

Barossa Walks

Barossa Goldfields

At the foot of the slope opposite is the Phoenix Tunnel, which was taken in about 85 m to investigate the same quartz reef as the North Tunnel. Again only traces of gold were found. The Main Shaft was dug also to intersect this reef which extended to the Lady Pearce Tunnel (located 400 m further south above the South Para River).

Details are given on the information panels.

2.4 km The walking trail joins the tramway, near a digging. The tramway was used to cart gold-bearing quartz in skips from the mine to the stamp battery. You pass the end of a 30 m tunnel, cut to maintain an even grade for ponies pulling the skips.

Checkpoint G3 is a level area at the southern end of the tunnel; *cross the road and continue along the level tramway.*

2.2 km The tramway curves around and you leave it at a point overlooking the Battery site, gradually winding your way downhill to the Engine and Boilerhouse foundations (just beyond the 2.0 km mark) where there is a good overview of the battery site. The 40-head battery, the largest in South Australia, operated only once in 1898 and following liquidation of the Menzies Barossa Mining Co. was sold and dismantled. Details on the panel.

Checkpoint G4, at the battery site, is the junction with the **Lady Pearce** circuit (notes below).

The **Phoenix Circuit** takes you back to **Checkpoint G3** and **Allendale Road Trailhead**. Follow the tramway, noticing the gorge of the South Para River below with an unusual River Red Gum forest on its slopes, a forest of Grass Trees, and the Devil's Nose rock outcrop.

1.4 km The tramway continues as far as the Transverse Tunnel, which again follows the reef from Lady Pearce, but at a higher level.

As you walk up the hill large gum trees have several trunks which have almost certainly regrown following cutting for fuel for the steam powered battery. Fortunate for the trees, that the battery operated only once!

1.2 km *Cross the Quarry Track*

1.0 km Various views to the east include the Wirra Wirra Peaks and Mt Crawford Firetower on the Warren Tower walk. Eventually you pass the **Geosite Barossa Junction Mine** (1896), an opencut with a shaft at the end of the digging – another failed prospect.

From here return to Allendale Road Trailhead joining the Victoria Hill circuit and **Checkpoints G7** and **G5**.

For Lady Pearce Circuit, leave G4 following the posts across the road trending down hill.

3.2 km Geosite Top Tunnel: A rocky section then leads to **Geosite Tunnel 2:** directly below **Top Tunnel**; both tunnels and Transverse tunnel (**Phoenix Circuit**) followed the same quartzite reef.

Cross the ford of the South Para River which, during the 1897-8 workings, was accidentally polluted by mercury amalgam used in gold extraction.

2.8 km Checkpoint 6 A number of trees nearby have multiple stems, indicating that they may have regrown from stumps of trees cut down for the **Mine Workings**.

2.4 km Geosite Mine Workings: Stone walling nearby may have supported a crushing floor; other stone-work may be the remains of a blacksmith's hearth.

Continue uphill to return to Allendale Road, via **Checkpoints G8, G9** and **G5** noting at ...

1.8-1.6 km ... that the track is benched with stone edging and some drill marks for dynamite—an old track for wood-cutters' drays?

Join Victoria Hill circuit at G5 and turn right.

COMMON BIRDS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Adelaide Rosella
Musk Lorikeet
Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Superb Blue Wren
Grey Fantail

Grey Shrike Thrush
Brown Treecreeper
Red-browed Finch
Diamond Firetail



Musk Lorikeet

Lyn Pedler



Red-browed Finch

Lyn Pedler

Walk is in Para Wirra Conservation Park managed by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. It is presented here by the Walking Trails Support Group. www.walkingtrailssupportgroup.org.au

Interpretation is based on the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia's guidebook Exploring the Barossa available from the Tanunda Visitor Information Centre.

August 2016

For further information: *The Barossa Goldfield*, 1996 Mines and Energy South Australia;
Royce Wells 1980 *The Barossa Goldfield History*, pub. Salisbury Education Centre.



Tramway tunnel for ponies

Gold was found here in both river (alluvial) deposits and in quartz reefs. Alluvial gold was found first in 1868 in shallow river deposits, but more ancient and deeper ones were also exploited. In both cases the gold particles were washed out of the riverine sands. The Victoria Hill area was the most important site and many shafts were sunk to gain access to the old river beds, but by 1871 the area was largely worked out.

Interest was later shown in quartz reefs and a number of mines were sunk in the 1890s to find gold-bearing lodes.

While some speculators showed off promising gold specimens, many thousands of £s were wasted in fruitless endeavours by the Belle of the Barossa and Menzies Barossa (previously Royal Phoenix) mining syndicates. A stamp battery near the South Para River (at G4) was used to pulverise ore to release gold from the quartz, but it was used only once.

The gold story is told well by the information panels installed by the Department of Mines and Energy. The fever of exploitation can still be appreciated from the remains of shafts, tunnels and the concrete foundations built for expensive equipment.

The area continued to support small farm and fossicking interests during depression years, up to the mid-1930s, became a Recreation Park in 1962, and was altered to a Conservation Park in 2016.

Distance and time:

There are three integrated circuit walks -

Victoria Hill Circuit 1.4 km, allow 1 hour

Phoenix Circuit 4.2 km; allow 2 hours, including portions of *Victoria Hill circuit*

Lady Pearce Circuit 5.8 km; allow 3 hrs, including portions of *Victoria Hill circuit* and *Phoenix circuit*

Access: Allendale Road Trailhead. Nearest towns are Sandy Creek (approx 7 km) and Williamstown (approx 8 km).

Time allowed is generous to allow for reading the signs. Notes are written for anti-clockwise walks. Marked distances at 200 m intervals decrease as you return to Allendale Road Trailhead.

Track

Generally an AS2156 Class 3 track.

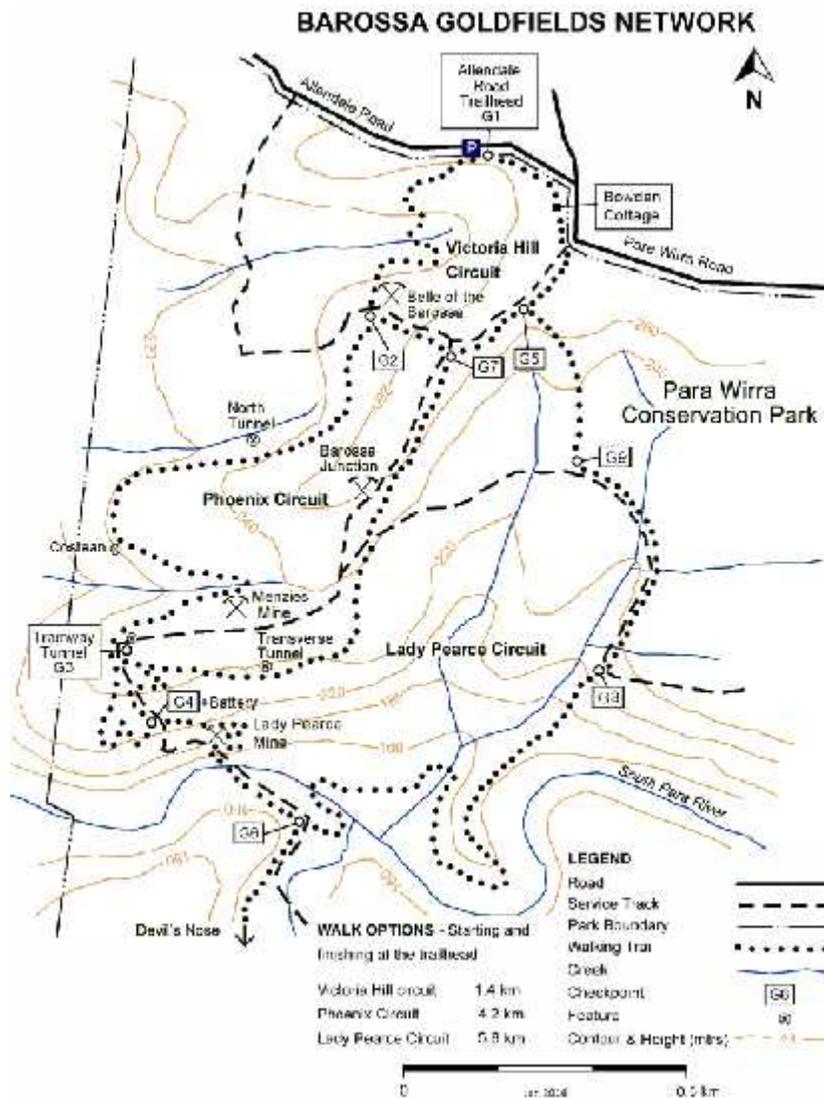
For your safety

-)] This is a walk in a natural area; beware of inherent hazards
-)] Walk in a party of at least four, advise a reliable person of where you are going and when you expect to return
-)] Wear strong comfortable boots and take adequate food and clothing
-)] Take at least 2 litres of water per person, more if it is hot
-)] Protect yourself from the sun and carry a First Aid Kit

Seasons come and go, and plants and animals

All walks start at Allendale Road Trailhead, Checkpoint G1 Nearby, under a Pepper-tree, are the foundations of Sarah and Henry Woodfield's house. They lived here between 1873 and 1901 during the declining years of the goldfield. Henry was a teamster from Gawler, using his oxen to take logs to the timber mill in Williamstown.

Read the sign about the goldfield before continuing the walk. Many of the diggings lie north of here in Spike Gully, now on private land.



This section of the walk takes you past some of the deep shafts of the alluvial Victoria Hill diggings and it is interesting how the vegetation of Pink Gum and heath has recolonised this area which must have been just about bare in 1870.

1.2 km Gold that was deposited in deeply buried sediments became cemented by lime-rich material. As the information panel explains this 'Barossa Cement' had to be crushed to free the gold.

The Edwards family lived in the Walkervale Gully area

between 1929 and 1932, eking out a living as described on the panel. Vacant unoccupied Crown Lands, as this area then was, would have provided haven for many penniless families during depressions.

0.8 km This is the location of one of the quartz reef mines, 'Belle of the Barossa'. Several shafts were put down, one to 80 feet (24 m), but with little outcome.

Checkpoint G2 is the junction with the Phoenix Circuit (notes below). To complete the Victoria Hill Circuit return to the Allendale Road following the boundary of the diggings, passing **Checkpoints G7** at 0.6 km and **G5** at 0.4 km, and through the garden of Bowden Cottage.

Bowden Cottage is managed as a museum by the Barossa Goldfields Historical Society and old mining equipment is on display in the garden. A labourer's cottage was built in 1907 which the Bowden family extended in the 1930s.

Continue on for the Phoenix Circuit and Lady Pearce Circuit.

3.4 km These grassy hills of Blue Gum woodland reflect a change in the underlying rocks and are the location of quartz reefs eagerly sought by miners.

3.2 km Geosite North Tunnel: At the foot of the slope below you is the elongated spoil heap from the North Tunnel, which was driven into the hill by the Menzies Barossa syndicate. It gave access to a deep quartz reef, about 60 m from the entrance. Only traces of gold were found.

2.8 km Geosite Costean: Just beyond this point on the hillside there is young regrowth of Blue Gum and Drooping Sheoak and you pass a fenced-off exploratory shaft and costean (or trench following the reef).

2.8-2.6 km On the opposite slope is an old track supported by stone walling, which went to the Phoenix Tunnel (below you now). The almost level horse tramway to the Menzies Mine is also visible.

2.6 km Geosite Miners Huts sites: Level plots in the hill to your left are the foundations of miners' huts.

Cross the creek to reach Menzies Barossa Mine, comprising ruins of the Steam Winding House and the fenced off Main Shaft. It is anticipated that a winding winch, manufactured by Martin's of Gawler, will be installed here.