

# Copeland gold deposits

## Mineral Resources

**Gold was first discovered in the Copeland district by Mr Saxby in July 1876, at Back Creek close to the site of the present township of Copeland.**

As a result of this discovery miners flocked to the locality and the population rapidly increased to 1 100 persons, of whom 800 were miners. Their wants were catered for by four stores and three public houses.

## Alluvial workings

The shallow alluvium along both branches of Back Creek were found to contain the precious metal, but unfortunately the deposits were soon worked out, the bed of the creek was narrow, and the gold content low.

The amount of alluvial gold won during the year of the discovery was only 1 500ozs, and then fell away rapidly to only 150ozs, being won during the following year.

A number of specimens were obtained – one of 8oz on the left branch near the Rainbow Reef and several others, including a nugget of 35ozs near the reefs on the left hand branch.

The method of working was by sluice boxes and the depth of the wash dirt varied from 1ft to 2.5ft, and the width from 2ft to 4ft.

## Reef mining

The alluvial miners, noticing that much of the gold was attached to water-worn fragments of quartz, immediately began prospecting the surrounding ridges for the auriferous reefs. The reefs actually being worked in 1877, the year following the discovery of the alluvial gold, included the Rainbow, the Centennial, the Mountain Maid, the Hidden Treasure, the Lady Lizzie, the Mechanics, the Morning Star, the Star of the South, the Rose and Thistle, and Lord of the North.

During the following year the extent of gold-bearing country had been proven from the Barrington River, through Copeland, to the Bowman River on the

northwest, a strip of country about five miles long. At about the same time, gold was discovered in various other parts of the district, viz., at the Cobark, Rawdon Vale, Boranel Creek and the Little River.



*Copeland region, c 1900*

The first gold lease taken up at Copeland was applied for on the 25th November 1876, and the first crushing machine, consisting of 10 head of stamps, was erected in 1877 by Messrs Driscoll and Watt on the Rainbow Reef.

Rich finds during 1877, 1878 and 1879, and especially the high returns from the Mountain Maid Mine, brought the goldfield into prominent notice, and the year 1879 saw the industry at its peak.

Unfortunately, the high hopes formed as to the permanence of the reefs were not realised, and commencing early in 1880 a great number of the disappointed miners joined in the rush to Temora, and only about 12 of the 51 reefs continued to be worked.

Following the discovery of gold in the district in 1876, many small mines were opened at Copeland.

Particular attention was directed to Back Creek, both on the right-hand and left-hand branches. The principal mines on the left-hand branch were the Hidden Treasure, Mountain Maid, Centennial and Lady Belmore.

Satisfactory yields were obtained from these for two or three years, but thereafter the industry





commenced to decline until in 1887 and onwards mining almost ceased in the area.

The following notes have been taken from the Annual Reports of the Department of Mines, and show the production of the above mines to the end of 1886.

Yields during the following years were negligible. Little information is available concerning the actual workings of the mines.

### **Hidden Treasure**

This reef was discovered in 1877 by Cameron and party. It bears nearly north and south and is well-defined, with walls of blue slate; average width is 2ft.

### **1879**

The reef has been tested to a depth of 200ft and in the three years of working 395tons of quartz had been crushed for a return of 828oz of gold.

Six leases were at work on the reef during this year:

No. 1 North (Bensusan and others) containing two parallel reefs; on one a shaft 45ft had been sunk, revealing a vein 8ft wide at the bottom. On another reef an underlay shaft had been sunk to a depth of 105ft, auriferous quartz veins being encountered at the 100ft level.

No. 2 North (Goundry and party) yielded a little over 2oz to the ton for 22tons treated.

No. 3 North; no production for two years work.

No. 4 North; no information.

No. 5 North; (Phillips and party) yielded 1.5oz per ton for 12tons of ore.

No. 1 South; (Saxby and party) were driving a tunnel to cut the reef at a depth of 30ft. No crushing carried out.

To the end of 1886 the Hidden Treasure mine had yielded 9 501 oz from 5 039 tons of quartz crushed, an average of 1oz 18dwt.

### **The Mountain Maid**

Discovered in October 1876 by Doust, Gill and Irwin, the reef bears ENE by WSW with a slight underlay to the south, with an average width of six inches.

To the end of 1879, 925tons yielded 7 664oz gold. Workings 180ft deep.

To the end of 1886, the Mountain Maid had yielded 8 819oz from 1892tons crushed, an average of 4oz 13dwt per ton.

The No. 1 East had yielded 2 766oz from 674tons, averaging 4oz 2dwt; and the No. 2E had yielded 4 500oz from 1 285tons, averaging 3oz 10dwt.

### **The Centennial**

Discovered in 1876 by Towns and party, the reef had an average width of 18 inches, strikes N and S with an underlay of 1 in 2.

To the end of 1879, 455tons yielded 664.5oz, four shafts 35, 40, 80 and 135ft deep.

Last two connected by a drive 100ft long at the 80ft level.

To the end of 1886 the Centennial had yielded 1 922oz from 1 202tons of quartz, an average of 1oz 12dwt per ton; the No. 1 South had yielded 1 334oz from 625tons, averaging 2oz 3dwt and the No. 2 South had yielded 999oz from 363tons, averaging 2oz 15dwt.

### **The Lady Belmore**

Reef worked since 1877, varies from six inches to 1ft in width, worked from two tunnels.

To the end of 1879, 362tons yielded 980oz.

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