THE BAROSSA GOLDFIELD

A guide to the walking trail

MINES and ENERGY
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

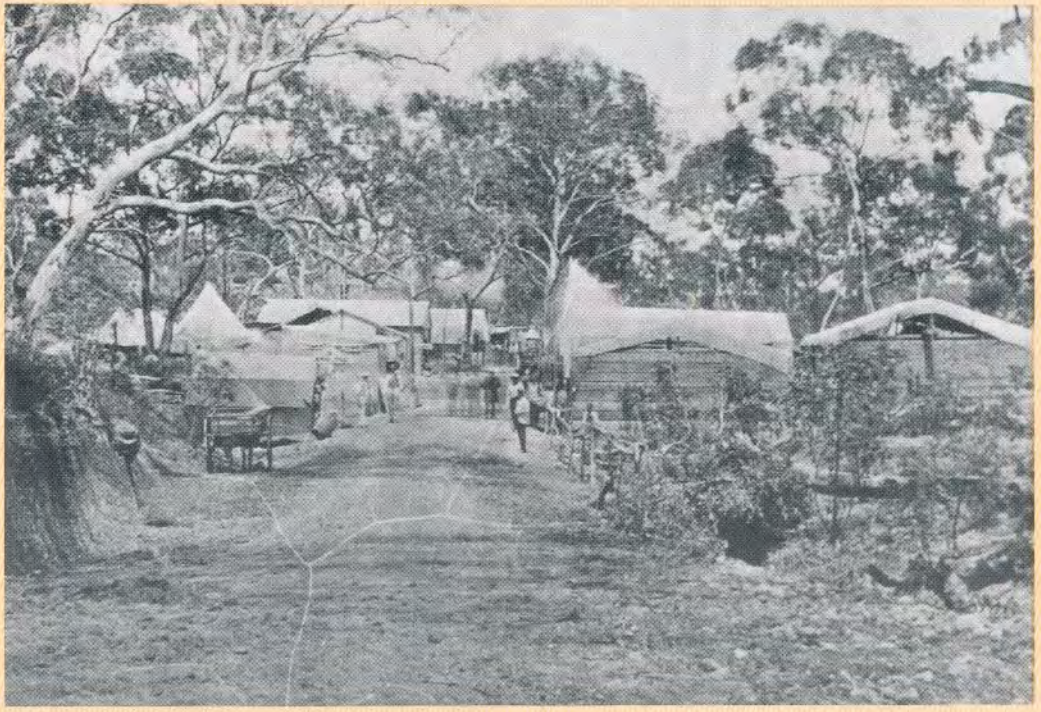
INTRODUCTION

Alluvial gold was discovered by Job Harris in 1868 in Spike Gully 1.5 kilometres north of the present park boundary.

About 25 000 ounces (778 kg) were produced from the goldfield, between 1868 and 1871 mainly from alluvial workings.The goldfield extends northward for a distance of 4 kilometres from the South Para River and is now located partly on private property and partly on Para Wirra Recreation Park. The trail is within the park, which is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and was established in conjunction with the Department of Mines and Energy.

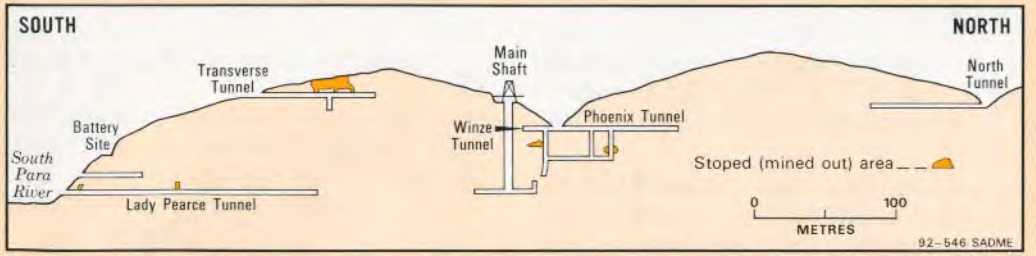
HISTORY

Within a week of the first discoveries in early October 1868, about 2 000 people had rushed the area, a block of unsold Crown Land was proclaimed an official goldfield, and a Warden of Goldfields and police trooper were dispatched to issue gold licences and settle disputes. At its height within the first few weeks, the rush attracted up to 4 000 people. The township of Barossa was soon established and consisted of a narrow lane of stores and hotels. An institute and school were added later and the township survived until the 1950s.



Barossa township, 1869

The initial diggings were in the modern alluvium in Spike Gully at depths of 2 to 6 metres but, by early 1869, prospecting syndicates were formed and more than 20 individual rushes took place in neighbouring gullies and hillsides during 1869. These later rushes won gold from ancient river channels (leads) buried by up to 30 metres of sand and gravel. The most prominent of these later rushes were located on Goddards Hill and Victoria Hill where a second township, Victoria, was established in 1869.



Longitudinal section of the Menzies Barossa Mine (see plan for line of section)

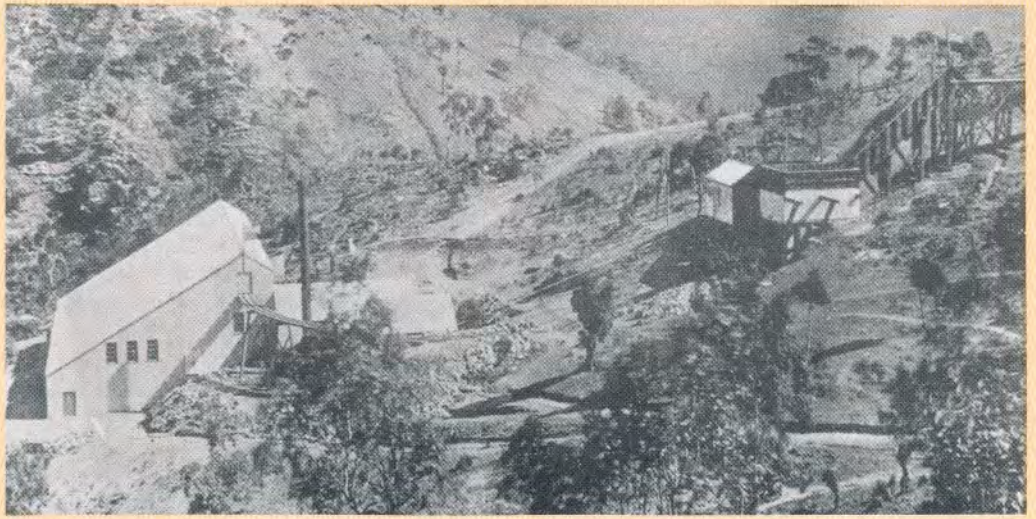
By late 1870, only 100 miners remained working old claims, many having moved to the newly discovered fields at Mount Pleasant and Birdwood.

New discoveries brought diggers back to the field at Sims Rush in 1887 and Yatta Hill Rush in 1889 near the northern end. Between 1887 and 1891, several companies were formed to explore and test the deep alluvial ground at the northern extremity of the field. The principal mines were the Barossa Enterprise and Barossa Deep Lead, but the operations were unsuccessful.

During the 1890s, companies were formed to work quartz reefs between Victoria Hill and the South Para River. In 1894, the Comet Syndicate started driving into a reef on the side of the South Para River but, lacking finance, was reformed into the Lady Pearce Syndicate. In 1895, the Royal Phoenix Syndicate took up a lease on the northern side of the Lady Pearce Mine and commenced tunnelling. In 1896, an American mining authority, Mr Menzies, acquired these leases and formed the Menzies Barossa Gold Mining Company.

A tramway linking the various tunnels and shafts to a 40-head battery was constructed, and extensive machinery was installed. Menzies planned to make the mine the largest in Australia and, in 1898, 100 men were employed. The first crushing of ore in early 1898 was, however, an economic disaster and operations were suspended immediately.

The alluvial deposits on the field were reworked during the 1930s depression years.



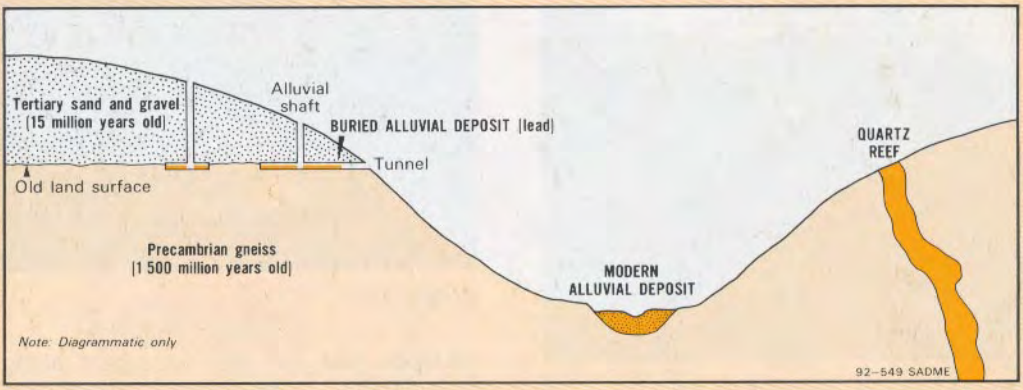
Menzies Barossa battery, 1898

GEOLOGY

Three types of gold deposits existed on the field. The oldest deposits occur in quartz veins or ***reefs*** as can be seen at the Belle of Barossa and Menzies Barossa Mines. These reefs, often containing iron minerals such as goethite and siderite, fill fractures in schist and gneiss which are about 1500 million years old (Precambrian Period).

Ancient, ***buried alluvial deposits*** or leads occur at depths of up to 30 metres below present hill tops. These deposits were formed about 15 million years ago (Tertiary Period) when sand, gravel and clay along with small particles of gold from outcropping reefs were washed into a large inland lake which stretched northwards to Kapunda. The Tertiary deposits are characterised by cemented conglomerate layers, known by the miners as cement, which usually occurs as cappings above the softer beds of sand and clay.

About two million years ago, the area was uplifted by faulting, and the once continuous Tertiary sequence was dissected by erosion, a process which has continued to the present day. During this time gold was washed from the leads into the present drainage channels forming ***modern alluvial deposits***.



Types of gold deposits on the Barossa Goldfield

COVER: The Barossa Goldfield, 1869

Botanical illustration in this brochure
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It's Blue with Five Petals: Wildflowers of the Adelaide region.

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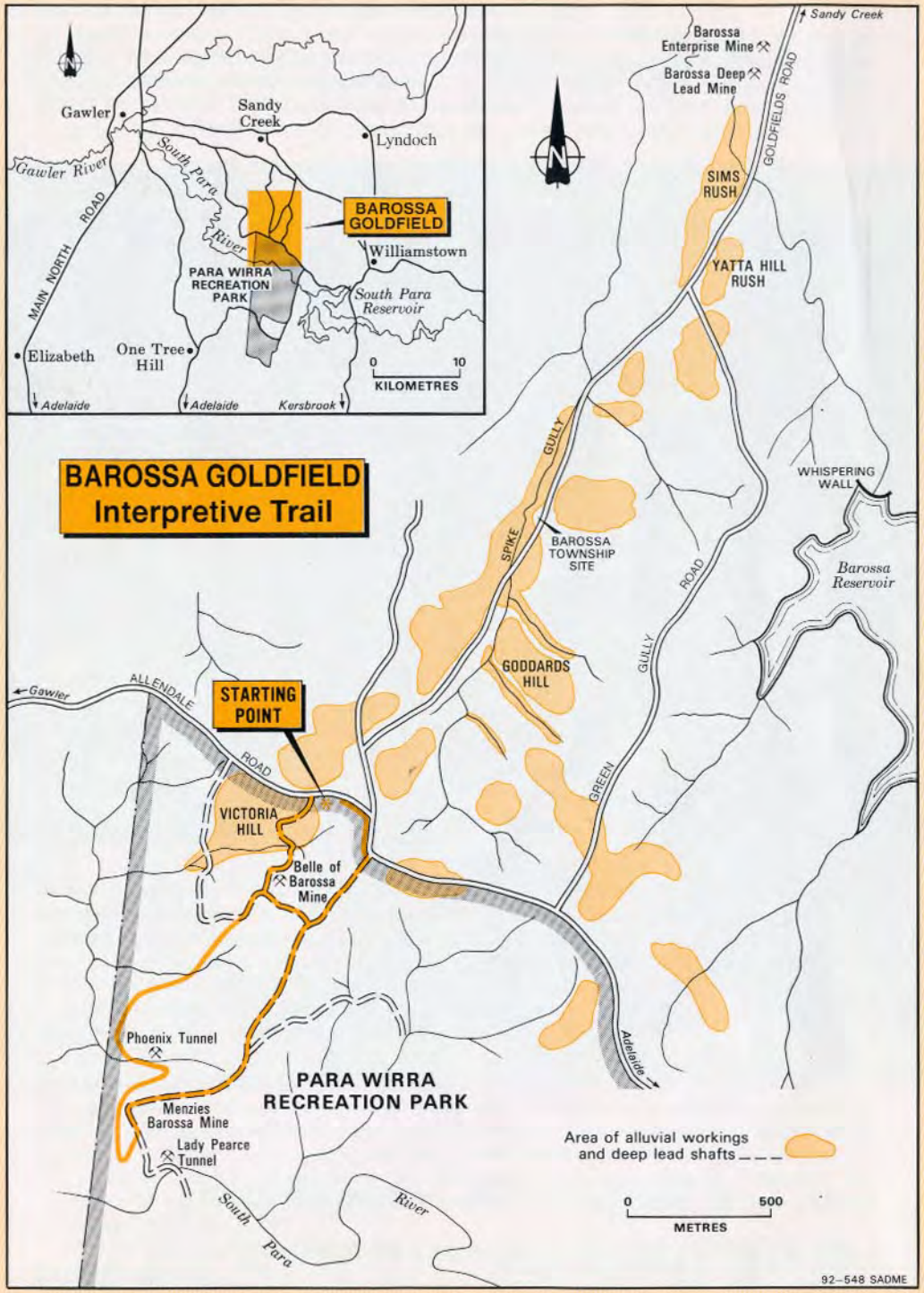
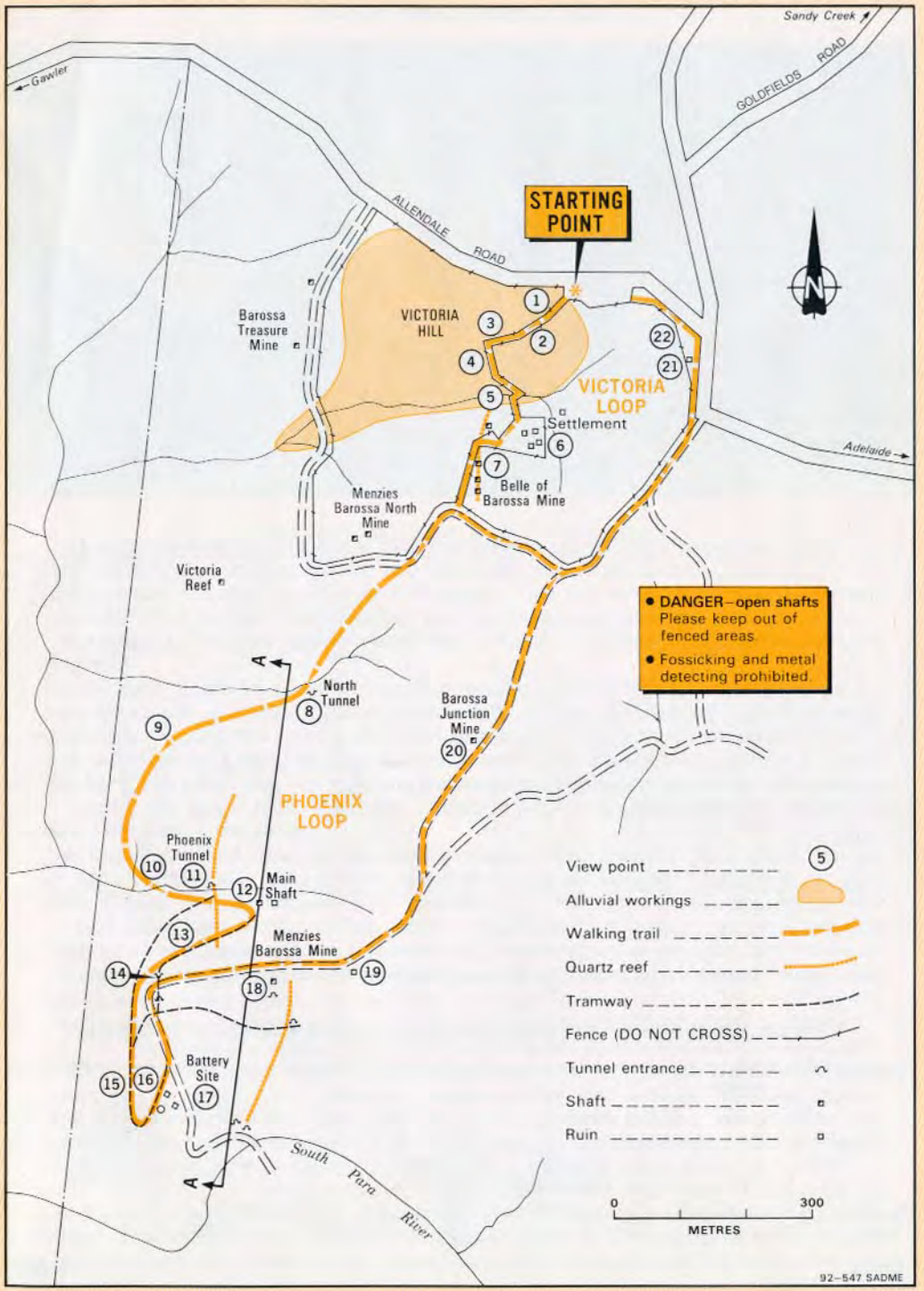

Gawler
Sandy Creek
Lyndoch
Gawler River
South Para River
MAIN NORTH ROAD
BAROSSA GOLDFIELD
Williamstown
PARA WIRRA RECREATION PARK
South Para Reservoir
Elizabeth
One Tree Hill
0 10
KILOMETRES
Adelaide
Adelaide
Kersbrook
BAROSSA GOLDFIELD
Interpretive Trail
Barossa Enterprise Mine
Barossa Deep Lead Mine
Sandy Creek
GOLDFIELDS ROAD
SIMS RUSH
YATTA HILL RUSH
WHISPERING WALL
GULLY
SPIKE
BAROSSA TOWNSHIP SITE
GULLY ROAD
Barossa Reservoir
GODDARDS HILL
GREEN
Gawler
ALLENDALE ROAD
STARTING POINT
VICTORIA HILL
Belle of Barossa Mine
Phoenix Tunnel
Menzies Barossa Mine
Lady Pearce Tunnel
PARA WIRRA RECREATION PARK
South Para River
Adelaide
Area of alluvial workings and deep lead shafts
0 500
METRES
92–548 SADME


Sandy Creek
GOLDFIELDS ROAD
Gawler
ALLENDALE ROAD
STARTING POINT
Barossa Treasure Mine
VICTORIA HILL
VICTORIA LOOP
Settlement
Belle of Barossa Mine
Menzies Barossa North Mine
Adelaide
Victoria Reef
DANGER–open shafts
Please keep out of fenced areas.
Fossicking and metal detecting prohibited.
North Tunnel
Barossa Junction Mine
PHOENIX LOOP
Phoenix Tunnel
Main Shaft
Menzies Barossa Mine
Battery Site
South Para River
View point
Alluvial workings
Walking trail
Quartz reef
Tramway
Fence (DO NOT CROSS)
Tunnel entrance
Shaft
Ruin
0 300
METRES
92–547 SADME

THE TRAIL

Discover the gold mining history of the area on one of two loop trails. The shorter VICTORIA LOOP is 1.2 kilometres long and takes about 1 hour to complete. The longer PHOENIX LOOP is about 5 kilometres and takes 3 to 4 hours. Interpretive signs illustrate mining techniques, geology, treatment of ore and the lifestyles of people who lived there. FOSSICKING AND COLLECTING OF ROCKS ARE NOT PERMITTED.

1. Victoria Hill: the site of a rush in 1869 by about 100 miners. The gold was worked out and the rush deserted by 1871. The area was reworked in the 1930s by about 20 men and their families.

2. Alluvial shafts: more than 100 shafts were sunk on Victoria Hill to depths of 24 metres in search of ancient river channels (leads) buried below layers of sand, gravel and clay.

3. Regeneration area: Victoria Hill was completely denuded of vegetation in 1869 and has regenerated since. The most common species are the small pink gum, golden wattle, native pine and kangaroo thorn.

Victoria Hill Rush

4. Barossa cement: a tunnel was driven into the hill below a layer of cemented sand and gravel, known by the diggers as cement.

5. Walkerville Gully: the site of a rush in 1868 which lasted for about 12 months. Gold was won at shallow depths from modern alluvium which has been eroded from older deposits on Victoria Hill.

6. Mining settlement: this clearing contains the remnants of dwellings from the 19th century and 1930s.

Ruin c.1930

7. Belle of Barossa Mine: this was worked unsuccessfully in 1895. The line of shafts marks the location of a quartz-ironstone reef. Good examples of quartz and gneiss can be seen on nearby dumps.

This marks the end of Victoria Loop. You can return to the car park passing localities 21 and 22 or continue on the Phoenix Loop.

8. North Tunnel: this tunnel was driven about 77 metres along a quartz reef by the Royal Phoenix Syndicate in 1895.

9. Sheoaks: these small trees with drooping branches have male and female flowers. Female flowers produce woody cones on older branches. Male flowers cluster at the tips of branchlets and give the tree a golden-orange tinge in spring.

10. Costean: the long trench or costean running up the hillside was dug in the 1890s to test any quartz reef exposed.

11. Phoenix Tunnel: this tunnel was driven 85 metres between 1895 and 1898 on an outcropping quartz reef . The reef is visible above the tunnel entrance.

12. Menzies Barossa Shaft: a large vertical shaft was sunk to a depth of 60 metres by the Menzies Barossa Mining Co. in 1897. Nearby is the site of the steam winding plant.

Main Shaft and winding plant ruins

13. Tramway: the location of tramways which connected the Phoenix Tunnel and Main Shaft to the battery site are still clearly visible and are now used for the next section of the trail.

14. Tramway tunnel: a tunnel was excavated through the hill to allow the passage of horse-drawn ore trucks. Banded gneiss is cut by a coarse grained pegmatite near the tunnel entrance.

15. Yaccas: these have a skirt of stiff grassy leaves and a rush-like spike bearing creamy flowers in spring. A member of the lily family, yaccas grow only a few centimetres a year. Large yaccas at Para Wirra may be hundreds of years old.

16. Outcrop: an excellent outcrop of Aldgate Sandstone (800 million years old), displaying cross-bedding characteristic of a shoreline environment. The dark layers are composed of the mineral ilmenite.

17. Gold battery site: a 40-head stamp battery was erected in 1898 to crush and treat ore from the Menzies Barossa Mine. The ruins of the power plant and the concrete floor of the battery house can still be seen.

Battery site

18. Open Cut: this was excavated along an outcrop containing small veins of reef material. It was joined to the tunnel below.

19. Aloes: these cactus-like plants were commonly planted last century and mark a settlement area during the 1890s.

20. Barossa Junction Mine: the Barossa Junction Co. was formed in 1896 to explore for gold in the quartz reefs and several shafts were sunk without success.

21. Ruin: this farmhouse was built about 1930 by graziers Jack and Vera Bowden using local stone, mud and timber.

22. Outcrop: an excellent outcrop of Tertiary-age conglomerate (about 15 million years old) which occurs as a capping on the hilltop. This outcrop is very similar to the *cement* at Locality 4.