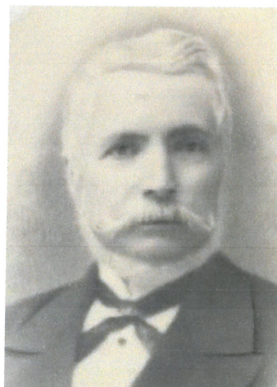


# Henry Frencham's 'discovery' of Gold and his Family Tree.



**M**y great, great, grandfather, Henry Frencham, was born at the Wexford Barracks in Ireland in 1816 to John Frencham 1783-1856 and Elizabeth Watchorn (Withers) 1784-1832. John was in the army. In 1840, Henry emigrated with his wife Alicia and 4 months old daughter Elizabeth to Melbourne on the steamship S.S. Orient.



Henry Frencham 1816 - 1897

Two reports about Henry Frencham's contribution to the history of the discovery of Gold in the Colony of Victoria. The first is in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4, published in 1972 and online, in 2006, by Donald S. Garden. The second in 1963 in Geoffrey Blainey's book 'The Gold Rush That Never Ended.'

The first reporting of Gold.

Henry Frencham, a goldfields pioneer, was born in Wexford, Ireland. He arrived in Melbourne in 1840. Henry's first employment was as a Bailiff for the government, collecting taxes, as well as an auctioneer for the City of Melbourne and later, as a reporter for the Port Phillip Gazette. Henry was also a lookout at the Flagstaff Gardens, watching for ships coming up the bay, as a reporter for the Port Phillip Gazette. The paper closed down as part of the Gold Rush in 1851.

Henry, aware of the gold rush to Bathurst in New South Wales, where the population increased by 540,000 between 1851 and 1852, set out early in June 1851 to search for gold in the Plenty Ranges and then onto Bendigo, to stop the evacuation of miners in the Port Phillip area to Bathurst. On June 14, 1851, the Melbourne papers carried the story of Frencham's claim to have discovered gold and his bid for the offered reward. An assay of his specimens revealed no gold. However, gold was found at the Caledonian Goldfield- Queenstown, not far from Warrandyte.

The second reporting of Gold.

In November 1851, Henry Frencham resigned from the Gazette to prospect for gold at Ballarat and Forest Creek (Castlemaine), which an acquaintance had described as a likely site. After prospecting for gold at Ballarat and Forest Creek with Robert Atkinson and James Ogilvie Ross, in Henry Frencham's Petition to the Victorian Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Victoria, they claimed the finding of gold in November 1851 when they reported the discovery to the Chief Commissioner at Forest Creek.

On December 8 1851, Captain Donald Horne's Mounted Police Troops arrived to protect their digging site. It was then recognised as a permanent Gold Field site. On December 9, 1851, Henry forwarded the particulars of his discovery to the Argus Newspaper, which published it in Melbourne on December 13, 1851. "The First Gold Found—Henry Frencham's discovery changed the fate of Bendigo forever."

Forest Creek Historic Gold Diggings - Friends of Mount Alexander Diggings

"During 1851 and 1852 tens of thousands of people streamed into this valley in the search for gold. They called the area 'the Mount' or, more simply, 'the Diggings' The first news of gold hereabouts appeared without fanfare in the form of a letter by

the discoverers, 'three local shepherds' to the Argus newspaper in Melbourne. A trickle of diggers made their way to the spot, and when reports of their splendid successes at Forest Creek reached Melbourne, the trickle increased to a flood. Within a year, the Mount Alexander goldfield extended south to Vaughan and Guildford and north to Barker's Creek. It boasted a digger population of over 30,000 and was known to millions around the globe. It had become the richest shallow alluvial goldfield in the world. A large number of these flats and gullies where the diggers toiled now lies within Castlemaine.



Forest Creek Historic Gold Diggings

During my recent visit to the Forest Creek Gold Diggings site, I was captivated by the remnants of equipment used in gold



mining in the mid 1850's. The site, rich in history, had an undeniable aura of hard work and perseverance. I was not only taken by the rich and varied colors, textures and friability of the cliffs, but also by the mounds and scatterings of quartz left after the gold had been extracted.



Forest Creek Gold Digging Site - Labyrinth/Geo Maze.

The rock art installation is a beautiful and meaningful way to explore the rich history of our district. It also offers an opportunity to gain insights to guide the next steps in your life. The installation consists of eight concentric rings, each consisting of a unique blend of rocks from the diverse geological makeup of the region. Symbolically, the pattern creates seven paths representing the seven planets of the solar system, used as a guide for our ancestors.

The arrangement of rocks is not just a chronological journey, but a personal one. The oldest rocks, placed in the outermost ring, represent the beginnings of your journey, while the youngest, in

the innermost ring, symbolises a journey to your centre for self-discovery, offering a unique reflection on your life's path.

As you traverse the path, a crucial choice awaits you: navigating your life's path or getting lost in a maze. This sacred path is a sanctuary for quiet reflection, a place where you can gain profound insights and find your way through life's challenges. However, be wary of the two horizontal paths, they maybe tempting, but they can lead to confusion and disorientation, steering you into a maze and away from your 'life's true path'.

In his book, "The Gold Rush That Never Ended," Geoffrey Blainey said Henry Frencham, a journalist in a red shirt and knee boots, using the nom-de-plume 'Bendigo,' announced the discovery of gold. He also claimed to have had a major role in a demonstration at Bendigo against the new three pound gold licence fee. In 1854, the government charged the miners this heavy licence and the miners started to rebel.

Henry, Robert, and James raised many petitions, one with tens of thousands of signatures sent to the government. Unfortunately, Peter Lalor rallied others and the result was later known as the Eureka Stockade. The rebellion of miners at Eureka Stockade was a key event in developing political systems and attitudes towards democracy and equality in Australia. Frencham continued digging at Bendigo until 1854.

Henry, then bought an estate in Windsor for subdivision and later a cattle station in Warrandyte. He was also the Manager of the Magnet Gold Mining Company in Warrandyte.

Committee Findings: Who was the first to discover Gold?

In May 1867, Henry Frencham lodged a claim with the Minister of Mines, for a reward for discovering the Bendigo field, but it needed to be recognised. He continued to defend these claims in later years, especially as his financial position worsened.

It wasn't until October 23, 1890, that a meeting of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Victoria was established to consider who first found gold. After carefully considering the evidence from twelve other claims, to be the first to discover gold in 1851, the Committee reported that it was difficult, if not impossible, to decide that question now. Still, there is no doubt that Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Farrell obtained gold before Henry Frencham arrived at Bendigo Creek.

They found that Henry Frencham's claim to be the discoverer of Gold at Bendigo has yet to be sustained. Still, he was the first to report the discovery of 'payable' Gold at Bendigo to the Commissioner at Forest Creek. The Committee decided that the first place at which 'payable gold' was discovered on Bendigo was at what is now known as Golden Square, called by the station hands in 1851, 'The Rocks,' 200 yards to the west of the junction of Golden Gully with the Bendigo Creek.

Henry's journey took him from Bendigo to Warrandyte, where he settled his family in a humble slab hut. He managed a 100-acre property perched high above the Yarra River on Pound Bend. This property is a significant part of the local history. The water wheel powered the saws to cut logs and crush quartz for gold and later to the orchard; In 1991, I revisited this place with my second wife and my children. We were all delighted to see the remnants of the water wheel and the photo of the crushing mill on page 15 – all reminders of Henry's legacy.



The wheel pumped water to sawmill and orchard





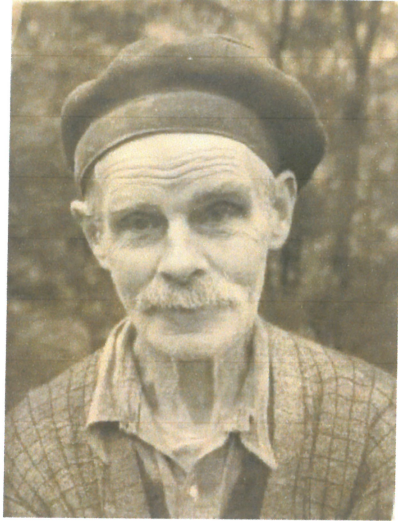
1904 Henry Frenchams Slab Hut Warrandyte

Henry later built a large two-storey house at 6 Berry Street Richmond, below, which is classified by the National Building Trust. Henry's final home was at 34 Adam Street, Burnley.



6 Berry St. Richmond





### A Reflection of Henry Frenchamss Life

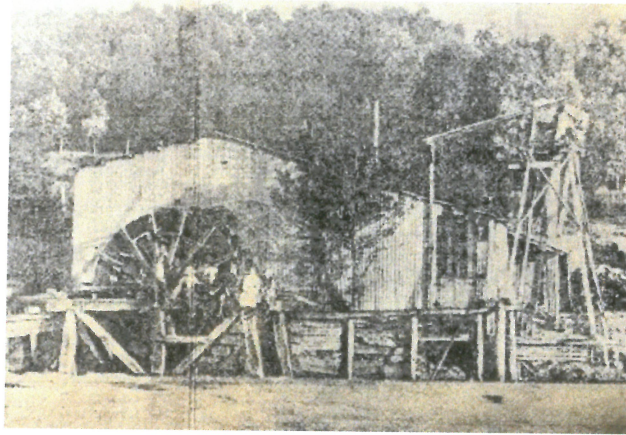
by Percy Frencham, a son of Edward Frencham, who lived at the property on Pound Bend in Warrandyte

Henry arrived in Port Phillip in 1840. After spending time in the Melbourne settlement, he took up the grazing run, which started at Deep Creek, Doncaster, extended along the Yarra to Brushy Creek, Lilydale and ran back to its source at Ringwood and Croydon. Horses and cattle were on the run. Sheep were not in the district. Goats were, as well as kangaroos and blackfellows. The bullock teams took a fortnight to come from Melbourne, a bit longer if the river was in flood.

The first house was built on the river bank near the pig farm, owned by Philpots. The blacks were friendly. The house was afterwards shifted to another position, on account of the floods. It was placed where the property known as Selby now stands.

The weeping willows growing there, planted by my Grandmother, Alicia Frencham, nee Littledale, were cuttings

which came from St Helena, Napoleon Bonaparte's dwelling place after he died, when all the soldiers guarding him were given their discharge. There were no other settlers on the run until some years later.



Water wheel and machinery for crushing gold

Grandfather, Henry Frencham gave up the station run, got rid of the stock and went mining. He got a lot of experience and no money. When gold was found there were over 2000 miners on the field, which was very rich in parts. Frencham's water wheel was installed on the river to work a crushing mill for the miners' quartz out of the mine. The wheel was about 500 yards upstream from the new bridge. The first bridge over the river was behind the post office. It was a low one, and the road went straight up the steep hill, hence the name Growlers Hill. It was the only crossing on the road to Yarra Glen and the Upper Yarra district. Warrandyte, formerly known as Anderson's Creek, is a native name. Anderson was an early settler on the run, who disappeared and was never heard of again. Either he got drowned or was killed by the blacks

Newspaper cuttings didn't include name and dates of articles e.g.  
The Water Wheel at Frencham's

"Beneath it the stream gently ripples, around it the birds love to trill, but it is not an old rustic bridge nor yet a mill, but the water wheel at Frencham's, a few miles up river beyond Warrandyte. Survivor of the years and of many bush fires, the old wheel paddles away and worked the circular saw and the pumps which supplied the man on the land with those two good servants, but poor masters, fire and water. A thing of beauty and utility combined, the wheel is a relic of the settlement of the district in the early days of Hill Pioneering. There was a wheel and weir at Warrandyte which inspired many artists, but old residents of old Warrandyte mainly hear the echoes of the mine batteries, which the wheel worked, resounding down the years and count the many sleepless hours they endured thereby."

Frencham Apple Tree at Warrandyte

"Miss Raisy Hawkes, of Warrandyte is mourning the loss of a friend, the magnificently gnarled old apple, 111 years old, which was blown down during the recent storm at her Selby property noted for splendid eucalypts. The beautiful tree was 4.0 m high and was planted in 1848 by a Mr Frencham, first owner of 1054 acre property. Beside being a local land mark, it produced a huge crop of delicious green apples every year, but no one ever new

their name. Miss Violet Hawkes, Miss Hawkes sister, who also lived on the property said she has known the tree for more than 60 years. When gold was first discovered at Warrandyte, she said. The diggers must have enjoyed its fruit. We all loved the old tree and its sad to see it laid low, particularly in Spring just when the buds are bursting.”

The Frenchams of Warrandyte by Louis Cranfield

“Henry Frencham took an active part in founding the first school at Anderson’s Creek Common School at Warrandyte. Henry’s daughter-in-law, Jane Littledale, was a teacher there and also on the School’s Committee, furthering their family’s commitment to education. Most of the earliest meetings of the Church of England were held in Henry’s home. Besides writing, Frencham was a successful miner and pastoralist. His family returned to live in Warrandyte in 1904, and took up a section, about three miles up the river, on the north bank, where they have since resided. Henry died on July 3 1897, aged 81 years. He left an estate worth \$460.”

He was predeceased by his wife Alicia. At the time of his death, Henry had fifty descendants.



My Great-Great-Great-Grandfather, Sergeant John Frencham, 1783-1868 married Elizabeth Watchorn (Withers), 1784-1832. All seven children were born to Elizabeth at the Garrison, as John was in the army at Waxford, Ireland.

Their children are Henry, 1816-1897, Edward, 1818, Twins—Elizabeth and Francis 1821, William, 1822, Thomas 1823, and Josiah 1825. John remarried Ann Gilbert, 1792-1864. There were no children from their marriage.



Photo is of Henry's family home, 1870-80 in Rotherwood Street in Richmond. Photo Left to right Alicia, Martha, Henry and his wife Alicia and their daughter Elizabeth.

Henry, 1816-1897 my Great Great Grandfather, married Alica Gainford 1812-1885. They had eight children. Elizabeth 1840-1927 Edward Frencham 1842-1923 Henry Lang 1844-1912 Mary Alice Frencham MP 1846-1888 William John 1848 Matha Jane 1850-1910 Alicia 1852-1939 Mary Gainfort 1857-1948.





Henry's son Edward travelled on the ship Donna Francisca 1898

In the front row is my Grandmother Bernice Frencham 1889-1977. On her left is my great grandfather Edward Frencham, her father, 1842-1922 and on the right is her mother Jane nee Littledale Frenchman 1846-1919. Photo from the left of Grandmother is Leslie 1881-1972 Annie 1871-1954 Right is Bessie 1885-1964 Howard 1883-1967 Back. Right left is Percy 1878-1970, Alice 1886-1972, Frank 1872-1967, Edward Harold 1874-1948, Mary 1875-1957, Douglas 1876-1952.

Edwards's daughter, Mary Alicia Frencham, 1875-1957, married Gideon Hood 1873-1919. My second cousin, Laura, was born at Foster in 1916 to parents Mary Alicia (May) Hood-nee Frencham and Gideon Hood. Laura had a baby brother who died in infancy. Her father, a bookkeeper at a city retail store, later took up farming with his brother in Foster. Laura's father died in 1919 at the Age of 45, when Laura was three years old.



Laura Hood

Laura was also a bookkeeper at Sun Alliance Life Insurance in Melbourne. Laura was the 'Custodian of the Family Tree'.

After her father's passing, Laura and her mother resided with the Frencham family in their two-story home on 6 Berry Street in Richmond. They later lived at 34 Adam St Burnley, where Laura attended primary school. Their living situation changed again during her senior school years when they moved to Bristol Avenue in Edithvale and later live over a shop in Frankston.

Finally, they settled on Croydon Road, Croydon, until Laura's mother's passing, at the age of 82 in 1957. Throughout her life, Laura cherished her relationship with her first cousin, my mum, Anne Jessie (Nance) nee Frencham Davies, who was seven years her junior. Nance also resided in the Frencham home on Adam Street. The families often gathered around the piano, played the violin, and enjoyed shared outings, strengthening the family connection.

During her secondary school years, Laura's fascination with the natural world blossomed. She meticulously documented introduced plants and highly noxious weeds, a passion that evolved into a study of the botany of native orchids and indigenous plants. Her garden in Croydon was a testament to her love for plants, flourishing with European winter and spring bulbs and roses.

Laura's library reflects her love for reading, fascination with early Australian history and respect for Aboriginal culture. Her collection of books, shells, and fossilized rocks is a beautiful reflection of her passion. As some rocks resemble Aboriginal stone tools, I will have them culturally assessed for the return to the appropriate homelands. Winifred Morrissey, daughter of Howard Frencham, often accompanied her on her hobbies, including photography, piano playing, tennis, basketball and horseback riding.

Laura and her first cousins, Bess, Al, and Uncle Perc, lived in Warrandyte until the early sixties when fires destroyed the properties. Laura's first cousin, Winifred, recalled Warrandyte being a special place where families came together.

Win said Laura was known to sit in the slab hut, listening intently to football. Aunty Bess said she would be better off listening more intently to sermons! Laura was a Tiger supporter,

and Win recalls she was great fun. Laura was a member of the Saint John the Devine Church in Croydon, an essential part of her life. She was in the choir, an active member of its library and distributor of pew sheets. She enjoyed walking the Church's Labyrinth.

Laura met Bert Travis at the Church and were married there on 4 February 1975. They pulled down the old house on Croydon Road and built the home where they had a happy life together, especially while caravanning around Australia. Bert passed away at 89 on 9 November 1993, when Laura was 78

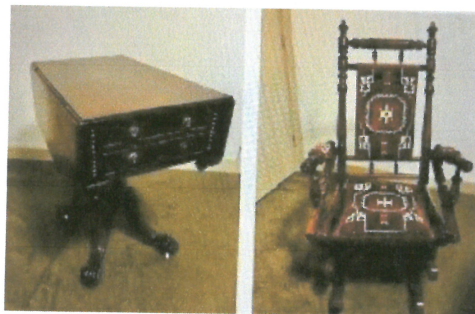
In 1991, we visited Laura in hospital with my children, Jessica, Cameron, and Justin, who enjoyed meeting their third cousin for the first time. We all enjoyed Laura's unique personality and laughed a lot. Laura's joy was palpable when she joined my Mum, Dad, Lorraine's Mum, Auntie Madge Rodda and cousin Jan at the Warehouse for my 50th birthday

When I learnt of Laura's failing sight in 2005 we often visited and read her mail to her. During those visits Laura would share the history of Frencham furniture. She recalled how she purchased the glider rocker for her mother from her first pay her. Her mother was not pleased. Laura did kept it alongside her bed. The 19th century Scottish Pembroke Dropside sewing table, a family heirloom, was brought over by Henry Frencham in 1840.



Laura's mother's 1890-1910 Edwardian chairs. The 19th century glider rocker. All have been lovingly restored.

As we enter our apartment, we are reminded of Laura and her generous gift, as we see her collection of rocks, a glide rocker, and a sewing table. In our bedroom, there's an Edwardian tub chair from the 1890s that my 4-year-old grandson Daniel has claimed as his own. Additionally, there's a carved walnut chair from the 1890s with a padded headrest and a nursing chair, both creating memories for my granddaughters Sophie and Georgia.



Pembroke Sewing table Glider Rocker

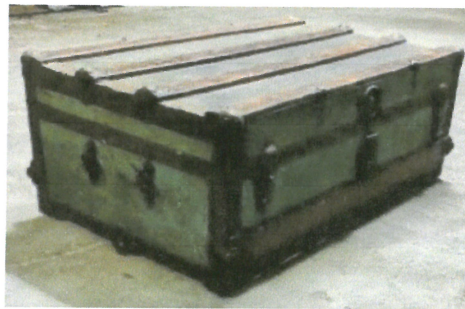


1890-1910 Edwardian chairs.

The Cabin Trunk that Henry brought to Australia in 1840 contained the family bible, birth certificates, and family photo albums. Also, Laura's pages and pages of descendants, other



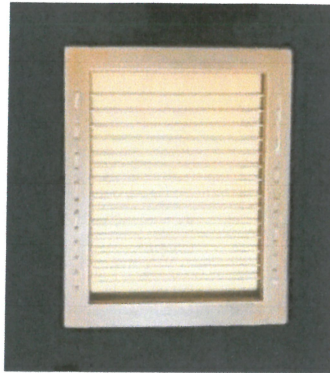
original documents, land titles of subdivisions, maps of gold diggings at Warrandyte and personal letters. Most importantly, it held Henry Frencham's Petition to Parliament and the findings from the Parliamentary enquiry into his and other claims to be the first to find gold at Bendigo.



Cabin Trunk

Other items included a timber-framed hinged "writing tablet." Laura explained it was used before lined paper was invented. The horizontal strings across the frame helped guide writing in a straight line. The "glasses" were held by the timber frame to magnify items. The Scalebuoy, a glass ball containing mercury, which was secured within a chrome-plated wire cage and handle and screwed into place. The purpose was to descale objects held in a container of water. Laura proud of Frencham history kept the cabin trunk in her kitchen.

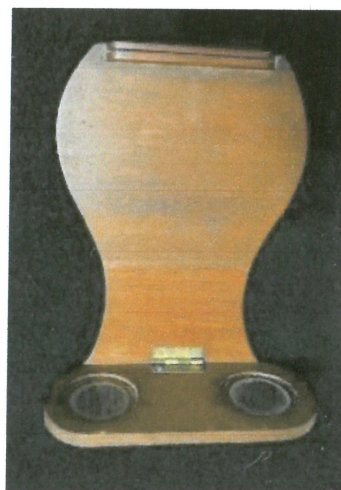
The Bendigo Historical Society has expressed interest in the Scalebouy and I plan to also offer the writing tablet and the magnifying glasses.



A guide used for writing



Scalebouy



Magnifying glasses

I am now retired, reviving Dale Frencham's computerised family tree and Laura's passion for its continuation; ensuring it's known to descendants. Dale's wife Carol is writing a novel based on the facts about Henry Frencham and his life story.

I also have the role now of identifying the likely persons to carry it into the next generations. The following is my immediate Frencham family tree.

My Grandmother, Bernice Frencham 1899-1977 married Robert Davies 1891-1949. They had two children—Uncle Ted Davies 1916-2009. My mother, Anne Jessie (Nance) nee Frencham Davies 1923 - 2009. In 1944 my mother married John James Rodda, 1919-2007. My mother was a stenographer, and my father was an Advertising Executive with Warrick Eddelbuttel Agency. Geoffrey John Rodda, the son of Anne Jessie (Nance) nee Frencham Davies and John Rodda was born on 25 August 1947 is the great great Grandson of Henry Frencham.



My Mother