

DRY CREEK-MAINDAMPLE-MERTON GOLDFIELDS

DATE

HISTORY:

- 1851:** Gold first found in Hell's Hole and Glen creeks in August 1851.¹ Hell's Hole Creek was the steep upper reaches of Tallangalook Creek - the diggings were for a short time called 'Wilkinson's'.²
- 1861:** Hell's Hole—These diggings are situate about nine miles, in a straight line, north-easterly from Merton (Big Hill), and comprise workings on three different creeks, viz., Hell's Hole, Dry and Branket Creeks, all of which rise on the Blue Range, on the boundary of Kellsall's station. Hell's Hole Creek is now worked for about four miles downwards from its source; but, with the exception of one party, who have just set in, it is at present entirely deserted. The diggings here, as well as on the other two creeks, are confined to the creek and its banks. The bedrock here is slate. This creek joins the Glen Creek at the Junction Station. The next creek in a westerly direction from the last mentioned one is the Dry Creek, which has been worked from its source to its junction with Hell's Hole Creek, a distance of about two and a half miles. The Dry Creek Sluicing Company, which is the only party working here on anything like a large scale, have brought in their water from the Branket Creek, a distance of over three miles, an undertaking which has fully occupied six men for eight months. A solid granite rock has in many instances been cut through, besides which there is a considerable length of fluming. This party may be said, comparatively speaking, to be only making preparations for working on a greatly extended scale. They are at present clearing the creek up before them, putting all the dirt, however, through the sluice boxes. They contemplate cutting a tail race in the rock in the bed of the creek, and fixing a permanent set of large boxes, and working the points and sides of the creek by means of branch boxes, all, however, falling into the main ones. There are three other parties at work here, who are entirely dependent on the sluicing company for water, as the creek is perfectly dry except in wet weather. A quartz reef lying between Hell's Hole and Glen Creeks has been worked to some small extent... No crushing has yet been had from this reef, as the nearest machine is at Muddy Creek (Yea), a distance of more than 40 miles. The digging on the Branket Creek, which lies westerly from the Dry Creek, is at present confined to the tableland; three parties are at work there, and are making fair wages. the workings are in the immediate vicinity of the creek, in made ground, the depth of which is about 15 feet; the whole of the top dirt is removed by ground sluicing, as having plenty of fall the parties have raised the water above them; the wash-dirt only is put through the sluices. A quantity of rubies have been found in the creek... the largest of which is the size of a horse-bean split length-ways, and much the same shape ... This creek has been worked about four miles from its source.³
- 1861:** Sluicers deserting Hell's Hole diggings for Jamieson, 1861.⁴
- 1864:** Dry Creek Sluicing Co., Merton, 1864 - employed 40 men.⁵
- 1866:** Hell's Hole quartz workings, near Merton, abandoned in 1866.⁶
- 1867:** About fifty alluvial miners at Hell's Hole and Dry Creek, 1867.⁷
- 1867:** Abandoned quartz leases successfully reworked at Hayfield (Ancona), 1867 - Northern Reef GMC formed 1868 to work Hayfield or Knobel Reef - battery - All Nations GMC worked adjoining claim from 1869 - worked until c.1873. (Sites now on private land)⁸
- 1867:** Numerous reefs found at Maindample, 1867 - no alluvial gold - two batteries by 1868 - because of the proliferation of mine names like Prince Alfred, Prince of Wales, Empress, Royal George, Duke of Edinburgh, etc. the settlement, about 1 mile south of present-day Maindample was called Royal Town - booming shanty town in early 1870s, serving population of about 1000 miners - official Maindample township surveyed 1875 - successful mining short-lived.⁹
- 1868:** New ground opened on Dry Creek, near Merton, 1868 - heads of Merton Creek worked 1869-70.¹⁰
- 1868:** 100 Europeans and 50 Chinese miners at what was called Strathbogie Diggings, 1868 - soon formed village of Dry Creek - nearly 200 miners, 1869 - 100 Chinese, mostly camped on opposite banks of creek, below township.¹¹

- 1868-70:** Peak period of alluvial gold production at Dry Creek, 1868-70.¹²
- 1869:** Steady returns from claims at Hell's Hole, 1869.¹³
- 1868:** Alluvial rush to Woolshed Creek and Prowd's Gully, Puzzle Range, 1869 - gold beginning to cut out at Alexandra, diggers looking elsewhere - alluvial fossicking, followed by small-scale reef mining.¹⁴
- 1869:** Rush to Growler's Gully, north end of Puzzle Range, 1869 - associated localities included Deadshot, Ryan's, Garibaldi and California gullies - substantial settlement at Growler's Gully by early 1870s, sometimes called Shetland Town - alluvial leads worked, then reefs - largest and deepest quartz mine was the Last Chance, at head of California and Garibaldi gullies, worked 1870-80s¹⁵
- early 1870's:** Crushing mill moved to Growler's Creek from Spring Creek (Alexandra).¹⁶ Dry Creek alluvial being worked by a great many fossickers, early 1870s - no quartz mining in Dry Creek area - no payable quartz found.¹⁷
- 1872:** New ground opened in Garibaldi Gully, 1872 - soon abandoned by European puddlers - Chinese took over claims.¹⁸
- 1873-74:** Chinese miners in the majority at Dry Creek, 1873-4 - MR complained that Chinese not revealing gold yields: 'in fact, were they willing to tender any information, it could not be relied upon, because they would only give such as suited their own purpose.'¹⁹ Redgum and messmate were timbers used in Dry Creek mining, 1870s - obtained no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from workings.²⁰
- 1874:** North-East Gold and Tin Co. sluiced bed and banks of Kangaroo Creek, 1874-5 - expensive tail-race - failed to find payable tin or gold.²¹
- 1875-77:** Perseverance Co., Perseverance Reef, Mairdample, 1875-7.²²
- 1876:** Antimony lode being prospected at Merton, September 1876.²³
- Late 1870's:** Dry Creek GMC sluiced Dry Creek township area to bedrock, late 1870s - employed many Chinese.²⁴
- 1877:** Alluvial gold production at Dry Creek declining by 1877; attention began to shift to highlands - reef prospecting.²⁵
- 1877:** Chinese party got £6,000 of gold in a short time from reef workings on the Tableland, 1877.²⁶
- 1877:** Meade's Unee claim at Table Land (site of later Golden Mountain mine), 1877 - 10-head battery, 30-ft diameter waterwheel, water-races from Kangaroo and Branket creeks, tramway - quarries on hillside, shaft and tunnel - engine added 1879 - 3,300 oz obtained, 1877-85.²⁷
- 1879:** Alpine Co. sluicing at Dry Creek, 1879.²⁸
- 1879:** From 1879, Perseverance Co. mined slopes above Clear Creek, about one mile from Unee mine, Tallangalook.²⁹
- 1880:** Alluvial mining improving, 1880 - rush to lower part of Hell's Hole Creek, near Doon - New Woolshed Co., on Glen Creek, cutting tail-race.³⁰
- 1883:** Hit or Miss Co., on slopes above Black Charley's Creek (about 2 miles north of Tallangalook), 1881-3 - working by tunnel - battery, water-races, tramways.³¹
- 1883:** All Nations/Ancona Co., Hayfield, 1883 - battery erected, then collapsed - 'usual mismanagement'.³²
- 1885:** No-Liability company formed to work Unee mine on an extensive scale, 1885 - minor operations only.³³
- 1886:** Party working Try Again Reef, Mairdample, 1886.³⁴

- 1888:** Hell's Hole Creek renamed Tallangalook creek, 1888.³⁵
- 1888:** Viceroy Co., west side of the Paps, near Maindample, erected battery, 1888.³⁶
- 1888:** Abandoned reefs between Glen Creek and Tallangalook Creek taken up, 1888 - trial crushing at Footscray.³⁷
- 1888+:** Claims taken up in vicinity of original Unee workings, 1888+ - Tallangalook GMC, New Tallangalook GMC - worked by open cuts on hillside.³⁸ Branket Black Ore mines, 1888-97 - main claims were Branket Black Ore GMC (1889-91) and Branket No. 1 GMC (1890-97) - former had battery on flats about 500 ft from its two shafts, driven by Pelton wheel, race from Branket Creek - proposed to roast ore (kiln?) - quartz laced with dark sulphide minerals.³⁹
- 1889:** New Tallangalook GMC, Table Land, 1889 - erected 10-head battery, Pelton wheel, Watson and Denny's pans - plant on Hell's Hole Creek, below open cut.⁴⁰
- 1889:** Successful prospecting, leases taken up on Branket and Raspberry Spurs, 1889 - Pelton-wheel battery at Glen Creek - Star of the Glen mine - worked successfully 1889-94, then less successfully until 1918.⁴¹
- Late 1880's:** Dry Creek township and diggings diminished during late 1880s; future Tallangalook township grew.⁴²
- 1889:** 'A few persevering Chinamen' still working old Dry Creek, 1889.⁴³
- 1891-94:** Bonnie Doon mine, 1891-4 - battery - also Bonnie Doon South GMC - both mines abandoned due to water at 80 ft.⁴⁴
- 1891:** Unee mine sold to a Ballarat & Creswick group, c.1891 - Golden Mountain GMC formed - plan to work on an extensive scale - issued 60,000 shares at 2/- each - first crushing disappointing - only minor operation ensued - operations ceased 1893 - total gold production approx. 300 oz.⁴⁵
- 1892-96:** New Golden Mountain GMC, 1892-6 - installed roller-crushing machinery and cyanide plant - cost £4,000 - unsuccessful - less than 300 oz gold.⁴⁶
- 1894:** Mining population of Dry Creek area in 1894 was 37 Europeans and eight Chinese.⁴⁷
- 1897:** Golden Phoenix GMC took over Golden Mountain claim, 1897 - reverted to conventional crushing plant - dismantled old Unee waterwheel and battery - ceased operations 1903 - total production 1,300 oz gold - signalled end of serious mining activity on the mountain - thereafter small-scale mining and prospecting.⁴⁸
- 1903:** Five Maindample quartz mines working, 1903 - Welcome Co. the largest.⁴⁹
- Branket Co., Hayfield and Merton, tunnelling and prospecting for the black ore lode, 1903.⁵⁰

Early 1900's:	Small-scale operations at Tallangalook in early 20thC included Golden Mountain Co., 1902-7; Lunatic Co., 1903; Tallangalook Extended, 1902-3; Yum Yum Syndicate (battery, Branket Creek), 1909; and Matchless Syndicate, 1908-18. ⁵¹
1903:	Lunatic mine, Tallangalook, 1903 - being worked by open cut - reef poor - similar work at Golden Phoenix. ⁵²
1907:	Pump hydraulic sluice plant commenced at Branket Creek, 1907 - one of first on Goulburn River catchment, as dredge mining was restricted on that river and its tributaries because of local opposition to its deleterious effects on water and agriculture - Sludge Board inquiry held in 1906-7 to consider whether dredge mining should be allowed to proceed in region - found that hydraulic sluicing, without elevation, had been carried out for years in Tallangalook and Dry Creeks, without major ill-effects to waterways - Sludge Board could see no reason why applications for dredging leases on Goulburn tributaries should not be 'dealt with on their merits' - ie., approved. ⁵³
1909-18:	Collegian Bucket Dredge, Dry Creek, 1909-18 - successful results - lease of 202 acres, average depth of ground 15 ft. ⁵⁴
1912-18:	Main Reef GMC working Welcome claim, Maindample, 1912-18 - winding plant, 11-head battery, cyanide plant - plant removed 1918 (nothing visible today). ⁵⁵
1914-22:	Prospecting at Tallangalook by Golden Mountain Development Syndicate, 1914-22 - unsuccessful. ⁵⁶
1917:	Two sluicing claims at Dry Creek, Bonnie Doon, 1917. ⁵⁷
1925-27:	Prospecting at Tallangalook by English Syndicate, 1925-7 - unsuccessful. ⁵⁸
1930's:	Alluvial mining on lower reaches of Glen Creek, 1930s - tent settlement. ⁵⁹
mid 1930's:	Rush to Ancona, c. mid-1930s - alluvial lead on private land. ⁶⁰
1937:	Two sluicing parties at Dry Creek, Bonnie Doon, 1937. ⁶¹
1937-38:	Golden Mountain, Tallangalook - tunnelling - complex ores carry scorodite and arsenopyrite - crushing suspended pending investigation of new treatment methods. ⁶² Maindample Syndicate working Two Jims lease, 1937-8. ⁶³
1940's+:	Crystal King quartz mine, Tallangalook, 1940s+ - mine commenced in response to demand for piezo-electric quartz for frequency controls in radio transmitters - also used in power stations, electric clocks, microphones, gramophones, etc. - worked by shafts and shallow pits. ⁶⁴
1950's:	Golden Mountain claim, 1950s? - diamond drilling carried out - results not encouraging - sporadic interest since. ⁶⁵

SOURCES:

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MAPS:

- 'Goldfields Map 40', 1858, Benalla Survey Office.

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- 1 Flett, pp. 120-21
- 2 Wylie (a), p. 5
- 3 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Kilmore Division), January 1861
- 4 Mining Surveyors' Reports (West Buckland Subdivision), August & October 1861
- 5 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Jamieson Subdivision), December 1864
- 6 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Jamieson Subdivision), December 1866
- 7 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Jamieson Subdivision), March & September 1867
- 8 Wylie (a), p. 19
- 9 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Jamieson Subdivision), September 1867; (Jamieson North Subdivision) March 1868; Wylie (a), p. 27
- 10 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Jamieson North Subdivision), March 1868; Flett
- 11 Wylie (a), p. 5
- 12 Wylie (a), p. 7
- 13 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Jamieson North Subdivision), September 1869
- 14 Wylie (a), pp. 41-2
- 15 Wylie (a), pp. 38-9
- 16 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision), September 1870
- 17 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), June 1874
- 18 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision), March & September 1872
- 19 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), December 1873 & September 1874
- 20 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), September 1874
- 21 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), December 1874, September & December 1875
- 22 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision)
- 23 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision), September 1876
- 24 Wylie (a), p. 8
- 25 Wylie (a), p. 8
- 26 Wylie (a), pp. 8-9 (quoting *Mansfield Guardian*, June 1877)
- 27 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), December 1877; Wylie (a), pp. 9-10
- 28 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), December 1879
- 29 Wylie (a), p. 18
- 30 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), June & December 1880
- 31 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), September 1881 to September 1883
- 32 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision), March & June 1883; Wylie (a), p. 21
- 33 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), September 1885 to 1887; Wylie (a), p. 11
- 34 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision), June 1886
- 35 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), September 1888
- 36 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Alexandra Subdivision) June 1888
- 37 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), September 1888
- 38 Wylie (a), p. 13
- 39 Wylie (a), pp. 16-17
- 40 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), June 1889
- 41 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), December 1889; Wylie (a), p. 17

42 Wylie (a), p. 11
43 Mining Surveyors' Reports (Dry Creek Subdivision), December 1889
44 Wylie (a), p. 18-19
45 Wylie (a), pp. 11, 15
46 Wylie (a), p. 15
47 Wylie (a), p. 22
48 Wylie (a), p. 15
49 Department of Mines Annual Report, 1903
50 Department of Mines Annual Report, 1903
51 Wylie (a), p. 15; Department of Mines Annual Reports, 1903, 1909
52 Department of Mines Annual Report, 1903
53 Department of Mines Annual Report, 1907, pp. 74-6
54 Department of Mines Annual Reports, 1909-10; Wylie (a), p. 23
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58 Wylie (a), p. 16
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62 *Mining and Geological Journal*, January & July 1938
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65 Wylie (a), p. 16