

# The discovery of gold

By 1850, Australia had become more than just a prison for British criminals. Each **colony** saw itself as a small patch of Britain transplanted to an exciting new land with endless possibilities. Many **free settlers** came in search of an escape from the dirty and overcrowded cities of England. Young people came to make their fortune.

## A growing prosperity

Thousands of **convicts** had been sent to the Australian colonies. As they were emancipated (freed after serving their sentence), they wanted to make a living by working for a landowner or becoming a landowner themselves. Shops and businesses thrived by supplying goods and services for the expanding farms, towns and cities. The colonies became more prosperous with the success of the wool industry.

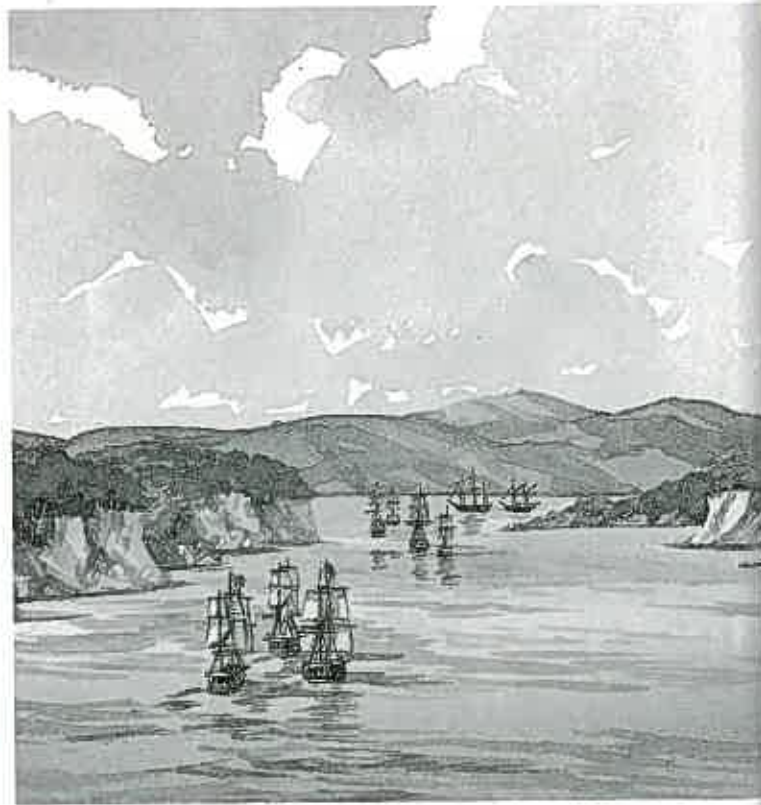
In 1851, a new chapter in the development of Australia began in the hills near Bathurst, New South Wales. The discovery of gold changed the face of Australia forever, and hastened the move towards Australia becoming a nation separate from Britain.

The First Fleet arrives in Sydney Cove.

## Before 1850

Aboriginal people arrived in Australia at least 50 000 years ago. Six hundred separate nations, each with a system of laws based on care of land, occupied the continent. A little over 200 years ago, the complex society of the Aboriginal people changed for ever.

In 1788, 11 sailing ships carrying more than 1000 British people arrived at a small cove that the local Eora people called Warrun, and which the British called Sydney Cove. The colony of New South Wales was established as a prison, and ruled by a governor. The British brought their laws, and their own idea of ownership of land.



By 1850, Sydney Town had grown into a major port, which served the developing agricultural industries of the colony.

## Gold rush!

The discovery of gold changed the face of Australia forever, and hastened the move towards Australia becoming a separate nation. It brought two things to Australia that had been missing up until then. It brought great wealth, and it brought a sudden influx of free settlers, many of whom stayed to work in factories and on farms.

In fact so many people came to Australian shores in search of gold that the period became known as the 'Gold Rushes'. People rushed from all over the world to seek their fortune.

## Aboriginal struggle for land

Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal warrior, led the Aborigines' struggle to retain their land. But, the indigenous people were defeated by the increasing size of the British population, the breakdown of Aboriginal society as their land was taken from them, and European diseases which killed entire clans.

After 1815, the south-east corner of Australia was occupied by Europeans in search of farmland. The central and eastern parts of Tasmania were occupied, and most of the surviving Aborigines were sent to Flinders Island in 1835. European settlements were also begun at Moreton Bay (Brisbane), Perth, Port Phillip (Melbourne) and Adelaide.