

The St Arnaud Range has provided early Victorian settlers with a rich supply of resources including timber products, gold and silver, eucalyptus oil and grazing opportunities.

During 2002 the Environment Conservation Council carried out an investigation on Box-ironbark Forests and Woodlands, which resulted in the re-classification of areas of State Forest. St Arnaud now consists of a mixture of State Forests, Regional Parks, National Parks and Nature Conservation Reserves.

Our Box-Ironbark forests tell a fascinating story of change and survival. How you use the forest today will shape our forests future. How will you help shape the next chapter?

St Arnaud State Forests

The St Arnaud State Forests offer visitors a wonderful mixture of natural and cultural history, abundant wildlife and a rich diversity of wildflowers.

The Forests were originally inhabited by the Wungaragira Gundidj Aboriginal Clan, who belonged to the Dja Dja Wurrung language group. European occupation has included stock grazing as well as alluvial and shallow reef mining for gold. The Forests have also been an important source of timber for sawlog, fence posts, palings and firewood. Harvested species include yellow gum, grey box and red ironbark.

Getting There

The St Arnaud State Forests (managed by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries) are situated approximately 190 km north-west of Melbourne, surrounding the historical town of St Arnaud. The major Forest in the area is 1 km south from the township of St Arnaud, along the Sunraysia Highway (locally known as the Moolerr State Forest). There is also a smaller patch of forest to the north of St Arnaud along the Charlton-St Arnaud Road (locally known as the Hard Hills area).

History

Life during the early days of St Arnaud ...

"Two diggers are wending their way to their home - a hut consisting of bark alone... Our two friends sit down to a small rough table, being nothing else than two supporting sticks and the wall side, the table nailed to the bark. The light is a slush one, made out of fat; the meal bread and fat." (Palmer. Y, 1980)



Photo: Prospecting

St Arnaud is an old gold mining town, surrounded by forest and hill country. The land was originally inhabited by the Wungaragira Gundidj Aboriginal tribe. European settlement in the region began with the establishment of the 'Tottington' sheep station to the south in 1838. Other pastoralists soon followed.

Gold was found 2 km east of the present townsite during January 1855. The area was named "New Bendigo", and approximately 20,000 men rushed there to make their fortunes. Due to water shortages, and most of the gold being hidden deep underground, after a few months only 5,000 people remained. The search for gold spread along the creek and a large discovery on Wilson's Hill moved most of the prospectors away from the New Bendigo area to a town that formed along the creek.

During the gold rush a large Chinese settlement was established at St Arnaud North, and was known as China Town. The 'Town' consisted of a wide street, with buildings made from bark and whatever else they could find. Imagine a long line of Chinese men making their way to a large dam at dusk, walking across a plank with buckets carried on poles across their shoulders. They would dip their buckets into the water and carry the water back for use on their gardens. These vegetables were sold around St Arnaud.

By 1860 many deep mines had opened up, and lots of families came to the area and shops, schools etc. were established to cater for them. As the town grew, so did the population of the surrounding countryside with many families taking up 320-acre blocks, which were expanded as time went by. The 'Lord Nelson' was the town's last operating goldmine, which wound up during 1926.

When the gold mines of North Central Victoria went into decline eucalyptus oil production emerged as an alternative source of employment for many miners.

Many of the old abandoned mine sites were utilised by eucalyptus distilleries. Steel boilers were easily converted into distillery vats.

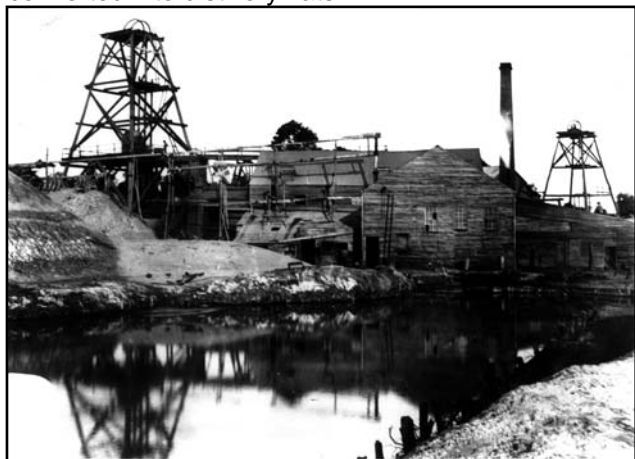


Photo: Lord Nelson Mine

Eucalyptus oil production started in the St Arnaud area around the turn of the nineteenth century. At this time, oil was mainly distilled from Blue and Green Mallee. The main harvesting method was to flatten scrub with a large roller and to burn the area. New growth was then harvested with sickles or other hand-held tools. The eucalyptus oil industry reached a peak in the late 1940s. Thereafter, the industry declined as production costs increased and as large eucalypt plantations were established overseas.

The St Arnaud Range has been an important source of timber for sawlog, fenceposts and firewood for the local community. Timber was also utilised by the mining industry. Over the years the forest has been managed for both commercial purposes and forest health.

Geology and Geomorphology

Over the years there have been a number of dramatic worldwide changes in sea-levels, as well as major climate change. Periods of glaciation resulted in the lowering sea levels - naturally, as these ice caps melted sea level rose. If you were here about 545 million years ago when the bedrock formed, you would be at the bottom of the ocean!

The geology of the St Arnaud area mainly consists of sedimentary marine bedrock (sandstone, mudstone, shale and slate), that has later been uplifted, weathered and buried with soil. Minor igneous intrusions have also occurred throughout the area. Natural weathering and depositional events have continually modified the landscape, leaving us with the present landscape. Most of the area consists of low hills and plains, used mostly for livestock grazing and cropping.

Plants, birds and wildlife

The forests south of St Arnaud are dominated by Box and Ironbark eucalypts and boast a diverse range of understorey species. Eucalypts found in the area include Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*), Grey Box (*E.microcarpa*), Red Ironbark (*E.tricarpa*), Red Box (*E.polyanthemos*) and Red Stringybark

(*E.macrorhyncha*). Understorey species include a number of rare and threatened species.

The vegetation of the Hard Hills area (north of St Arnaud) is quite different, with an unusual combination of Mallee and Box-Ironbark species in the one site. Much of the area has been harvested for eucalyptus oil over the years. Tree species include: Blue Mallee (*E.polybractea*), Green Mallee (*E.viridis*), Bull Mallee (*E. behriana*) as well as other species more typical of the Box-Ironbark forests - Red Box, Red Stringybark, Red Ironbark, Yellow Gum, Long-leaved Box (*E.goniocalyx*) and Grey Box. The understorey is dense and varied and supports a number of endangered flora and fauna species. Late in 2005 a previously undescribed orchid was even discovered in the area!

St Arnaud is fortunate to have such a diversity of wildlife and flora close to its doorstep. Visit the forest during Spring and Summer and enjoy the array of colours of the wildflowers. Look for species such as: golden wattle, rough wattle, goldfields grevillea, cats paw grevillea, pink bells, peach heath, daphne heath, bearded heath, twining fringe lily, blue pincushions, fringe myrtle, twiggy bush-pea, showy parrot-pea, rough and scarlet mint bush, wax flowers and white marianth. You may even see a range of delicate native orchids including: the wax-lip orchid, greenhoods, spider orchids, sun orchids and beard orchids.



Photos: Goldfields Grevillea, Beard Orchid, Gorse Bitter-pea

As can be expected, the forests support a diverse range of fauna species, including mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs. Enjoy the sights and sounds of kangaroos/wallabies bounding through the forest, kookaburras laughing in the trees, gliders/possums swinging in the trees, and wedge-tailed eagles soaring above. The endearing Echidna can also be seen trundling from one ant-nest to the other for a quick snack. The area provides important habitat for threatened species such as the swift parrot, square-tailed kite, painted honeyeater, diamond firetail, powerful owl and tree goanna.



Photos: Powerful Owl, Tree Goanna, Echidna

The little jewel of the dry country, the Spotted Pardalote is commonly heard in the Box-Ironbark areas, while the Hard Hills area supports many of the now threatened woodland bird species such as Brown Treecreeper, Hooded Robin and Jacky Winter. In

former years, the now endangered Bush Stone-curlew was found in the area but its present status is not known. Records exist of the Masked Owl being present, but its status is not known either. Various honey-eaters and thornbills can commonly be seen flying around the forest.

Reptiles are well represented around St Arnaud and include the Shingleback or Stumpy-tailed Lizard, Jacky Lizard, Bearded Dragon, Eastern Blue-tongue Lizard, Blotched Blue-tongue Lizard, the rarely seen Dark-spined Blind Snake and the less popular Eastern Brown Snake. The density of the understorey in many areas means that care must always be exercised when bushwalking in the warmer months.

Activities to enjoy in the State Forest

- Get active! Walk along one of the tracks around the Basin, ride your horse or bike along the bush roads and appreciate the beauty of the forest. Be sure to stay on formed roads when riding.
- Find a nice spot to relax, camp or have a picnic, remember to look after the forest by taking your rubbish home with you.
- Take your dog for a walk. Making sure your dog is under control at all times.
- Try your luck by fossicking or prospecting with a current Miner's Right. Remember any holes created by prospecting must be filled in.
- Enjoy a car or motorbike tour of the forest, exploring the extensive road network. Make sure you are licensed and registered and always stay on formed roads.
- Test your hunting skills with licensed firearms and protect the forest from pest animals such as foxes and rabbits.
- Explore and search the forest for clues that give us evidence from the past – remember to leave everything as you found it.

Lets look after our living museum!

- All native plants, animals, historic sites and geographical features are protected by law.
- Campfires are part of the outdoor experience. However sparks can easily start the bush burning. You can take care with fire by observing all fire regulations and Total Fire Ban days, always use existing fireplaces where possible or 30 cm deep trenches, collect only dead wood from the ground for campfires, ensure your fires is less than 1 metre square and at least 3 metres clear of burnable material, never leave fires unattended, and ensure fires are safe and that they are completely extinguished when you leave.

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Look out for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

Attractions

- **The Basin - Picnic Area**
(St Arnaud - Teddington Historical Water Supply area)
3.7 km S of St Arnaud Township, W of Sunraysia Highway

Walk around and enjoy nature or submerge yourself in history - this site has both! The shallow stony soils around 'The Basin' support Box-Ironbark and Heathy Dry Forest vegetation, with a diverse shrub understorey and ground layer of native grasses, orchids and lilies. The flora diversity attracts a number of rare birds and other fauna.

St Arnaud was one of Victoria's first towns to have a town water supply - the supply was gravity fed from Teddington Reservoir to 'The Basin'. The Pipeline is a tribute to the initiative of the early settlers to the area. 'The Basin' water storage is now managed by Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, and is used by local piggeries and as an emergency town supply.

For further information on this site, see 'The Basin' Forest Note.

- **Eucalyptus Distilleries, NE of St Arnaud (Hard Hills area)**

For a century and a half, the aromatic smell of eucalyptus smoke has wafted above the thin, hungry soils of central Victoria. Vernon's Eucalyptus Distillery started up in the Mallee country north of St Arnaud in around 1946. Decades ago, there were dozens of distillers in the blue mallee country of central Victoria. Today in central Victoria, only four remain. Blue Mallee was harvested to make the world's sweetest, finest eucalyptus oil. You may still find evidence of these sites throughout the bush.

Historical Mine Sites:

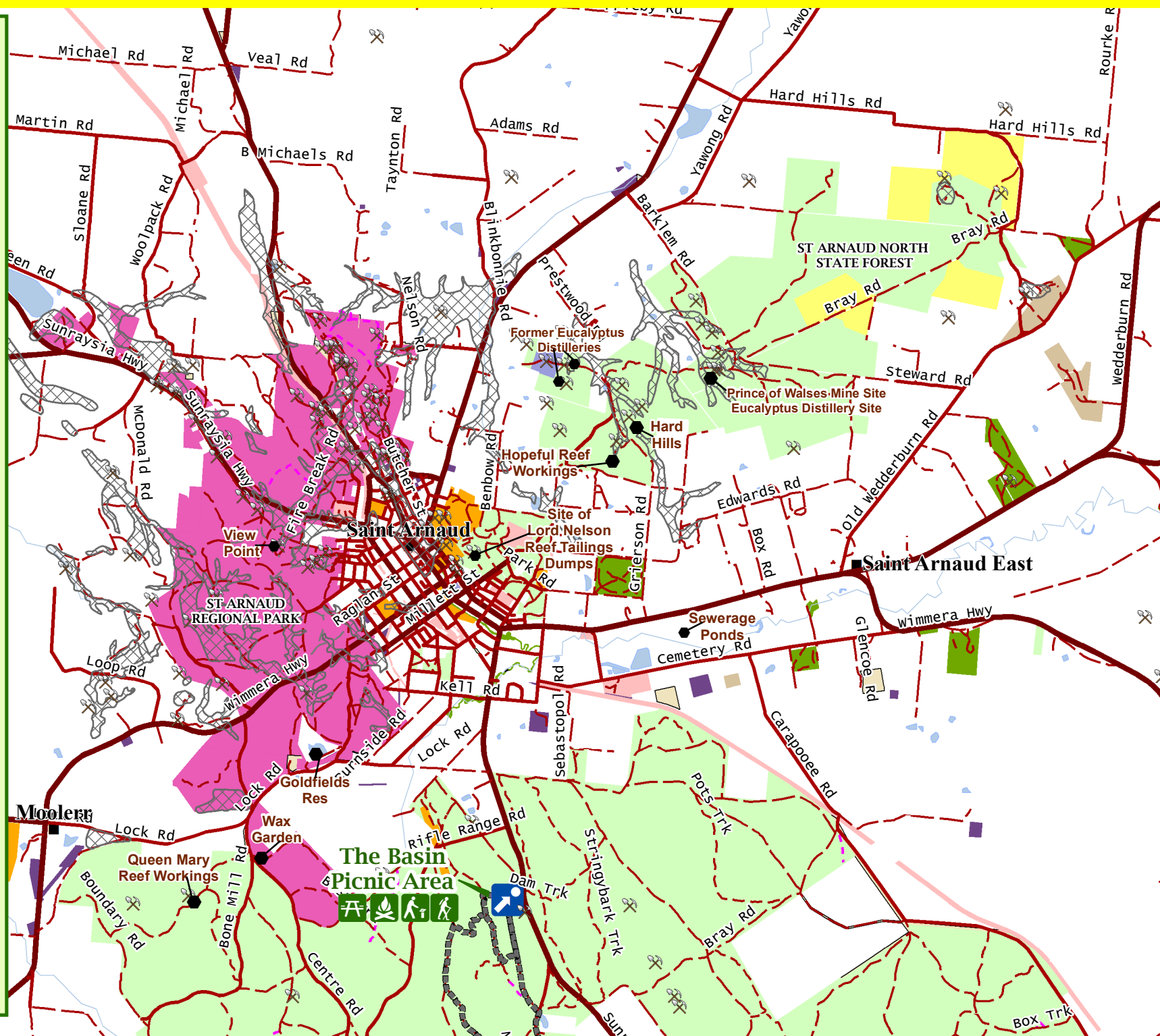
Most of the gold found in the St Arnaud area has been hosted by quartz reefs buried below the surface. Over the years a large number of diggers and their families made their way to the 'goldfields' to try their luck. Many sites are poorly preserved and any signs of past mining operations have been obliterated. Please look out for old mine shafts when walking through the forest.

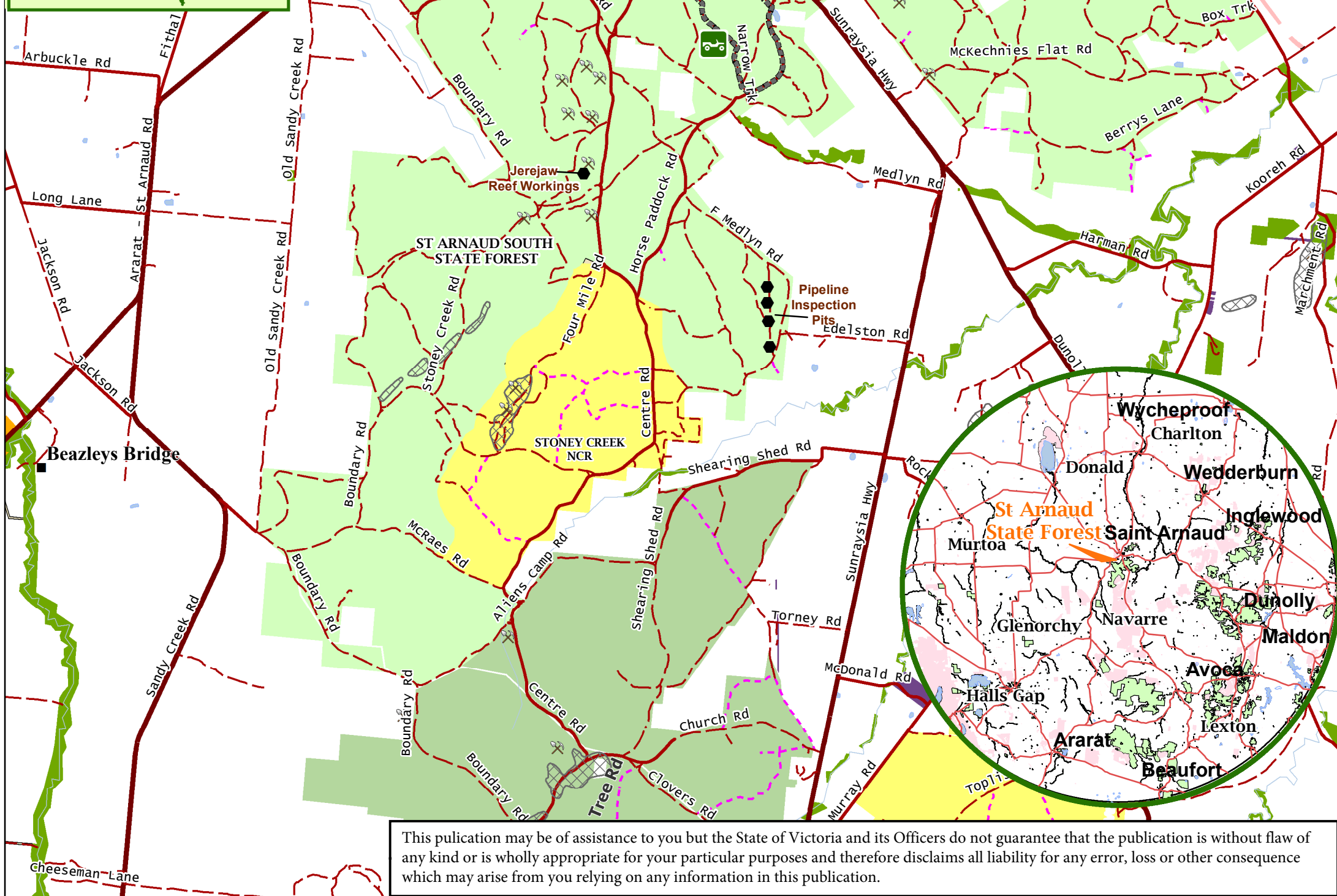
- **Queen Mary Reef Workings**
4.5 km SW of St Arnaud, W of Queen Mary Road
The Reef was mined between 1866 and 1884 and reached a maximum depth of 165 feet. At that time there were up to 34 miners working in that section of forest. The site now consists of bulldozed mullock heaps and filled shafts.

- **Nook Mine / Jerejaw Reef Workings**
6.5 km SW of St Arnaud, W of Centre Road
The Jerejaw Reef was mined from 1866 to 1884, and reached a maximum depth of 216 feet. The remains of a horse-drawn circular haulage whim, as well as mullock heaps/filled shafts are still visible.

Features

-  Recreation Site
-  Picnic Table
-  BBQ / Fireplace
-  Self-guided Walk
-  Information Board
-  Forest Drive
-  Forest Walk / Drive
-  Historic Mine Site
-  Historic Mine Workings
-  Main Road (Sealed)
-  Local Road
-  2wd
-  4wd
-  Foot Tk
-  Unmaintained
-  Creekline / Water course
-  State Forest
-  National Park
-  Nature Conservation Reserve
-  Historic Reserve
-  Bushland Reserve
-  Community Use Area
-  Earth Resources
-  Services and Utilities
-  Uncategorised Public Land
-  Permanent Waterbody





This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its Officers do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

▪ Hopeful Reef Workings

2.4 km NE of St Arnaud, W of Grierson Road

Mining occurred between 1872 and 1881, reaching a maximum depth of 265 feet. A deep open shaft surrounded by mullock heaps still exist at the site. The shaft has been fenced.

▪ Prince Of Wales Mine Site

3.75 km NE of St Arnaud, S of Eucy Patch Track

The Mine operated from 1874 to 1884 and reached a maximum depth of 220 feet. Relics of the mine include a mullock heap, a filled shaft and the remains of a stone mounting bed.

Nature Walks / Cycle Tracks / Nature Drives

▪ The Basin Walk

Easy - approximately 1 km return

Fitness level – Low, Walking skill level - Low

Enjoy a short, easy stroll around The Basin to enjoy the sights and sounds of the bush. This short loop starts and finishes at the Basin Picnic area.

▪ Pipe Gully Walk

Easy - approximately 2 km return

Fitness level – Average, Walking skill level - Moderate

This walk is a short loop that takes you through a low-lying section of the forest - in the past low lying areas such as this were preferentially cleared because of their comparatively deep, fertile soils. These moist pockets of vegetation are crucial in times of drought for fauna species.

▪ Grand Circle Tour

Easy

The Grand Circle Tour showcases places of interest in the St Arnaud State Forest, St Arnaud Regional Park and the St Arnaud Township. The self-guided tour extends for approximately 27 kms.

Includes:

- The Basin
- Wax Garden
- Goldfields Reservoir
- View Point
- Bell Rock
- Hard Hills
- Sewerage Works - great bird spotting area

Further information on the Grand Circle Tour can be obtained from the St Arnaud Information Centre

Nearby Attractions

Nearby Parks and Reserves:

- St Arnaud Range National Park
- Stoney Creek Nature Conservation Reserve
- Stuart Mill Nature Conservation Reserve
- Redbank Nature Conservation Reserve

Nearby Recreation Sites within Parks:

- Rostron Picnic Area
- West of England Fire Tower
- Wax Garden
- Teddington Hut and Camping Area
- Bell Rock
- View Point

These sites are not shown on the map. For further information on these sites contact the Parks Victoria

Information Centre on 131 963, or visit their website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Historical Sites within St Arnaud township:

- Welcome Nelson Company Mine Site / Reef Tailings Dumps (NE of junction of Butcher and Hopetoun Streets)
- Lord Nelson Mine Site / Tailings Dumps (Chrysolite Hill, Millet-Dally Road (Pioneer Park))
- New Bendigo Co Mine Site , New Bendigo Diggings (NW of St Arnaud, 3.1 km east of Sunraysia Highway)

For more information

For further information contact the Department of Environment and Primary Industries office at St Arnaud (☎ 5495 1700) or DEPI's Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

Or visit the DEPI website:

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au>

References

- Bannear, D. (1994). *Historic mining sites in the Inglewood, Wedderburn & St Arnaud Mining Divisions*. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bendigo.
- Palmer, Y. (1980). *Track of the years: the story of St. Arnaud*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- St Arnaud Water Works Trust (1976). Preliminary Report on the St Arnaud Water Supply 1976. St Arnaud Waterworks Trust, St Arnaud.

Special Acknowledgment: Hughes, A. St Arnaud Field Naturalist Club, St Arnaud.

Photos:

[echidna], (Photo: DEPI/Ouroumis)
[powerful owl], (Photo: DEPI/McCann)
[tree goanna], (Photo: NCCMA/Adrian Martins)
[prospecting], (Photo: DPI/The Virtual Exhibition Collection)
[Lord Nelson Mine] (Photo: DPI/The Virtual Exhibition Collection)
[goldfields grevillea], (Photo: STAFNC/Hughes)
[beard orchid], (Photo: DEPI/Camilleri)
[gorse bitter-pea], (Photo: STAFNC/Hughes)

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its officers do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.