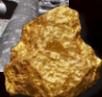


Early Gold Mining At Macraes Flat

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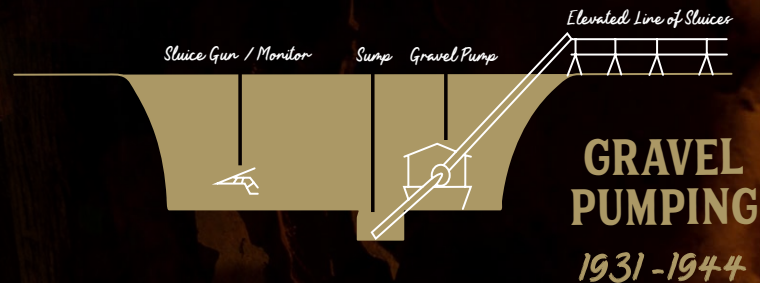
The gold deposits at Macraes Flat were located in alluvial material broadly distributed across the top of relatively level schist bedrock. Being heavy, the gold was found at the base of this alluvial deposit. Above this was "two feet of schist gravel under eight feet of clay and fine schist gravel". This material all had to be removed to access the gold-bearing alluvial layer. Paddocking and gravel pumping were used to reach the gold deposit.



Dredging

Gold dredging was attempted on two occasions at Macraes Flat, in 1898 and 1901. Neither was a success, and each time the dredge was shut down and moved elsewhere within a short time. The first dredge was working the ground adjacent to Macraes Township, but then it closed after ten weeks due to sticky clay. The ground was later re-worked by gravel pumping.

Gold dredging was attempted on two occasions at Macraes Flat in 1898 + 1901



Gravel Pumping

Gravel pumping was a large-scale method of paddocking. This new type of mining was used from 1931 to 1944. It used an electrically or steam driven pump to elevate the gravel washdirt and tailings out of the pit to the sluices/sluice box. Two plants were used at Macraes.

A paddock was excavated, and sluice guns were used to wash the material to a gravel pump, which was run through an elevated sluice box to recover the gold. The resulting tailings were piled nearby.

Once a paddock was worked out, it was flooded and used as a water storage and settling pond for water coming from the sluice box. Eventually the used paddock/pond was backfilled with tailings.

The final paddocks excavated in each section were not backfilled after the economic ground was exhausted. The Macraes gravel ponds you can see today were created during the 1930s-1940s by the gravel pump mining process.



Paddocking 1864

Alluvial mining, or "paddocking" by small groups of miners began at Macraes Flat in about 1864 and continued until the early decades of the twentieth century. Small pits were excavated to reach the lower levels. This work could be carried out in relatively small holes in the ground and required very little capital outlay. At its height, up to 500 men were recorded as being in the Macraes Flat district, with 380 actively involved in alluvial mining, working the cradles and sluice boxes.

