

Major gold discoveries

This map of Australia shows where Australia's major gold discoveries were made between 1851 and 1900. The state and territory boundaries on this map are how they are today.

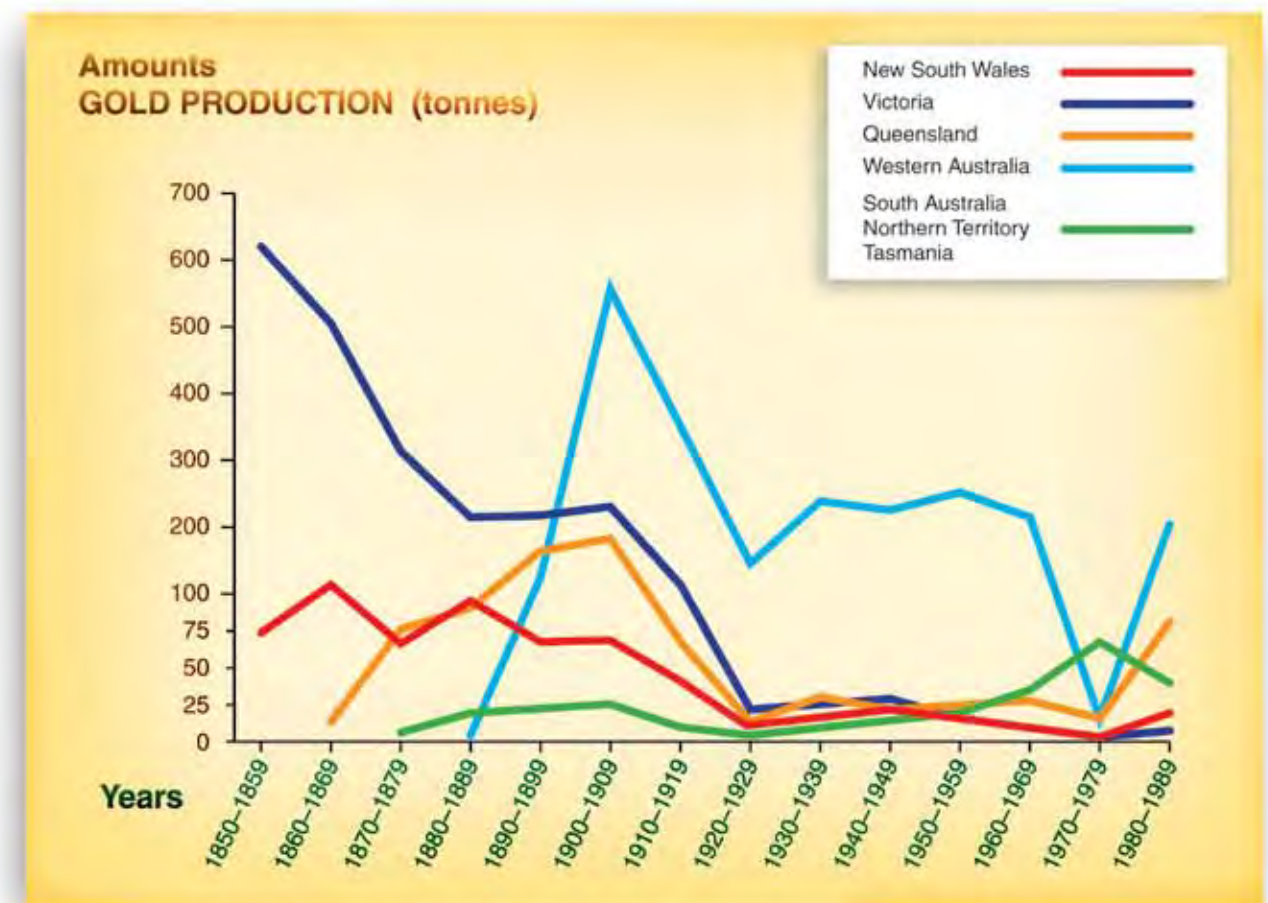


Gold production graph

This graph shows the amounts of gold found in Australia's states and territories between 1851-1989. Some states have never been major producers of gold, while others have changed substantially over time.



Families visiting the Kalgoorlie Super Pit mine on its 20th birthday



1851

12 February
Edward Hargraves and John Lister find five specks of gold near Bathurst, New South Wales.

14 June
New South Wales' richest goldfield is found on the Truron River.

28 June
Gold is found at Clunes in Victoria by James Edmonds.

22 July
The *Geelong Advertiser* publishes news of Edmonds' find and the Victorian gold rushes begin.

August
James Regan discovers the richest alluvial goldfield in the world at Golden Point, Ballarat, Victoria.

October
What will become Victoria's richest field is discovered at Bendigo.

1852

February
James Grant finds Tasmania's first payable gold near Fingal.

October
The first payable gold is found near Armidale, New South Wales. The first finds of gold in South Australia are made at Echunga.

Gold discoveries across Australia

Although gold has been found in each Australian state and in the Northern Territory, this does not mean that all have been equally productive.

During the first gold rush, Victoria produced two-thirds of all gold found in Australia at the time. In the first 30 years of the gold rushes, only tiny amounts of gold were found in Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.

By the time of the second gold rush, Queensland and Western Australia were approaching Victoria's levels of gold production. New South Wales had fallen far behind.

Today, almost all of the gold produced comes from Western Australia.



Gold coins

Kangaroo coins were produced as an unofficial **currency** in Port Phillip (now Victoria) in the early years of the first gold rush.



Gold coins

Many different countries have produced gold coins. The large coin in the centre dates from the reign of King William III of Britain and was made between 1694 and 1762.

Did you know?

4000 BC

This is when gold was thought to have been first used in parts of Europe.

3000 BC

Egyptians discovered how to beat gold into gold leaf to use in decoration, and to mix it with other metals.

600 BC

King Croesus of Lydia (now Turkey) produced the first gold coins.



This is an example of one of the first coins made from gold in Lydia.

New South Wales

In 1851, within weeks of Edward Hargraves' announcement, thousands of diggers were panning along Lewis Ponds Creek and the Truron River near Bathurst. The town of Sofala, named after a gold mining town in Mozambique, soon had hotels and stores to serve the diggers. At one stage, Sofala had a population of 12 000.

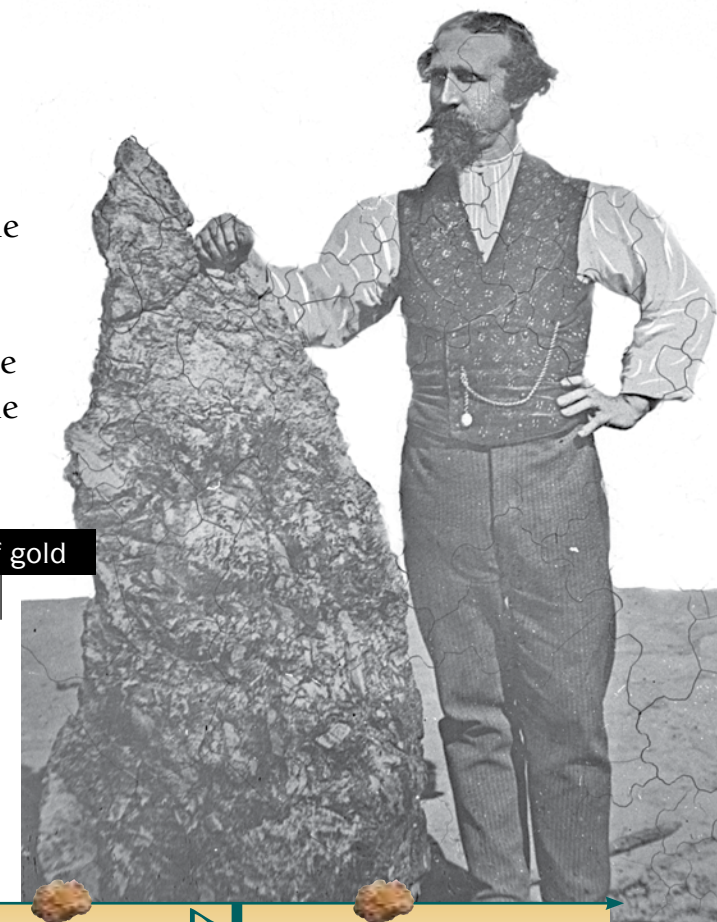
Alluvial gold was quickly worked out. The real success of goldfields' towns such as Hill End and Tambaroora came from deep reef mining. Although men had to sink shafts as far as 900 feet (275 metres) they were often richly rewarded. It was at Hill End that Bernard Holtermann and Ludwig Beyers found their remarkable **chute** of gold.

New South Wales may not have produced as much gold as Victoria or Western Australia, but it did pioneer goldmining techniques. New South Wales was also the first to use steam power. The first **stamper battery** in Australia was erected at the Old Company Mine, just north of Tambaroora.

New South Wales had the coldest goldfield at Kiandra in the Snowy Mountains. It also had some of the hottest, at Mount Boppy and Mount Browne in the west of the state.

At Hill End in 1872, a huge chute of gold was dug out of the ground from the Star of Hope Mine. Weighing 630 pounds (286 kilograms) it contained 3000 ounces of gold. Bernard Holtermann was one of the owners of the mine and had this photograph taken standing next to it.

Chute of gold



Golden stories

Ned Peters

Ned Peters filled his diary with poems about his life as a digger. He wrote about the hard work and his unhappiness about not finding gold. A pennyweight was a tiny amount of gold.

*We've tom'd and sluic'd and work'd away
From early morn till setting sun.
Just each a pennyweight as pay
For all the labour we had done.*

1858

June

The 'Welcome' Nugget is discovered at Bakery Hill, Ballarat, Victoria.

July

Gold is discovered at Canoona and the Fitzroy River in northern Queensland. 15 000 diggers rush to the site.

September

News of gold discoveries at Port Curtis in Queensland leads to a rush.

1860

August

Gold is discovered at Lambing Flat (now Young) in New South Wales.

1861

30 000 diggers rush to prospect at Forbes in New South Wales.

1862

December

Edward Stringer finds alluvial gold in the Gippsland Mountains, Victoria. The Long Tunnel mine becomes the richest in Victoria.

1866

June

Gold is discovered at Crocodile Creek in Queensland.

1867

8 January

The Queensland Government offers a reward of £3000 to anyone finding gold to support 3000 people.

Victoria

In the 1800s, Victoria dominated gold production in Australia and, for a time, the world. The first major discoveries were of alluvial gold near Bendigo and Clunes in 1851. Over the next 10 years, new fields were being discovered constantly. As many as 40 000 men would rush to a new field then leave again when they heard of something better.

Ballarat

Peter Hiscock was the first to find gold at Ballarat on 8 August 1851, but the field was soon abandoned. A second rush took place in 1852 and this time the diggers stayed. By the following year, there were 20 000 digging, puddling and cradling for gold. Once alluvial gold had been exhausted, diggers turned to underground mines. By 1864 there were 64 000 diggers working 300 mines.

Bendigo

Bendigo was even more productive. Unlike Ballarat, its wealth lay deep underground in rich quartz mines. At one time Bendigo was described as having 'a mine in every backyard'. For many years, the Victoria Quartz Mine was the deepest goldmine in the world.

Other goldmining areas

In western Victoria, Mount Alexander (later Castlemaine), Clunes, Chewton, Maldon, and Maryborough were all important goldmining centres. In the north, Beechworth had a population of 22 500 by 1857 and, over the next 14 years, produced 85 000 kilograms of gold.



A model of the 'Welcome' Nugget

This is one of the largest nuggets ever found in Australia. It was discovered at Bakery Hill in Ballarat in 1858 and weighed 78 381 grams.

What is it worth now?



The 'Welcome' Nugget was sold for almost £9000. At today's gold prices, it would be worth \$895 668.



Ballarat, Victoria

Ballarat's main street, photographed in about 1900.

Queensland

In 1858, there was a short-lived rush to Port Curtis in Queensland. Eager prospectors including about 8000 diggers came from Victoria hoping to make their fortune. But the first finds of gold were exaggerated and it was impossible to make a living. Many diggers could not afford to leave and the Victorian Government had to donate £15 000 to help them come home.

Gympie

In 1867, James Nash discovered gold at a place that was later called Gympie. Within months, 25 000 people were prospecting in the area. Deep mining began in 1880 and continued until about 1925. In the 1870s, gold was discovered further north, first at Ravenswood and, in 1872, at Charters Towers.

Palmer River

Diggers showed that little would deter them from seeking their fortune when they flocked to the Palmer River goldfield. The goldfield was extremely remote and uncomfortable. It was hot and humid with poisonous snakes and ferocious insects. By 1877, there were 17 000 miners on the Palmer River site, including 7000 Chinese.

Mount Morgan

The greatest wealth from Queensland gold came from Mount Morgan, near Rockhampton. Gold was found in the 1860s, but not mined. In the 1890s, Mount Morgan was the richest goldmine in the world.



A postcard from Mount Morgan



A typical sample of gold-bearing quartz from Gympie

1867

October
John Nash discovers gold at Gympie, Queensland.

1868

October
First gold found in the Barossa in South Australia. Gold is discovered at Townsville and Ravenswood, Queensland.

1869

The 'Welcome Stranger', the largest nugget ever found in Australia, is found in Victoria.

1870

14 April
First payable gold found at Gulgong in New South Wales.

1871

Payable gold discovered at Pine Creek in the Northern Territory.

1872

November
William Hann discovers gold in the Palmer River in far north Queensland. Cooktown becomes the port for these fields.

1876

February
Australia's most northerly goldfield is discovered at Coen on the Cape York Peninsula.

1878

Tasmania's most important alluvial field is found at Lisle by the Bessell brothers.