

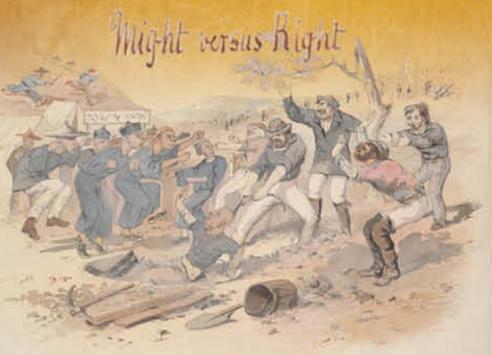
LAMBING FLAT

GOLD TRAILS

DISCOVER NSW'S RICH GOLD HERITAGE VEIN

LAMBING FLAT 1861

visit and understand the anti-Chinese racial riots that divided the goldfields communities



When the famous goldfield artist Samuel Thomas Gill sketched the riots at Lambing Flat in 1861, he could have chosen several names for his image.

For example, 'Yet another occasion of mob rule evicting Chinese miners from their claims', as mob rule had already erupted in several places across the New South Wales and Victorian goldfields.

Might versus Right

Gill chose the potent caption 'Might vs Right' for his image, capturing the sense that the Lambing Flat riots were more than just another event in an unfolding social drama.

The riots were the culmination of racial tension and hatred across the goldfields that had been building for years.

Gill saw that this was not just a territorial dispute over gold-bearing ground, but a conflict with a major racial dimension that divided the goldfields communities, as well as people in towns and cities far removed from the dispute.

What place did racist policies have in the fledgling colony of NSW? Should mob rule dictate public policy? In the wake of the Lambing Flat riots, some answers would finally be found to these long-running, troubled issues.



Above: *Might vs Right - The Lambing Flat Riot 1861*. S.T. Gill. Reproduced courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW from Dr Doyle's Sketch Book Call No: PXA 1963, No: 114

Gill used this painting to make his own personal statement of the injustice underpinning the events that culminated in the Lambing Flat riots of 1861. Gill was not alone in his sympathy for the Chinese; even on the goldfield itself, many favoured a 'live and let live' approach.

The kinder and tolerant citizens were no match for the agitators, who took advantage of gold miners' underlying sense of grievance to incite unrest and to drive the Chinese repeatedly off the field from late 1860 through to mid 1861.

Today you can visit the site of the Lambing Flat riots and the goldfields around Young, Wombat and Harden-Murrumburrah, visit the museums to learn of the horrible injustice to those who could not defend themselves, and of others who helped, fed and sheltered the distressed Chinese victims.



Camp Hill young at time of riot, Reproduced courtesy Mitchell library, State Library of NSW Call no: DG SV1B/3 Digital:a928387

Above: Lambing Flat 'at the time of the riot' Below: Young c. 1875 - a town which emerged from troubled origins



Burrows Street, Young (formerly Lambing Flat) Reproduced courtesy Mitchell library, State Library of NSW Call no: ON 4 Box 69 No 1034 Digital:a2825287

Lambing Flat: part of the Gold Trails network



Young and Harden – Murrumburrah ...

today are the two regional centres closely associated with Lambing Flat and the Burrangong Goldfields. From a base in either of these towns you can explore the regional landscape and heritage.

Follow the Gold Trails

Discover for yourself the heritage riches underpinning the towns, villages and landscapes of NSW. Here the stories of those who won the gold and those who stole the gold, are brought to life by communities committed to conserving and sharing their heritage.

Visit www.goldtrails.com.au for more information.



www.goldtrails.com.au



Thanks to support received from the NSW Government, through the Destination NSW 2011/12 Regional Tourism Product Development Program, Young Shire and Harden Shire developed this brochure.

All roads lead to Lambing Flat

When gold was found at Lambing Flat in 1860, it wasn't just another goldfield. This was a very rich, vast area that could be worked easily with little capital or equipment. It was the discovery every unlucky miner had been waiting for. Gold was proving hard to find as the fields ran out. Thousands of miners and prospectors rushed to the new field – many bringing with them years of frustrations over hard work for little return on other diggings across NSW, Victoria and beyond.

Among the new arrivals were 1,500 Chinese miners. Since 1855 when Victoria imposed an entry tax on the Chinese, these new arrivals had taken to disembarking at Sydney, or Robe in South Australia, and trudging through the bush to the Victorian and NSW diggings.

Many Chinese never made it south of the border, as they often discovered the NSW countryside much to their liking and unearthed new gold rich areas for themselves as they went. Chinese miners staked their claims on the Lambing Flat field from its earliest days.

Organised labour

Unlike others, Chinese miners arrived in NSW in organised groups of around 100 complete with a leader. This approach allowed them to undertake mining in a vastly more systematic way than European miners, who worked alone or in small groups.

Chinese teams were prepared to invest time and labour in building infrastructure such as water races and dams to underpin their mining efforts. Water was typically a very scarce resource on the diggings, so the way the Chinese were able to provide for their own needs was a major point of difference.

This led to jealousy at their success in re-working ground that Europeans had abandoned as no longer payable. Europeans accused the Chinese of 'taking their gold', fuelling the resentment.

The coordinated, organised approach of the Chinese miners led to widespread resentment on the diggings at their success in extracting gold from ground others often found unpayable.



Washing tailings. Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia nla.pic-an24794265

A ticking bomb

While anti-Chinese sentiment was widespread, the highly dispersed nature and small number of miners on many of the NSW diggings had usually acted to prevent major confrontation.

Many predicted that it needed only a rush to a goldfield rich enough to attract a large concentration of European and Chinese miners for an explosive situation to develop.

With 9,000 miners on the Burrangong and Lambing Flat goldfields in January 1861, the stage was set for confrontation.

On 27 January, a crowd estimated at 1,500 miners gathered and drove the Chinese off the fields.

The assistant gold commissioner and outnumbered police could do little as the riot ensued. Reinforcements arrived soon after and this allowed the Chinese to return.

Might versus Right



Illustration after original 'Chinese in Lambing Flat riots, December 1860' courtesy Dept of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Deserting the field

To defuse the situation, the police restricted the Chinese to very limited sections of the field. But maintaining a force of 290 police and military on the field was an expensive solution for the government.

When the military were withdrawn in late May, tensions immediately flared, fuelled by news that the Chinese had successfully defended their claim, at Native Dog Creek, from European miners who tried to drive them off.

The riots came to a head on Sunday 30 June 1861 when 2,000 to 3,000 miners, most armed with pick handles, formed up under flags and banners and resolved to expel the Chinese from the field once and for all.

In a brutal expulsion that included scalping some 'Celestials' as their pigtails were cut off, the Chinese were banished on a cold midwinter night, with no equipment or provisions. As they had back in January, 1,274 Chinese miners took shelter at James Roberts's property 'Currawong', 20 km away near Murrumburrah. Roberts's family and employees fed and sheltered them for two weeks.

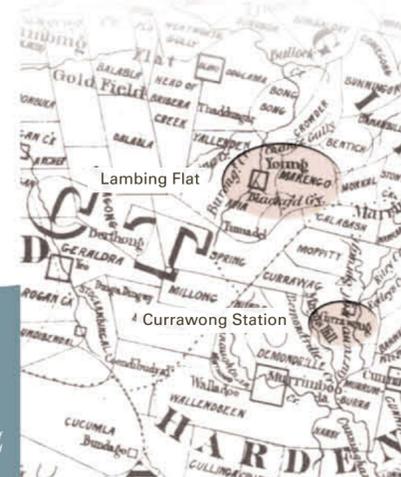
Military response

Police reinforcements arrived on the field a week later. Soon after, three of the ringleaders were arrested on 14 July.

That night 1,000 miners attacked the police lock-up to free the men, resulting in one death when the police fired and charged the crowd. The next day the men were released.

The riot led the assistant gold commissioner to read the British Parliament's *Riot Act* of 1714 that gave local authorities the power to declare a group of twelve or more people to be an unlawful assembly, and order them to disperse or face punishment.

Police reinforcements soon arrived. On 17 July Martial Law was declared and a detachment of troops sent from Sydney to enforce it.

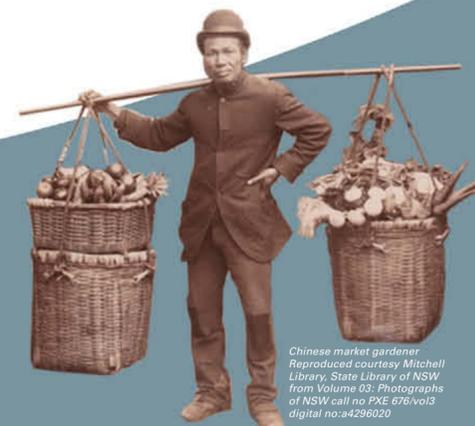


Section from Reuss and Browne's map of NSW 1860-69. Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia Map NK 5928.

Government reaction

Such a blatant uprising against law and order shocked the colony, with popular opinion blaming it on the presence of the Chinese. Parliament passed an anti-Chinese immigration bill and restricted where the Chinese could mine. This is regarded as the beginning of the 'White Australia Policy', restricting non-European immigration, which ended with the abolition of the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1973.

This highly discriminatory legislation did help reduce tensions, creating a gradual status quo of resentful co-existence. As the alluvial gold reserves dwindled, most Chinese miners returned home, while those who stayed often drifted into new occupations. To diminish the memory of the riots, the name Lambing Flat was changed to Young, after the governor Sir John Young. Today all citizens are respected and welcome in Young.



Chinese market gardener. Reproduced courtesy Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW from Volume 03: Photographs of NSW call no PXE 676/vol3 digital no:a4296020

PLACES TO VISIT ON THE GOLD TRAILS IN YOUNG AND HARDEN

Lambing Flat Folk Museum, Young

Campbell St, Young
This is the perfect start to your exploration of the Lambing Flat story. The museum is located in the 1883 Young Public School building.

The original 'Roll-Up Banner' that led the rioting miners march in 1861 is of national significance. The collection also includes a range of artefacts. Open 7 days 10 - 4, entry \$5 ph 02 6382 2248



Blackguard Gully, Young

Located off Murringo Road, Young
Chinese miners were brutally expelled from Blackguard Gully, one of the major Chinese camps on the goldfield, in January and again in June 1861. Evicted into the surrounding country with no equipment or provisions, the Chinese walked the 20 km south to seek refuge on James Roberts's 'Currawong' property near Murrumburrah. Open access, free entry.



Chinese Tribute Gardens, Young

Pitstone Road, Young
Chinese miners would have fled past this site en route to Currawong back in 1861. The gardens were built as a tribute to them and their violent and inhumane treatment in the Lambing Flat riots, and their role in Young's history. The gardens are built around the former Chinaman's Dam. Originally constructed by two German brothers, it was later sold to Chinese miners in the 1870s.



St Mark's Church, Currawong

Currawong Rd, 10km from Murrumburrah.
The Roberts family built the bluestone Anglican Church 10 km northwest of Murrumburrah in 1918-19 adjacent to Currawong Station, where James Roberts sheltered 1,274 Chinese miners from the Lambing Flat riots in 1861. Communion is celebrated in St Mark's 1st Sunday of the month 8 am. Open access to grounds only.



Chinese Cemetery, Murrumburrah

Burley Griffin Way, Murrumburrah
The Chinese section in the south-east corner of Murrumburrah Cemetery is the burial site of at least 21 Chinese men aged from 39 - 85, who died between 1881 and 1925. Their occupations included vegetable gardeners, cooks, storekeepers, miners, labourers, a skin buyer and vegetable hawkers. Open access, free entry

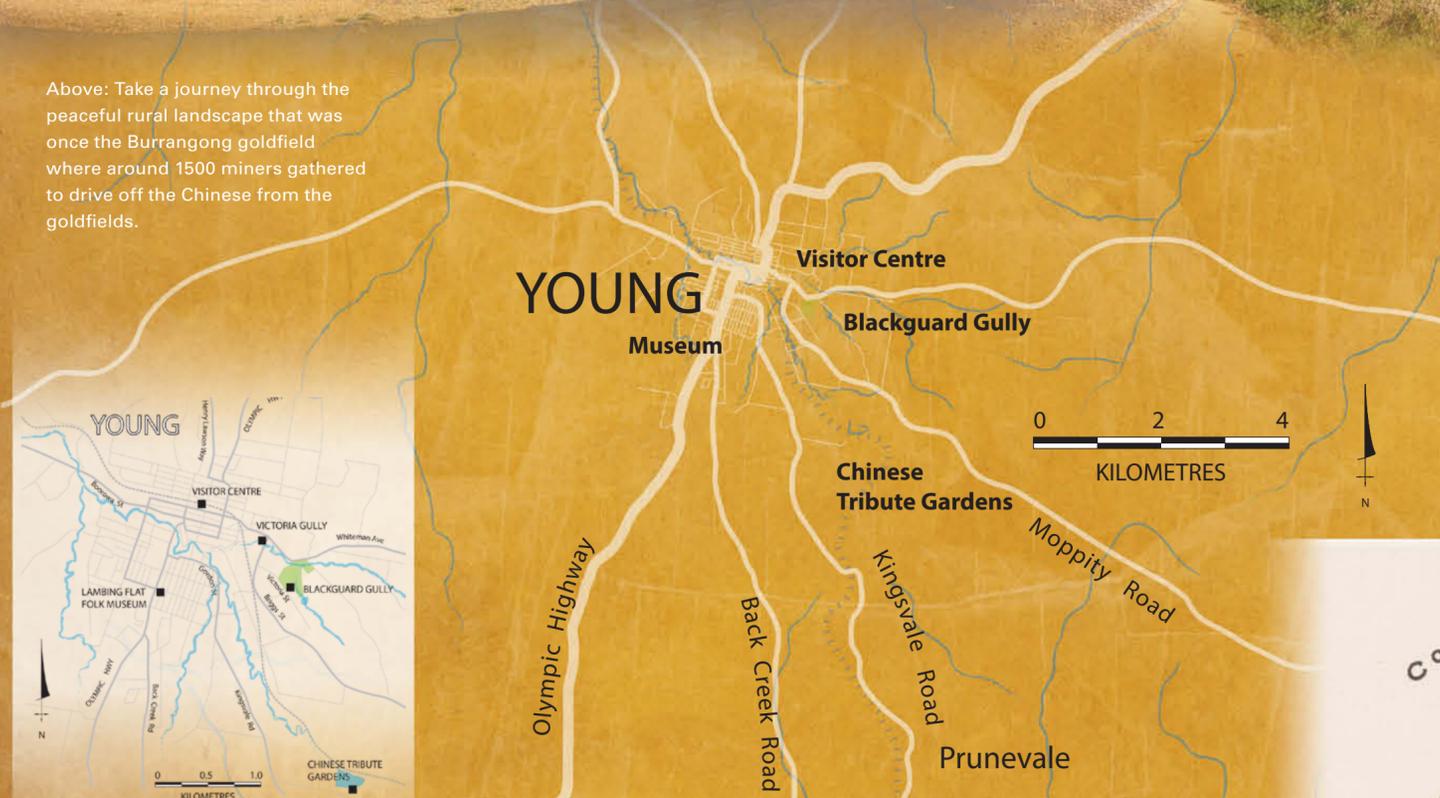


Harden-Murrumburrah Historical Museum

Albury St, Murrumburrah
The Harden-Murrumburrah Historical Museum is housed in the imposing 1912 School of Arts building. Displays feature the local history of gold mining, agriculture, railways, the 1st Australian Light Horse regiment and domestic life. Open Saturday 10:30 - 4:30, Sunday 2 - 4:30 or by appointment. Adults \$2, children 40c. Group bookings and school groups welcome. ph 02 6386 2555.



Above: Take a journey through the peaceful rural landscape that was once the Burrangong goldfield where around 1500 miners gathered to drive off the Chinese from the goldfields.



Below: A view of the Demondrille property showing the landscapes of the Murrumburrah / Lambing Flat region at the time of the riots.

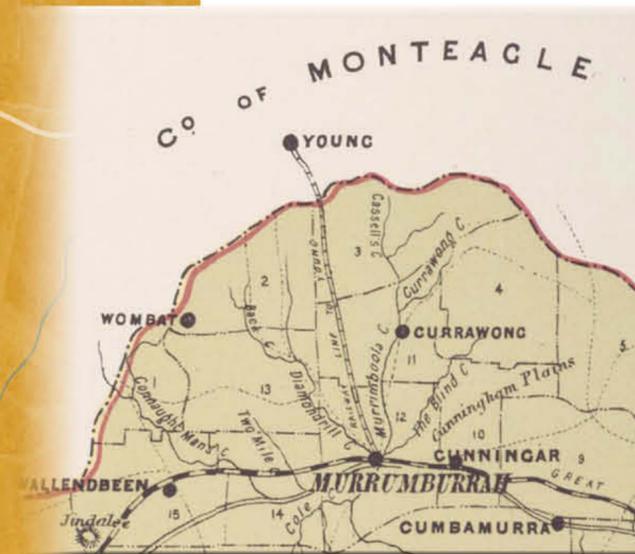


Above: Demondrille: from "Sketches of Yass and Murrumburrah District 185- / Mrs J. Milburne. Reproduced courtesy Dixon Galleries, State Library of NSW - DG SV18/3. Digital no. 46085003



Discover the subtle rural landscapes of the Young / Harden region from a base in either of these regional centres.

Explore the places where miners once staked their claims in search of the deposits of alluvial gold, washed down from the rich quartz veins in the surrounding rock.



Above: Map from "New Atlas of Australia 1886. Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia. Map RaA30. Part 81.

The country roads make for memorable touring, in cars, motor bikes, bicycles or simply on foot.