

Stories from Australia's History

Peter Lalor and the Eureka Stockade



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GRAPHIC
PAGES!

When a word is printed in **bold**, click on it to find its meaning.

ON THE GRAPHIC PAGES, TEXT WITH THIS COLOURED BACKGROUND COMES FROM A HISTORICAL SOURCE.

Stories from Australia's history

The story of modern Australia starts on 26 January 1788. On that day, Captain Arthur Phillip arrived at Sydney Cove from England with the **convict** ships of the First Fleet. The new **settlement** brought disaster to Australia's **Indigenous peoples** because the newcomers took their lands. This event marks the beginning of Australia as we know it today.

Since 1788, Australia has grown from a tiny convict settlement into a free and **multicultural** nation. During those 200 or so years, a number of key events have changed Australia forever. The **Eureka Stockade** is one of these events.



The Eureka Stockade is a defining moment in Australia's history.

What does it mean?

Eureka: Eureka means 'I found it!' in Greek. The Eureka **diggings** were named after the Eureka Lead, a rich layer of gold that ran beneath that part of Ballarat.

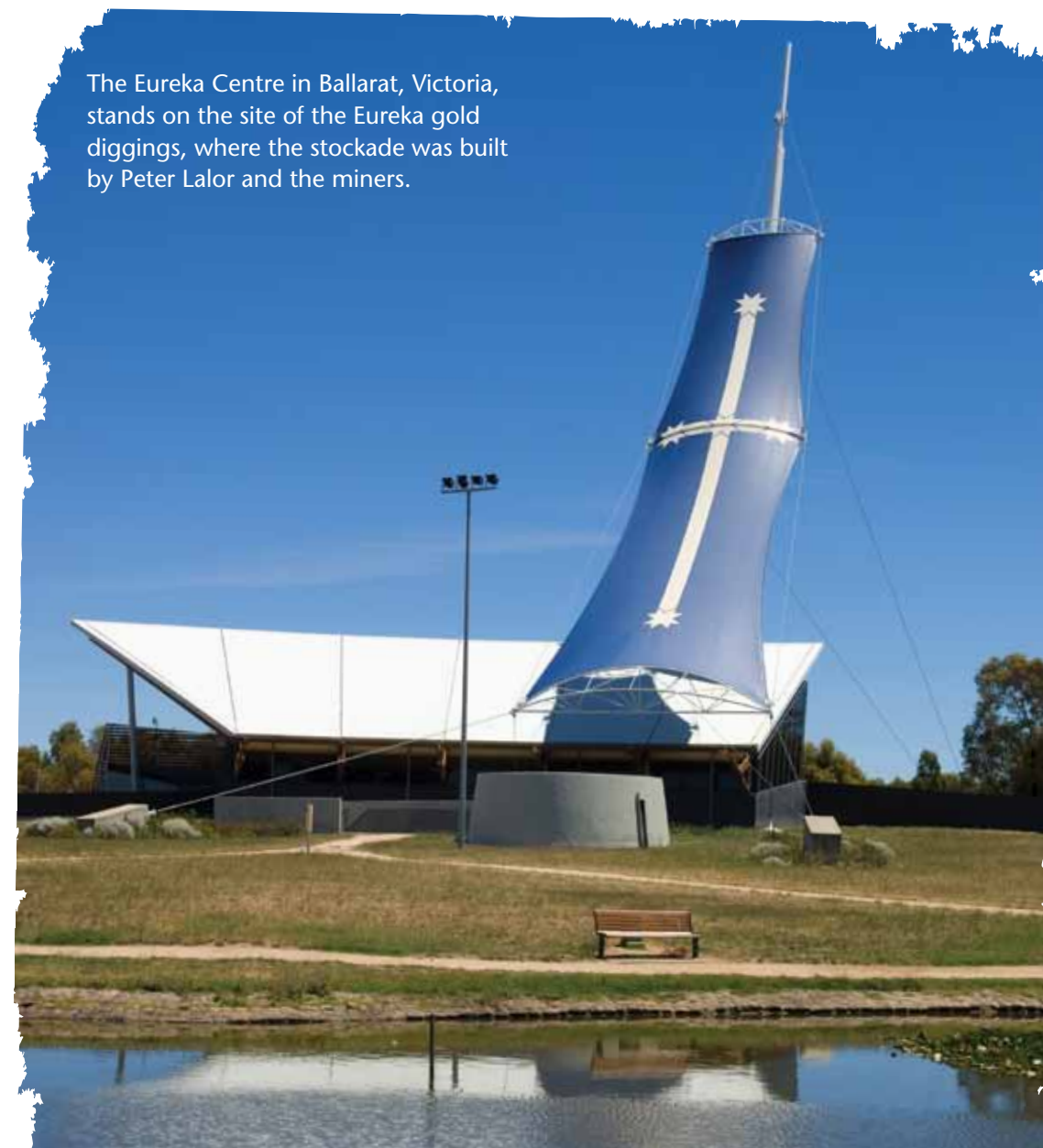
Peter Lalor and the Eureka Stockade

In December 1854, a group of Ballarat gold miners, led by Peter Lalor, built a wooden fort, or stockade, at the Eureka diggings, took up guns and fought government troops. They believed that they were fighting for justice and the right to vote, but the Victorian Government of the time saw them as **traitors** who must be defeated.

After the battle, around 25 diggers and six troopers lay dead. The miners may have lost the battle, but they won their rights in the end. After the Eureka Stockade, Australia would never be the same again.

This is the story of the people, the ideas and the events that led to that significant battle, and how it changed Australia.

The Eureka Centre in Ballarat, Victoria, stands on the site of the Eureka gold diggings, where the stockade was built by Peter Lalor and the miners.



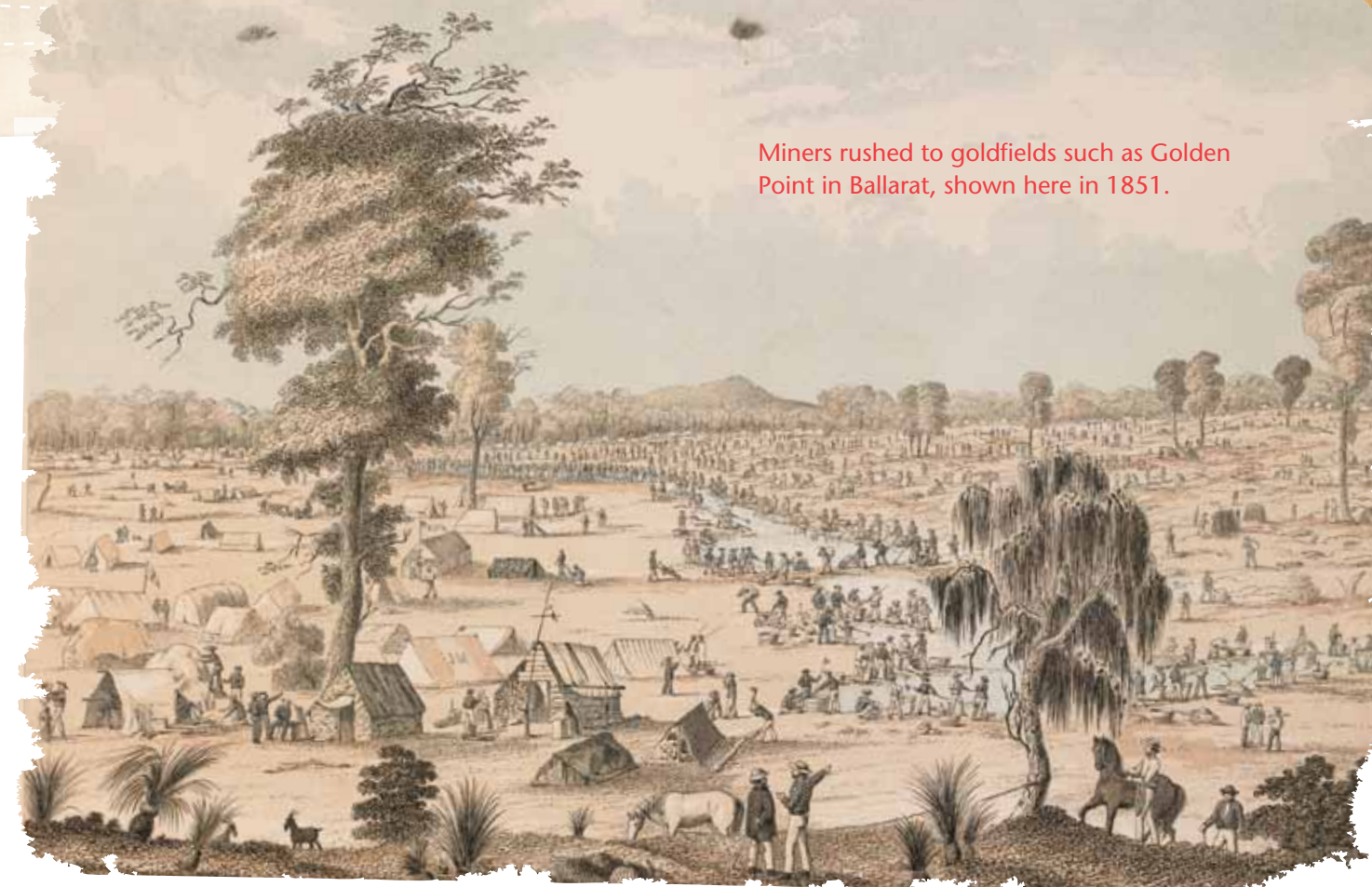
The big picture

The story of the Eureka Stockade begins with gold. In the 1800s, gold was the poor person's hope for a better life.

When gold was discovered in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851, the news spread like wildfire. Locals left their jobs for the **diggings**, and people from all over the world rushed to Australia. Huge 'tent cities' full of gold-seekers sprang up everywhere, with more diggers pouring in every week. Everyone was so mad for gold that people called it 'gold fever'.

The Victorian goldfields were the richest in the world at the time, and the richest goldfield of all was in Ballarat.

This map of Victoria shows the two main ports and the main gold diggings in the early 1850s. It was at Ballarat that the Eureka Stockade took place.



Miners rushed to goldfields such as Golden Point in Ballarat, shown here in 1851.

Trouble

By August 1851, Victoria's governor, Charles Joseph La Trobe, was worried. Most of his police force had run off to the goldfields. There was no one left to guard **convicts** and keep law and order.

Governor La Trobe feared that his **colony** would become as lawless as California's 'Wild West' during the 1849 gold rush in the United States of America. He needed money to pay troopers to keep order on the goldfields. However, the landowners in the Victorian **Legislative Council** would not allow government money to be spent on the goldfields. They hated the gold rush because it interrupted their farming.

So, Governor La Trobe introduced gold **licences** that the diggers had to buy before they were allowed to dig for gold. This helped to solve the government's money problem, but it upset the miners.

Victoria's government

In 1851, Victoria had just split from New South Wales to become a separate colony, with a Legislative Council of its own, elected by rich landowners. The governor was chosen by the Queen of England, and the working people of Victoria had no say in how they were ruled.

What does it mean?

Legislative Council:

The Legislative Council was a group of lawmakers elected by property owners.

Key people

These three people played key roles in the Eureka Stockade.

Peter Lalor

Born: 1827 in Ireland

Role: Leader of the miners at the Eureka Stockade

Age at Eureka: 27

Died: 1889

Appearance: Tall, strong, neat and respectable

Character: Strong-minded, straight-talking, courageous. Educated as an engineer, but came to Victoria in 1852 seeking gold.

Comments: Peter Lalor was a good speaker and a natural leader. He was hot-headed and urged the miners to use violence, but won people's respect because he fought for what he believed in.



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Charles Joseph La Trobe

Born: 1801 in England

Role: Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, in charge of the colony 1839–54

Age at Eureka: 53

Died: 1875

Appearance: Tall, honest, honourable, friendly-faced but dignified

Character: Well educated, clever, quiet. He loved reading, writing, drawing and mountain climbing. La Trobe saw Melbourne as a great future city and planned the Royal Botanic Gardens, Pentridge Prison and Yan Yean Reservoir.

Comments: La Trobe was not a military man. He disliked violence and was not the sort of man who could easily control rough miners. The diggers hated him because he brought in the gold licence laws. Yet, he managed to keep the peace, unlike Sir Charles Hotham.



Sir Charles Hotham

Born: 1806 in England

Role: Lieutenant Governor of Victoria 1854–55

Age at Eureka: 48

Died: 1855

Appearance: Tall, thin, piercing eyes

Character: Clever, strict, stubborn, hard-working. An officer in the British navy and a fighter, he wanted to join the Crimean War in 1854 but was sent to Victoria.

Comments: Hotham was a good money-manager, but his blunt talk and unbending ways led people to dislike him. Although he took steps to ease tension on the goldfields, he was a military man at heart. He saw the Eureka Stockade miners as traitors who should be punished.

Trouble on the goldfields

August 1851

In the early days of the gold rush, the Victorian goldfields were rough and lawless places.



STOP THIEF!

THIS IS MY CLAIM!

NO, IT'S MINE!

EUREKA!

1 September 1851

To bring law and order to the goldfields, Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe drew up a set of rules, which were displayed at the diggings.

RULES FOR THE DIGGINGS

- No mining on Sundays
- One claim only per miner
- No alcohol on the diggings
- Every miner must buy a licence to dig for gold
- Licences cost 30 shillings per month
- Licences must be carried at all times
- Penalty £5 fine or prison

By order
Governor
La Trobe

THAT'S TOO MUCH!

A WEEK'S WAGES?
I'M NOT BUYING A
LICENCE!

Thirty shillings (\$3) was a lot of money. A £5 (\$10) fine was more than most diggers could afford.

Governor La Trobe sent gold commissioners and squads of troopers to the goldfields to make sure the miners obeyed the rules.



SEARCH THE DIGGINGS, MEN. ARREST ANY MINERS WITHOUT A LICENCE.

YES, SIR!



On the diggings...

SHOW US YOUR LICENCE!

I SHOWED IT TO YOU YESTERDAY!

I'VE LEFT MINE IN MY TENT.

RUN!

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!



The rules helped keep law and order on the diggings, but the miners hated the troopers...

HEY, ISN'T THAT BILL O'CONNOR, THE EX-CONVICT?

YEAH! WHAT'S HE DOING IN A TROOPER'S UNIFORM?

THEY'LL TAKE ANYONE THEY CAN GET. HE'S A BRUTE.

NEXT TIME, YOU WON'T TRY TO HIDE.

...and they hated having to buy a licence every month.

I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD, BUT I STILL HAVE TO PAY FOR A LICENCE.

IT'S NOT FAIR.

I WAITED ALL DAY TO BUY A LICENCE. WHEN I GOT BACK, MY TENT HAD BEEN ROBBED.

THEY LOCKED ME UP FOR A WEEK AND FINED ME £5. NOW I'M BROKE.

Life was getting even harder on the Victorian goldfields.

YOU HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD? DIG DEEPER!

WE'RE ALREADY 40 METRES DOWN. THE MINE WILL FLOOD!

I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD IN WEEKS AND MY LICENCE FEE IS DUE AGAIN.

IT'S UNFAIR.

WE DIDN'T MAKE THE LAWS, SO WE HAVE NO SAY...

July 1853

Across Victoria, groups of miners began to protest. At the Bendigo diggings...

VOTES FOR MINERS!

WEAR THIS RED RIBBON TO SHOW YOUR OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S LICENCE LAW!

CHEAPER LICENCES!

JUSTICE!

WE'LL SEND A LETTER OF OUR DEMANDS TO LA TROBE!

1 August
1853

Governor La Trobe's office, Melbourne

SIR, A LETTER
FOR YOU, FROM
BENDIGO.

THERE'S UNREST
ON THOSE
DIGGINGS.

YES, SIR. HUNDREDS OF
MINERS ARE WEARING
THE RED RIBBON.

OH NO...

...much ill feeling... amongst the diggers against the Government... thirty shillings a month is unjust because the successful and unsuccessful digger are assessed in the same (way)... (we ask) that the licence fee be reduced to ten shillings a month...

THE MINERS WANT
LOWER LICENCE
FEES. THEY ALSO
WANT THE VOTE?

TELL THEM NO!

YES, SIR.

I DON'T WANT
TROUBLE... BUT THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE.

The Bendigo miners formed a protest group named the Red Ribbon Movement. Ten thousand diggers joined, but the Governor did not change his mind. Then, in May 1854, Governor La Trobe resigned and returned to England after his wife, Sophie, became ill.

June
1854

Sir Charles Hotham replaced La Trobe. At first the miners welcomed the new governor and were pleased...

HOORAY FOR
GOVERNOR HOTHAM!

I SHALL SET UP AN
INQUIRY TO REVIEW
THE LICENCE LAWS.

HOORAY!

October
1854

Governor Hotham's office, Melbourne

THE COLONY IS
£2 MILLION IN DEBT.
WE NEED TO RAISE
MORE MONEY.

THE LAW MUST BE
OBEYED! CHECK FOR
LICENCES TWICE A WEEK!

HOW MANY MINERS'
LICENCES HAVE BEEN
SOLD THIS MONTH?

BUT THERE ARE 77 000
MINERS ON THE DIGGINGS!

YES, SIR, BUT HALF
THE DIGGERS HAVEN'T
BOUGHT A LICENCE.

YES, SIR.

THE DIGGERS WON'T
BE HAPPY...

44 000, SIR.

THAT'S A
DISGRACE!

Under Governor Hotham's strict rules, the diggers became angrier and angrier. They were like gunpowder waiting to explode...

Viewpoints

The government saw the miners as a mob of troublemakers and **rebels**. The miners saw themselves as fighters for justice. These two letters written at the time show these different points of view.

Robert Rede Gold Commissioner, Ballarat

Robert Rede was the Gold **Commissioner** in charge of the Ballarat goldfields. He believed that his troopers should use strong force and strict laws against the miners to keep order. Three days before the Eureka **Stockade** battle, he wrote to a government officer in Melbourne:

“I hear the (miners) are all armed... We shall be on the alert... If the Government will hold this and the other gold fields it must at once crush this movement, and I would advise again that this gold field be put under Martial Law [specially strict laws] and ... a strong force [of soldiers] sent up to enforce it.”

Robert Rede, 30 November 1854

Gold Commissioner Robert Rede was well prepared to fight back against unrest among the miners.



1854, a group of miners, built a stockade, and took over the mine.

Peter Lalor gold miner, Ballarat

Many diggers, including Peter Lalor, came from Ireland, where the poor were fighting against injustice. These miners brought new ideas, such as **equal rights** and votes for workers. Many miners believed that the **licence** laws were unfair and that the troopers used unnecessary force. Peter Lalor wrote:

“...the people were dissatisfied with the laws, because they ... (put upon) them an odious [hated] poll tax [licence fee]. The diggers were subjected to the most unheard of insults and cruelties in the collection of this tax, being in many instances chained to logs if they could not produce their license. I have often known men to be asked for their license four or five times... a day... The water... in deep (mine shafts causes)... the diggers frequently to change their dress; ... they very often leave their licenses behind; ... (if) visited by the police, they are dragged, wet and dripping... to the prison, like common felons [criminals].”

Peter Lalor, 10 April 1855



The Eureka rebellion

With the miners furious about the licence laws, it did not take much to stir up trouble. The murder of a digger in Ballarat started a chain of events that led to the rebellion at Eureka.

7 October 1854

Outside Bentley's Eureka Hotel, Ballarat

HELP!
JAMES SCOBIE
HAS BEEN
MURDERED!

Everyone suspected that the murderer was James Bentley, the owner of the hotel.

BENTLEY, WE'RE ARRESTING YOU FOR MURDER.

HEY, YOU KNOW ME, BOYS. I'M NO MURDERER.

A few days later...

DID YOU HEAR?
MAGISTRATE DAWES
RELEASED JAMES BENTLEY.

YEAH. THEY SAY
BENTLEY IS A
FRIEND OF THE
MAGISTRATE.

THERE'S A PROTEST
MEETING THIS
AFTERNOON
OUTSIDE THE HOTEL.

That night, after the protest meeting...

FIRE!
FIRE!

THAT'S
REVENGE FOR
OUR MATE
SCOBIE!

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST
FOR BURNING DOWN
THE EUREKA HOTEL.

Governor Hotham ordered James Bentley to be re-tried. He was found guilty, but this did not satisfy the miners.

11 November 1854

The miners formed a new protest group called the Ballarat Reform League. They prepared a list of demands, which was brought to Governor Hotham.

BALLARAT REFORM LEAGUE

RELEASE THE
ARRESTED MINERS!

NO MORE
LICENCE FEES!

VOTES FOR
DIGGERS!

27 November 1854

Governor Hotham's office, Melbourne

DEMAND?! I CANNOT
GRANT THESE
REQUESTS!

29 November 1854

The Ballarat miners were furious. They called a 'Monster Meeting' at Bakery Hill, where 10 000 diggers turned up.

BURN YOUR
LICENCES!

JUSTICE
FOR
MINERS
by Henry Seekamp

THE
BALLARAT TIMES
30 November 1854

MONSTER
MEETING
90 miners
burn licences

Meanwhile, in one of the miner's tents...

THE MEN SAY
THEY'D RATHER
FIGHT THAN
GIVE IN.

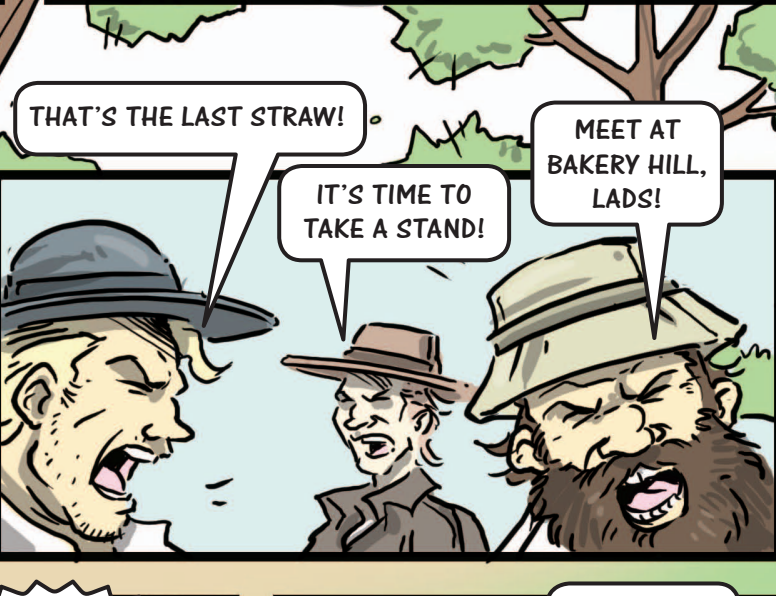
LET'S MAKE THEM A FLAG.
WE CAN USE THIS PETTICOAT.

WE'LL SEW THEM
A FLAG TO BE
PROUD OF!

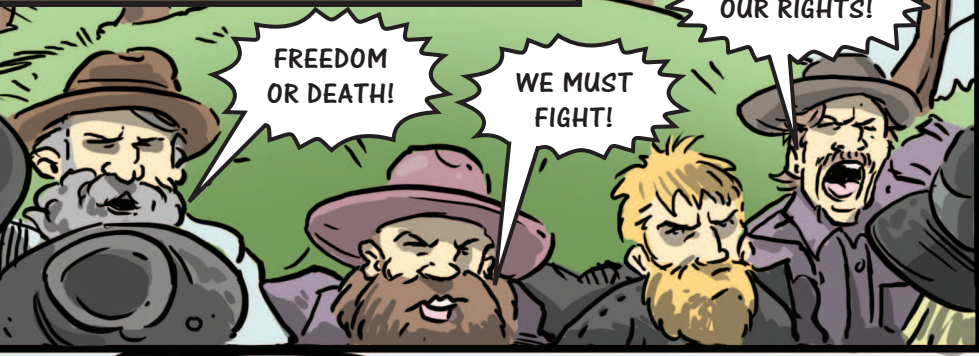
The stars of the Southern Cross...

30 November 1854

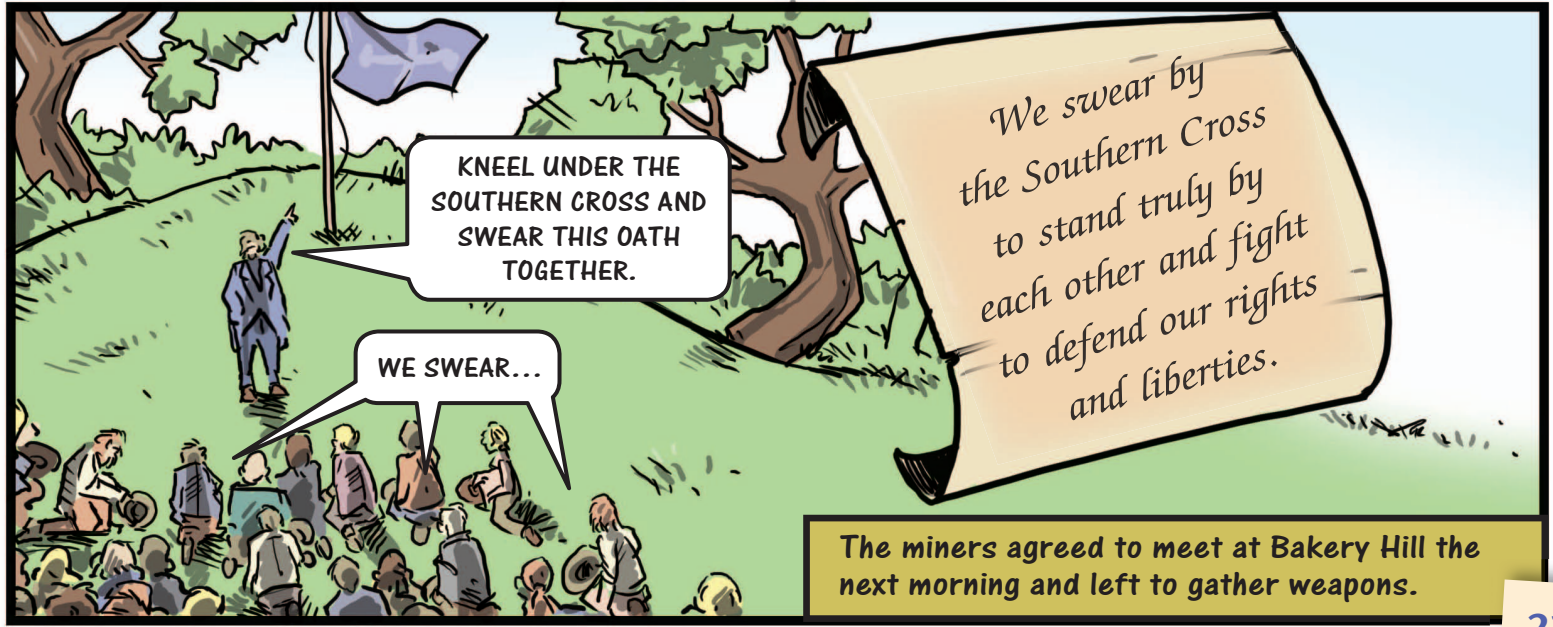
The next day, at Ballarat Gold Commissioner Robert Rede's tent...



The same day, 4 p.m. at Bakery Hill...



Lalor came from a family of Irish freedom-fighters. He knew how to lead men.



1 December
1854

About 1500 miners marched with Peter Lalor to the Eureka diggings and built a stockade.



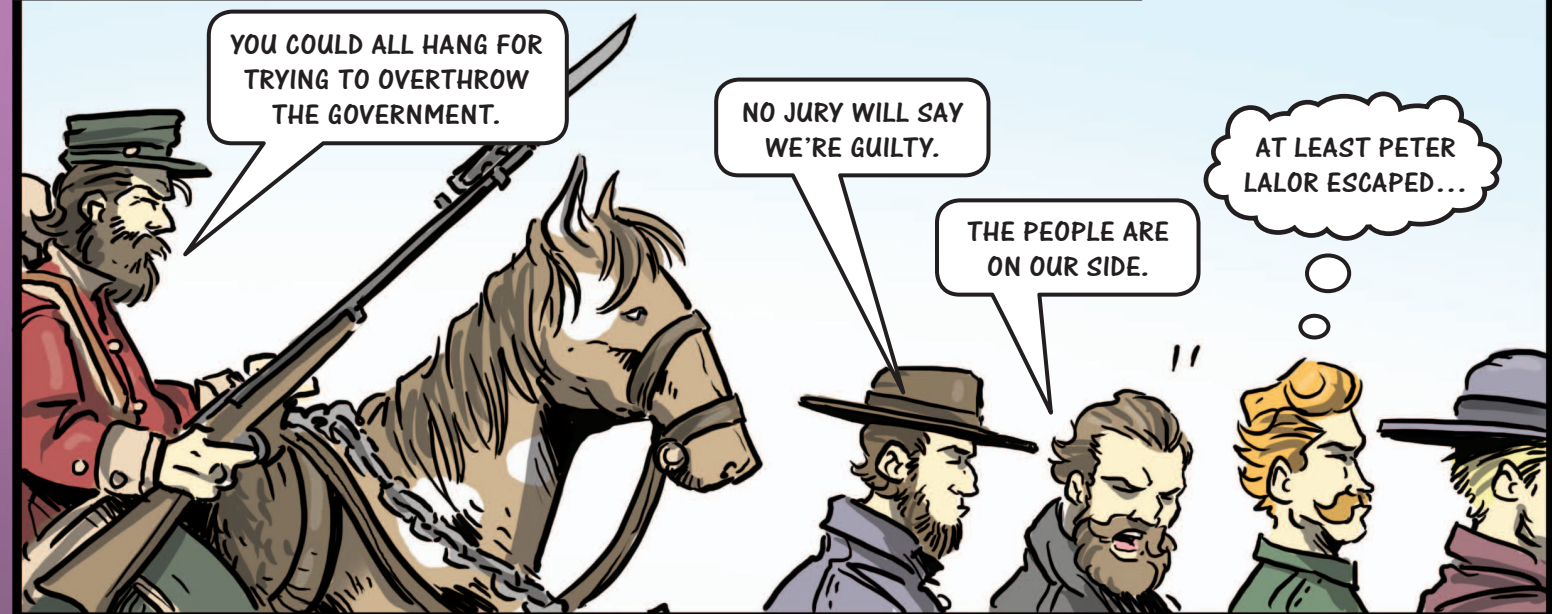
By Saturday night, many miners had returned to their tents to rest. Only about 120 men were left in the stockade.

Meanwhile, at Gold Commissioner Rede's tent...



WE'LL ATTACK BEFORE DAYLIGHT AND CATCH THEM BY SURPRISE.

Hundreds of miners were arrested and 13 men were charged with treason.



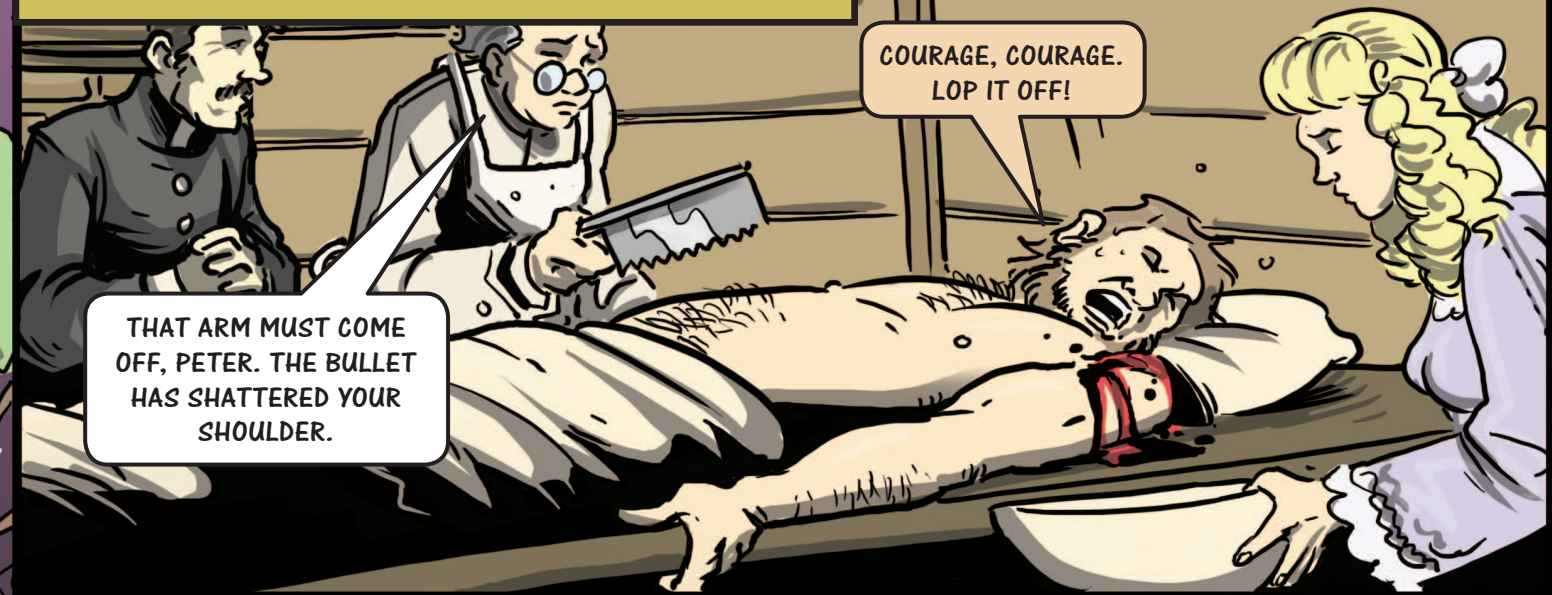
YOU COULD ALL HANG FOR TRYING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT.

NO JURY WILL SAY WE'RE GUILTY.

THE PEOPLE ARE ON OUR SIDE.

AT LEAST PETER LALOR ESCAPED...

Meanwhile, at the house of Father Smyth in Ballarat...



COURAGE, COURAGE. LOP IT OFF!

THAT ARM MUST COME OFF, PETER. THE BULLET HAS SHATTERED YOUR SHOULDER.

Dawn,
3 December 1854

WE'RE OUTNUMBERED 20 TO 1!

ATTACK!
ATTACK!

PETER LALOR HAS BEEN SHOT!

COURAGE, MEN!

HE'S STILL ALIVE. QUICK, HIDE HIM UNDER THAT PILE OF BARK.

The battle of the Eureka Stockade lasted just 15 minutes. About 25 miners and 6 troopers were killed. The diggers lost.

YOU'LL BE SAFE IN GEELONG, PETER. ALICIA DUNNE WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.

THANK YOU, LADS.

REWARD
£200

for the capture
of rebel
PETER LALOR
by order
Governor
Charles Hotham

No one betrayed Peter Lalor and he was not captured.

What happened next?

After the battle of Eureka, hundreds of diggers were arrested and beaten. The troopers also attacked and killed innocent **bystanders** and burned down their tents. Newspapers reported these events and the public were outraged.

The trial

Thirteen miners were charged with trying to overthrow the government and sent to trial in Melbourne. However, the people were on their side. In February and March 1855, juries found the miners not guilty. The freed men paraded through the streets of Melbourne, cheered by thousands of people. Soon afterwards, the reward for Peter Lalor's capture was withdrawn and he was freed by the government.

Henry Seekamp

Ballarat Times editor Henry Seekamp was put on trial for supporting the **rebels**. The government accused him of printing the Eureka miners' meeting notices and writing **sympathetic** newspaper reports. Henry Seekamp was found guilty. He was jailed for six months, even though he was not present at the Eureka **Stockade** and did not fire a single shot.

This wood engraving from 1887 shows how the Eureka miners were carried in triumph by the celebrating crowd after they were found innocent.



Eyewitness words

Local newspapers supported the Eureka Stockade miners, although editors had to be careful about what they wrote to avoid being charged with **treason**. The editor of *The Age* newspaper wrote on 5 December 1855:

“(We) do not sympathise with revolt; but neither do (we) sympathise with injustice.”

What does it mean?

treason: To commit treason means to betray the government of your country.

Changes for the better

In March 1855, the enquiry set up by Governor Hotham to look into the miners' problems recommended changes to the laws. Gold **licences** were replaced with miners' rights, costing just £1 (\$2) per year, and licence inspections were banned. More importantly, the diggers who bought a miner's right were given the right to vote. In 1855, the miners voted their hero, Peter Lalor, into the Legislative Council.

1854, a group of miners, built a stockade, and were



The new miner's right replaced the gold licence. This miner's right is dated 1863.

The effects of the Eureka Stockade

The Eureka Stockade had effects that spread across Australia.

In Victoria

The events at Eureka weakened the power of Governor Hotham and the rich landowners in the Legislative Council. They realised that they could not keep all the power to themselves. The fact that most people supported the miners showed the government that it was out of touch and did not understand what the miners wanted. This led to **democratic** changes in Victoria that allowed miners to vote.

In Australia

The Eureka Stockade showed that working people would fight for their rights. It was a warning to those in power that they would have to give working people a say in the way Australia was governed. Eureka was the start of a democratic movement that would result in votes for men in Australia by 1901, and for women by 1902.

Whatever happened to ...

Peter Lalor?

Peter Lalor recovered from having his injured arm amputated after the Eureka Stockade. He married his nurse, Alicia Dunne, in July 1855. In November he was elected by the miners to the Legislative Council and served in the Victorian Parliament for 32 years. He died in February 1889.

Timeline

This timeline shows the main events of the Eureka Stockade.

July 1851

Gold is discovered in Victoria.



June 1854

Governor Charles Hotham arrives in Victoria.



7 October 1854

Miner James Scobie is murdered at Bentley's Eureka Hotel, Ballarat.



17 October

Bentley's Eureka Hotel is burned down.

11 November 1854

The Ballarat Reform League is formed.



November 1855

Peter Lalor is elected to parliament.

February and March 1855

The miners are found not guilty.

1852

1854

1855

1 September 1851

The gold licence laws are introduced.



29 November

The miners burn their licences at Bakery Hill.



30 November

At a meeting at Bakery Hill, Peter Lalor is elected leader and the Eureka flag is flown.

1-2 December 1854

The miners build a stockade.

3 December

The Battle of the Eureka Stockade, where miners are arrested.

What do you think?

The Eureka Stockade raises many questions about justice, law and order, and the rights and wrongs of people's actions. Try the following activities to test your own ideas about these important subjects.

Who is right?

The two sides in the Eureka Stockade had different ideas about laws and the importance of obeying them. Read the following opinions and have a discussion in class about who you think was right.

The government

Keeping law and order is very important. No matter what their reasons, if people threaten violence and break the law, the government must stop them, by force if necessary.



The miners

Laws should not be obeyed if they are obviously unfair. If peaceful protests do not work, people must resort to violence or things will never change.



What does it mean?

protest: A protest is an organised gathering of people who have all come together to complain about the same thing.

What would you do?

The following scenes actually occurred at the time of the Eureka Stockade. Read each scene, then choose what you would do.

Scene 1

You are Henry Goodenough, a trooper at Ballarat. You have been ordered to put on miners' clothes and spy on the men protesting at Bakery Hill. The other miners kneel and swear loyalty to the Eureka flag. You know that this is an act of treason. Would you...

- A** try to persuade the miners to stop
- B** change sides, swear the oath and fight for the diggers
- C** kneel before the flag and pretend to join in, then betray the diggers?

Scene 2

You are Father Patrick Smyth, a Catholic priest who has tried to persuade the miners not to fight. After the Eureka Stockade, a miner brings the badly wounded Peter Lalor to your house for help. Would you...

- A** hide Lalor and call a doctor for him
- B** not let him in, but suggest a friend who might help
- C** call the troopers?

Scene 3

You are Governor Hotham. You receive many reports of brutal acts carried out by Commissioner Rede's troopers after the battle of Eureka. Would you...

- A** remove **Commissioner** Rede from his post
- B** order an enquiry into the actions of the troopers
- C** praise the troopers for keeping law and order?

Once you have chosen what you would do in each scene, find out what actually happened on page 31.

Find out more

Websites

<http://shededucationcom.ascetinteractive.biz>

This educational website from Sovereign Hill includes extensive teacher and student resources, and audio files of primary sources that you can download.

<http://www.ballarat.com/eurekastockade.htm>

This website offers detailed information about the Eureka **Stockade**. It includes directions for the Eureka Trail, a 3.5-kilometre walk that follows in the historic footsteps of the Eureka troopers.

<http://eureka.imagineering.com.au>

This website is run by the Public Records Office Victoria and has 90 original primary sources from the time of the Eureka Stockade. Students will need guidance.

Places to visit

The Art Gallery of Ballarat, Victoria

The actual Eureka flag flown at the stockade is on display.

The Eureka Centre, Ballarat, Victoria

The Eureka Centre is built on the site of the original stockade.

Sovereign Hill open-air museum, Ballarat, Victoria

The 'Blood on the Southern Cross' sound-and-light show features a **re-enactment** of the burning of Bentley's Eureka Hotel. Sovereign Hill also has an excellent Gold Museum and many educational activities.

The Eureka Centre, Ballarat



1854
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govern

Glossary

- bystanders** people who are present at an event but do not take part
- colony** an area of land that is controlled by a distant country
- commissioner** a government officer
- convict** someone serving a sentence in jail for committing a crime
- democratic** government by the people
- diggings** a place where gold is dug
- equal rights** the right of all people to be treated fairly and equally
- indigenous peoples** the original peoples of a country or region
- liberty** freedom
- licences** documents giving the holder permission to do something
- magistrate** judge
- multicultural** with many different cultures
- rebels** people who fight against the government
- re-enactment** the performance of what happened at an historic event, such as in the form of a play
- reform league** a protest group
- settlement** a place where people live
- stockade** a fort
- sympathetic** offering support; feeling for someone
- traitors** people who betray trust

What actually happened in the 'What would you do?' scenes described on page 29:

Scene 1: C. Goodenough pretended to join in, then betrayed the miners. Find out how Henry Goodenough spied on the miners at: http://eureka.imagineering.com.au/goodenoughs_testimony.htm

Scene 2: A. Father Patrick Smyth hid Peter Lalor and helped him. Find out more about Father Smyth's actions at: <http://eureka.imagineering.com.au/biographies.htm>

Scene 3: C. Governor Hotham praised the troopers. Find Governor Hotham's letter defending the troopers at: <http://eureka.imagineering.com.au/despatch162.htm>

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