

# Braidwood gold

## Mineral Resources

The information below covers that part of the Shoalhaven Basin between Jembaicumbene Creek and the Mongarlowe River (not including the latter).

The area was largely incorporated in the past, in the Braidwood Mining Division, although part of the Jembaicumbene Creek drainage was covered at times by the Araluen Division.

The area is dealt with under the sub-section Shoalhaven and Jembaicumbene Creek.

## Alluvial mining

Escort returns from the banks in Braidwood to the Royal Mint, Sydney between 1858-1874 amounted to 19 596 kilograms (630 088oz).

This would have been entirely derived from alluvial sources. In addition, alluvial production (excluding dredging), according to Registrars Returns between 1875-1920, amounted to 1 019kg (32 757oz).

### 1. Shoalhaven

The presence of gold in alluvials throughout the area has been known since 1851. Working at that stage was confined to the banks and bed of the Shoalhaven River, and some of the smaller tributary creeks. The gold encountered appears to have been very fine and widely distributed, although seldom in workable concentrations.

Localities at which activity was concentrated include Bombay, Colombo Flat, Warri, Pipeclay Diggings, Back Springs and Limekiln Creek.

At the Limekiln Creek confluence with the Shoalhaven, water for hydraulic sluicing was supplied from Reedy Creek. On the whole, however, the principal working method employed up to 1900 was ground sluicing.

A comprehensive survey was carried out by the Mines Department in 1893 on the extensive high level terrace alluvials on the west bank of the

Shoalhaven, between the Bombay Crossing and Reedy Creek.

The survey delineated an area of alluvials about 3 400 hectares in extent, with depths up to 46m. In the southern part of the area (712 hectares) the average thickness was estimated at 9m, giving 75 000 000m<sup>3</sup> of gravels and drift with an average yield of about 0.125g/m<sup>3</sup>.

A number of shafts showed the gold to be confined to the bottom and also one or more 'false bottoms', while the average weight of the colours panned was 0.000125-0.00025, the largest colour encountered weighing 0.00175g.

In 1900 ground sluicing gave way to dredging and only a little alluvial fossicking has been done since.

### 2. Jembaicumbene

Fine colours of gold were obtained in 1851 by Clarke from the Jembaicumbene Swamp.

The majority of the gold, however was obtained from wash layers on the bottom, or on 'false bottom' of black clay.

Working was carried out over about 13km of Jembaicumbene Creek up from its mouth, over an average width of 365m. While the alluvials are up to 12m thick, the average thickness appears to be about 4.5-6m with 0.6-0.9m of auriferous wash on the bottom.

The principal methods used were sinking on the richer leads and open paddock working, and ground sluicing of the remainder whenever sufficient water was available.

Dredging became the principal means of obtaining the alluvial gold after 1900 until 1917, after which only minor fossicking has taken place.

Although production figures from the Jembaicumbene Creek areas are not available, the amount of work apparently done suggests that it must have accounted for much of the Braidwood total. The known reefs in the drainage basin are very few and small, suggesting that minor



mineralised veinlets in areas of the granite have shed most of the gold into the system.

## Dredging

### 1. Shoalhaven

The Colombo Dredging Co. constructed a bucket dredge in the Shoalhaven bed near Colombo in 1900, operations only proceeding until 1902 when unprofitable workings caused abandonment. In 1901 the dredge worked 295 000m<sup>3</sup> for a yield of 20.5 kg (0.067g/m<sup>3</sup>).

In 1909 the Gipsy Flat Dredging Co. constructed a bucket dredge on the higher terraces on the western side of the Shoalhaven River (location unknown), however the values were too patchy and in places the ground very tight.

The only records of production were 2.36kg from 124 800m<sup>3</sup> (0.019g/m<sup>3</sup>) in 1910 and 2kg in 1911.

Tewksbury Proprietary Dredges N.L. constructed a bucket dredge in the Shoalhaven bed above the Warrie Bridge on the Braidwood-Goulburn road in 1909.

Operations continued until 1913 and ceased on unprofitable working. The total production was 102.7kg from 1 770 884m<sup>3</sup> (0.056g/m<sup>3</sup>).

Thereafter, the only working appears to have been by a gravel pump on Reedy Creek during the period 1935-1937, when 2.86kg was produced from 28 160m<sup>3</sup> of wash (0.01g/m<sup>3</sup>).

### 2. Jembaicumbene

Fairly extensive working was carried out on the Jembaicumbene Creek flats between 1900-1917 and up to four bucket and two suction dredges were working at one time (1902-1908).

Production figures are somewhat incomplete, but it would appear that of the order of 1 011kg (32 500oz) was produced, the principal producer being the bucket dredge of the Jembaicumbene Dredging Company (later the Jembaicumbene Enterprise Dredging Co).

This treated 2 234 000 m<sup>3</sup> for 304.5kg (0.13g/m<sup>3</sup>) between 1901-1917, not including the years 1901-1903 and 1906-1909.

Most of the ground appears to have been worked previously in the pre-dredging days, while the new ground proved hard to treat due to the presence of black clay and occasionally a hard granite bottom.

The gold generally was restricted to a 'wash' layer up to 1.2 metres thick, overlain by about 4.5 metres of overburden.

This dredge worked at the western end of Jembaicumbene Swamp, just above the Shoalhaven River.

Other bucket dredges to work on the swamp were those of the Jembaicumbene Middle Ground, Central Jembaicumbene and Elrington Companies.

## Reefs

Little reef mining activity has taken place in this area and, according to the available records, the only auriferous reef worthy of mention is Stalkers Reef.

This reef near the Jembaicumbene townsite, was prospected between 1913-1919 when shallow sinking revealed ore assaying 124g/tonne.

Mineralisation consists of base metal sulphides and auriferous pyrite in a muscovite gangue.

There has been no recorded production from this reef and its dimensions are not known.



*Shoalhaven River, c1910*

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