

# OLD LEAD DIGGINGS



Old Lead Diggings Aerial View



OLD - 2019 Surface view of remnant shafts facing south-west



OLD 2019 Surface view of remnant shafts facing south



OLD 2019 Collection of surface artefacts



OLD Aerial landscape view with line of Old Lead and tributary gullies marked - following Tully 2013

DIAGRAM 2402

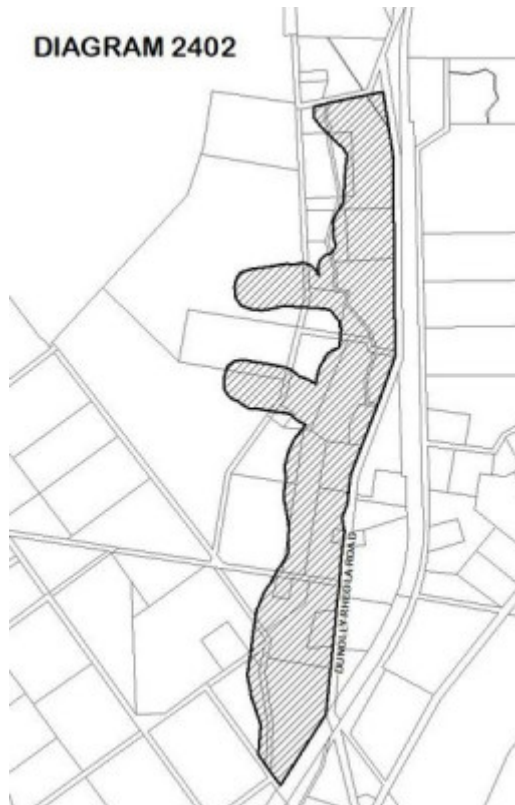


DIAGRAM 2402

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## Location

OLD LEAD ROAD and OLD LEAD ROAD DUNOLLY, LODDON SHIRE, CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

## Municipality

LODDON SHIRE

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2402

## VHR Registration

December 10, 2020

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 14, 2021

# What is significant?

The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly includes a dense aggregation of several thousand remnant mining shafts that resulted from the search for nuggety gold. The place contains other archaeological features including artefact scatters a hotel and house site.

# How is it significant?

The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

#### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

## Why is it significant?

The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant as the site of one of the largest and richest nineteenth century gold rushes in the history of Victoria, and possibly Australia. The scale and intactness of the place is highly evocative and reveals the magnitude of the rush and the mining techniques used by the diggers. The pattern of remnant shaft holes, located in close proximity to one another, demonstrates how the place functioned as a 'small man's diggings' in the aftermath of the Eureka uprising. The lead was rushed in 1856, when 30,000-50,000 miners were on the Old Lead Diggings and in Dunolly itself. The goldfield yielded dozens of large nuggets more than twenty ounces (0.6 kg) in weight. The area between Dunolly, Inglewood and Wedderburn forms part of the Golden Triangle, which has produced more large nuggets than anywhere else on earth. [Criterion A]

The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant as an extensive and well-preserved historical and archaeological landscape characterised by a dense aggregation of thousands of mine shafts that resulted from the search for nuggetty gold. The place also contains the archaeological remains of a store and house site that operated during the gold rush. Scatters of historical archaeological artefacts are visible across the site and are contained within many of the shaft holes. The place has the potential to yield important information about the scale and technological history of gold mining, the cultural history of gold mining, the material culture of the gold fields, and the gold seekers themselves. [Criterion C]

The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant as a characteristic and well-preserved example of places associated with early deep sinking on the Victorian goldfields. The site includes several thousand closely spaced mining shafts that indicate the scale, intensity and technology of deep sinking from the early years of the gold rush in Victoria. The remains also indicate the small claim nature of early goldfields in Victoria, where limited size claims allowed larger numbers of miners to dig for gold.

[Criterion D]

## Permit Exemptions

**Categories of works or activities exempt from permit application (PERMIT EXEMPTIONS)** It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.38 of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act). Under s.38 of the *Heritage Act 2017* the Executive Director may include in his recommendation categories of works or activities which may be carried out in relation to the place or object without the need for a permit under Part 5 of the Act. The Executive Director must not make a recommendation for any categories of works or activities if he considers that the works or activities may harm the cultural heritage significance of the place or object. The following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly: **General Conditions** All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. All works should ideally be informed by a

Conservation Management Plan prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

**Specific Permit Exemptions**

The following activities are permit exempt as long as they do not remove or demolish, damage or despoil, develop or alter or excavate, relocate or disturb the mining shafts or any other archaeological features.

The continuation of existing agricultural practices in current locations including management of livestock grazing.

Continuation of current vegetation maintenance practices.

Pruning of dead or dangerous trees to maintain safety.

Weed and vermin control including above ground removal of noxious plants and weeds and the laying of traps and poisons.

## Theme

### 4. Transforming and managing the land

Construction dates	1856,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered archaeological place,
Hermes Number	206182
Property Number	

## History

### HISTORY

### Rush to the Old Lead

Gold mining began around Dunolly in 1853 but discoveries nearby at Tarnagulla, Moliagul, Inkerman, Rheola and elsewhere sent thousands of miners surging back and forth across the district over the following years. The Old Lead at Dunolly, originally known as German Gully, had been quietly prospected for several years prior to 1856 but returns were patchy. However, the discovery of large nuggets at depth in June and July 1856, ignited a massive rush of diggers back to what became known as the Old Lead and temporarily 'depopulated half the diggings towns in Victoria'. Thousands of miners quickly traced the lead for several kilometres down towards Burnt Creek, through the town of Dunolly and beyond, where it became a wet lead. At the pinnacle of the rush in September 1856, there were an estimated 30,000–50,000 miners on the Old Lead Diggings and in Dunolly itself. The Dunolly rush was of the same scale as the more famous Forest Creek (Chewton-Castlemaine) gold rush of 1852–53, where the population was estimated at 25,000–30,000 people. The area between the towns of Dunolly, Inglewood and Wedderburn forms the Golden Triangle, which has produced more large nuggets than anywhere else on earth.

Mining along the Old Lead involved deep sinking, digging shafts ten-twenty metres deep to hit the auriferous deposit. A 'lead' was a deep alluvial auriferous deposit or gutter, often following the course of a creek or gully. Most gold on the Old Lead Diggings was in the form of nuggets, found at depth where gold had accumulated after eroding from a nearby reef. Mullock or spoil from the shaft was hauled up manually by bucket or windlass and dumped around the edges of the shaft. The small size of claims and crowded conditions meant there was limited space available to stack mullock and washdirt. All washing was done in the creek. Luckily for the miners, good rain in the spring of 1856 kept the water holes full.

Historian James Flett described the riches of the Old Lead as 'prodigious'. In the week 4-11 August 1856, for example, eight nuggets were reported ranging from 72 ounces to 336 ounces. On 4 October 1856 miners discovered the Dunolly Nugget, 2952 ounces (91.8 kg) gross weight. Described as 'a most unlovely-looking long piece of rust-coloured quartz and gold', when melted down it produced 1363 ounces (42 kg) of gold and was one of the largest gold nuggets ever found in Victoria. There were almost 100 nuggets recorded from the Old Lead greater than twenty ounces (0.6 kg) in weight, although many large specimens were never reported.

### Small man's diggings

Miners worked at Dunolly in 1856 in the aftermath of the Eureka rebellion, which had taken place only 18 months earlier. One of the many outcomes of the rebellion

and the subsequent Commission of Enquiry was to maintain access to goldfields for small miners and restrict larger companies from monopolising claim areas. When the rush to the Dunolly Old Lead occurred in mid-1856, miners worked their claims under the 1855 *Act to amend the Laws relating to the Gold Fields* (18 Vict. 37) and regulations published in the *Victoria Government Gazette* on 8 April 1853 and 13 June 1855. Each miner was allowed an area of 3.6 metres square, with up to four miners working as a party allowed to combine their claims into 7 metres square. Special approval ('a written sanction') was required to peg out larger areas, although companies could take out leases of up to 160 acres on worked ground that had been abandoned. A single miner was thus entitled to a claim area of just 13 metres square, while parties of four miners could hold 53 metres square. The distribution of shaft holes on the Dunolly Old Lead is consistent with these small claim sizes, where shafts are typically five-ten metres apart.

### Decline of the rush

The huge influx of diggers to the Dunolly goldfield meant that less than half had been able to get a claim on the Old Lead and the number of miners soon declined. Secretary of Mines Robert Brough Smyth recorded that Daisy Hill, Alma, Jones's Creek, Bet-Bet, Kingower and other places were so rich that the miners dispersed rapidly. By 1860 the population of the entire Dunolly mining division was reduced to 3,800, including 950 Chinese. In 1862 there was a further rush to the Old Lead, on ground near Hughes' store, but by 1865 the population of the Old Lead was 260. Despite the huge exodus, however, many miners settled down to live and work along the Old Lead. According to Smyth, they 'built little places and kept goats, fowls and gardens to help tide them over bad times. They ... erected a number of puddling machines and every now and again they came across an astonishing patch of nuggets'.

Drought across Victoria in the mid-1860s meant that alluvial mining was extremely difficult. The Dunolly mining surveyor, R.J. McMillan, described 'the unprecedented scarcity of water. Puddling generally is all but at a standstill. All the dams, with but few exceptions, [are] dry'. The following years saw numerous minor rushes to the Old Lead, with prospecting continuing on a small scale into the early 20th century. A pump hydraulic sluice began operating on the Old Lead around 1907, just north of Dunolly at Delideo Reserve. The lease area was 166 acres and the operation processed almost 250,000 cubic yards of alluvium from seven acres, for a yield of 1,150 ounces of gold from 1908 - 1909.

### Post-mining landscape change

The Old Lead was described by Flett as originally 'six hundred paces wide' (c. 400 m) but the physical evidence of deep sinking along the lead is now only about 100 metres wide. This indicates that 100 metres or more of mine shafts and related workings, and possibly diggers' huts and gardens, along each side of the lead have been filled in and restored to pasture by the previous landowners. The Flett family who owned the land until the early 2010s concentrated on farming but kept the central portion of the diggings and tributary gullies intact. Much of the adjacent grazing/cropping land is very clean, with virtually no surface evidence of domestic or industrial discard. There were at one time tens of thousands of miners working along the diggings, many of whom lived close by in tents or huts, with the residence entitlement of the Miner's Right having been introduced in early 1855. The domestic discard from miners' residences at the time must have been extensive but most of this material has since been cleared away and probably pushed into old mine shafts as part of the clean-up process. Both eastern and western edges of the Old Lead Diggings are clearly defined, with a sharp transition between pasture and mining areas.

Filling in and levelling out mined areas along the edges of the Old Lead expanded the grazing area after mining ceased. Also, many trees were ring-barked and cut down to maximise grass growth. Many of the stumps show evidence of ring-barking and sawing, and the weathering of the stumps indicate the trees were felled many years ago. Farmers historically believed that trees deprived grass of light, water and nutrients, so they waged war on the trees, ringbarking, chopping, cutting and burning to 'sweeten the grass'. After mining ceased on the Old Lead, many of the trees originally cut down by the miners grew back. Most of these, however, were subsequently cut down again and burnt off by the landowner to grow as much grass as possible.

Miners obliterated the creek that originally ran down the Old Lead from north to south and it remains eradicated to this day. The Old Lead Reservoir, built in 1860 and located immediately north of the Old Lead place boundary, traps the modest flow of the remnant watercourse and diverts it into a now broken pipe that runs beneath the Old Lead Diggings.

A large area of remnant mining shafts at the northern end of the Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly, covering an area of more than 200 metres by 100 metres, is likely to have been destroyed using heavy machinery in February 2019 in search of gold. Historically this area was known as Charlie's Gully.

Archaeological remains of historical mining activity extend well beyond the boundaries of the Old Lead Diggings into adjacent properties and nearby areas of the Dunolly-Inglewood State Forest. The Old Lead Diggings at Dunolly are thus part of a wider landscape of historical mining activity known as the Golden Triangle, covering the area between Dunolly, Inglewood and Wedderburn, where gold was often found in the form of large nuggets. The Welcome Stranger, the largest gold nugget in the world, was found in 1869 at Moliagul, twelve km to the north of Dunolly.

### KEY REFERENCES

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## Assessment Against Criteria

**Criterion WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT?** The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly includes a dense aggregation of several thousand remnant mining shafts that resulted from the search for nuggety gold. The place contains other archaeological features including artefact scatters a hotel and house site.

**HOW IS IT SIGNIFICANT?** The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register: Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history. Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history. Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

**WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT?** The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant at the State level for the following reasons: The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant as the site of one of the largest and richest nineteenth century gold rushes in the history of Victoria, and possibly Australia. The scale and intactness of the place is highly evocative and reveals the magnitude of the rush and the mining techniques used by the diggers. The pattern of remnant shaft holes, located in close proximity to one another, demonstrates how the place functioned as a 'small man's diggings' in the aftermath of the Eureka uprising. The lead was rushed in 1856, when 30,000-50,000 miners were on the Old Lead Diggings and in Dunolly itself. The goldfield yielded dozens of large nuggets more than twenty ounces (0.6 kg) in weight. The area between Dunolly, Inglewood and Wedderburn forms part of the Golden Triangle, which has produced more large nuggets than anywhere else on earth. [ Criterion A] The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant as an extensive and well-preserved historical and archaeological landscape characterised by a dense aggregation of thousands of mine shafts that resulted from the search for nuggety gold. The place also contains the archaeological remains of a store and house site that operated during the gold rush. Scatters of historical archaeological artefacts are visible across the site and are contained within many of the shaft holes. The place has the potential to yield important information about the scale and technological history of gold mining, the cultural history of gold mining, the material culture of the gold fields, and the gold seekers themselves. [ Criterion C] The Old Lead Diggings, Dunolly is significant as a characteristic and well-preserved example of places associated with early deep sinking on the Victorian goldfields. The site includes several thousand closely spaced mining shafts that indicate the scale, intensity and technology of deep sinking from the early years of the gold rush in Victoria. The remains also indicate the small claim nature of early goldfields in Victoria, where limited size claims allowed larger numbers of miners to dig for gold. [ Criterion D]

## Extent of Registration

Heritage Act 2017 NOTICE OF REGISTRATION As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying a place in the Heritage Register: Number: H2402 Category: Registered Place, Registered Archaeological Place Place: Old Lead Diggings Location: Old Lead Road, Dunolly Municipality: Central Goldfields, Loddon Shire All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2402 encompassing all of Crown Allotments 10, 11C, 12, 18A, 18B, 21, 26 and 26A, Section 13 Parish of Painswick; all of Crown Allotments 13 and 19, Section B Parish of Painswick; all of Crown Allotments 15D, 17A and 17B Section F, Parish of Painswick; and parts of Crown Allotments 1, 4, 5A, 5B, 11, 11B, 13A, 13B, 14, 14A, 15A, 15B, 15D, 15E and 17A Section 13 Parish of Painswick; parts of Crown Allotments

7 and 17B Section B Parish of Painswick; and parts of Crown Allotments 15, 15A, 15C, 15E, 16A and 17 Section F Parish of Painswick. 10 DECEMBER 2020 STEVEN AVERY Executive Director

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*