

## PROSPECTING IN THE MOUNT BROWNE AND TIBOOBURRA AREAS.

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<http://www.gold-net.com.au/archivemagazines/feb99/default.htm>

### **DESERT DREAMING** *by Jim Foster*

Gold is often found in the most inhospitable of places, and the far north west of the state of New South Wales Australia is very inhospitable. Summer temperatures often remain over 40 degrees (104 f) for weeks at a time. There is very little surface water in the district and as the earliest white explorer to that part of Australia found life could be difficult in the desert.

In 1844 the explorer Charles Sturt left his home in Adelaide, South Australia, to search for the inland sea that was thought to fill the huge unknown and unexplored centre of the continent. Sturt's expedition at first followed the Murray River, then the Darling before striking away west and north toward the heart of the continent.

By the summer of 1845 Sturt and his party found themselves trapped by a fierce drought at a place he named Depot Glen. This was a semi-permanent water hole on Evelyn Creek a creek that flowed only after heavy rains and the only surface water for many days' march. While trapped in the Glen, Sturt's second in command, James Pool fell ill with what was thought to be peritonitis. Helpless to allay his friend's pain and suffering, Sturt wrote in his journal. "We are locked up (for the duration of the drought) as effectually as if we had wintered at the Pole."

In July 1845 James Pool died and was buried beside Depot Glen. His lonely grave can still be found, marked by a gnarled and twisted Grevillia tree. Sturt had the initials J.P. and the year, carved into the iron like trunk of that ancient desert tree. To stand in the meagre shade of that tree 154 years later and run your fingers over those crudely carved characters is to establish a direct link to the living history of the desert. Sturt named a nearby mount in honour of his second in command, Mount Pool and had his men erect a large stone Cairn on the summit, a Cairn that can still be seen from the nearby glen.

Winter temperatures in the desert are usually mild and pleasant, 15 to 25 degrees. (60-78 f) Sturt on the other hand experienced a killing heat so intense that he wrote in his journal "The lead dropped from our pencils. Our hair and the wool of the sheep ceased to grow and our nails became as brittle as glass."



<b>Jim &amp; Cheryl Foster</b>
<b><u>MINELAB Detectors</u></b> <b><u>Sales &amp; Service</u></b>

Unknown to Sturt and his party the country they were exploring was part of a large goldfield. Beginning in the south around Mount Brown the auriferous country extended northward to where Tibooburra now stands. Bright quartz reefs shed gold into the flats, creeks and gullies of the Warratta range, deposits that were not to be found for another twenty two years.

**In 1867 a shepherd found gold in Evelyn creek and the rush was on.** Men followed in Sturt's footsteps up the Murray, The Darling, and then on foot across the wild and inhospitable country to the new goldfield. Hundreds more walked up the track from Adelaide to Broken Hill and then on to Tibooburra. No one knows how many died on that perilous journey, but many did. For thirty years gold was dug, washed, and dry blown across the huge area around Depot Glen. The gold came from three main types of deposits.

**\* This is not quite correct..the date is too early and the gold has not actually been found in Evelyn Creek.**

1. It came from the shallow pre-Cambrian clayey loam 600 million years old that had been spread far and wide by wind and water.
2. Outcrops of 135-195 million-year-old conglomerate outcrops. At Nuggetty Gully gold was found in these deposits. To the west, the drives into the side of Tunnel Hill remain as a legacy of unsuccessful attempts to mine the low grade deposits under the conglomerate capping of the hill
3. Further south, in the fault line of the Warratta ranges, some quartz reefs produced good gold for a time but the remoteness of the spot and lack of water finished off the mining attempts before the gold ran out.

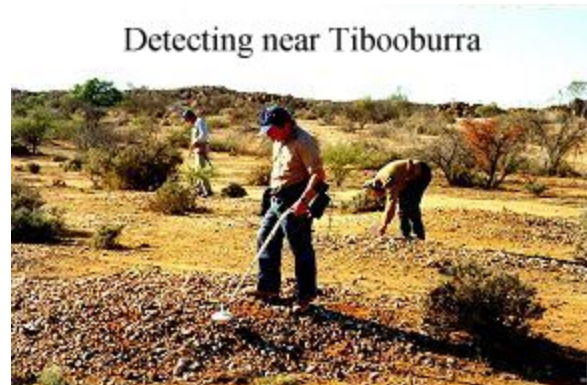
This was a poor mans goldfield. The gold was mostly shallow and widely dispersed. Any man who could use a shovel and a dry blower could make good money. But water was always a problem. When water was available puddlers were used to separate the gold. Puddlers were more efficient than dry blowers. Sometimes the miners stockpiled their pay dirt for a year or more while awaiting a gully washer to fill their dams. While they waited they reverted to dry blowing for tucker\* money. \* (Ed: food)

### **TODAY AT MOUNT BROWN**

Detecting for gold on the goldfields from Mount Brown in the south to Tibooburra in the north is pretty civilised these days. Prospecting is allowed on Mount Brown Station for \$10 per day per person. This includes full use of the amenities of the shearing shed, shearers quarters, and kitchen. Just bring your food and bedding and you have it made. Good gold is still being found all over the Mount Brown diggings and you can be assured that you will find some gold if you know what you are doing. Most people easily find enough to cover their costs with many doing very well indeed.

### **TIBOOBURRA**

Tibooburra has two hotels, a motel, a camping ground with all facilities and Dead Horse Gully Camping Ground. Dead Horse has water, toilets, and plenty of space, but no power or showers.



Tibooburra has what is known as a "common," around the town, ground that is freely available to the citizens for the use of grazing their house cows, horses, etc.,. The common also encloses two goldfields. The Tipperary and Two Mile diggings.

The gold around Tibooburra is mostly small, but it is everywhere. This is one of the few places I have ever seen where you can find gold every day. One rule that seems to work very well here is to search away from the old diggings, but always in sight of them. The old diggings themselves have been subject to many years of detecting and hold very little gold. It is the thousands of acres of "new ground," that will produce the most gold. Often it is found in patches. A patch may consist of only a few small bits, or it might contain hundreds of nuggets. If one nugget is found it pays to search that area very closely as that one nugget may signal the existence of a worthwhile patch. Once a patch is located it should be gridded both ways and not abandoned until exhausted.

Gold is also found amongst the granite boulders that are scattered around the town. Much of this gold is in the sand itself, something that is rare in the world of gold distribution. Again the gold can be scattered singularly or in patches and again it is mostly small, less than a gram of flat, smooth gold but some nuggets will go over the ounce with many in the one to ten gram range. (.035 - .35oz) Other goldfields are scattered between Mount Brown and Tibooburra. These are mostly on private land and permission to search must be gained from the owners or their agents.

A four-wheel drive vehicle is most suited to this area but not absolutely necessary. Five winters in a row we visited Tibooburra in our old Nissan campervan and not once did we have a problem. We actually found a campervan the best for prospecting. Every day we went out and had with us in our van our refrigerator, food, and water. There were places we couldn't get to without 4-wheel drive but we found the amenities of the camper van more than compensated for that.

Detecting for gold in the desert is an experience that you will remember forever, but be careful, the desert exerts an irresistible attraction that will draw you back time and again no matter how you fared in finding gold. It has to do with the clear air and far horizons, the startling beauty of a patch of Sturt Desert Pea flowering in some shady gully, the unique flora and fauna that only you, moving slowly over the ground as you detect will see. If the gold doesn't draw you back the desert will.

# THE MOUNT BROWNE DIGGINGS

<http://www.treasureenterprises.com/>

The **MOUNT BROWNE DIGGINGS** are situated at the southwestern end of the Mount Browne Range, and comprise of several short gullies on the northwestern side running towards a branch of the Yango Creek. The gold has been found here in the gullies or troughs between the slate hills, in the few centimetres of soil and shingle contained in them, which represents the washdirt. These gullies are very short, and descend towards the flat, where the alluvium is approximately 1 metre deep and they spread out and become poor to work. Small nuggets are often picked out of the washdirt; the largest found weighed 7½ ounces. Holes of 3 to 4 metres in depth have been sunk on the creek flats here, but without finding payable gold. Small nuggets have been found on the surface in several places, and there is no doubt that if a sufficient quantity of water was available a great deal of the surface would pay for sluicing. The dirt can be washed in the waterholes of Yango Creek when water is available. Rounded quartz pebbles are scattered over the low hills, indicating the remains of older drifts likely to contain gold.

The **FOUR MILE DIGGINGS** are on the south-east side of the Mt. Browne Range, and here the gullies are flatter, wider, and contain a greater depth of alluvium than the Mt. Poole Diggings, the sinking being from 1 to 4 metres in alluvium, and from 6 to 12 metres in a conglomerate of quartz gravel or cement beneath the alluvium and resting on the slate bottom. It occupies a portion of ground near the bottom of the gullies and low hills, and has only been tried to a limited extent, owing to its hardness, where worked however; it is said to yield payable results.

## HOW TO GET TO THE MOUNT BROWNE DIGGINGS

Mt Browne is located 16 kms south of Milparinka on the Mt Shannon Road. At Milparinka take the road leading past the western side of the Harry Blore Memorial Park and Pioneer Memorial. Pass through one gate not far from Milparinka but do not go through the second gate on this road, about 8 kms further on. Take the track to the right (toward the west) and follow it through to the old Mt Browne homestead area.

From the homestead area follow along the track along the edge of the creek which ends at the old cemetery.

For a clearer map and fossicking details, call into the Milparinka Visitor Information Centre

Permission to camp and fossick can be obtained from 08 80913558..

# Mud map of Mt Browne Goldfields

UHF CHANNEL 16  
REPEATER CHANNEL 1  
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