Maldon Historic Area

Visitor Guide

Located in and around Maldon township, Maldon Historic Area protects many relics of the gold mining era - abandoned shafts and tunnels, mullock heaps, quartz roasting kilns, stone walls, chimneys and machinery - as well as the Box and Ironbark forests once threatened by the constant demand for timber to feed steam boilers and shore up mine tunnels. The historic area lies within the Country of the Jaara Jaara people.

A town with a past

Alluvial gold was discovered in the Maldon district by Captain John Mechosk, a German prospector, in 1853, resulting in a rush of some 20,000 diggers to the alluvial gullies around Maldon. By the following year, only 2000 remained.

After the initial rush, companies were set up to mine the rich, but sometimes elusive, quartz reefs. Some alluvial mining was carried out using puddling machines powered by horse or steam. In the 1860s the amount of quartz reef gold produced at Maldon almost rivalled Bendigo (Victoria’s richest quartz mining field).

This prosperity was short lived (from 1870-1900), and the last deep mines closed in 1926.

As gold production declined, the town’s population dwindled. For most of the last century, Maldon experienced very little growth.

The miners left behind one of the best collections of accessible quartz reef mining relics in Victoria. Many of the mine sites, historic buildings and heritage features have been preserved.

In the 1990s Triad Minerals NL and Alliance Gold NL extracted 60,000 ounces of gold from the open cut at Union Hill. Current mining and exploration licences cover the Historic Area. This period of mining is part of Maldon Historic Area’s recent history.

Facilities and accommodation

Picnic areas are located at Butt’s Reserve, North British Mine, South German Mine, Carman’s Tunnel and Mt Tarrengower. Camping is permitted at Butt’s Reserve, but there are few facilities. Bed and breakfast, self contained cottages, hotel and motel accommodation is available in Maldon. Caravan parks are located at Maldon, Welshmans Reef and Baringhup.

For more information call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au
Notable Maldon mines

The Beehive Chimney, a town landmark built in 1862, is 30 metres high and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. It is surrounded by an 1850s open-cut mine, winding, pumping and battery engine footings from 1860-1870s and the remains of a chlorination and cyanidation plant from the mine’s last active period.

South German Mine is known for its early use of cyanide and chlorination works to extract gold.

Carman’s Tunnel was built in 1882 for the Great International Quartz Mining Co NL. The tunnel is unusually wide and high. Regular guided tours are available.

North British Mine was the largest, most profitable and longest operating mine in Maldon, ceasing operation in 1926. The surviving structures represent the most comprehensive set of mining foundations in Victoria.

Recent mining activity can be seen from viewing platforms at Union Hill and the Porcupine Flat treatment plant. At Union Hill modern mining technology has been used to construct the open cut and rehabilitate the hillside with native trees grown from locally collected seed.

The Box-Ironbark forest

Once important to the miners for timber and firewood (Fentemens Mine needed 50 tons of dry firewood each week), the bush is now a valued part of Victoria’s Box-Ironbark forests.

Eighty-three percent of Victoria’s original Box-Ironbark forest has been cleared. These remnants support a diverse range of native plants and animals, including many threatened native species.

Mount Alexander Diggings Trail

Stroll around Maldon today and evidence of the gold rush is everywhere - in the buildings and in the surrounding bushland.

The Mount Alexander Diggings Trail is a guide to the remarkable relics of the gold rush. It provides a range of linked, interactive attractions involving gold mining sites and relics, historical accounts and images, modern gold mining operations, the extensive box-Ironbark forest and several significant heritage towns.

The best way to find your way around the Diggings is to begin with a stop at the Visitor Information Centre in Maldon or Castlemaine and browse through the Diggings Guidebook.

Heritage

Parks Victoria, Heritage Victoria, the Mount Alexander Shire Council and local groups work together to maintain the setting and character of Maldon and its surrounding Box-Ironbark forest. The collection of cottages, mine owner’s villas, remnant goldfield gardens, stone gutters, roads and mining relics are part of Australia’s history.

Be fire ready and stay safe

On days of forecast Code Red Fire Danger this park will be closed for public safety.

If you are already in the park you should leave the night before or early in the morning for your own safety.

Closure signs will be erected and rangers will patrol where possible, however you may not receive a personal warning that the park is closed so check by calling 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au.

For up to date information on fires in Victoria or general fire safety advice call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

How to get there

Maldon Historic Area is 136km north west of Melbourne. To get there, turn off the Calder Highway toward Castlemaine and Maldon at Elphinstone (Melway Ref: 509 B6).

June 2013

Printed on Australian-made 100% recycled paper