



THE EUREKA REBELLION - Time Line of Events

1st July, 1851

The Port Phillip District separates from New South Wales and becomes the Colony of Victoria. It is still subject to British control.

August, 1851

Gold is discovered at Buninyong and at Golden Point, Ballarat. The Colony of Victoria has insufficient funds and no organization to cope with a goldrush. Governor La Trobe introduces the Gold Licence system.

19th & 20th September, 1851

F.C.Doveton (Ballarat's first Gold Commissioner arrives in Ballarat)

13th December, 1851

The Government's plan to double the Licence to 3 pounds per month fails due to pressure from diggers in Melbourne and Geelong.

July - December, 1853

Unrest builds on the various goldfields with protest meetings held in Bendigo and Castlemaine.

July - October, 1853

Bendigo's Red Ribbon Movement is active on the Goldfields. Miner's wear a red ribbon to demonstrate their opposition to and non payment of the Licence fee.

24th September, 1853

The Licence fee is reduced to 2 pounds for 3 months. The reduction is well received on the goldfields and reduces some of the tension between the diggers and the authorities.

November - December, 1853

The Licence fee is increased to 4 pounds for 6 months and 8 pounds for 12 months.

Many diggers are finding the Licence fee expensive and unfair, particularly to those not finding gold. They are unhappy with the treatment received from the police and government authorities who they believe are corrupt. Other diggers wish to purchase land for farming if they can't find gold, as well as wanting the right to vote at elections. ("No taxation without representation") Only landowners can vote at this time.

March 1854

The Bill to Extend the Elective Franchise, is drawn up by the Legislative Council and sent to London for the assent of the British Parliament.

June 1854

Robert Rede becomes Ballarat's resident Gold Commissioner.

22nd June, 1854

Lt Governor Sir Charles Hotham arrives in Victoria. Hotham faces mounting financial debt. He orders weekly Licence hunts in an attempt to increase the Colony's income.

16th August, 1854

Governor and Lady Hotham tour the Victorian Goldfields. They are warmly welcomed in Ballarat.

13th September, 1854

Gov Hotham orders twice weekly Licence hunts to further increase revenue.

7th October, 1854

James Scobie is murdered outside the Eureka Hotel. An inquest finds that the wounds were inflicted by an unknown person.

10th October, 1854

The disabled servant of Fr Smyth (Parish Priest) is beaten and arrested for not holding a Licence.

He is later charged with assaulting the arresting policeman. Peter Lalor leads a deputation to Commissioner Rede seeking to have the Scobie case reopened. Rede agrees.

12th October, 1854

Following a Coroner's inquest into the death of Scobie, Bentley is released due to lack of evidence. Many diggers believe that the Magistrate, John Dewes is both a friend and a business partner of Bentley.

15th October, 1855

A monster meeting is held on Bakery Hill (mainly attended by Catholics) to protest against the beating and arrest of Fr Smyth's servant.

17th October, 1853

A meeting of up to 10,000 diggers is held near the Eureka Hotel to protest against Bentley's acquittal. The meeting results in the burning of the Hotel. The police and military cannot settle the crowd and Commissioner Rede is pelted with eggs.

19th October, 1854

Police reinforcements arrive and a detachment of the 40th Regiment arrive a few days later.

21st October, 1854

Andrew McIntyre and Thomas Fletcher are arrested for the burning of the Eureka Hotel. A third suspect, Westerby is later arrested.

A meeting of diggers on Bakery Hill agrees to pay bail for McIntyre and Fletcher.

23rd October 1854

The diggers send a deputation to Commissioner Rede seeking to have the police involved in the arrest of Fr Smyth's servant (Gregorius) removed.

25th October, 1854

A meeting led by Timothy Hayes and John Manning, reports on the result of the deputation to Commissioner Rede. The meeting resolves to petition the Governor seeking a retrial of Gregorius and the removal of Commissioner Johnston from Ballarat.

27th October, 1854

A detailed plan of defence for the Ballarat Government Camp is developed and further military reinforcements arrive from Melbourne.

30th October, 1854

Governor Hotham establishes a Board of Enquiry into the death of James Scobie. (The Enquiry sits in Ballarat on the 2nd and the 10th November)

11th November, 1854

A public meeting on Bakery Hill results in the formal establishment of the Ballarat Reform League.

16th November, 1854

Governor Hotham instructs a Commission to enquire into conditions on the goldfields.

20th November, 1854

James Bentley, Thomas Farrell and William Hence are convicted of the manslaughter of James Scobie. The miners Westerby, Fletcher and McIntyre are convicted and sentenced to gaol terms for the burning of the Eureka Hotel.

25th November, 1854

Commissioner Rede receives information that the Government Camp if the convicted men are not released.

27th November 1854

A deputation from the Ballarat reform League including Humffray, Black and Kennedy, meet with Governor Hotham, Attorney General Stawell and Colonial Secretary Foster to demand the release of the three prisoners. (Westerby, Fletcher and McIntyre). Hotham does not believe the diggers have the right to "demand anything"

Father Smyth informs Commissioner Rede in secret that the Camp is in danger of attack.

28th November, 1854

A detachment of the 12th Regiment arrives in Ballarat as reinforcements. As they pass the Irish section of the Eureka Lead there is some digger agitation. A drummer boy, several of the military and civilian transport drivers are wounded.

29th November, 1854

A monster meeting is held on Bakery Hill attended by more than 10.000 diggers. The deputation of diggers report on the outcome of their meeting with Governor Hotham. The Flag of the Southern Cross is flown for the first time. A number of diggers burn their Licences.

30th November, 1854

A Licence hunt occurs in the morning at the order of Commissioner Rede. The diggers refuse to show their Licences and pelt the troopers with rocks as they enter the diggings. Rede reads the Riot Act and troops fire a volley over the diggers heads. Approximately six diggers are arrested and taken to the Government Camp.

In the afternoon work is suspended on the Eureka Lead. Another meeting is held on Bakery Hill and Peter Lalor becomes leader of the diggers and calls for volunteers. Hundreds of volunteers swear an oath to defend their rights and liberties under the Flag of the Southern Cross. A number of diggers move to the Eureka Lead and erect a barricade.

1st December, 1854

The Stockade is strengthened with the arrival from Creswick's Creek of 300-400 volunteers. The arrival of this group who require to be armed, fed and housed places great strain on the resources of those at the Stockade.

Major General Sir Robert Nickle leaves Melbourne for Ballarat with 800 men.

Raffaello Carboni, George Black and Father Smyth meet with Commissioner Rede to present a peace proposal. Rede rejects the deputations request.

2nd December, 1854

Father Smyth tries to persuade Catholics to lay down their arms and attend mass the next day.

3rd December, 1854

In the early hours of Sunday morning led by Captain Thomas, a well armed contingent of more than 296 soldiers and police proceed to the Eureka Lead to attack the Eureka Stockade.

At dawn the Stockade is attacked and a brief battle follows. Twenty two diggers and seven military are officially listed as being killed. Many others are wounded. Approximately 120 diggers are arrested and marched to the Government Camp.

4th December, 1854

Martial Law is proclaimed in Ballarat.

Henry Seekamp, the editor of the Ballarat Times is arrested in his office and charged with seditious libel.

5th December, 1854

Major General Nickle arrives in Ballarat.

A public meeting is held in Melbourne in support of the Government's action at Ballarat. The crowd however condemn the Government's action against the diggers and the meeting is quickly closed.

6th December, 1854

A group of 13 prisoners is charged with treason.

A meeting of approximately 6000 Melbourne residents congregate around St.Paul's Cathedral to condemn the actions taken by the Government and the administrators in Ballarat.

14th December, 1854

The Gold Fields Commission sits for the first time. The first Ballarat sitting of the Gold Fields Commission is held at Bath's Hotel on the 18th December, 1854.

8th January, 1855

The members of the Gold Fields Commission meet with Governor Hotham and recommend that the Gold Licence be abolished.

10th January, 1855

Members of the Gold Fields Commission recommend to Governor Hotham that a general amnesty for all those connected with the Stockade uprising be declared. He refuses their request.

23rd January, 1855

Henry Seekamp is tried and found guilty of seditious libel. On the 26th March, 1855 he was sent to prison for a term of 6 months.

February-March, 1855

The 13 Stockaders excluding Thomas Dignum are tried and found not guilty of treason. The charge against Dignum is withdrawn.

March 27th, 1855

The final report of the Gold Fields Commission is presented to Governor Hotham. The report advocates that: the Gold Licence be replaced by an export duty on gold, the introduction of a miners right which would give the franchise to the holder and the abolition of the Gold Commission. These recommendations were subsequently implemented.

November 10th, 1855.

Peter Lalor and John Basson Hummfray are elected to the Legislative Council.

December 31st, 1855

Governor Hotham dies in Melbourne.

REFERENCE:

Eureka from the Official Records – McFarlane
(Public Records Office, Melbourne 1995)