

Alluvial gold known to occur in the Thanes Creek area is popular with tourists and fossickers as it has easy access from the rural centre of Warwick, which is located on the main tourist routes of the New England Highway (Route 15) and the Cunningham Highway (Route 42).

The Department established the gold fossicking area in 1993 with the co-operation of the Warwick Shire Council and the landowner.

Access

Thanes Creek is about 40km west of Warwick. Take the Cunningham Highway travelling towards Inglewood. At about 37km from the Warwick Post Office turn off to the right into Thanes Creek Road. The turn-off is 0.5km past the Thanes Creek Bridge, just past Thane railway siding. Cross the rail line and go 3.6km to the end of bitumen and continue along the well formed gravel road a further 1.6km to a fork, turn right into Hart Road and continue 2.5km to a second fork, turn right into Big Hill Road and follow a further 0.9km to the Fossicking Area on left (main entrance sign is visible from road).

Fossicking

Colours of gold can be obtained from the alluvial sediments within the stream channel and from gravel layers in the low bank or possibly from crevices in rock bars. During dry times, water may be scarce but pools do remain in better seasons.

Panning is the simplest recovery method. The pan is filled with soil or gravel that

has been sieved to remove the coarse fraction and water added. The material is mixed to slurry then the pan is gently tilted and rotated at the same time so that the over-flowing water carries off the lightest material. The pan is then swirled to spread out the residue containing the heavy material for close inspection.

Geology

The rocks in the Thanes Creek area have been mapped as the Texas beds, which are of Devonian to Carboniferous age. They include sandstone, mudstone, conglomerate, slate, chert, jasper, andesite and limestone.

The primary auriferous quartz reefs occur mainly in slate. Alluvial gold in the gullies and creeks accumulated from the weathering of the rocks containing these reefs.

Requirements

To fossick you need to hold a Fossickers Licence. Individual, family, club, educational organisation and commercial tour operator licences can be obtained for this area or for the whole of the State for periods between one and twelve months, with fees varying accordingly. Licences can be obtained from the Department's office in Brisbane and locally from the Shire Council office at Warwick.

To fossick elsewhere outside the Fossicking Area, the licensee must obtain the written permission of the landholder.

Camping

Camping is prohibited in the Thanes Creek Fossicking Area.

Accommodation is available in Warwick at several motels, hotels and caravan parks.

Code of conduct

Use only safe working practices. Holes deeper than 2m or undermined overhangs are not permitted. Hand tools only are permitted (no machine mining, including the use of eductor dredges and sluices).

To protect the area for the future and to minimise inconvenience to others, please:

- Make safe any excavation on leaving.
- Remove all rubbish and dispose of properly.
- Keep vehicles to established tracks to avoid erosion.
- Do not interfere with the vegetation, stock or wildlife.
- Control pets so they do not annoy others, stock or wildlife.
- Minimise noise from radios, vehicles etc.
- Avoid lighting fires in dry conditions and keep a 2m diameter cleared space around fireplaces.

For further information:

*The Mining Registrar
Brisbane District Office
Podium 2, Ground Floor
Cnr Main and Vulture Streets
Woolloongabba Qld 4102*

*(PO Box 1475)
Coorparoo Qld 4151*

*Telephone (07) 3238 3733
Facsimile (07) 3405 5345
Website: www.nrm.qld.gov.au*

*Warwick Shire Council
64 Fitzroy Street
PO Box 26
Warwick Qld 4370*

*Telephone (07) 4661 2333
Facsimile (07) 4661 5390
Thanesck_V1.doc Dec 2002*

HISTORY OF THE GOLDFIELDS NEAR WARWICK

The goldfields in the vicinity of Warwick include Talgai, Thanés Creek, Leyburn, Canal Creek, Palgrove, Pikedale and Lucky Valley.

Gold was first discovered at Lord John Swamp (Lucky Valley goldfield) in 1852. Alluvial gold was discovered at Canal Creek 50km west of Warwick in 1863. In the following year the Talgai field (also known as Darkey's Flat) supported both alluvial and reef mining. The richest alluvial gold was won from Dunns Gully, 5km south of Pratten. The largest reefs that were worked on this field were located at Mount Gammie North.

In 1868 alluvial gold was discovered at Thanés Creek, with the first reef (Just-in-Time) located in 1879. Further reefs were discovered in 1881 and included the Queen and the King mines.

The mines were worked steadily until about 1884 when many of the mines reached water level and the ore became pyritous causing a general decline of the fields. Very little work was then done until early 1887 when another rush followed the discovery of gold at Glenelg to the south.

After renewed interest, some existing mines were reopened but with little success.

In 1893 the St Patricks (Talgai) and the El Dorado (Thanés Creek) were discovered. Other fields discovered include Leyburn (1872), Pikedale (1877) and Palgrove (1897).

The eventual demise of the goldfields was attributed to the low average grade of the ore, poor mining methods, lack of suitable crushing and treatment plants, pyritic ore, high cost of transport and the periodic discovery of richer fields throughout Queensland.

