

Department of
Conservation &
Environment

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Your Ref.

Our Ref.

Date 14 May 1991

Mr Phillip Clingin
City of Ballarat
P O Box 655
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Dear Phillip

EUREKA STOCKADE

Thank you for your phone call of 13 May concerning VAS's work on the Eureka Stockade. We have a report from Professor Weston Bate on the location of the stockade (copy enclosed). You can see that he puts the stockade about 40 yards either way from Rodier Street. In the absence of anything more recent than an 1870's map of Ballarat in this office, I think this places part of the stockade on your land.

Weston Bates comments on the archaeology are valid reasons why an excavation to settle the issue is not justified.

VAS is still interested in the site and considers that monitoring of any ground surface disturbance in the vicinity of the stockade is warranted in case evidence of the stockade is uncovered.

I have checked with the Australian Heritage Commission and it appears that the Stockade has never been nominated for the Register of National Estate an important omission that I will rectify as soon as possible. Perhaps your committee might like to be involved in the process.

VAS would be interested to be kept involved in the process of improving the interpretation of the stockade site and can offer some expertise in interpreting archaeological sites.

I hope this is of some use to you.

Yours sincerely,

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Victoria Archaeological Survey
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The Location of the Eureka Stockade

This report looks first at the written evidence and then at its topographical implications.

1. Written evidence

1.1 W. B. Withers, History of Ballarat, Ballarat, 1887, p.105
(cf 1870 edition)

It was an area of about an acre, rudely enclosed with slabs, and situated at the point where the Eureka Lead took its bend by the old Melbourne road, now called Eureka street... The site, as is shown on the map herewith, lay about midway between what are now Stawell and Queen streets on the east and west, and close to Eureka street on the south.

Withers 1870 edition contained a sketch map, as follows, to make the location even clearer.



Comment: Withers deserves strong consideration because he knew Ballarat well in the 1850s and worked methodically and in great detail on the Eureka episode, gathering eyewitness accounts and treating them critically.

1.2 S.D.S. Huyghue "Reminiscence" M.S. at the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

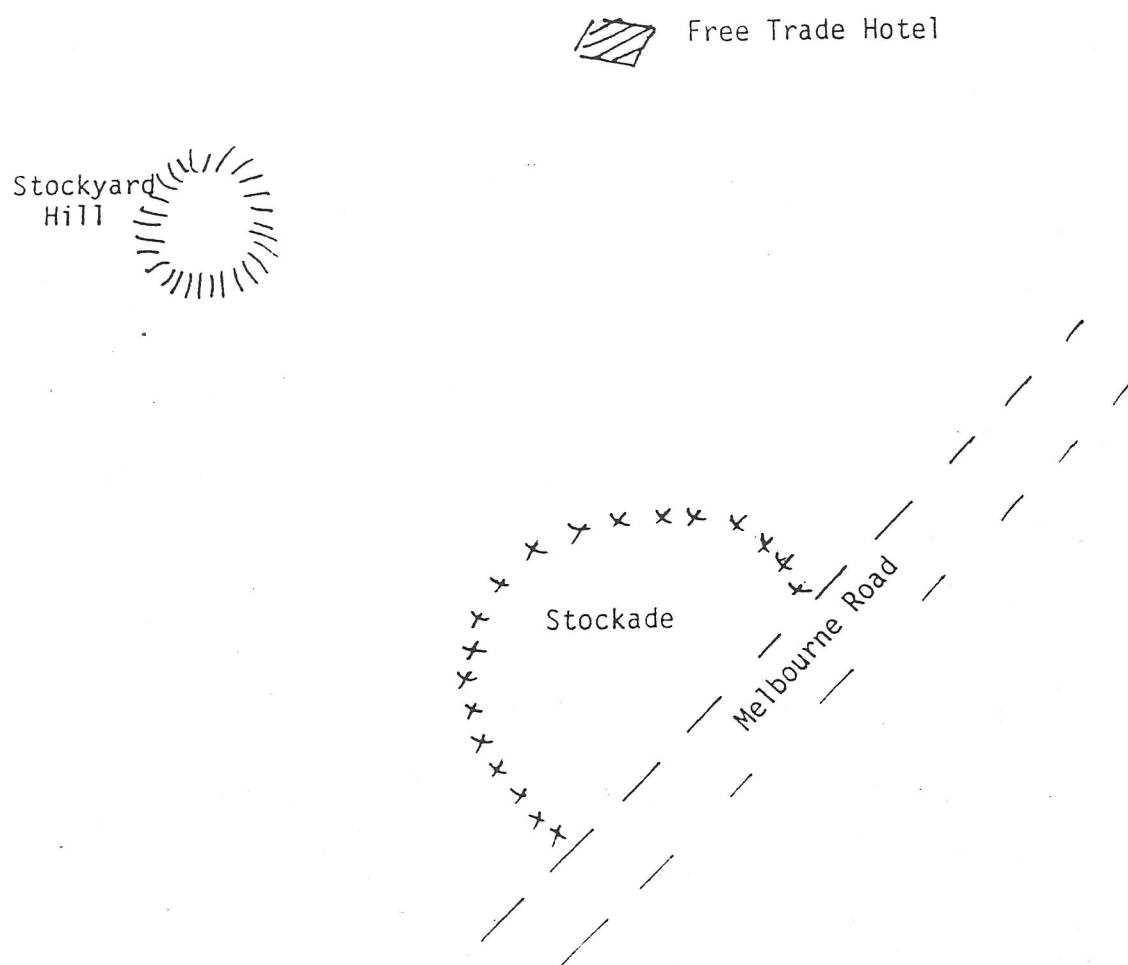
Huyghue was storekeeper at the Government Camp in 1854 and was used by the military to draw plans of the attack. His "Reminiscence" was based on a diary kept at the time. In it he described the path taken by the troops as follows:

...at first curving well up under Black Hill and then striking a more direct course towards the rebel stronghold... Pursuing their course now without further interruption they descended into a ravine and following up a shallow gully leading therefrom and separating the Free Trade Hotel from Stockyard Hill, arrived close to the hotel and within 200 yards of the enemy's position.

The stronghold was placed at the then southern end of the "New Eureka" workings where the diggers had commenced sinking.... The general lay of it was on a gentle slope leading up to and bordering the Melbourne Road, beyond which the ground fell away again more abruptly in an opposite direction, rugged with deserted workings and studded with tents. The irregular enclosure comprised about an acre....

Huyghue's map of the engagement is held at the St Albans (England) headquarters of the 40th Regiment, who took part in the fight. Oral evidence of its existence and authenticity has been received from Mr. E. J. Millett of Ballarat's Montrose Cottage and Eureka Museum. Most important for the location of the stockade is its indication that the troops moved straight ahead to the stockade after passing between the Free Trade Hotel and

Stockyard Hill. A sketch of the position shows the following main points.



This compares very closely with the map used by W. B. Withers, which added the later streets.

1.3 Ballarat Star 1870, p.2

This extract indicates that the Eureka Stockade Reserve was set aside between 1866 and 1868 when Emanuel Steinfeld was mayor of Ballarat East. As the site was on the line of the lead it would have been heavily worked and thus unattractive initially for urban development. That the reservation included the actual site of the stockade seems a very strong probability.

Some time ago, while Cr. Steinfeld was mayor of Ballarat East, some old residents of Ballarat besought him to procure, if possible, the proclamation by government of a reserve on the site of the Eureka Stockade. He did what he could in the matter and received favourable promises which brought about the government gazette proclamation of eleven acres and upwards on the site of the stockade as a reserve.

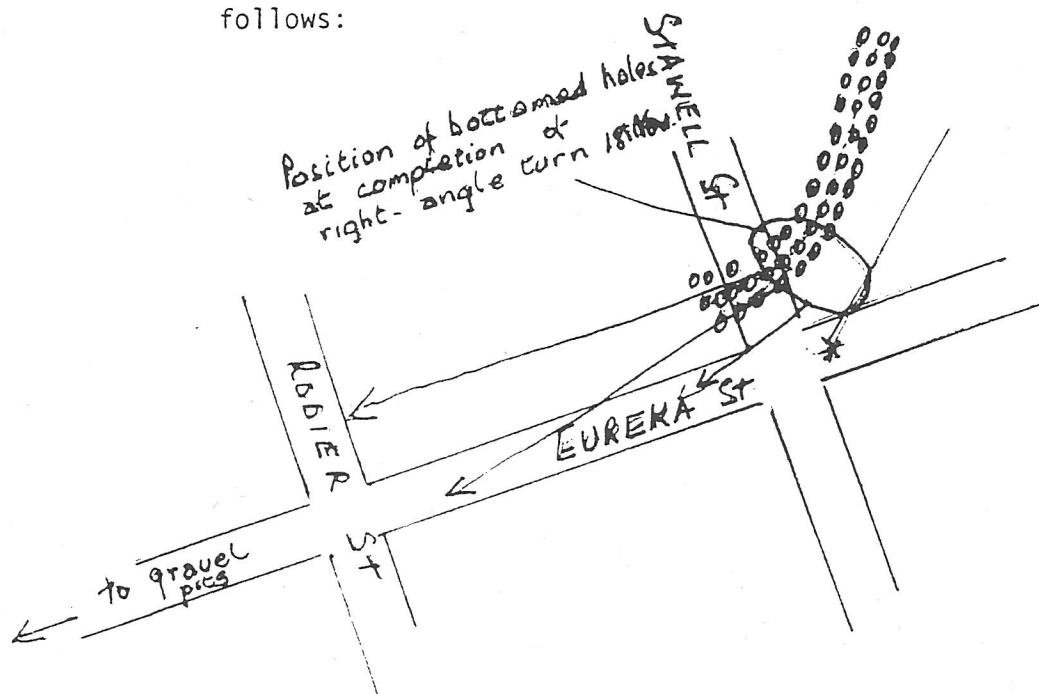
- 1.4 The minutes of a committee appointed to erect the memorial in 1884 (Ballarat Historical Society collection, entries for 24 April, 15 July) mention contacting Peter Lalor to help fix the site and record the decision to inspect the reserve with members of the Ballarat East council on 25 July.

Discussion at that time did not query the original reservation. What it did do was adopt a memorial site for its elevation, knowing that it was some 200 yards east of a majority view of the location of the actual stockade.

- 1.5 It is clear that the location of the Eureka Lead, both in terms of its debris preventing settlement and its shepherded holes providing earthworks etc. for the stockade, is critical for determining the site of the stockade. Therefore the reports of the mining reporter of the Ballarat Times in 1854 become significant. He gave week to week descriptions of progress on the lead and in particular noted that by 18 November (just before Eureka) the lead had completed a right-angle turn and was headed directly for the Gravel Pits.

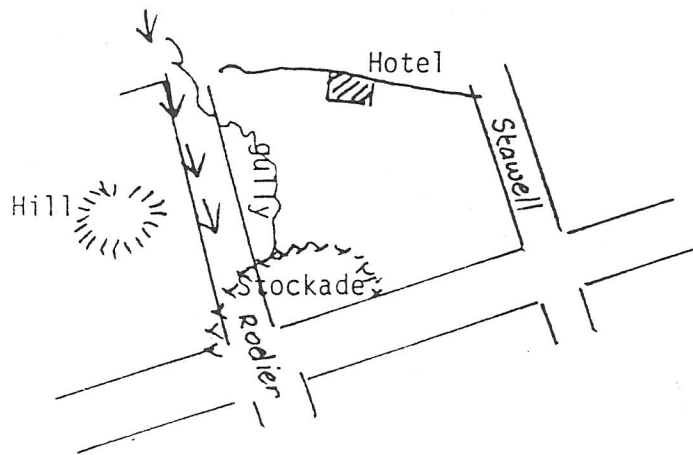
2. Topographical evidence

2.1 The map compiled in 1861 by Ballarat mining surveyors, whose knowledge of the position of the various leads must be considered reliable, shows the right-angle bend of the Eureka Lead occurring at about the stage the lead crossed modern Stawell Street. Where it began heading straight for the Gravel Pits there would have been some lag in the trend of shepherded holes. In other words they would describe a series of tangents to the curve of the actually bottomed line of holes. A sketch map would show it as follows:

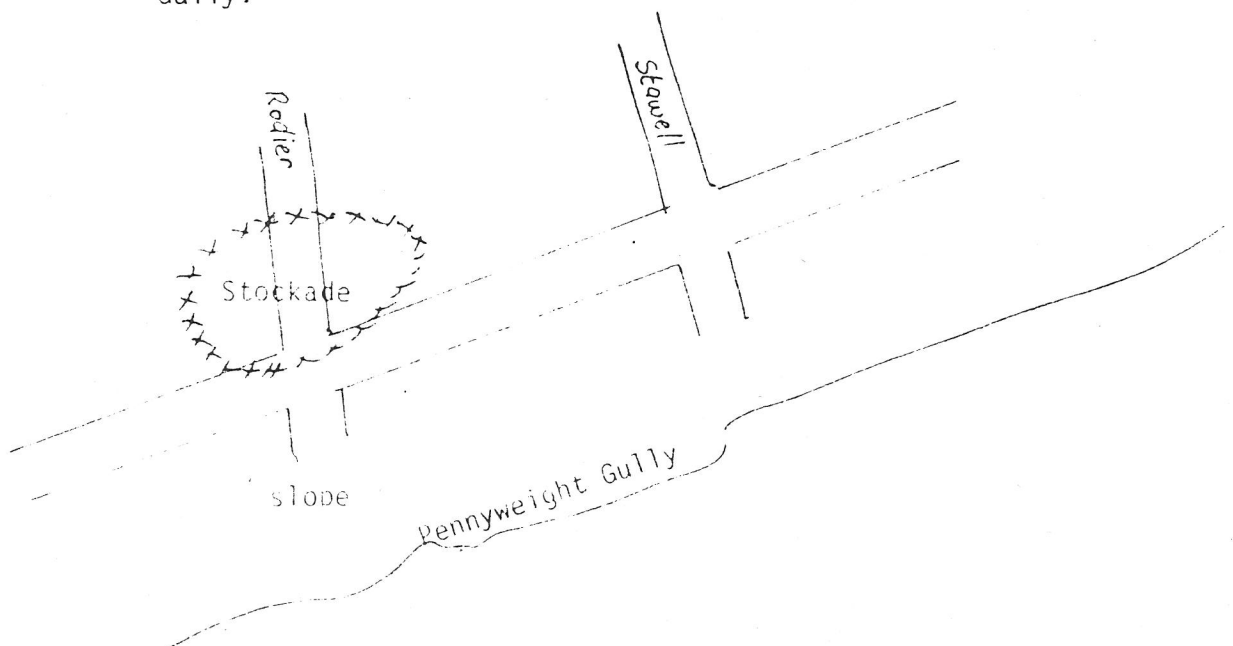


Arrows show likely supposed line of the lead occupied by shepherds. Usually they were 100 to 200 yards ahead of the last hole bottomed.

- 2.2 The attack on the stockade is precisely described in 1.2 as being made up a small gully between the Free Trade Hotel and the Cattle-yards or Stockyard Hill. The troops gathered in the shelter of the hill and snipers occupied high ground behind the hotel. Then they attacked directly. No account suggests that the attack was not directly on a line between the hotel and the hill.

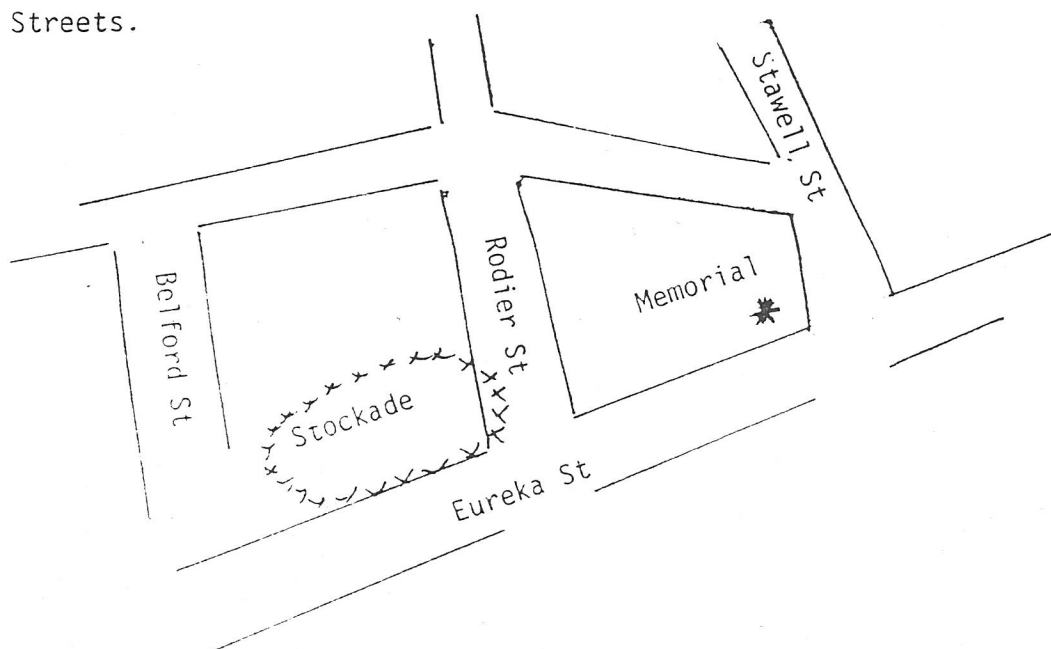


- 2.3 The south side or rear of the stockade is said to have been on the edge of a slope, which suggests a location between Rodier and Stawell Streets, on Eureka Street, where the ground falls away quite rapidly to the South into Pennyweight Gully.



3 Recent debate

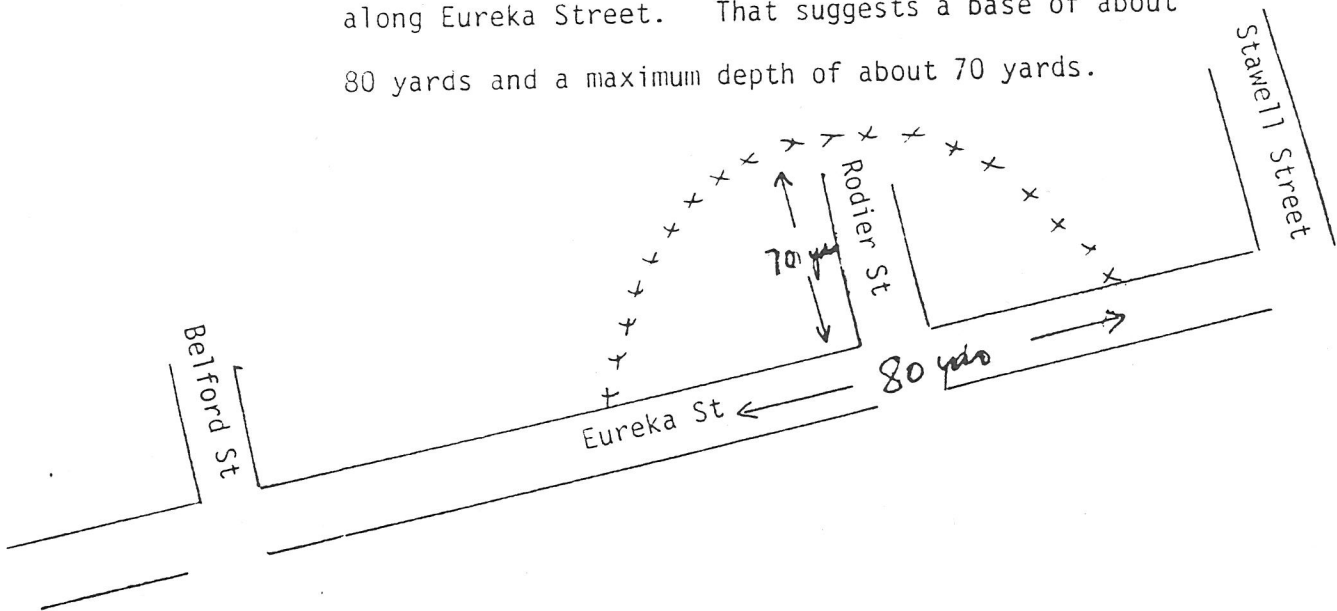
In 1974 there was a strong divergence of views. Bob O'Brien (Ballarat Courier, 23.2.1974) placed the stockade 500 yards west of the memorial and close to an attributed site recorded by the mining surveyors in 1861. He has since, however, changed his view (in response to debate and in accepting the direction of attack on the stockade ruling out a westerly site). In writing to the Mayor of Ballarat (letter received 12 January 1981) he expressed the view that the site was 100 yards west of the present memorial, on Eureka Street between Belford and Rodier Streets.



4. Conclusion

- 4.1 From the foregoing, it seems that the most likely position of the stockade on a modern map is along the north side of Eureka Street between a point 50 metres east of Rodier Street and a point 50 metres east of Belford Street.

- 4.2 The shape of the stockade seems to have been an ellipse enclosing about an acre of ground, with the longest side along Eureka Street. That suggests a base of about 80 yards and a maximum depth of about 70 yards.



5. General considerations

The value of an archeological approach to determining the site of the stockade is very small, for the following reasons:

- 5.1 The materials of the stockade were slabs, valuable for mining and no doubt recovered for that purpose later.
- 5.2 Stores and tents within the area were burnt by the military and police.
- 5.3 The site was shepherded holes on the line of the lead and therefore subject to the full impact of concentrated digging in the period immediately after the battle. Holes 160 feet deep (Ballarat Times, 7.10.1854) produce large amounts of clay, heaped up around the shaft and fossicked extensively during the late 1850s.
- 5.4 The stockade existed for only a few days and was fought over for less than half an hour so little trace would be left.

5.5 Pistols and ammunition were commonplace on the diggings and it would be necessary to explore much more than any supposed site if the relative abundance of such materials was to be used as evidence. It would be impossible to differentiate between general mining ground and this specific site.

5.6 Subsequent filling of dangerous shafts and general roadwork drainage and levelling will have further reduced the specific quality of the stockade site.

6. Recommendation

I do not consider an archeological approach to the Stockade site to be feasible. I do not think the evidence would be as valid as the written record and consider that the extent of the excavation would have to be many times the reported area of the stockade (allowing for some uncertainty about its location).

Weston Bate