

ECHUNGA GOLDFIELD - CHAPEL HILL DIGGINGS  
NEAR MYLORSUMMARY

This report has been prepared as a result of the nomination of several gold-fields within the larger Echunga Goldfield area. The Echunga Goldfield is comprised of many scattered diggings and the Branch has identified the Jupiter Creek and Chapel Hill diggings for individual listed. The Chapel Hill Goldfield is under no known threat and is designated as a Forestry Reserve.

Historically, the Chapel Hill Diggings are significant because they represent an early major area of activity in the State's first gold rush during the 1850's. They are located close to the original gold discovery in Chapman's Gully and represent the continuum of mining techniques used in the working of deep alluvial leads.

Physically, the Chapel Hill Goldfield is a reminder of the northern extent of the Echunga Goldfields.

Environmentally, the Chapel Hill Goldfield is not a major feature, although it does support the rural nature of the area.

The Integrity of the Chapel Hill Goldfield has been compromised by natural deterioration although its mining functions are obvious.

The area is not listed on the Register of the National Trust or the National Estate.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION BRANCH RECOMMENDATION:

..... *Brian C. Reaney* .....  
Manager

It is recommended that the Echunga Goldfield - Chapel Hill Diggings, near Mylor, be placed on the Register of State Heritage Items, and that it be categorized H1, H2, H3.

|                                       |   |         |   |    |    |    |    |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------|---|----|----|----|----|
| South Australian Heritage Act 1978-80 | Register of State Heritage Items<br>ITEM EVALUATION SHEET<br>Historic Site  |         |   |    |    |    |    |
|                                       | Item CHAPEL HILL DIGGINGS<br>NEAR MYLOR   |         |   |    |    |    |    |
| Age<br>1850's-                        | Theme   |         | Office<br>6627-10459                    |    |    |    |    |
| Period<br>Several<br>1852-1948        | Subject<br>PRIMARY INDUSTRY - Extractive  |         | Region<br>Mt. Lofty &<br>Eastern Plains |    |    |    |    |
| Site Type<br>Mining                   | Boundaries<br>REFER TO MAP  |         | Status<br>-                             |    |    |    |    |
| <u>Qualitative Data</u>               |   |         | <u>Grading</u>                          |    |    |    |    |
| Component                             |   | Comment | E                                       | VG | AG | FP | NA |
| <u>History</u>                        |   |         |   |    |    |    |    |
| 1. Context:                           | A major area of activity in the Echunga Gold-field, Chapel Hill was worked during the early 1850's. It reflects the gold mining era in the State, illustrating the techniques of mining employed, and the transitory nature of the industry in its effect upon the State's economy. |         |   | *  |    |    |    |
| 2. Person/Group:                      | Various mining syndicates and individuals.  |         |   |    | *  |    |    |
| 3. Event:                             | 1853 Bell's Hill Rush<br>1854 Christmas Hill Rush<br>1857 Poor Man's Hill Rush<br>1858 New Rush   |         |   | *  |    |    |    |
| <u>Physical Components</u>            |   |         |   |    |    |    |    |
| 4. Natural Elements:                  | Hill top position, gently falling to the south, dense scrub with a great deal of secondary growth off trees previously cut down.  |         |   |    | *  |    |    |
| 5. Man-Made Elements:                 | Several types of mining activities, mostly shallow collapsed shafts leaving 'craters', several collapsed adits, earth banks of a dam, no building remains except for a portion of a battery building.   |         |   |    | *  |    |    |
| 6. Representation:                    | One of the earlier fields, similar to Jupiter Creek but not as extensive, northern most substantial diggings in the Echunga field.  |         |   |    | *  |    |    |
| <u>Environment</u>                    |   |         |   |    |    |    |    |
| 7. Continuity:                        | Surrounding landscape not as densely vegetated; area developed for semi-agricultural purposes and in most cases cleared; site is so large though that it does not present an identifiable contrast to the area.   |         |   |    | *  |    |    |
| 8. Local Character:                   | Maintains but does not necessarily establish the rural character of the area.   |         |   |    | *  |    |    |

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Component

Comment

Grading

E VG AG FP NA

9. Landmark: Too densely vegetated to be a visual landmark, once inside though the diggings are notable compared to the surrounding area.

Integrity

10. Alterations: The scrub has taken over the site; except for a portion of the battery building there are no above ground structures; most of the shafts and tunnels have collapsed.

11. Condition: As an area of bush the site is stable, shafts are and will collapse and require attention, erosion has damaged surface remains.

12. Compatibility: The site is a Forest Reserve.

Supplementary Information

Adaptation: As the site itself is the product of evolution and as such is an historical statement, any adaptation or developments should be low keyed. Any new structures or physical requirements should be kept to the perimeter. Total reconstructions should be avoided.

Interpretation: The Mines Department has already embarked upon an interpretive plan for the area. The interpretation should be kept low keyed with more detailed information available at a nearby centre or in leaflet form. Some sensitive measures should be taken to protect visitors from the open mine shafts. The site's relative importance and representative qualities should be stressed.

Current Owner: State Government under the control of the Forestry Department.

Evaluated By

Iris Iwanicki, Register Historian  
Ivar Nelsen, Register Architect

Reviewed By

Mark A. Butcher  
Register Supervisor



## HISTORICAL RESEARCH REPORT: ECHUNGA GOLDFIELD

The Echunga goldfields was first discovered in 1852, and represent the State's first gold rush and most productive goldfield, yielding approximately 400,000 oz. An earlier discovery in 1846 at Montacute gave rise to excited speculation and the formation of the Victoria Gold Mine. Unfortunately the venture was not successful, with only 24 ozs. of gold produced. Nevertheless, for the first time in the State "genuine specimens of gold - adorned the cabinets of the curious". Shares in the company went from £2 to £30 and as a result South Australia can lay claim to the first gold mine in Australia.

By contrast, the Echunga gold fields present a wide spectrum of gold mining activity over an extended period of time. The area fossicked and mined for alluvial and reef gold stretches from Hahndorf south to the River Finniss and comprises three main areas:-

- (1) Hahndorf to Mylor
- (2) Old Echunga diggings - Chapel Hill and Chapman's Gully
- (3) Jupiter Creek Diggings

The field near Mylor is diffuse, stretching from German Gully and the Hahndorf Oval to Donkey Gully in the south, and extending into the Hundred of Noarlunga to include Bigg's Flat field near Silver Lake. A smaller field is found in the alluvial diggings on Blackfellow's Creek and the Mount Monster and McMurtries gold reef mines at the southern end of Kuitpo. Other main areas in the State mined for gold include the Barossa field, Teetulpa, Oakbank/Woodside, Mongolata, and Waukaringa.

### Chapman's Gully (Private Property)

In 1852 William Chapman demonstrated the presence of gold by panning the mineral before an excited group of horsemen led by the Colonial Secretary, B.T. Finniss in Chapman's Gully. In his reminiscences he describes the scene when a shining piece of gold appeared in the pan:

"Immediately ensued a scene of great confusion. Shouting, hootings, cooeings split the air, and such a row was made that horses which had been tied to the trees close by broke their bridles and bolted away as from a new pandemonium. Everyone began to wash at once. Kettles, billies, saucepan lids, pannikans and even hats were called into requisition, and by all a little gold was found".<sup>2</sup>

Within the next few months, thousands of prospectors came to the area and an estimated £18,000 worth of gold was found in Chapman's Gully and on the sides of Windlass Hill. According to Brown, the National Company (1855) and the Echunga Gold Mining Company (1881) worked the area, sinking shafts and erecting machinery. The latter company installed a 10 head battery in 1882. However, the yields were not sufficient to keep either company afloat and both went into liquidation.<sup>3</sup>

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1. H.Y.L. Brown: A Record of the Mines of S.A., Adel. 1908, pp.318, 7,17.
  2. Jack Whimpress: Echunga 1839-1939, Adel., Luth. Pub. House 1975, p.51
  3. H.Y.L. Brown: A Record of the Mines of S.A., Adel. 1908, p.230.

### Chapel Hill (Forest Reserve)

Moving over the hill, the next major area of activity occurred west of Chapel Hill during the 1850's. Deep alluvial leads were worked, the more notable being Bell's Hill Rush (1853), Christmas Rush (1854), Poor Man's Hill Rush (1857) and New Rush (1858). The area, now exempt from the provisions of the Mining Act, is honeycombed with shafts approximately 30 feet deep and has the deteriorated remains of an engine house and square chimney associated with a gold battery. A large dam (National Dam) was constructed. Operations ceased in 1869.

Gold mining also occurred at the northern end of the field, in Hahndorf Gully (1858) and Sailor's Sawmill, and German Gullies (1872) at shallow depths. Alluvial mining in Donkey Gully commenced in 1852 and in 1890 reef mining commenced. Warrakilla Mine at the head of the gully was worked from 1893 to 1905, and produced over 2,500 oz. gold.

### Jupiter Creek Diggings (Forest Reserve)

In 1868 Thomas Plane and Henry Sanders came across a rich payable area of gold near Jupiter Creek in Long Gully. Within two months nearly 1,500 people came to prospect the area and a township of huts, two stores, wineshop and hotel was established on the top of the hill above the gully on the site used now as a council rubbish dump. Gold was found in the alluvial deposits in the gullies and lower hillsides and sought in reefs on the higher hillsides. The most successful of early reefing ventures was carried out by the Beatrice Gold Mining Company. It sank four major shafts and won rich pockets of gold. A 10 head battery, 2 boilers, steam engine, 2 puddlers and amalgamation plant was installed in 1869 in a stone building and the smoke from the boiler conveyed through an underground flue up the hillside to a circular stone chimney. Nearby, an engine shaft was sunk to 100 ft. and equipped with a beam engine for pumping. The Company went into liquidation in 1871 as a result of the high cost of labour, and inadequate water supply. Other companies who were formed during the era include the South Crystal Gold Mining Co. and the Phoenix Gold Mining Company, but these were unsuccessful. Little remains of the gold battery, except traces of the flue beneath the chimney. A little higher up the hill above the chimney is a tunnel extending 79 metres deep into the hill. It was driven in 1932 by Frederick Gee, and traverses a sequence of kaolinised sandstone with minor interbedded shale before connecting with two old shafts on the southern side of Fosters Gully. Known as the New Phoenix Adit, it is in very good condition.

Following the passing of the Gold Dredging Act in 1905, the Echunga Proprietary Hydraulic and Gold Sluicing Company was formed to treat alluvial deposits in the vicinity of Golden Point on a larger scale. Three dams were constructed, boiler, pumps, and sluicing plant floated on a barge and after a few years the company went into liquidation after producing 222 oz. gold.



The area was worked by prospectors during the depression of the 1930's, and has attracted sporadic interest during the 1950's and 1960's. Hewlitt's Hut, constructed of flattened out kerosene tins and lined with newspapers and linoleum, demonstrates the ingenuity of its builders in 'making do'. This appears to have been inhabited up until the late 1950's or early 1960's. The most important sites on the Echunga Gold Field include Chapman's Gully, Chapel Hill and Jupiter Creek. Of these, Chapman's Gully, because it is the site of the first official demonstration of the discovery of gold, is significant. Jupiter Creek represents a wide range of mining techniques developed to recover gold. These range from the panning and washing of alluvial gold to sophisticated tunnelling, and the crushing and chemical treatment of gold bearing quartz. Chapel Hill, closely associated with the nearby Chapman's Gully, also reflects most of these processes but does not present the same continuum of attempted working.

At a State level, the areas identified within the Echunga goldfield are significant in representing the first gold rush in South Australia, and the development and use of different mining techniques used in winning the gold from the ground.

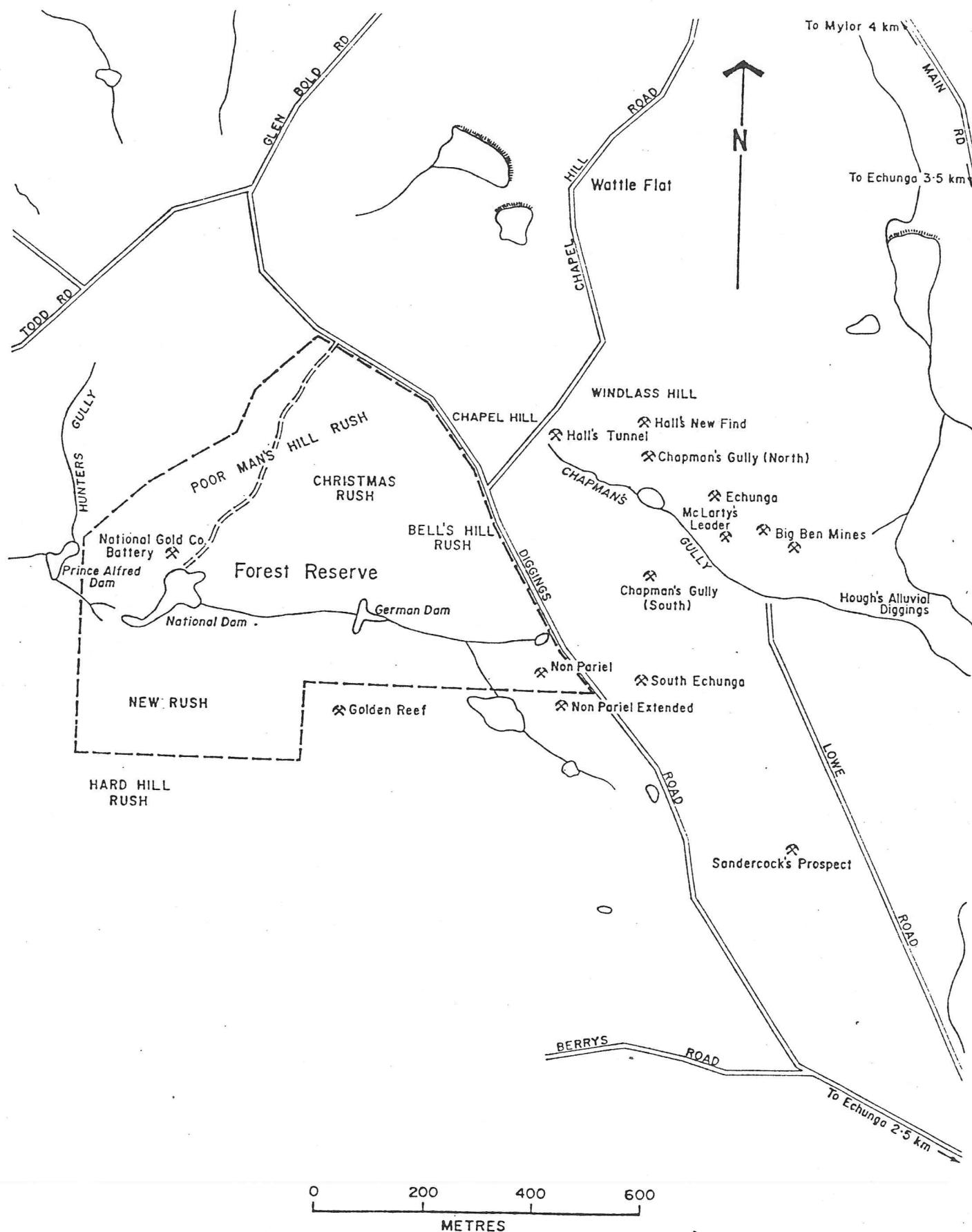
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Greg Drew: Jupiter Creek Diggings of the Echunga Goldfield; Dept. Mines & Energy, 1982.  
Rod Elphinstone: Report on Mineral, Quarrying & Mineral Processing Sites in S.A. - Working Paper 1, Department of Environment and Planning, April 1982.  
Royce Wells: The Echunga Goldfields, Dept. Mines and Energy  
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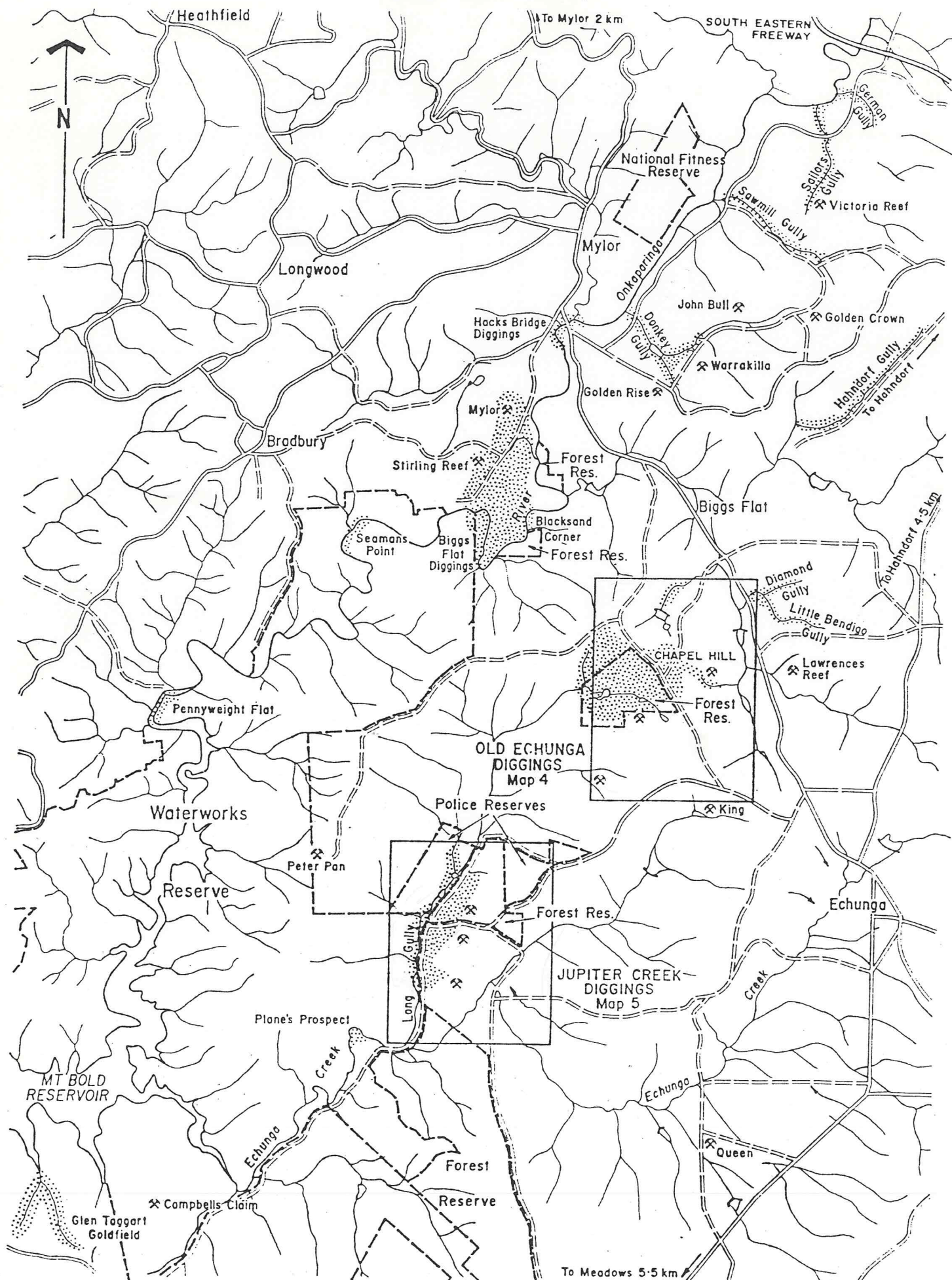
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Register Historian

21/1/83

# OLD ECHUNGA GOLD DIGGINGS



# ECHUNGA GOLDFIELD (NORTHERN PART)







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6627-10459  
CHAPEL HILL DIGGINGS -  
DAM

FGB 83

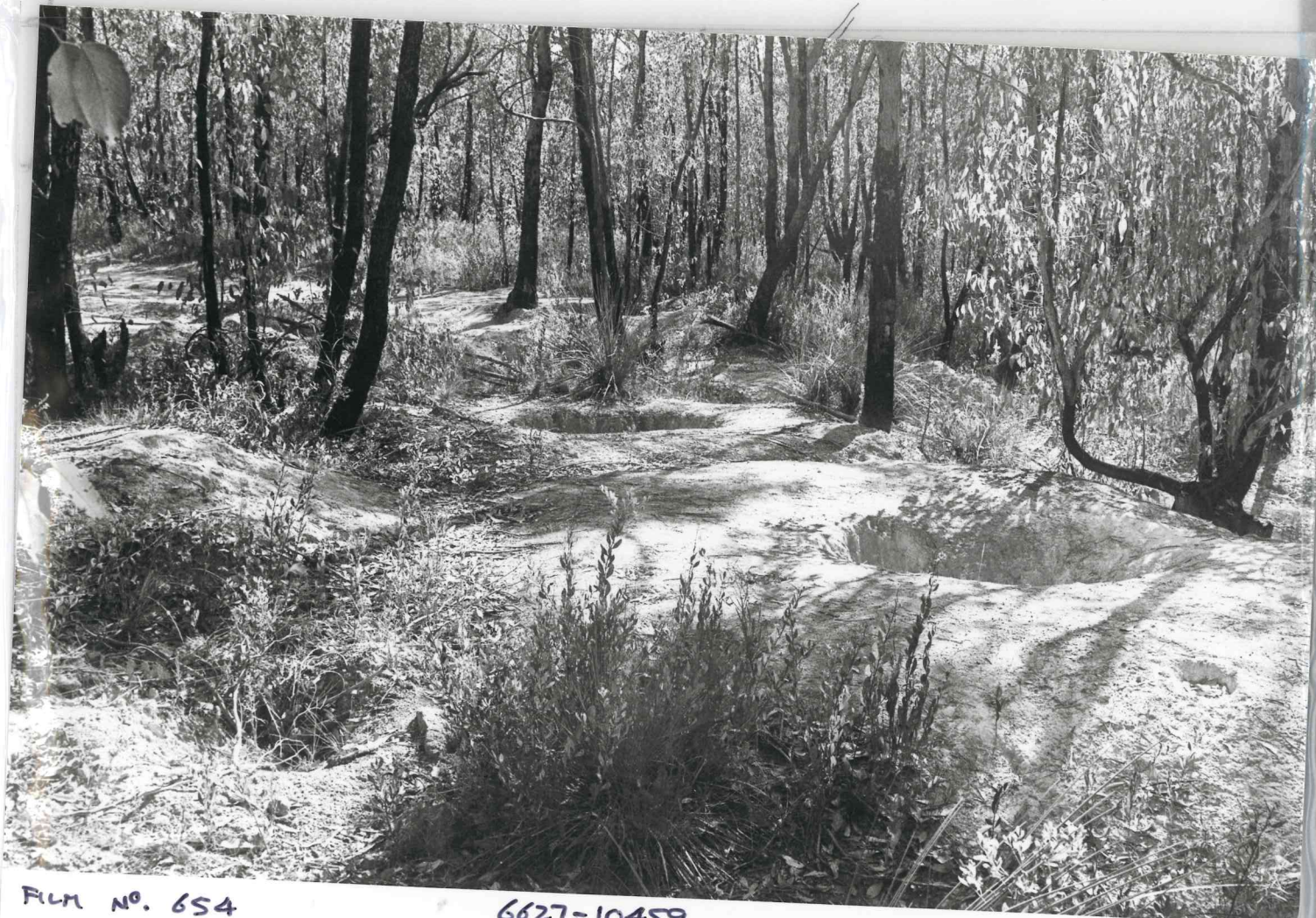
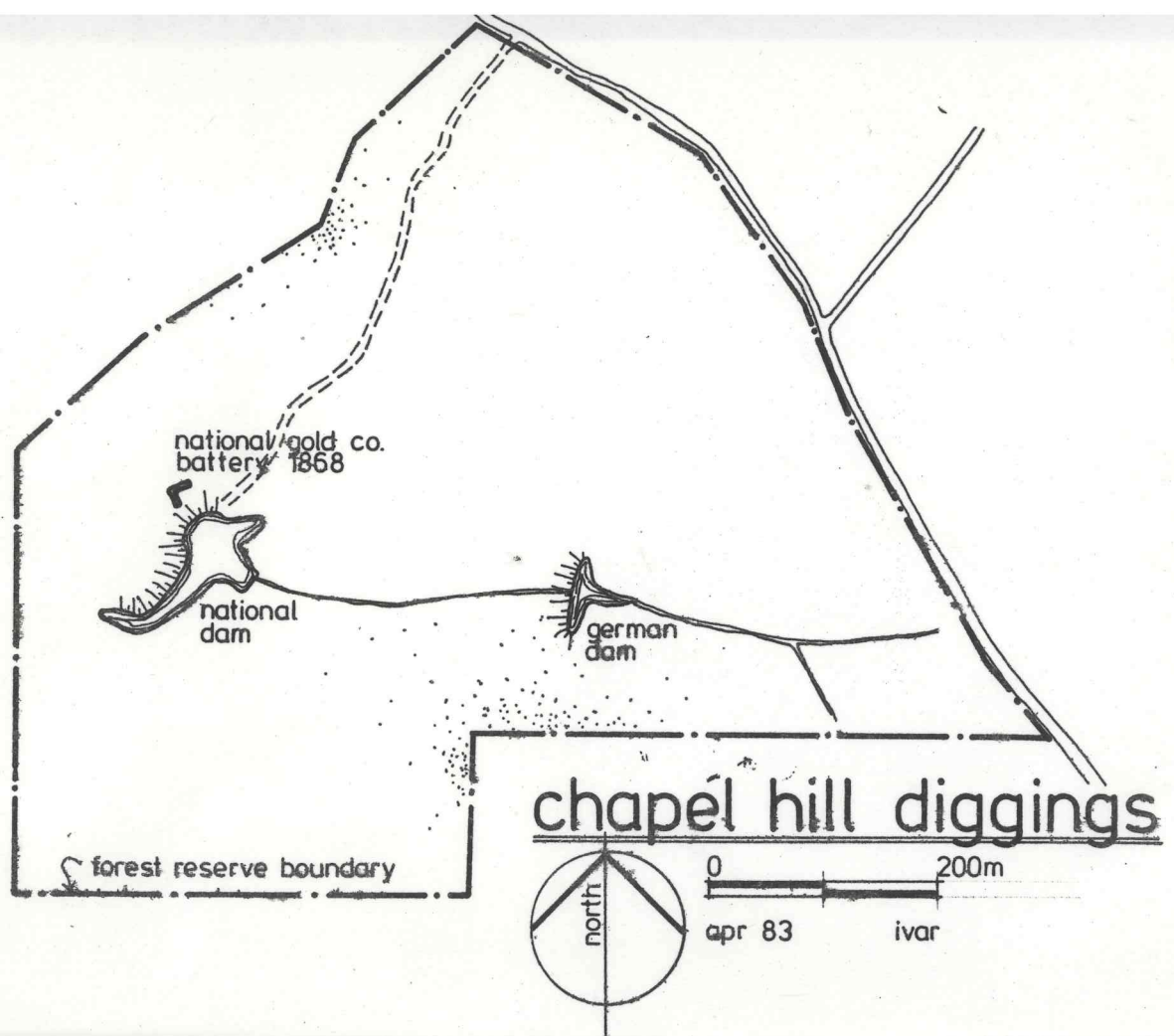


FILM NO. 654

6627-10459  
CHAPEL HILL DIGGINGS

FGB 83





Film No. 654

6627-10459  
CHAPEL HILL DIGGINGS

POB 83





FILM NO. 654

6627-10459  
CHAPEL HILL DIGGINGS,  
BATTERY RUINS

FGB 83



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