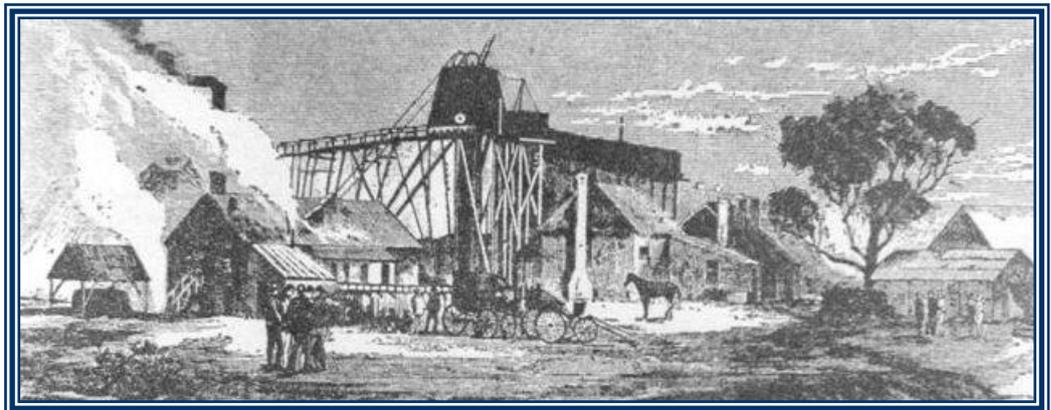


Australasian No. 2 Deep Lead Mine Historic Area

Visitor Guide



A quiet pensive place, little remains today above ground to indicate the industry, wealth and tragedy that unfolded here at the site of the 'new' No. 2 mine shaft. Miners risked the dangers of injury or death daily and the *New Australasian Gold Mining Company*, number two shaft disaster claimed the lives of 22 miners remains as Australia's worst gold mining disaster.



Speculation and prosperity

The Australasian Mining Company (sometimes called Australasia Mining Company) began prospecting in 1867 and soon discovered the Australasian Lead. Within twelve months returns were being paid to investors. The lead was rich but this first shaft (Australasia No.1) was abandoned after nearly ten years due to mine shafts flooding.

A new company, the *New Australasian Gold Mining Company*, was formed in 1878 and a second 'new' shaft (Australasian No.2) was sank 80m down and about 200m away from No1.

Disaster strikes

In the early hours of December 12, 1882 work was progressing in a drive connected to the second shaft. Without warning water began flooding the drive – the miners had accidentally broken into abandoned workings full of water.

The miners ran back along the drive towards the shaft, frantically tapping on the air pipes to warn others and trying to beat the black torrent of water rushing behind them. Only five miners could out-race the rising water, and climbed the ladder of the shaft more than 80 metres to the surface to raise the alarm.

The boiler men sprung into action and stoked their boilers to the maximum, as much power was needed now to pump the water out quickly, or the twenty-seven miners below would drown.

Visiting the Reserve

The winding gear, poppet head and boilers have long gone. The depression of the No.2 shaft can be seen beside the mullock heap. A cairn and oak trees mark the tragic site. There are several kilometres of tunnels beneath you.

Try to imagine the noise of the engines, the shouting of the men, the confusion and panic and anxiety of the miners and two thousand strong crowds waiting over those fateful days.



Miners at the site circa 1882. A similar structure (with an underground tour) is reproduced at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat.

Location and access

The Mine is reached from route C291. Left turn onto Australasian Road on the north side of Creswick just past the cemetery. Continue on past the Australasia No 1 Mine Historic Area site to the Australasian No.2 D.L.M.H.A carpark.



Further information

Parks Victoria
Information Centre
13 1963
or visit the website
www.parks.vic.gov.au

Parks Victoria Office
La Gerche Gully
Sawpit Road
Creswick
Ph: 13 1963

Visitor information centres

Ballarat

Visitor Information Centre
Lydiard St
Ballarat Vic 3350
Toll Free: 1800 44 66 33

Creswick

Visitor Information Centre
Albert St
Creswick Vic 3363
Tel: (03) 5345 1114

Daylesford Regional

Visitor Information Centre
Vincent St
Daylesford Vic 3460
Toll Free: 1800 454 891

Caring for the environment

Help us look after this area
by remembering these
guidelines:

Please take rubbish away
with you for recycling and
disposal

Dogs must be on leads

Fire

The Australasian Mine and
surrounding parks are in
the **Central
Total Fire Ban District**

It is your responsibility to
know if it is a day of
Total Fire Ban

If in doubt call the **Victorian
Bushfire Information
Line: 1800 240 667**

No fires/flames,
(including gas or fuel
stoves/lanterns in tents)
may be lit on days of
Total Fire Ban.

Park Closures

Be prepared to leave early
as **extreme weather may
cause the closure of some
park areas** for public safety.

Rescue

News of the tragedy spread quickly. Men, women and children flocked to the site. The Creswick Advertiser reported at least two thousand people stood around the shaft and on the mullock heap, anxiously waiting for any news from below.

Divers from the HMS Cerberus at Williamstown were rushed to the site by train only to find their air pipes were far too short. After one of the fastest train journeys on record more air pipes were ferried to the site but to the large crowd's dismay, the diver's suits were too small, and so early rescue hopes were dashed.

On the third day, the level of the water was finally low enough for a rescue team to enter the mine.

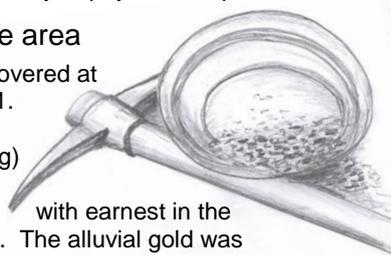
They found twenty-two of the miners drowned. Some had left messages scratched on their Billy cans to their loved ones above. The five survivors told how they stayed clinging to the sides of a 'jump up' in darkness. The 'bad' air was too low in oxygen to keep candles alight. They had sung hymns to lift each other's spirits, but could not stop their colleagues slipping into unconsciousness and sliding into the dark water.

Laid to rest

The funeral for the 22 lost was the biggest ever seen in Creswick. More than 4,000 people took part in the procession, including 2,000 from the Miners Association. Another 15,000 people lined the road from the New Australasian Mine to the Creswick Cemetery to pay their respects.

Mining in the area

Gold was discovered at Clunes in 1851. Alluvial (surface mining) began immediately with earnest in the Creswick area. The alluvial gold was exhausted within the first few years.



Some mining terms explained

Shafts (holes dug vertically from the surface to the stream bed) were sunk to depths of up to 200 metres through the basalt.

Drives (tunnels dug horizontally along the underground streams) were then worked by the miners to recover the gold. Drives could be up to 3 kilometres long.

Jump Ups were spaces dug beside the drive like a small cave, so miners could avoid machinery.

Deep Lead Mining

This method began around the 1860's in this area. Volcanic activity in this area had covered many rivers and streams under a thick layer of basalt rock. Using massive equipment and a lot of investment, mining companies would drill down through the basalt to find the gold lead (the buried river of gold). Shafts were sunk once gold bearing reefs were located. Water had to be pumped out continually to allow miners' access to these deep, gold-bearing river beds.

Around the area

The Creswick and Ballarat area has many places to visit for both natural and historical significance. Sovereign Hill has a reproduction of the mine and its disaster among its many authentic gold heritage attractions.

Anderson's Mill

Just 15 minutes from Creswick, this historic bluestone flour and oat mill provided staple foods for generations of miners and mining communities.



Buried Rivers of Gold Heritage Trail

A self-drive tour of the sights and stories from the district's gold mining history and settlement. A booklet and CD is available from the Creswick Interpretative Centre and Creswick Museum.

Creswick Museum

Located in the old town hall, a fascinating collection of historical records and mining history as well as paintings by the Lindsay family is held here. Open weekends and most public holidays 11.00am to 3.30pm

www.creswickmuseum.org.au

Creswick Regional Park

This Park is home to a variety of native wildlife, colourful spring flowers and myriad walking tracks. Take a picnic lunch and pan for gold in Slaty Creek, fish, canoe or stroll around St Georges Lake. Explore the historic plantations on the La Gerche walking track, or 'step onto' the Goldfields Trail. For details on the Goldfields Trail visit www.gdt.org.au



For further information on these and other attractions of the area be sure to call into the Creswick, Daylesford and Ballarat Visitor Centres.



Updated July 16, 2012