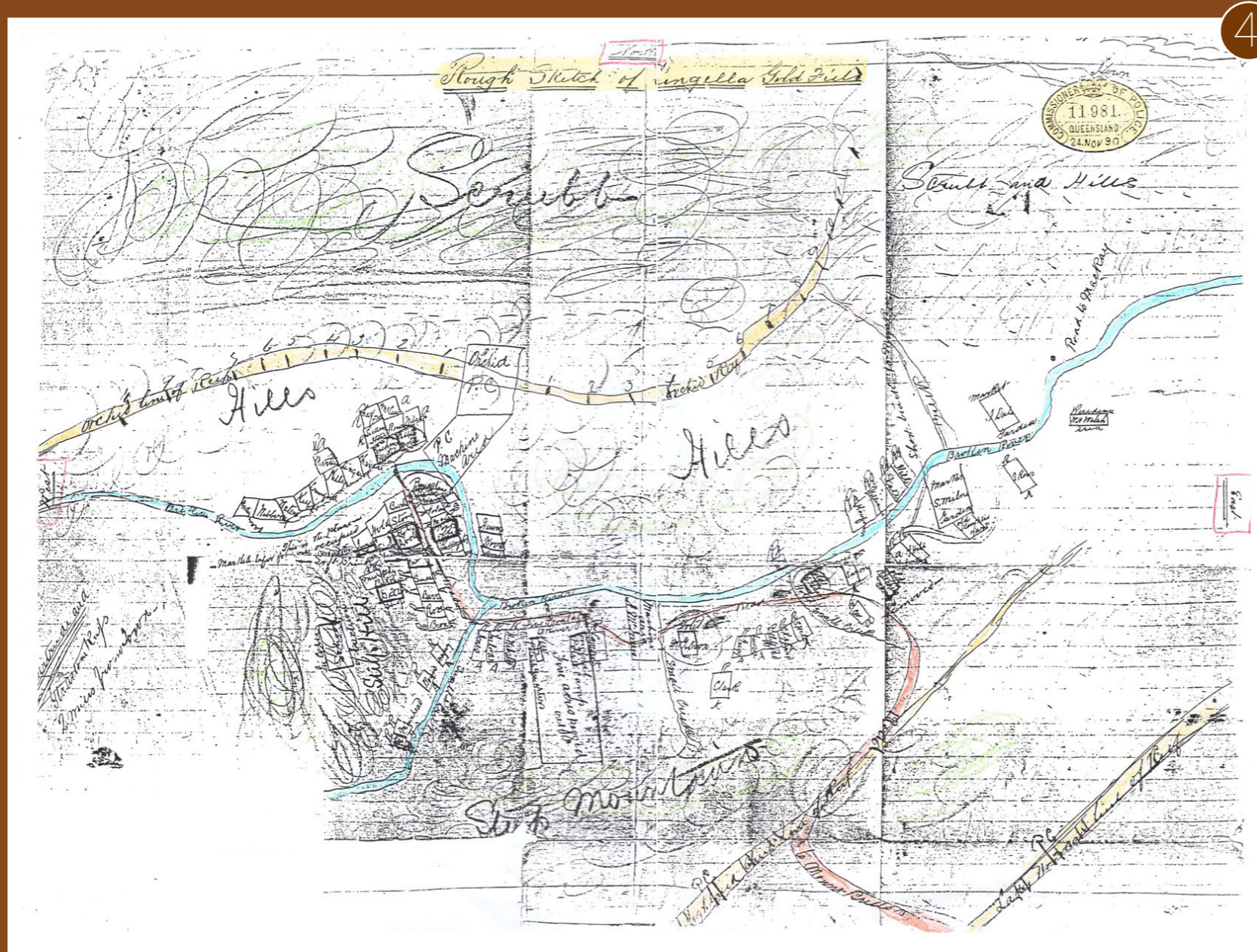
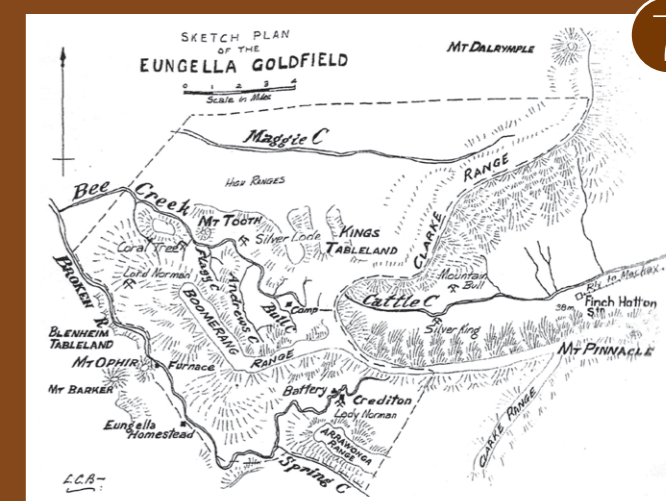
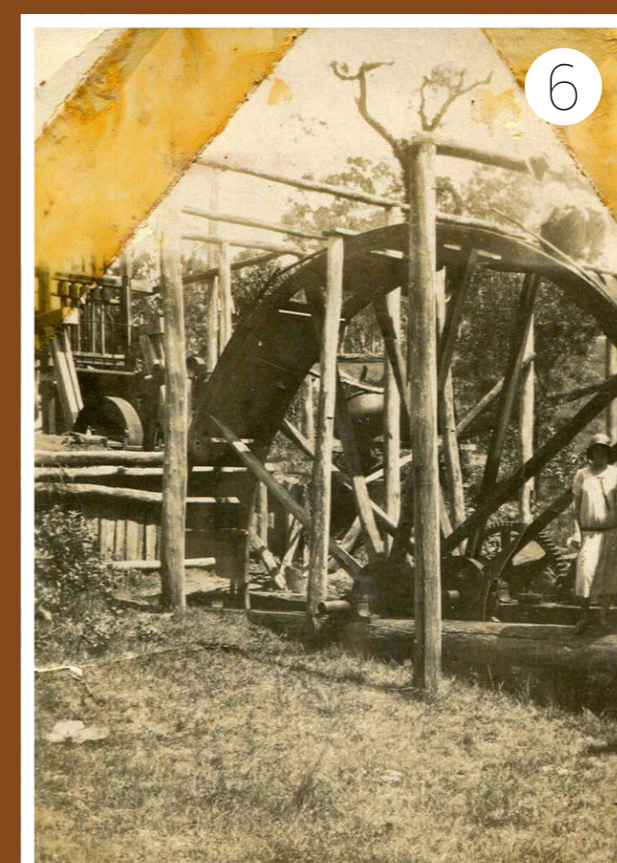
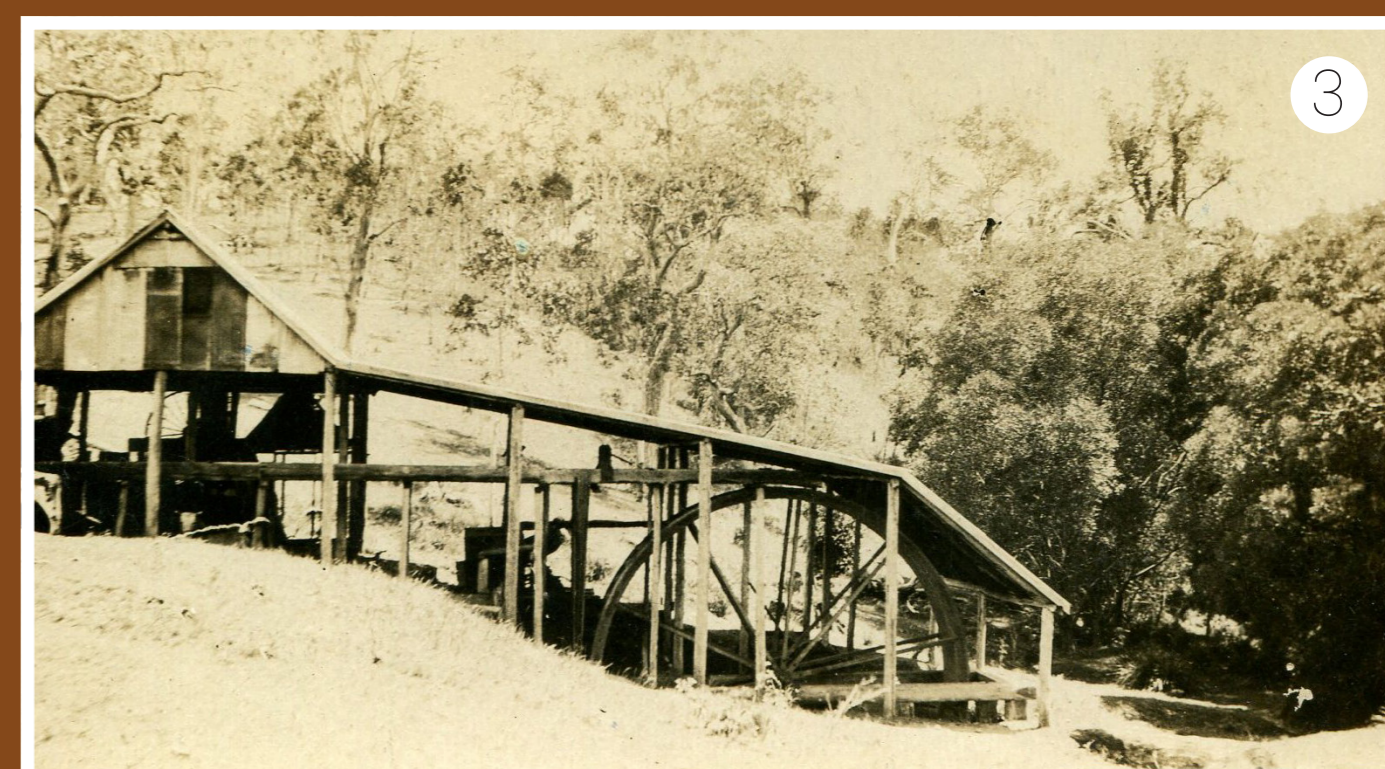
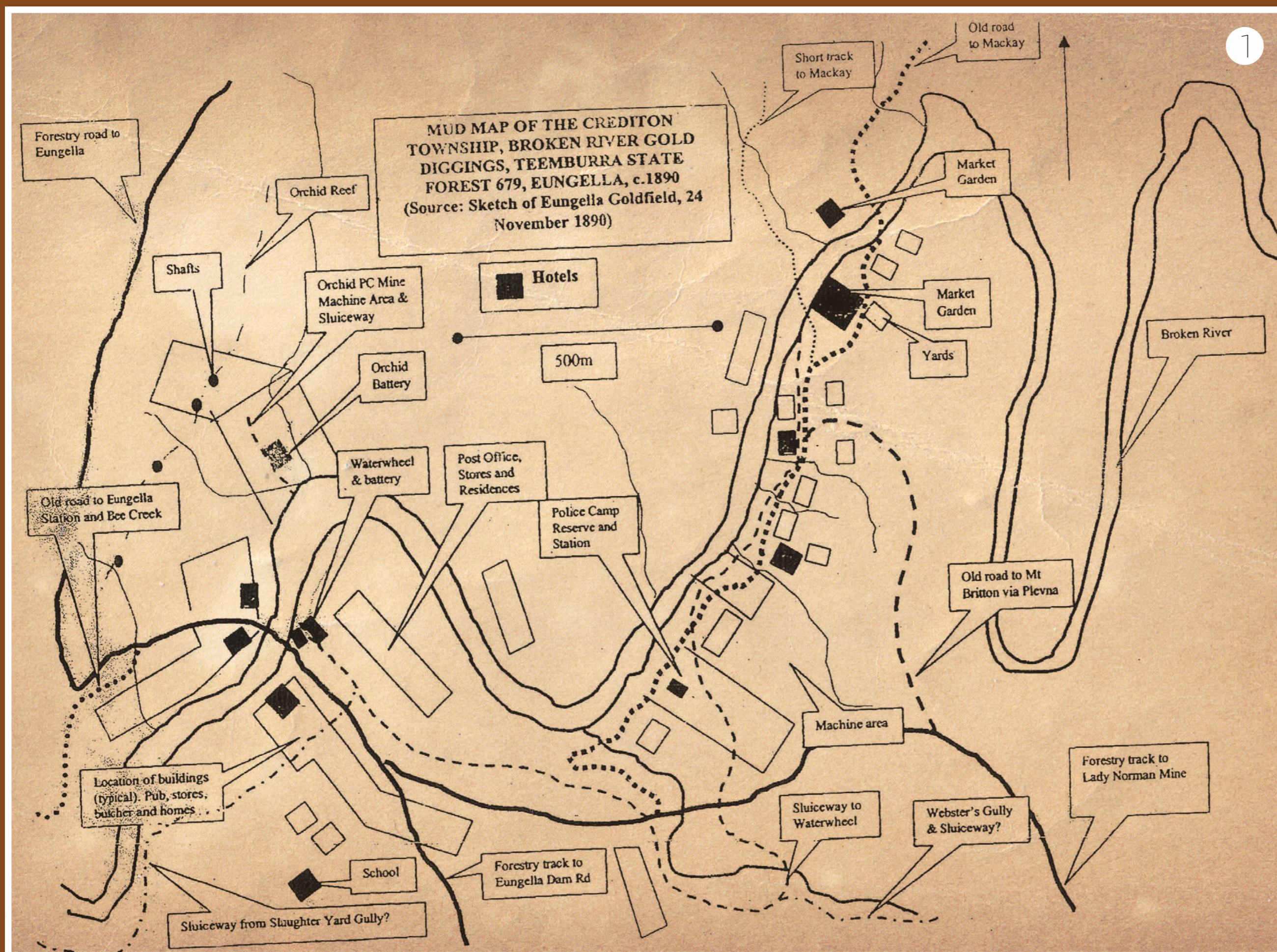


# EARLY GOLD MINING AT THE DIGGINGS



**FROM MT. BRITTEN TO EUNGELLA IN PIONEER DAYS**

FURTHER reminiscences of the pioneering days in the Mackay district are given in this series of articles by Mr. A. C. Edwards, who recently contributed some of his recollections of life and conditions in the 'eighties to the 'Daily Mercury'. In the present series, Mr. Edwards had the assistance of Mr. James Pascoe and Mr. William James Higham, his contemporaries.

**ABOUT THE YEAR 1885** Mr. James Pascoe, connected to the late Mr. James Leacock, a well-known settler in the Mackay district, was the first to discover gold in the district. He was then a settler on the Broken River, and he was the first to discover gold in the district. He was then a settler on the Broken River, and he was the first to discover gold in the district.

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**IMAGE DESCRIPTIONS:**

1. Goldfields sketch of 1890
2. Mrs Vatas Simpson and Dulcie Dearness (nee Wrench) at a Eungella mine circa 1941 - photo contributed by Dulcie Dearness
3. Water wheel at the Diggings
4. The Diggings rough sketch, artist unknown
5. Article: A.C. Edwards memories
6. Diggings water wheel
7. Goldfields sketch plan
8. Article: The Brisbane Courier - 5 Feb, 1891

"Now to more prosaic matters. The township, if it can be called such, is greatly scattered, and presents the usual features incidental to a mining township in its initial stages. It is only some ten months since Eungella was born, and it owes its birth principally to Messrs. M'Caw and Leacock, two prospectors who were rambling through this glorious piece of country in search of gold. They found it in cautious fashion. Seated on the ground on a slope of one of the hills, their attention was attracted by a magnificent orchid growing on the side of a boulder. On stooping to admire its beauties, the sparkle of gold attracted their attention, and examination of the stone proved to them conclusively that at last they had found a bonanza. The ground on which they stood was rich with gold, and good reefs were known in the immediate vicinity. The Orchid mine is now well known in mining circles, and at the time of my visit fully twenty men were employed in useful work. Three shafts have now been sunk, and the drive to meet the main reef is now tunnelled over 280ft. The reef is fully 5ft. broad and looks very promising."

"The Eungella gold is reported to be of very fine quality, and worth from £3 17s 6d. to £4 1s. per ounce. Machinery is urgently required on the field, it will be impossible to develop otherwise. Much hard work has been done and the pioneers are becoming somewhat disheartened for the want of financial encouragement. It takes money to make money. There are not less than five public-houses at Eungella or, one to every twenty-five of the population, including men, women and children. There is no church, and the residents have only been treated to a minister once in nine months and that was when two people desired to be united. The people are most orderly and very hospitable. Not long ago the first child was born in the place and there was great rejoicing. The little stranger, it has been suggested, should be called Eungella Gibson."

Excerpts from the article 'Along the Northern Coast' (by our travelling reporter) The Brisbane Courier, 5 February 1891 See the full article > <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/3522037>

Gold was first discovered at Bee Creek in 1888, at an area named Golden Gully. Almost overnight a shanty town named 'Crediton Township' sprang up at the site now known as The Diggings.

The township had a school, post office, slaughter house, two butcher shops, market garden, police station with barracks and three general stores. Around 50 private dwellings and five hotels including the main one - The Golden Orchid - helped to accommodate the estimated 200 people who came to discover their fortunes.

Several notable mines/claims were quickly established - 'Lady Norman' (named after the Queensland Governor's wife) was

located on the left bank of Broken River. Leacock and McCaw had 'The Bobby Dazzler' claim which became the principal 'Orchid P.C.' mine on the north side of the river. They erected a large 10 head battery driven by a steam engine to crush the ore. It operated from 1890-1895. In 1896 the 'Gracie Norman' claim constructed a five-head battery driven by a water wheel 7.9 metres in diameter, on the southern bank of the river, opposite the old battery. The water wheel was likely made from locally-sourced and sawn cedar wood.

Four main reefs of gold - Orchid Reef, Laura Reef, Lady Norman and Gertrude Reef - yielded approximately 1,500 lbs of

gold from the Diggings in its heyday, with silver and copper also discovered in much smaller amounts.

Realistically, the gold rush was short lived, by 1898 most mines had closed. By 1905, it was reported that whilst thirsty travellers could still buy a beer in the township, most of the remaining miners had already moved onto Charters Towers, Queensland.

## Step Back in Time gathering Eungella's past

Images were contributed to the "Step Back in Time - Gathering Eungella's past" project by past and present residents. Visit [www.history.eungella.com.au](http://www.history.eungella.com.au) for more information.