

# Gold diggers

The discovery of gold in 1851 brought great wealth to the Australian nation. People from all around the world flocked to the goldfields, hoping to find their fortune. Gold diggers were looking for a 'mother lode', which was a rich vein of gold.

## The gold rushes

When gold was discovered near Bathurst, New South Wales, in 1851, the first gold rush began. About six months later, gold was discovered in Victoria.

People from around the world began arriving at the Australian goldfields. In 1852, 370 000 people **migrated** to Australia. They came from countries such as Britain, America, China, Italy, Germany and Poland.

[Need pic of Edward  
Hargraves for My Story box]  
Lo-res



## A DIGGER'S STORY

in 1851, Edward Hargraves set out to find gold near Bathurst, New South Wales. John Lister, who had already found a small amount of gold in the area, guided Hargraves to the site. Hargraves found more gold and was the first to report the find to the government. He received a £10 000 reward, plus a regular payment for the rest of his life. He wrote a book about his discovery, but he did not mention Lister's name.



People rushed to goldfields during the 1850s, such as the Eaglehawk goldfields near Bendigo, Victoria.





Many gold diggers and their families lived in tents at the Mount Alexander goldfield in Victoria.

## Life on the goldfields

Life was very harsh for people living on the goldfields. Gold diggers and miners lived in tents that covered the countryside around the goldfields. Doctors were rare in the early days. Many women had no medical help during childbirth.

As settlements grew around the goldfields, many people built slab huts or bark huts in which to live. People set up stores and places to buy alcohol. Blacksmiths, tinsmiths, doctors and chemists opened businesses to make a living. Clergymen came to the goldfields to preach.

Gold diggers had to buy a licence from the government before they were allowed to dig. It entitled them to a 3.6-square-metre piece of land. The expensive licence fee had to be paid whether or not the digger found gold. This made life very difficult for most gold diggers.



Children of gold miners pan for gold in a stream.

## aussie fact

In Ballarat, Victoria, people can visit a model of a goldfield town, called Sovereign Hill. Visitors can pan for gold and take underground tours of gold mines. There are also stores and houses from the gold era.