



11 BENDIGO CREEK FORD

Just above the ford at the mouth of the Bendigo Gorge was the original site (1869 to 1878) of the Cromwell Quartz Mining Company's over-shot waterwheel and 12-stamp battery, named the Solway Battery. The ore was first carted down from the Company's mine to be crushed but when the cost of transporting Bannockburn coal to the mines became more economical in 1878, and as the mountain water supply was not reliable, the battery was moved up to the site of their main workings. The battery was then converted from water power to steam power, extended to 20 stampers, and named the "Matilda Battery" after Miss Matilda Goodger, daughter of George Wellington Goodger, principle shareholder of the Cromwell Quartz Mining Co. Ltd.

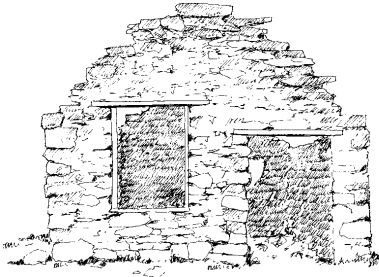
Today beside the ford on the Bendigo Loop Road, and along the creek banks, are the old tailings (now a quarry site) from an unsuccessful dredging venture operated by the Bendigo Light Gold Company in 1935. The old dredge ladder can still be seen at the Lions picnic site, beside Lake Dunstan on the way back to Cromwell. The cottage next to the ford dates from about 1910.

12 BENDIGO TOWNSHIP 1869-1872

The town was laid out in 1869 with all the streets given English place names - Oxford Street (the main street, where the business premises once stood), York Street, Canterbury Street, Chester Street, Bath Street, Exeter Street, and Rochester Street.

In the early 1870s, most of the shopkeepers shifted their businesses up the hill to Logantown, closer to where most of the hard rock mining was taking place.

Today, only Oxford and York Streets remain: they are now part of the Bendigo Loop Road, while all that is left of the town are the stone remains of the bakery, some trees and remains of other stone walls. Extensive vineyards are now being established on the terraces and lower slopes surrounding this area.



A remote high country "road" across the Dunstan Mountains where some examples of early gold mining and evidence of early pastoral history can still be seen along the roadside.

Thomson Gorge Road – Dunstan Mountains Historic Sites

4WD (summer 2WD) & Walking, or Biking Tour

An historical tour (following a dry weather road with fords) of old gold mining sites and places of interest representing the early days of mining at the northern end of the Bendigo gold field and the history of Matakau.

This tour can be taken starting either from Omakau (in the east) or Bendigo (in the west).

The tour is described from east to west through the old gold mining town of Matakau (Tinkers), the Manuherikia Plains, on through the gorge, over the Saddle, ending at the old Bendigo Township. The tour can also be taken from west to east by reading this brochure in reverse.

Supporters & Financial Assistance

- Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust
- Cromwell & District Promotions Group
- Department of Conservation – for assistance with display materials.

Researched by:

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Drawings kindly provided by Doug Ayson.

Caution

Visitors are warned, that following this guide, you do so at your own risk. Some of these sites are on private property, and respect to the property owners would be appreciated. Access may also be denied at some sites at times of stock movement and at lambing time. It is recommended that you take a torch if you intend to do any tunnel exploring.

RURAL RESPONSIBILITY CODE

- Ask permission before going on to private property. (DOC can provide contacts.)
- If access is denied, it is for a good reason so please respect the landowner's wishes.
- Leave all gates as you find them, open or closed. There are some 23 gates and many are boundary gates which are always to be left closed.
- Try not to disturb any stock.
- Take only photos, leave only footprints: Please take your litter home with you.

NAMING OF BENDIGO

According to Geoffrey Duff in his book "Sheep May Safely Graze" the name Bendigo originates from an English Methodist lay-preacher who advertised himself as Abednigo of Nottingham. The press corrupted his name to Bendigo Thomson because during his earlier fighting career, he was in the habit of bending down to dodge his opponent's blows.

When a mate of Bendigo Thomson immigrated to Australia, he worked on Ravenswood Station in Victoria as a shepherd and lived in a hut beside a creek, which he named after his old friend "Bendigo" Thomson. This creek in turn gave its name to the diggings that followed the discovery in 1851, of gold nearby and later also to the city, which in time grew up around the Bendigo Goldfield.

Bendigo Creek in Otago, was named by the first miners who came from Australia when they discovered that this creek was worth prospecting.

MORVEN HILLS - BENDIGO STATION

The first run holders on the western flanks of the Dunstan Mountains were the McLean family. In 1858 the family leased four large runs totalling 400,000 acres and named the whole property Morven Hills.

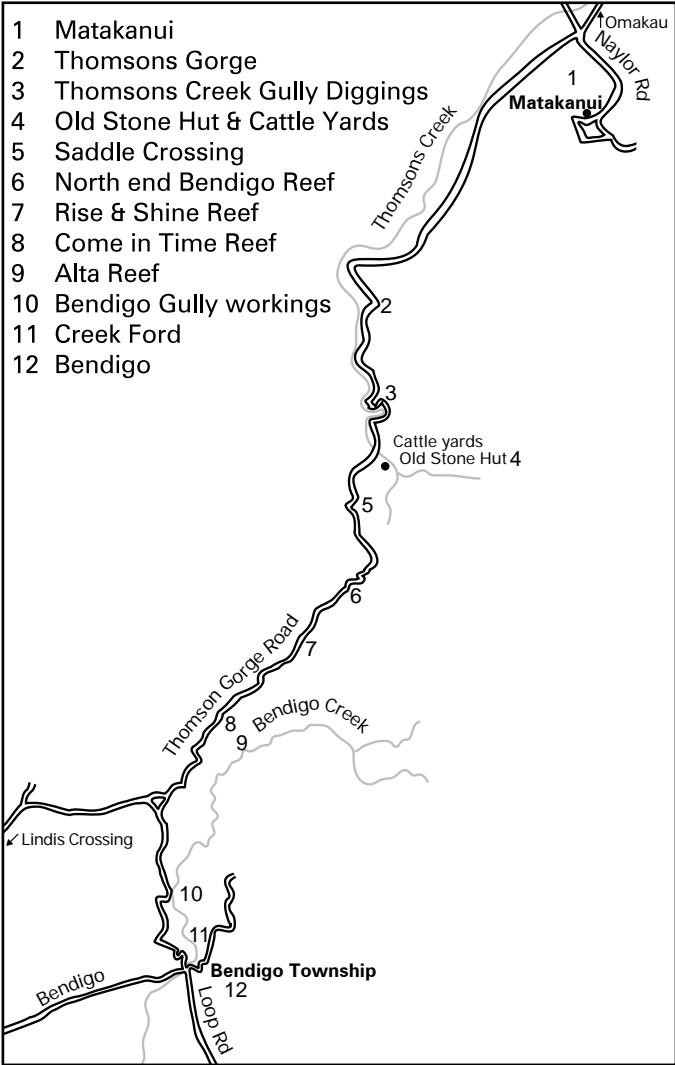
Morven Hills was split up as a result of the 1910 Land Act into some 32 pastoral leases. At the final ballot, Run 238 of 13,000 acres was to become Bendigo Station.

In the early 1990s Bendigo Station, then running some 13,000 sheep and 200 beef cattle, was one of the first Crown pastoral leases to undergo tenure review. The result was that the lower parts of the Bendigo pastoral lease became freehold, while the high altitude summer grazing blocks were returned to the Crown - the Bendigo Conservation Area. In addition, all of the main Bendigo goldmining sites have been returned to the Crown - the Bendigo Historic Reserve, while large areas of Kanuka bush formed the Bendigo Scenic Reserve.

Freehold ownership of the lower country of the Upper Clutha basin has enabled a change in land use from pastoralism to vineyards. Here this new freehold land is well suited to vineyard development, much of which can be seen from the Bendigo Loop Road. Large areas of new vineyards on the terraces and north-facing slopes are a good example of a major new viticulture industry, which is rapidly developing in the Upper Clutha basin and in Central Otago generally.



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THE ROAD OVER THE DUNSTAN MOUNTAINS

The low saddle over the Dunstan Mountains was not a regular one used by early Maori as their more regular track to their summer camps at Lake Hawea and Lake Wanaka was over the Lindis Pass.

In late 1862, the first miners crossing over from the Manuherikia Valley to the Upper Clutha Valley found gold in the Bendigo Creek at the same time as other miners who had made their way up through the Dunstan (Cromwell) Gorge, following the true left bank of the Molyneux (Clutha) River.

A Government promise in 1899 to build the Thomson Gorge Road was never fulfilled. The "gorge track" was however, in continuous use by travellers and shepherds with their flocks. In



THOMSON GORGE ROAD DUNSTAN MOUNTAINS

*Historic Sites
4WD, Viewing & Walking, or Biking Tour*



1908 the Vincent County Council had a shepherd's hut built next to the Creek, below the saddle.

In 1975 the Vincent County Council (now Central Otago District Council) started a dry weather route over the Saddle but it was completed by Matakau Station. The Council part of the road was paid for by the run holders and funding from Government through backcountry access funds. Today, much of the Thomson Gorge Road is often in poor condition, because of only occasional maintenance work. The road is now mainly used by 4-WD vehicles and mountain bikes.

The full loop trip (some 140 km) – from Alexandra, over the Saddle and back through the Cromwell Gorge is available most of the year, though on occasions fresh winter snow can temporarily close the road.

All gates should be left as found while all boundary gates must be left shut. There are up to 23 gates and 6 shallow fords to cross. The actual number depends on which route is taken.

STARTING FROM ALEXANDRA

A good half-day outing, though if you wish to visit the Bendigo Historic Reserve you should allow a whole day.

From Alexandra, leave on SH 85 to Omakau and at the Commercial Hotel, turn left in to Racecourse Road and continue straight on to the Thomson Gorge Road. Alternatively, you can take a side trip to the old gold mining town of Tinkers, today known as Matakau. See Note 1 for more details.

To go to Tinkers, turn left at the end of Racecourse Road, and then turn right on to Naylor Road (signposted Matakau) and explore the township before returning to the Thomson Gorge Road.

When back on Thomson Gorge Road, a steady climb with some ford crossings brings you to the saddle at 900 m. The road now drops down passing through the northern end of the Bendigo Goldfields. At the fork, the track ahead goes to the Bendigo Flats, the old Bendigo Township site, and via the Bendigo Loop Road to SH 8. The road that goes to the right comes out on to Ardour Road, which takes you to the Lindis crossing bridge on SH 8. From here, a left turn takes you past Bendigo Loop Road to Alexandra.

1 MATAKANUI - today a small 'ghost' town

In the early days, from 1863 till about 1923, the town was known as Tinkers, but by the late 1890's, the town was starting to be called Matakau.

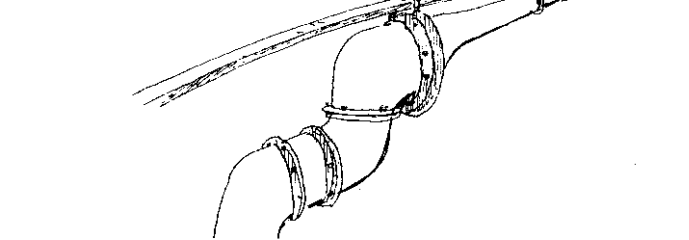
There was a very rich ground strike at the point where the Dunstan Fault line comes close to the surface. The diggings provided stability and lasting work, initially for small groups of miners who in 1864 used water from Thomsons Creek. This water was first used by these small groups for sluicing, and later by larger groups (formed by amalgamation of smaller groups), for hydraulic elevation sluicing, starting in the 1890s.

Many of these groups paid out some good dividends.

When all the water from Thomsons Creek had been allocated, a group of hardy Irishmen formed the Undaunted Gold and Water Race Mining Co. A 36 km race from Chatto Creek took three years to construct. Once completed, they worked their claim very successfully from 1878 to 1912, and then amalgamated with the Tinkers Mining Co. They became the last of the mining companies, working from 1917 to 1923. The company ended in liquidation.

For about 8 years in the 1990s, a small-scale excavation mining operation worked some untouched land, using a floating recovery plant. Large sediment ponds have been left behind as evidence of this work.

Today the wooden school is still there with its bell Today the wooden school is still there with its bell tower, but has long since been closed as a school and is now used as a farm barn. Most of the town buildings and yard walls are of sun-dried bricks – the hall, Duggan’s store, stable and yard wall date from about 1890. The Matakanui Hotel (Newton’s Tavern) closed in the late 1960s, the store in 1980 while the former bakery has been restored as a privately owned cottage. Nearby, in the shadow of some shrubs, stands an old sluicing monitor gun as a memorial to the old miners who worked here in the late 1800s / early 1900s.



MATAKANUI - the meaning of the name

The original meaning of most Otago and Southland Maori place names has been lost and today there is confusion because many different meanings have been suggested.

According to Herries Beattie, in his book first published in 1944,“Maori Place-Names of Otago” the name Matakui-nui (the map now calls it Castle Rock) referred to one of three heights along the Dunstan Range and meant “to inspect in a large way”, or “to look at a large object”. Beattie believed that the Dunstan Range had several names, the central portion, with Castle Rock as its pivot, being Matakui-nui. The spelling of Matakanui has slightly changed and the pivot location has shifted from the western flanks to the eastern flanks of the range.

MATAKANUI STATION

The Otago interior was opened up for pastoral grazing in the late 1850s. Run 223, along the eastern Dunstan Mountain flanks consisting of approximately 80,000 acres was formed in 1859 but settled in 1861 by George Thomson and his partner Webster. It was named Matakanui Station and it was soon grazing 17,000 sheep.

Like most of the original large high country runs Matakanui Station was split up as a result of the 1910 Land Act. Today, Matakanui Station still rises to 1,500m on the Dunstan Mountains but is now only a third of its original 80,000 acres. The majority of the usable land is on long leading spurs, open tussock flats and irrigated paddocks, which in total carry some 17,000 Polwarth sheep and 1,200 Hereford cattle.

2 THOMSONS GORGE

It was George Thomson, the first long-term run holder of Matakanui Station who named Thomsons Creek, Thomsons Gorge and Thomsons Saddle.

As the road starts the climb through the gorge, the view behind is over valleys and mountains; Manuherikia Valley, Raggedy Range, Ida Valley and North Rough Ridge with the Kakanui Mountains in the far distance. The slope below the gorge road, drops steeply down to Thomsons Creek with a towering rock wall on the far side. This section of the gorge has a similar feeling to that of travelling on the better-known Skippers Road. Some of the former miners races can still be seen with a few now being used for irrigation.

This is true sheep and beef cattle country – steep slopes and rugged landscapes with cover of snow tussock, speargrass and shrubs, like the native matagouri along with introduced weeds and grasses. It is only in the last 10 years that Merino sheep have been run in the gorge. The land has been considerably modified from its pre-European state by burning and grazing.

3 THOMSONS CREEK DIGGINGS

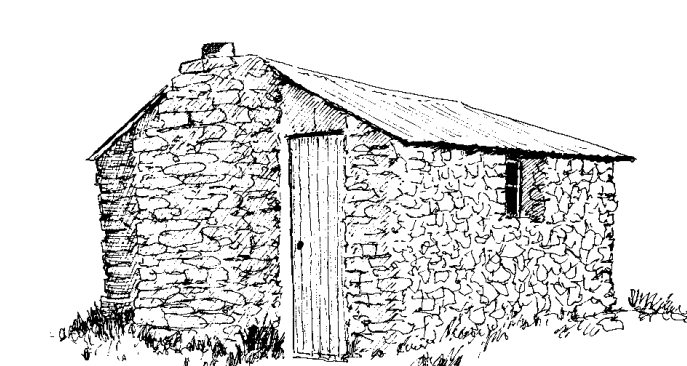


There has been very little written about the Thomsons Creek workings. It is possible that some of the first miners travelling through the gorge would have found traces of gold in the creek but Tinkers and Bendigo offered better prospects.

Battery Creek is one of the small creeks that flow into Thomsons Gully. It was likely that the Oakley Reef was discovered here in 1872 by miners working alluvial claims in the gully. The Oakley Company was formed to develop the reef but with little success. The majority of the creek workings visible from the road are believed to have taken place in the 1870s-1880s. Evidence left behind including stone stacking and diversion channels, suggests that the miners working here were mainly Chinese.

4 OLD STONE HUT AND CATTLE YARDS

Close to Thomsons Creek the County built the hut in 1908 for shelter for the drovers and travellers,and the hut is still used today. The cattle yards nearby, were built by Matakanui Station in the 1980s. The headwaters of Thomsons Creek lie beyond the hut.



5 SADDLE CROSSING - 900m above sea level

At the boundary gate, on the saddle, Thomson Gorge Road turns left onto Ardgour Station. (The ridge track to the north goes to Mt Kamaka in the North Dunstan Conservation Area).

The fine view to the west from the saddle is looking over the catchment of Rise and Shine Creek, down to the Upper Clutha Basin and Hawea Flats with Mount Aspiring National Park and the Southern Alps in the distance.

The next gate takes you onto Bendigo Station. Further on, a sharp right turn follows the Rise and Shine Creek down towards Bendigo Station, while the left track climbs southwards. A little further on, the upward track leads into the Bendigo Conservation Area.

6 NORTH END BENDIGO REEFS

In total, there are three reefs and areas of workings along or close to the Rise and Shine Creek, which are all close to the Thomson Gorge Road – the Rise and Shine Reef / sluice workings, Come-In-Time Reef and the Alta Reef.

7 THE RISE AND SHINE REEF SITES

The Rise and Shine Reef was the most easterly of the reefs, at the north end of the Bendigo goldfield workings. This was not a true quartz reef, but consisted of bands of auriferous stone.

The Rise and Shine sluicing workings covered a 20-year period of hydraulic sluicing between 1866 and 1886. A party of Swedish miners constructed a race to carry water from Thomsons Creek on the other side of the Dunstan Mountains, for their sluicing operation. Evidence of these workings can be seen in the sluicing scars as you drive down the gully.

The deeper section of the reef was then worked by The Eureka Co. It took over the abandoned Alta battery - five stamp (further down the Rise And Shine gully) in 1874/1875 and constructed a mile long (1.8km) tramway up to the reef. They too were unsuccessful and in 1876 closed down. McLaughlin who had a claim at the reef site in the 1890’s put a 5-stamper battery close to the site in 1910 (just above the present “Red” cattle yards) and had some success for a year or two.

The last attempts on the Eureka claim commenced in 1993, when a shaft was sunk on the south side of the valley, not too far from the old Eureka workings. From the drive, a reef of bluish quartz was struck. Prospects looked good, so the Bendigo Rise and Shine Mining Co. was floated. A small ball-mill was erected to test the quartz but within months the company was in difficulties and after less than two years, had gone into liquidation.

In 1938 a newcomer, The Bendigo Shine Again Gold Mining Co. took over the claim. A five-stamp battery, driven by a diesel motor, was erected about 500m from the workings. The company struggled on until 1943 when the mine was closed down permanently.

For over thirty years, the battery remained a landmark in the gully until the Mines Department declared the claim abandoned and put the battery up for sale. A Cromwell schoolteacher, John Anderson, bought the battery and set it up behind the Golden Age Hotel – the Middle Pub in Cromwell, calling it “The Goldminer”. Later, the Woodbury brothers, (ex Glenorchy scheelite miners) moved the battery to the Golden Terrace Mining Village located above the Frankton-Queenstown Road. The project was launched in May 1972, construction started in June 1972, opened in 1973 and closed in 1982. Some of the village relics went to the Arrowtown Museum and its believed the battery pieces are now at the Goldfields Mining Centre, Kawarau Gorge.

At the bottom of the valley, both below and to the left of the "red" cattle yards are significant mining relics; a holding dam for water supply down further, while mining platforms, crushed stackings, drives are those mainly associated with The Bendigo Shine Again Gold Mining Co.

8 THE COME-IN-TIME REEF

In 1880 the Come-In-Time Reef was the last of the Bendigo reefs to be discovered. John Kane located it on a sharp ridge separating Rise and Shine Creek from Shepherds Creek. Open workings and tunnel operations (become known as the Red Tunnel Mine) were used both sides of the ridge long which the present road runs.

Although a trial crushing was not very promising, a company was formed and headed by William Cameron. The old five stamp Eureka battery was shifted from across the gully, likely on to the present site. A double tramway and steel rope conveyer transported the ore to the crushing mill. The first crushing of 350 tons of ore yielded a discouraging 110 ounces of gold. Six months after the second crushing all operations ceased.

In 1902 the battery of 5 heads was shifted back across the gully and over the ridge to the Alta claim.

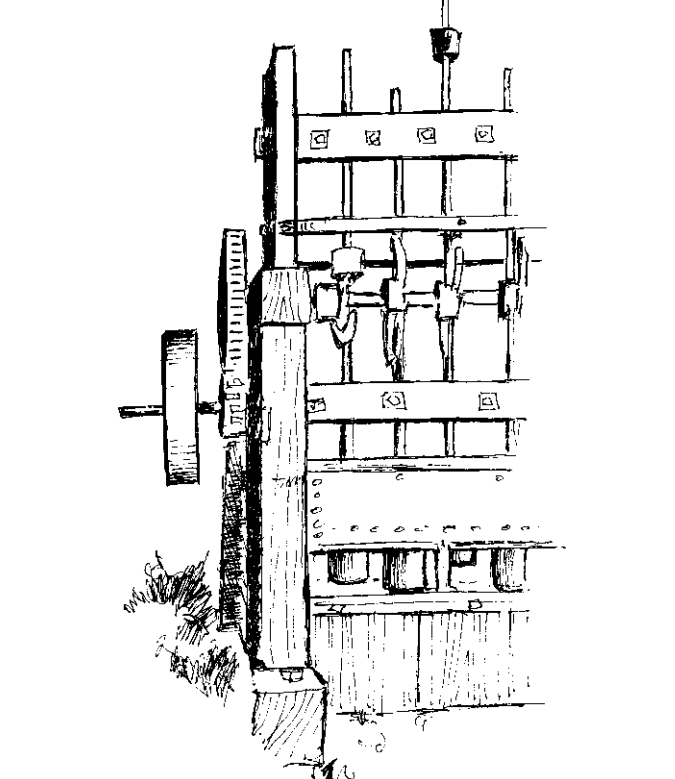
In 1908, a new company, Come-In-Time Mining Co. was formed and acquired an interest in the Cromwell Property Gold Mining Company. Half of the twenty stamp “Matilda” battery

(i.e. Ten stamps) was shifted in 1909 to its present site. The 1910 report stated that only a meagre 4 ounces of gold was recovered.

The final attempt to work the reef was made in 1919 by James Dunery and party. They used the same battery (Cameron's) and took over Cameron's aerial rope-way, which had been erected in 1912 to bring ore across from the opposite slope. For a short time ore from the Alta reef (over the ridge to the south of the Come-In-Time reef) was crushed but within two years all work on both reefs had ceased.

Today on the left of Thomson Gorge Road, a marked track leads down past the entrance of the mine tunnel (on the left) and then on down to the battery. With the aid of a torch, the tunnel can be explored for some 60 metres into the hill. Portions of the cableway gear can still be seen high up on the opposite slope below the crest of the ridge.

The battery was restored in 2006 with funding assistance from Central Lakes Trust, The Community Trust of Otago and from the Ray O’Brien Trust so that the battery could be made safe and sound and for visitors to better understand how it once worked.



9 THE ALTA REEF

In 1870 Williamson and party found the Alta Reef and formed the Alta Company to work the reef. (The reef lies south and over the ridge opposite the present Come-In-Time battery.) The company purchased a battery from Rough Ridge and erected a five stamp battery in Rise and Shine gully with a race to drive the battery and a tramway linking the workings. Problems were encountered in trying to recover the gold from the crushed rock. Heavy yellowish white material (later identified as scheelite) hindered the process, forcing the mine to close down and the plant was then sold in January 1875 to the Eureka Co.

In 1897, another attempt was made to revive the Alta reef claim by forming a small company to work the mine. A shaft was sunk and though the reef was located, no payable ore was found.

In 1902 the claim was taken up again. The five stamp Come-In-Time battery was then shifted right next to the claim (remains still lie there today) and powered by a seven hp diesel engine. Though there was some initial success, results were patchy and even the attempts to mine the scheelite were not successful and by 1906 the mine was closed and the diesel engine sold to Morven Hills to run their generating plant.

In 1912, Sandy Cameron and brother Jack, pottering along the reef came upon a patch of good ore containing both gold and scheelite. They erected an aerial cableway and lowered the quartz ore to the old Come-in-Time battery, which they took over after it had been abandoned near the Rise and Shine Creek. The Cameron brothers made quite good returns until the good ore ran out.

The final attempt to work the Alta reef (as well as the Come-In-Time reef) was made in 1919 by the James Dunery party, using the Come-In-Time battery and the aerial ropeway. Results were not encouraging and like everyone else, they finally abandoned the claim.

10 BENDIGO GULLY WORKINGS

After leaving the three Rise and Shine reefs, the road heads down towards the Upper Clutha Basin. The left fork leads towards Bendigo Creek and a second left fork leads down to the creek and Bendigo Gully.

The gully lies between the upper and lower Bendigo Gorges, the site of the earliest workings at Bendigo and the main Bendigo alluvial workings between 1863 and 1866. Most of the lower part of Bendigo Creek, from the gorge to the Clutha River, continued to be worked by the occasional miner. The only remaining evidence of these early workings is the large group of stone ruins, which in 1866 was the site of Goodalls Bendigo Gully Hotel. In 1870, Goodall sold it to Smith & O'Donnell who ran it as store, post office and hotel. The hotel was destroyed by fire in 1872, and in 1876 a public meeting house was constructed on the same site. The O'Donnells continued to run the store until 1907 to provide for rabbits, local farmers and the occasional prospector. Today, only the abandoned ruins of the walls remain.

Between 1867-1870 small scale sluicing took place on the southern gully slopes of Bendigo Creek. Sludge run-off polluted Bendigo Creek and because clear water was required for the Cromwell Company's battery at the mouth of the gorge below, sluicing was forced to cease.