watch by a gang of robbers at Murdering Flat, near Choak'em Gully. (*Argus*, 10/1/53)

[A ruffian, sticking up Wathen on the road near Fryers Creek]... swore a deep convict oath that he would blow 'my bloody brains out if I looked at him. (Wathen, p. 142)

Illustration: 'View of Murdering Flat, Fryers Creek, Mount Alexander', lithograph by W. Thomas, in Wathen, p. 228.

A pretty bend in Fryer's Creek encloses the interesting Murderer's Flat. (James Bonwick, in *Bryce Ross's Diggings Directory*, p. 11)

The destruction of those nests of crime [sly grog shops] at Friar's Creek, soon made Murderer's Flat and Choke'em Gully associated only with the history of the past. (Bonwick, p. 28)

I never encountered a robber

So far I have given you an insight into the state of Melbourne and the road to the diggings. I will now give you an insight into the diggings; which are by far the safest places of the three. (H.A.K. ('a successful digger'), October 1852, in Mossman (letters), p. 42)

The various accounts of murders, or even of ferocious and unprovoked assaults, are, for the most part, purely imaginative. The great wonder should be, the amount of honesty and personal security that actually exists in a population plentifully besprinkled with lawless vagabonds from all quarters of the globe... (Gilfillan, pp. 160-61)

I met with many agreeable and intelligent men in coarse garments, with many rough sailors, and lots of queer fellows, but I never encountered a robber. (Caldwell, p. 102)

The diggings may be no Eden, but they are certainly not a Gomorrah. (Bonwick (magazine) February 1853, p. 161)

[Forest Creek] I will venture to say, that during my five week's residence among from 10,000 to 25,000 men of all classes here, there has been less disturbance than in one Ward of Melbourne for the same time. (*Argus*, 12/12/51)

In England, the gold fields are often described and spoken of as the most lawless spots on the face of the globe. This, I believe is a popular delusion. The law is more revered on

the gold fields than anywhere else. Self-interest makes it so, for it is felt that on the due preservation of order and authority depends the lives and property of the whole population. (Brown, p. 149)

... the government was of the Queen, not of the mob; from above, not from below... and therefore instead of murders, rapes and robberies daily, Lynch law and a Committee of Vigilance, there was less crime than in a large English town, and more order and civility than I have myself witnessed in my own native village of Hatfield. (Lord Robert Cecil, in a letter)

I may venture to say without fear of contradiction, that there is not a town in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, of the same extent as Melbourne, which would not produce as dark, if not darker deeds, were it placed as suddenly in the same circumstances. The only wonder to me was, how much order prevailed in such a mixed community, where gold was exposed in many shop windows, without protection, save a frail piece of glass. (Askew, p. 154)

So far from being all or mostly ruffianly, blood-thirsty, lawless, and 'Lynch-lawing' mobs, the miners are generally a most orderly, honest, and respectable class of people, and instances of improper conduct to any injurious extent are astonishingly rare where comparatively no kind of protection to person or property is provided by the Government. (D. McLeod, *SA Register*, 7/4/52)

[Nighttime at the Commissioner's Camp, Forest Creek, October 1853] No life is upon the scene save two sentinels who, with steady step and musket on shoulder, pace backwards and forwards before the Gold Office. Yes. The Gold Office. Talk of lawless diggers indeed! Why, here is a common broad-paling type of structure which a good stout fellow might kick to pieces with his foot; and yet in this wooden treasury is regularly deposited the Bendigo and Forest Creek gold prior to its transmission to Melbourne by escort. In this mere hut has been deposited ere now, upwards of half a million's worth of property, and the diggers go to sleep within a few yards of it as calmly as a vast collection of philosophers. (*Herald*, 15/10/53, quoted in Blake, p. 143)

Ovens Diggings—Commissioner Clow on the ground by 1/11/52— 'a more quiet, orderly set of diggers are not to be found assembled in Australia.' (Letter from digger, *Argus*, 4/12/52)

The Australian population have stood the test of gold wonderfully, and come out of the trial with honor. Their conduct, as a body, has been singularly orderly and submissive to the constituted authorities. (Fabian)

[Fears that crime and infamy would accompany gold rushes] Subsequent events, however, happily do not record the smallest approach to that state of lawlessness, and we find the Australian colonists quietly obeying the proclamations of Government, paying their tribute with good grace, and pursuing the occupation of gold-digging as leisurely as they would potato-hoeing. (Mossman, p. 9)

[Two diggers, having been apprehended working on a Sunday] They neither made resistance nor showed any discontent. One of them only said, 'Well, Sire, I hope never to do it again.' I at first stood quite aghast at this specimen of submissiveness in Anglo-Saxons and colonists, especially after all that I had heard of their independent and unruly

dispositions.... Mr Wright assured me that the police had never met with any serious obstruction in any act, however severe... (Lord Robert Cecil, pp. 19-20)

[1851-early 1852—Armstrong] ...attributes the passive submission of these rascals [sly groggers] to their being in great proportion escaped Van Diemonians.... These men, though bad characters, have a wholesome respect for the law from having been experimentally made acquainted with its terrors; and they dare not brave it openly. (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 23)

Police protections & the courts

Until the last few days the Government tents, which were opposite ours, afforded us some protection. Now we have to sleep with loaded pistols under our pillows.... It used to be very pleasant, after a hard day's work, and a good 'swag' of gold, to lay on your stretcher, and hear the hour called by the sentries, both soldiers and police, who were opposite us. (Letter of January 1852, in *Emigrant in Australia*, p. 71)

The two police stationed here have made a great change in this locality, and instead of the nightly cries of murder we only hear a distant report of some weapon during the night, and an account in the morning of some tents half-a-mile off having been ransacked. (*Argus* correspondent at Mt Alexander, 25/1/52, quoted in *SA Register*, 8/2/52)

All the letters from Mount Alexander dwell upon the lawless condition of the place, and the deeds of rapine and bloodshed that disgrace it. The well-disposed miners, and the colonists generally, inveigh loudly against the supineness of the Governor, whose conduct may perchance admit of some excuse, though we confess ourselves unable to imagine that any can be offered for it. An efficient body of police to keep order at the diggings would be costly, and that is all. It can no longer be pleaded that there is not money enough in the colonial treasury for such a purpose. The licensed diggers at Mount Alexander pay in fees an average of £600 a day... (*Emigrant in Australia*)

... the authorities at the camp, who, as they balanced the spirit and numbers of the defiant miners, were apt to judge of the police requirements, not by the proportion deemed necessary to protect the people, but by the force requisite to defeat them, should the mutual irritation come to a crisis. (Anderson, p. 18)

Digger dissatisfaction at the level of police protection on the diggings emerged early on. Protested that, given the amount of money being raised by licences, the Government was obliged to provide a commensurate level of protection. LaTrobe's hands were tied by the Legislative Council's refusal to spend money on the diggings, and awaiting word from London. When the NSW Governor received the go-ahead from London to spend goldfields revenue on goldfields needs, LaTrobe immediately initiated more commissioner/police stations. Diggers sceptically attributed this move to Government avarice (re. licences). Also, suitable and trustworthy constables were difficult to recruit during the gold rush.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED DRAMAS

ACT 3—SCENE 1—THE BLACK FOREST

Bill Bolter and Ned Slaughter (Vandemonians) are discovered, sitting under a gum tree, in earnest conversation, their horses grazing quietly near them.

Bill Bolter—Well, Ned, what news?

Ned—Trade's dull—there's little doing on the road my way. You Forest coves too, I suppose, find things a trifle slack?

Bill—Why only middling—that's a fact—our party did a little shaking in the nugget line this week; but not to speak of. The fellow made me laugh, he called out "police," when I requested him to stand; and swore as how he would report me to the 'thorities. What police? says I—what 'thorities? and then I put my thumb up to my nose, and stretching out my fingers thus, made him a sign, which well conveyed my meaning—Walker ['Be off!' or 'I'm off']. But who comes here?

Bill—Business, I hope. See to your poppers, Ned, and sneak with me behind this clump of trees.

Ned—*(Looking earnestly at the approaching horseman)*—Why, strike me honest! if it isn't Joe the Stifler.

Bill—Well, here's a spree.

Enter Joe the Stifler

Joe—What, Bolter! Slaughter! how goes it lads?

Bill—Well, queerish; how with you?

Joe—Bad's the word with me. Luck's gone against me altogether, and only last night I was sold completely; done browner than the brownest.

Ned—You sold!

Joe—I'll tell you how. I saw a beery chap flashing a lot of notes at Lyneton, just after dark. In course, I marked him for my own, and in due time managed the job, and took the roll of notes.

Bill—Well, so far, so good.

Joe—But here comes the bad—the cove who acted very decent, handed his money over quite perlite, and begged me, in so piteous a tone, to give him back a portion of his tin, to clear his way upon the road, that I consented and out of *my own* pocket—mark you—gave him five bob.

Bill—Not much!

Joe—Too much! for when I struck a light and came to overhaul the notes, they were all those—"Don Havanna's;" but never mind, I've got an idea—

Bill—But stop; who's here?

The gentlemen retire behind the trees. Two horsemen approach, followed at a short distance by a third. One of the travellers is tall and sallow, rides a good horse awkwardly, and appears to command considerable deference from his companion.

The third gentleman, as far as can be discerned in the distance, appears a sort of mongrel between a soldier, artillery man, footman, and constable.

Bill, Ned, and Joe (together)—Stand! Your money or your lives!

A sound of hoofs is heard, and the hybrid soldier, artilleryman, footman, and constable, is seen evaporating at racing speed.

Joe, Bill, and Ned—Come, stump up!

Dark Stranger (tremblingly): Why—you—don't—mean—to—say—that—you—w-a-n-t—my—m-o-n-e-y?

Bill (*Cocking his pistol*)—Or your life, if you'd rather part with that!

Light Stranger: Why—you—wouldn't—hurt—the—L-e-e-f-t-e-n-a-n-t G-o-v-e-r-n-o-r!

Joe (*Knocking up the pistol, which explodes and lodges three slugs in an adjacent wattle*)—Stop, Bill! Blessed if it ain't the cove! You're Sir Charley, ain't you, Sir? It's the werry man.

Ned—Hurt our best friend, indeed! No, no, honor amongst thieves! Off you go, your Excellency. Why don't you wear your hat and feathers, and then these accidents would not happen?

(Strangers ride on.)

Bill—I'd nearly shot him, and what a blunder that would be! A fine day's work, indeed, to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs! Three cheers for Sir Charles, boys, may he live a thousand years, and leave another so good behind him. Three cheers for Sir Charles, the true friend of the bushranger, burglar, pick-pocket, and murderer! Hip—Hip—Hurrah! Three cheers for the crawling police! Three cheers for Billy Lonsdale [Colonial Secretary of Victoria] and the five-and-ninepence a day [constabulary].

(The horses are caught, the gentlemen adjourn, and in another five minutes are deep in the mysteries of a rifled mail cart.)

SCENE 2—HOSTELRIE AT LYNETON

The two travellers in a private room, Sir C. sitteth himself on chair No. 1, stretcheth his legs on chair No. 2, and smoketh a cigar. The shadow sitteth on chair No. 3, stretcheth his legs on chair No. 4, and also smoketh a cigar. A conversation ensueth, which rather bordering upon what the profane entitle Namby Pamby, is scarce worth being handed down to posterity.

Sir C. (concluding)—Well, at all events, it was a mercy that they were only robbers. If they had been those rascally diggers we might have been ill used. I was a little frightened at first, till I saw by their manner that they belonged to the fine enterprising spirit of which we hear so much. The man who of old “fell among thieves” had to wait for his Samaritan; it is not every one who has the skill to find his Samaritan and his thief in the same person! He, he, he!

Shadow—He, he, he!

Sir C.—And the courtesy they showed me! How gratifying to find even here in that out-of-the-way place, so much fine true English sentiment, and to discover a stream of real British loyalty and love for the Authorities, even in the breasts of your bold and dashing foot-pads! Loyalty worthy of the mansion of your hospitable friend John Thomas; or only to be equalled in the office where our thick-witted toady-general blunders over the hints you give him and tries to give force to his paper thunderbolts! Noble fellows all! (*Takes his chamber candlestick.*) Heigho, I miss my evening overture! I wish I had my fiddle! Good night. (*Exit.*)

Shadow—Good night, your E—

Sir C. (re-appearing)—I heard one of those fellows say something about “killing the goose that lays the golden egg”; what the deuce did he mean by that? Don't know, eh? Never mind! I'll make a memo to talk it over with Billy.

(Exeunt Omnes.)

(Argus, 30 April 1852)

We were surprized [sic] while at work to day (Thursday [30/9/52]) to hear a tatooning [sic] on a piece of Tin, and found numbers of miners assembling round [calling meeting to call for improved law & order—esp. night fossicking] (Arnot, p. 126)

Public meeting at Lever Point, Forest Creek, in October 1852—4,000 diggers—procession to meeting led by impromptu band—meeting opposed proposed export duty of 2s. 6d. an ounce on gold, talked about licence fee, and proposed to complain to Government about police and crime on the diggings—delegates were appointed to meet with LaTrobe—talk of export duty disappeared for a while and Assize (Circuit) courts were planned. (Blake, p. 142)

Mutual Protection Association (or Diggers' Protection Association) formed at Mt Alexander meeting, October 1852. Chairman, Laurence Potts. (*Argus*, 14/10/52)

I have directed the erection immediately of a temporary gaol, and the necessary accommodation for the court at Castlemaine, at the junction of Barker's and Forest Creek. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 1/11/52)

Judge Redmond Barry began first criminal sessions at Castlemaine on 9 December 1852. Circuit court was an outcome of the October protests against inadequate government protection on the goldfields. (Blake, p. 150)

Judge Barry, opening the first Circuit Court session at Castlemaine, noted that within the period of 12 months from its discovery, there had been but one committal from the goldfields of Mount Alexander on a capital charge. Forty prisoners were then awaiting trial on lesser charges—no great number. [A reflection of law-abiding diggers or inadequate policing?] (Bonwick (magazine), February 1853, pp. 158-9)

The on-the-spot sentencing of criminals was seen as a good deterrent to the rising tide of crime on the diggings. Court was initially held at Castlemaine every two months. (*Argus*, 20/12/52)

Two men—William Larkins and Henry States—charged with stealing three bags of sugar, one cheese, one gun, a cask of rum from a tent at Bendigo (value £5) were sentenced to six years' hard labour on the roads, by Justice Barry at Castlemaine Circuit Court. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

James Haines found guilty of stealing a digger's horse, sentenced by Justice Barry at Castlemaine Circuit Court, to eight years' hard labour. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

The one man in the group which robbed John Bowman to be arrested was sentenced by Justice Barry to 12 years' hard labour on the roads, 'the first two in irons'. (*Argus*, 15/12/52)

Sly grog seizures

An Act to temporarily amend the Act governing the sale of fermented and spirituous liquors was passed by the Legislative Council in January 1852, imposing a £50 fine. Half of any fines to go 'to the informer or person prosecuting such offence, to and for his own private use...' (LaTrobe to Grey, 16/1/52)

[??] It was to be recollected that the penalty, half of which was to be given to the informer, was only indirectly received by him, as it was paid in the first instance to the Police Reward Fund, so that there was no direct temptation to crime on the part of the policeman. (*Argus*, 24/12/51)

... orders were given to seize all spirits, &c. coming up to the diggings... a whole brood of informers instantly sprang up... (Earp, p. 133)

The penalty was a fine of £50, half of which went to the informer, and here was a great source of revenue to the Camp officials which they were not slow to avail themselves of... Informers were employed, villains and perjurers, and in the guise of diggers let loose among the community. Henceforth no man's character and property were safe... It only wanted an official or an informer to say that a particular place was a sly grog shop, and it was fired and the owner arrested and fined. (McKillop)

[from Charles Thatcher's song, 'Laying Information'—]

As a digger then this trap himself disguises,
And then he goes into a sly-grog store,
Handles the things and asks their various prices;
He blithely talks about the Russian war,
Decants upon the policy of the nation,
And brings away a bottle of brown stout,
Then coolly, goes and lays an information.

... the most degraded amongst the constabulary—two Norfolk Island ex-convicts as I have been informed, [have] been engaged in entrapping, not the unwary seller, but the innocent digger, by tales of sickness, or by other methods, into selling or procuring for them glasses of spirits. (*Argus*, 8/5/52)

Henry Leversha ran a store at the 'big waterhole somewhere below... Johnston's bakery'—i.e., near Gaulton Street—when a township of tents sprang up there during the water shortage of December 1851. As a sideline, he sold brandy. A butcher named Conway informed on him when Leversha refused to give him a bottle of brandy gratis. Luckily, one of the constables was a shipmate of Leversha's and tipped him off. The brandy was removed from the premises the night before the early-morning raid. (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, pp. 13-14)

Early in 1852 (and earlier at Ballarat) commissioners and constables made 'a vigorous determined onslaught' on the sly grog tents—'uprooting'—'grog shop hunting'. (*Argus*, 8/5/52)

In the month of January, weak as the police force notoriously was, no less than between fifty and sixty seizures were made at Mount Alexander [for illicit liquor and gambling, under Acts enacted on 6/1/52]. (LaTrobe to Grey, 2/3/52)

First offence, liquor seized and £50 fine. Second offence, liquor seized and £250 [£100?] fine. Third offence, liquor seized, £250 fine and four months' hard labour. (Fauchery)

The law said that when a sly grog seller was *convicted* the liquor found in his possession was to be confiscated and the tent and its other contents destroyed. The officials ignored the law, and burned the tent when the owner was arrested, and before he was convicted. (McKillop)

When a grog tent and contraband goods were seized and sold, half the proceeds went to the constable or informer. (*Argus*, 3/5/52)

Police seized sly grog and it was said that grog ‘didn’t keep well’ at the Camp. (Blake, p. 63)

About 12 to 14 sly grog shops were burnt down at Forest Creek during the last week (*Argus*, 5/2/52)

This is conferring a real benefit to the diggers, for they [sly grog shops] are infested by a set of pick-pockets and midnight robbers... (*Argus*, 5/2/52)

[Golden Gully, Bendigo, 1852] When the police discover a sly grog shop they set fire to the tent and burn it with all it contains, for this reason the grog is generally kept in a small tent adjoining the one in which the proprietor resides, who of course knows nothing about the tent with the grog. (Snell, pp. 289-90)

A woman used to come up the gully selling hop beer at 6d. a pannikin—the initiated could get something stronger... The police suspected her and watched her, but no constable’s life would have been safe had he meddled with her on her rounds among her digger friends. (W.H.Wilson (American), in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 158)

In the Petty Sessions records for Bendigo in 1852, the majority of the prosecutions were for sly-grog offences. In fact they outnumbered all the other prosecutions combined. The same offender was repeatedly charged, and a fine of £50 appeared to have had little deterrent value. (Bowden, p. 26)

‘As for sellers, the certainty of income, so much greater than that won by most from the tumbled earth, justified the risk.’ Police and commissioners found it impossible to contain the illicit sale of spirits on the central goldfields. Forest Creek Chief Commissioner Wright wrote, ‘The profits derived from this traffic are so enormous that the infliction of the highest penalty allowed by law fails to deter offenders. (Blake, p. 142)

The celebrated coloured lady, Mrs Finch, from Adelaide, had her tent and stock burnt on Saturday last for grog-selling, and was ordered off the ground. (W.H., ‘Confessions of Another Gold Seeker’, Forest Creek, 25/1/52, in *SA Register*, 21/2/52)

[Referring to same woman] Twice in one week her tent was burned down by police, but another went up in a couple of hours. (Yandell, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 19)

[Bendigo, 1852] Saw police leading a woman in a cart with a cask and a lot of bottles, connected with a sly grog shop, I suppose. (Snell, p. 313)

There was a grog shop next to our tent that was burned down on Sunday night, and the men taken prisoners; and my mate next morning went scraping in the ashes, and found in a hole £80 in money. (letter from Mt Alexander digger, early 1852, quoted in Anderson, p. 31)

Armstrong led the raid on Henry Leversha’s store in December 1851 and, when he found nothing but a strong smell of brandy (Leversha’s friend the constable had broken a bottle the night before), threatened to handcuff Leversha to the stirrup of his horse. ‘I thought he would have struck me with his whip.’ The raiding party left, vowing ‘they would have me yet.’ (Leversha, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 14)

Went down with Mr Armstrong into a neighbouring glen to make a seizure of a sly-grog shop.... When we arrived at the grog shop we found a policeman already standing as sentry at the door, and others, carbines in hand, standing round. Mr Armstrong went in, ordered all he found inside to be handcuffed, and proceeded to search. The man, however, had been too much for him—we only discovered half a keg of port. However, the selling had been sworn to by a police spy, and so the tent was doomed. The culprit's own spade was used to knock his tent down, and his wife actually helped to pull the stakes out of the ground. All the woodwork was piled, and a glorious bonfire was made. The kegs and the tent were confiscated for the use of the authorities.... In the course of the day this man was fined £100 (it being a second offence)... These seizures are pretty frequent; Mr Armstrong tells me he has as many as nine bonfires blazing together at night in various parts. (Lord Robert Cecil, March 1852, pp. 21-2)

At Ballarat, in more lawless days, when Mr Armstrong had it entirely his own way, he used to collect a bundle of faggots, pile them up in the middle of the forfeited tent, and set the whole concern in a blaze—burning them out, as he expressed it, 'rump and stump', destroying bedding, furniture, merchandise, and clothing; and yet, even to this, unauthorised as it was, they never offered serious resistance. (Lord Robert Cecil, March 1852, pp. 21-2)

[Ballarat, November 1851] Mr Armstrong... has been engaged all day, accompanied by two troopers, each with a pistol in his hand, and a black fellow, in going from tent to tent, and enforcing the people to take out a gold license, whether diggers or not, including butchers, bakers, storekeepers, and others who are not diggers and have no inclination to dig... and this with a threat that, if not complied with, the tent would be cut down.... The selling of grog on the sly has been one cause perhaps, of taxing each tent in [this] way... (*Argus*, 21/11/51 (*ex-Geelong Advertiser*))

One of the last of the sly grog shops [at Ballarat] was demolished on Sunday last, upon which occasion the Sub-Commissioner (Mr Armstrong) gave us a specimen of his pugilistic abilities, by flooring one of the men who interfered with the police while engaged in their duty. This is the sort of man for the diggings, and had they two or three thousand such in the police force, they might have a chance of carrying even so wild a scheme as the increase of license. (Letter dated 17/12/51, in *Argus*, 24/12/51)

Armstrong

In 1848, Armstrong was an employee of S.G. Henty, Esq., at the Grange, in southwestern Victoria. (Flett, p. 442)

... formerly a Port Phillip squatter, had emigrated to California, where, after three years successful digging, I believe he had returned amply remunerated for his exertion. His knowledge of the system regulating the diggings in California rendered his arrival opportune; and to the judicious appointment of him as Commissioner may be greatly attributed the system and regularity which prevails in the working of these mines. (Dunn)

On 26 July 1851, Armstrong (then a returned Californian digger) was one of a party, which included Captain Dana and the native police, sent to Clunes to keep order (or to confirm discovery, according to one source) in the first flush of the rush there. They were soon replaced by Commissioner Powlett and a number of police. (Flett, pp. 437, 441)

In August 1851, Armstrong, as Crown Bailiff, accompanied L.J. Michel to Anderson's Creek (Victoria Diggings) to officially sanction the diggings there. (Flett, p. 34)

Armstrong became Sub-Commissioner at Ballarat in September 1851—formerly Assistant at Anderson's Creek, where he kept himself busy with prospecting and constructing an improved cradle. (*Argus*, 19/9/51)

Armstrong claimed to have issued the first licence at Ballarat. (Flett, p. 413)

F. Kawerau, applying in 1864 for a reward for the discovery of the Daylesford goldfield, told how Armstrong had 'paid us a visit to collect licenses' within a few days of their commencing digging at Wombat Flat, in October 1851. 'We knew nothing about digging, and we were very much indebted for instructions to Mr Armstrong at the time.' Before Armstrong's visit, 'We were there in considerable dread of Mr Armstrong at that time, and of course we acknowledged his authority when he came.' (Flett, pp. 398-9)

In evidence to the Rewards Board in 1864, Armstrong told how, in 1851, he had hunted down unlicensed diggers in new localities: 'I was aware that he was out in that neighborhood [Creswick], and I made it my business to go out every day, and it was only by the water being discolored running from where he had been washing that I found out his claim.' (Flett, p. 411)

When Armstrong was Commissioner at Ballarat in 1851, he constantly scoured the surrounding districts, as far afield as Creswick and Daylesford—in search of unlicensed diggers. Giving evidence at a Rewards Board hearing in 1864 re. the discovery of gold at Creswick, Armstrong was told that one claimant said he had been unable to find a person of authority to report his discovery to. Armstrong was asked, 'If any one had made a discovery they would have been at no loss to find you?'—'No loss to find me! I was as well known as the town clock there.' (Flett, p. 413)

Sub-Commissioner Armstrong sparked a protest meeting at Ballarat in early September 1851 when he forced a party of diggers off part of their lawful ground, threatening them with 'Irons' if they opposed him. (*Argus*, 11/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

Inspector Armstrong—'cruel, arrogant and egotistical'—was removed from Ballarat to Bendigo [Forest Creek?] for conduct for which he ought to have been obliged to leave the force. (Clarke, p. 36)

David Armstrong, appointed [at Mt Alexander?] 29/10/51—in March 1852 he was one of nine Assistant Commissioners at Mt Alexander (along with Benjamin Baxter)—paid £300 per annum, plus forage and rations (perhaps he thought the 'forage' referred to him, not his horse).

[March 1852] At least three actions pending against Commissioner Armstrong for illegal seizures—over-vigilant sly grog seizures. (*Argus*, 23/3/52)

He is a very striking man, well made, tall, uscular, with keen 'flashing' eyes, a splendidly clever countenance, perfect temper, and a quiet, fearless energy. His fame has gone far and wide through the diggings—he goes by the sobriquet of 'the flying demon.' He is a Scotsman... curt and shrewd... (Lord Robert Cecil, p. 23)

['Hermsprong'—Inspector of Police on one of the chief diggings. Formerly a blacksmith.] 'The arm which used to smite iron, now smote men.'... He was a huge

athletic fellow, and as remarkable for the brutality of his disposition as for his love of a bribe. He had a riding whip, famous all over the diggings, the thick end of its stock being terminated by a brass knob as large as a good-sized apple. This whip he called his GREEN APPLES; and this knob he exercised, without ceremony or remorse, on any skull that was audacious enough to question the propriety of his proceedings. (Howitt, pp. 219-20)

‘Monster’ Armstrong... was widely suspected of ‘protecting’ sly-groggers who paid for the privilege, and burning down the tents of those who defied him.... The ‘Monster’... was dismissed after two years [1853?] of what Howitt described as a ‘savage and corrupt career that would have disgraced the emissaries of a Nero or a Caligula...’ ...his parting shot to diggers... were the words, ‘I don’t mind being turned out; for in these two years I have cleared £15,000!’ (Bartlett, pp. 139-40)

His official salary was £400 a year. (May, p. 52)

Resigned his office in April 1852, chiefly because the Government have refused to put him in the Commission of the Peace, as they have done to all the crown land commissioners. Mr Wright thinks they have done wisely in this; to a stranger it does not seem so. (Lord Robert Cecil, pp. 29-30)

Armstrong was in charge of a police station (two or three days a week) at Taradale at the latter end of 1852. Went to Korong (from Bendigo) as Gold Commissioner in November 1852. (Flett, pp. 202, 283)

Police corruption/misdeeds

Police constables received half the fines imposed for sly-grogging and licence evasion [?]
—corruption was encouraged—bribery, blackmail, and protection rackets. Read estimates some constables collected up to £1000 in six months. (Blake, p. 65)

I regret to say, that the very inducement held out to the constable by our recent Act of Council to exert himself in the suppression of this particular offence, necessary and judicious as it might appear to be, would seem to carry with it the disadvantage of inducing the police to neglect, in the diligent prosecution of this branch of their duty, other functions equally important, but less remunerative. The fact is with some justice alleged as a grievance, and it is one which I feel it incumbent upon me to endeavour to remedy without delay. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 5/11/52)

... the temptation [for police] to neglect the ordinary, but equally pressing duties connected with the repression of disorder and detection and pursuit of criminals, which may be attend with no extraordinary and individual profit, in favour of those leading to the detection of illicit sale of spirits, the results of which under our recent law are so remunerative, is too evident. The fact forms a frequent and very legitimate cause of complaint at the Gold Fields, and will meet with the attention from me which it calls for. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 4/11/52)

It undoubtedly was a grave fault in Governor Latrobe... that he was so slow in taking cognisance of complaints, even when preferred under a weight of circumstantial corroborations. In fact, he was too charitable to believe derogatory accusations, and lacked that vigilant, energetic sternness of character which detects dereliction in the bud,

and punishes it condignly on the first commission of the crime. He... had 'no eyes to see' any offence directly, no ears to receive undiluted information. (Kelly, p. 15—and Kelly was a supporter of LaTrobe's)

At the Ovens in 1853, a constable assisting the gold Commissioner in sorting out a claim-jumping dispute, tripped in a mine cutting at the same time as cocking his gun (the jumpers were resisting the Commissioner's decision against them) and shot one of the diggers dead. The diggers were all for lynching the constable, but stood him on a cask and gave him a hearing. 'The man looked pale, but with a firm voice said, "I tripped."' Someone in the mob said he saw him trip; then they hesitated, and afterwards allowed him to go, a digger remarking, "I expect you will go down to Melbourne and be promoted.'" (Ross, pp. 80-81)

Camp-digger relations on the Ovens would appear to have been smoother than elsewhere—until February 1853, when the newly-promoted Assistant-Commissioner Meyer led a party of troopers to settle a claim-jumping dispute. Things got heated and the young Meyer too rashly ordered the troopers to cock their muskets and take the accused claim-jumpers into custody. One man was accidentally shot as a constable pursued him down the shaft. The diggers reacted murderously—a public meeting attracted 1,000 and demanded digger representation on a board of inquiry which should be constituted to look into the conduct of goldfields officials. LaTrobe had promised that the Chief Goldfields Commissioner, W.H. Wright, would investigate the diggers' grievances. Wright stalled on the inquiry, reckoning that, with diggers leaving the Ovens for Ballarat, the heat would soon go out of the protests. Bartlett wrote, 'Wright relied on his popularity and good humour to turn the edge of digger wrath. He had no understanding of the deeper democratic currents below the agitated surface.' (Bartlett, pp. 141-6)

The redeeming features of the officials and their administration are microscopical, and the evidence in favor of the damaging reports is overwhelming. There were some humane and honest men among the officials, but they were few in number, and were powerless to prevent the gold-laced tyranny, which was backed by a callous and grasping Government... Even military despotism in Russia today [1908] is more humane than that which existed on the goldfields in the fifties. Let every true Australian fervently hope and daily pray that never again in this country will a military caste or military domination exist.

...the 'jackanapes manners of these idle young scapegraces', as one writer puts it, were galling to the citizens and bred a hatred and contempt for Campism... They considered themselves an infinitely superior class. The 'sacred Camp' was a common expression of contempt... (McKillop)

A storekeeper on business at the Camp was rebuked by the Commissioner for not removing his hat whilst passing through the Camp. (William Ottey, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 63)

A Commissioner with his coat off, and wearing a large wide-awake hat was sitting under the shade of a tree on the Camp one summer day reading a paper, when a person of common clay rode past at a hand gallop on the public track near at hand. The Commissioner at once sent a trooper after the man and had him arrested for not walking his horse and raising his hat when passing the Commissioner. (McKillop)

[Two diggers, having been apprehended working on a Sunday] They neither made resistance nor showed any discontent. One of them only said, ‘Well, Sire, I hope never to do it again.’ I at first stood quite aghast at this specimen of submissiveness in Anglo-Saxons and colonists, especially after all that I had heard of their independent and unruly dispositions.... Mr Wright assured me that the police had never met with any serious obstruction in any act, however severe, and that their measures had been so severe that he had been compelled on his arrival to enforce a little moderation. In this spirit he was a little displeased at Mr Armstrong’s riding off from us to stop some fellows who were playing at quoits. (Lord Robert Cecil, pp. 19-20)

A false report was circulated about Geelong yesterday, to the effect that the troopers had fired on the diggers and that the mob had captured Captain Dana and Armstrong, and were taking them to Melbourne prisoners. ...I must say that I expect to hear of such a thing happening, unless better me be appointed in charge at the diggings. (*Argus*, 29/9/51)

Instead of going up there on the bounce [i.e. looking for a fight], and throwing out hints about ‘irons’, and calling them ‘blackguards’, they should have proceeded quietly and unostentatiously... [re. the conduct of Captain Dana and party on his arrival at the Ballarat diggings] (*Argus*, 29/9/51)

Sub-Commissioner Armstrong sparked a protest meeting at Ballarat in early September 1851 when he forced a party of diggers off part of their lawful ground, threatening them with ‘Irons’ if they opposed him. ‘And men—Englishmen! must bow down and submit to such an act, and be threatened with ‘Irons’, as though they were galley-slaves, or felons. It makes the blood boil at the base contemplation of being menaced, in such an ignominious manner. Irons! That to a free man? (*Argus*, 11/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

I regret to be obliged to admit that the ill-judged, if not improper, conduct of the authorities on the ground, in more than one instance, favoured, if it did not provoke, this spirit. (LaTrobe to Pakington, 2/3/53, quoted in Bartlett, p. 145)

If the Government Officers do not alter their mode of proceeding... they will accelerate a catastrophe, for which they will only have themselves to blame. (*Argus*, 11/10/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

William Westgarth was a member of the Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the goldfields (1856)—visited various goldfields. At Castlemaine ‘we had... a day’s duty to perform in the promised investigation of cases of complaint against the public officers. The long pent-up griefs and annoyances of the miners exhibited themselves in various advertisements by the roadside; some calling for public meetings to prepare cases for the Commission, others inviting all to come forward with anything they had met with of a condemnatory character.... [However] what we were chiefly assured of was that a system of irresponsible government answers very badly at the gold-fields, and probably everywhere else, with the British people.’ (Westgarth, p. 249)

Republicanism

Nothing will foster republicanism sooner than these golden successes. The Australian people will grow too independent for their rulers. (Letter from E.J., Geelong, 11/11/51, in *Illustrated London News*, 29/5/52, p. 430)

... living under the Russian despot cannot be reckoned a bit worse than living under the boasted laws of the British constitution... (Bryce Ross, letter in *Argus*, 12/6/52)

That which is put forward most prominently is the repeal of the gold licence; but, besides this, there is a strong feeling against the arbitrary treatment of the diggers by the Commissioners and police, and for an elective franchise—the principles of the British Constitution being grossly violated in the persons of the diggers, who are heavily taxed, and totally unrepresented in the legislative body. (Howitt, p. 216)

[Laurence Potts [who had been in California], at the same meetings] The Home Government do not require, or do they possess the power to enforce unjust taxation. It was such taxation that lost Great Britain, America... (*Argus*, 18/12/51)

There is now a surplus of £13,000 in the gold fund—money screwed out of the sinews of gold-diggers... And what is to be done with it? They say it is for the Queen! Has the Queen not enough? Does she want to buy more pinafores for the children? They will tell you her salary is small. I wish to God I had one-seventieth of it for my children... (Captain Harrison [Texan?], at Dec. 51 monster meeting, *Argus*, 18/12/51)

There is no doubt that the statesmen at home know just as much of our wants and wishes, as they do of the man in the moon; and the governors whom they appoint are just as fit to be our rulers as King Stork [tyrant] or King Log [weak] in the fable. ...the way things are now [August 1852] going on, I feel perfectly sure that ere long the feelings of doubt and exasperations which have taken possession of the people, and which, as I have told you, are fanned and kept alive by demagogues, will burst forth against the Government; and anarchy will, I fear, be the result. (Earp, pp. 148-9)

From what I saw upon the ground, and from the physiognomy of many importations from the Sister Colony I began to fear that the diggings will speedily retrograde into a state of anarchy. (*Argus*, 30/1/52)

... the Colonial Government seem to be doing everything they can to compel the diggers to break into open revolt... (Earp, p. 134)

There appears to be a most extraordinary demand for guns, pistols, powder and ball, and even cutlasses are inquired for. The diggers are generally the purchasers, and people wonder what they can want with such a quantity of arms [—'virulent treason' is a popular supposition]. ...it is not likely that the diggers are providing themselves with fire arms to shoot at the gold... (*Argus*, 10/12/51 (ex-*Geelong Advertiser*))

[E. Hudson, addressing monster meeting in December 1851, advocated passive resistance] ...but mind, keep your powder dry. (*Argus*, 18/12/51)

The Attorney General characterised the language of the diggers at the 15 December monster meeting as 'seditious'. (*Argus*, 23/12/51)

The first repulse of the Government officers, by physical force, on any of the Colonial goldfields, will never be forgotten till the Australians have abjured their loyalty, and are an united independent nation. (*Argus*, 29/9/51)

Every one thinks of himself, there is no patriotism, because no man looks upon this country as his home. All are in a sort of temporary exile,—the servants of mammon, that they may spend 'golden earnings at home'. (Howitt, p. 21)

I may prefer the old country, and so may any one who looks for the picturesque and the beautiful in scenery, and for a high state of intellectual culture and taste, as the chief ingredients of the pleasure of existence; but what thousands and millions are there to whom the main consideration is to live! (Howitt, p. 157)

Things will not last for ever in this way: there will be an outbreak here before many years. Nothing but separation from England is talked of. (Letter from Melbourne, 6/9/52, in Mossman (letters), p. 9)

[In 1852] William Peter, British Consul in Philadelphia, reported confidentially to the British Foreign Secretary that 'an arrival from Australia represents that the formation of a Republican form of government is contemplated there, and movements tending thereto are actually progressing, and a speedy declaration of independence of the Mother Country is expected...' Mr Peter then went on to say that a movement entitled 'The Order of the Lone Star' had been launched in the United States to 'extend the area of freedom' and 'to diffuse throughout the world the principles of Liberty and Republicanism'. (Bartlett, p. 10)

Not only the flags indicating nationalities but banners proclaiming one's loyalties were common on the goldfields. Texans, from the Lone Star State, had introduced their symbol which other Americans as well as Germans had adopted as a symbol of Republicanism. (Introduction to von Guérard, p. 21 (see illustration))

John Harrison, a former ship's captain and renegade squatter—ran up a red flag with a white star on it to assert his republicanism. (Bartlett)

At the 'indignation meeting' at the beginning of 1852 when the Bendigo gold commissioner refused to accept gold in payment for licences, a diggers' deputation (including Captain Harrison) carried a flag 'something like the Victorian Ensign'. They were followed by diggers marching seven abreast. ('Interview with a Pioneer' (W. Hamilton), in *Bendigo Advertiser*, 23/11/1901)

Captain Harrison called a meeting of gold diggers at the Flagstaff on 29/3/52, to 'fully explain the objects and advantages of the Victorian Gold Mining Association'. Captain Harrison's tent in Melbourne during race week bore 'the Star Banner'. (*Argus*, 29/3/52)

Among other things, the Victorian Gold Mining Association operated an assay office for its members in Collins Street—gold assayed by Dr Webb Richmond, Chairman of Mt Alexander Committee. (*Argus*, 15/4/52)

[Diggers' flag painted by artist-digger, William Dexter, and flown at the Red Ribbon meeting of diggers at Bendigo in August 1853—an earlier version was flown at 15/12/51 monster meeting. Dexter] ...explained the digger's flag... There were, he said, the pick, the shovel, and the cradle—that represented labour. There were the scales,—that meant justice. There was the Roman bundle of sticks,—that meant union: 'altogether,—all up at once.' There were the kangaroo and the emu,—that meant Australia, &c., &c.... 'There now,' he exclaimed, pointing to the digger's banner, 'that is what I call a real spaciment of what liberty is!' (Howitt, p. 224)

[Dexter, at the same meeting, reminded diggers that liberty is a two-way street) I have seen men on the diggings thrashing their wives. I don't call that liberty. [Dexter's wife,

Caroline Hooper was a feminist, advocate of the Bloomer costume, and friend of George Sand.] (Howitt, p. 224)

[By early 1853] Even Wilson [editor of *Argus*], who had made grievances part of the stock-in-trade of the *Argus*, regarded digger democracy with growing suspicion. Liberty, in democratic guise, might threaten other privileges besides those of squattocracy. The spectre of mob rule began to haunt the editorial office of the *Argus* as well as LaTrobe's study at Government House. (Bartlett, p. 147)

In spite of some violence of language, in spite even of some endurance of political wrong, we believe that there is sound loyalty to constituted authority at the diggings. (Bonwick (magazine), February 1853, p. 161)

Fawkner formed the Colonial Reform Association in November 1852—aimed at winning the vote for working men, and unlocking the land? (Bartlett, p. 147)

But the gold-diggers as such were not destined to become politically dominant.... Only about an eighth of the registered miners troubled to cast their votes at the first elections (date?). (A miner's right qualified its holder to vote.) (Morrell, p. 245)

Land

[SA Government set the price for an ounce of gold at £3 11s on 28/1/52] When a South Australian absentee adventurer bears in mind that every 22½ ounces of gold-dust that he brings back will buy him an eighty-acre freehold property of virgin soil, he will feel a mighty encouragement to industry and economy while at the Diggings, and an irresistible motive to return as soon as he has filled his bag with the potential metal. (*SA Register*, 29/1/52)

Of 30 Germans who have returned, scarcely one presents a case of comparative failure, and two have cleared £400 each in eight weeks... Those who have returned so successfully intend to buy land in the colony, and thus cement the ties which bind them to the South Australian soil. ...the great object of accumulation seems to be the augmentation of the paternal estate or the improvement of their farming operations. (*SA Register*, 14/1/52)

... the inadequate supplies of the Crown lands to the mining population, and the unfrequency of the opportunities afforded them for purchasing. This has been long a matter of general complaint throughout the colony,—a complaint certainly of a very strange character in a young colony of such extensive area, and one, too, that seems unfortunately to have occasioned much dissatisfaction upon the gold-fields...

The success of many of the miners,—a success realised probably after a season of great privation and labor—may very naturally explain this indication of a strong desire to acquire land and to form a settled home. On this subject the evidence is endless and the complaints universal, suggesting to the mind not only a most painful picture of the wholesale prevention of individual comfort and well-being to the population upon the gold-fields, but that in this neglect or inability a policy is being pursued most suicidal to the interests of the colony at large. (Anderson, pp. 19-20)

[Victoria] ...nearly its whole extent of 93,000 square miles, or 60,000,000 acres, handed over to 1000 squatters for a mere 20*l.* a year each?—That, with a vast population pouring

into the country, and who want to settle, there should be more than 60,000,000 of acres still unsold, and yet not an acre to be had?—That 1000 men, for the small aggregate sum of 20,000*l.* should hold the whole from the public, who would pay millions of money for it, and establish a population upon it...? That each single man, for 10*l.* a-year, shall enjoy on an average nearly 93 square miles, or 60,000 acres? (Howitt, p. 135)

And may we finally ask, on what principle the British Government has thrown open the gold-fields to the people of all nations, if it were not as an inducement to settle there? The gold is the property of the British people, and should have been carefully preserved to them, unless it were made an equivalent for some other benefit, which settlement in the country would be. (Howitt, pp. 135-6)

Wonderful would be the healing, ameliorating, humanising influence of a fresh, wholesome, agricultural life on this, at present, homeless and landless population. (Howitt, p. 227)

[from 'Song of the Gold Diggers'—Mary Helena Fortune (MHF)]

Then dig! 'tis for wife and babes,
We are marring beauties now,
But the time will come for the waving grain,
And our sons shall hold the plough!

Adventurers

LaTrobe, in his communications with Earl Grey and Pakington, commonly referred to the gold diggers as 'the adventurers'. (Perhaps he longed to be free to join them?)

... the proper conclusion of a study of the gold rushes. Scenes and characters differed from rush to rush, but all had this in common. They were adventures, adventures of the common man. ...it was upon the gold-seekers that there descended most the spirit of the conquistadores and the Elizabethans—not their lust for conquest, indeed, but their zest for the unknown, their carelessness of consequence. They were as typical of the nineteenth century as those other adventurers of the sixteenth, though they plundered Mother Nature rather than their fellow-men. (Morrell, p. 415)

Years after his gold-digging experience in the 1850s, von Guérard wrote, 'the gold-fields became a way of life and those who lived it became nostalgic for it ever after.' (von Guérard, p. 7)

... that feverish period of robust life, that has had no successor... (James Robertson, in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 48—writing in 1882)

In the life of a digger there is a kind of Gipsy existence with a charm that is indescribable; one cannot call it 'gambling' or a 'lottery' or 'speculation'. Whenever a digger was in any way successful, where was there a happier man? A feeling of continual hope permeates him, it never fades, and there are men even now [1887], who have been digging since the early days, though poor, in whom the feeling of hope still remains. The life is a life of freedom, which can almost be felt;—no rates, no shackles of any kind, in fact, it is a feeling that can only be understood by those who have experienced it... (William Ottey in *Records of Castlemaine Pioneers*, p. 61)

Alec Chisholm, who grew up in the declining gold town of Maryborough in central Victoria at the turn of the century, described a community ‘living on memories—dreaming, perhaps, of events of the 1850s’. (Griffiths, quoting A.H. Chisholm, *Mateship with Birds*, Melbourne, Whitcomb & Tombs, 1922)

—Would you like to look at the gold fields...?—asks Hilda [Leviny].

...To me the landscape is repetitive. The ghost-towns nearby through which we speed, like Fryerstown, are all alike: holes, ditches and hard, yellow earth. For Dorothy and Hilda this is the world of childhood magic: they grew up with it, like we with the legends of Rákoski-Szántó of the Törökugrató. (Kunz)

The eminent colonist W.C. Wentworth said that the gold rushes had ‘precipitated Australia into nationhood’. (Symons, p. 59)

i