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## About Bendigo - The story -

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When payable gold was discovered at OPHIR (a location near Orange NSW) on 7 April 1851, Bendigo was just a sheep run on the flats beside a creek over the ranges on what was known as the Ravenswood Run in Central Victoria. A pretty area, lightly wooded and with ample water.

Robert Ross Haverfield who saw the Bendigo valley before the discovery of gold wrote:

The flats carpeted with green grass, were dotted here and there with comely and shady gum trees while the creek banks, shaded with wattle, sloped down to a chain of water holes, which, in the spring and winter seasons, and indeed all of the year round, contained a good supply of sweet clear water.

Down about Epsom, the valley wore a really picturesque appearance; the gum trees were very fine and the wattle flourished luxuriantly.

A shepherd from the Ravenswood Run brought his sheep over the Big Hill ranges and tended his flock. He lived in a hut on these picturesque flats.

It is reported that this shepherd was handy with his fists and fancied himself as a pugilist. Locals named him Bendigo after the noted Nottingham boxer of the time William Bendigo Thompson (or Bold Bendigo) of whom he was an ardent admirer.

William Bendigo Thompson was twice British champion and the greatest of all 19th century bare knuckle fighters. He was never defeated. His name was a corruption of the biblical Abednego as he was one of triplets and his brothers were Shadrack and Meshack.

So Bendigo was not, as some people said it was, named for: **Around the bend I go**

The area the shepherd tended his sheep became known as Bendigos Flats. Diggers on their way to the field simply called it: The Bendigo

and another good reference to the origin of the name for Bendigo is from an interview in the Bendigo Independent newspaper printed in 16 April 1887.

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***The Local Dawn of Civilization - A pre-auferous pioneer  
Bendigo Independent 16 April, 1887.***

*A lady is at present on a visit to Sandhurst as the guest of Mr And Mrs Stamp, of Long Gully, who was beyond doubt the first European woman to reside in the district now called Bendigo, and who possesses also a better*

*understanding, because personal knowledge, of the neighbourhood during the few years preceding the discovery of gold than any person we know at present alive.*

*We refer to Mrs Catherine Hayward, of Charleville, Royal Park Brunswick. There is nothing in the lady's [sic] present name to arouse the immediate attention of old or young Bendigonians, but when we explain that Mrs Catherine Haywards first husband was Mr William Myers, from whom Myers Flat and Myers Creek derived their titles, it will be apparent that in pre-auriferous days the venerable lady and her family filled no small space in the society of the district, such as it was. They were in those days monarchs indeed of all they surveyed, their flocks of sheep and their cattle and horses wandering over an extent of country limited only by the necessity of keeping up communication with their water supply, which of course was the Myers creek.*

*As it is not often that one can hold communication in Sandhurst with a colonist whose experiences with those of her first husband go back for nearly 47 years, a member of our staff yesterday did himself the pleasure of interviewing the lady. As is customary with ladies in general, Mrs Hayward was not anxious that her name should attain prominence in a public journal. But on her friend, Mr Stamp, assuring her that anything which might appear in the Bendigo Independent would not contravene the laws of good taste, and would be read with interest by very many throughout the district, she courteously consented to be interviewed.*

*Briefly the story of the settlement of Bendigo, as gathered from the wife of our earliest settler, is that two brothers, named William and Thomas Myers, natives of Bootle, in Cumberland, left England early in 1839. The late Mr Grice [of Grice, Summer and Co], another of the earliest Victorian settlers, was from the same town, and was an intimate friend of the two brothers. Mr Thomas Myers, after landing in Port Philip, was the first to proceed to the interior and take up the tract of country afterwards known as Myers station.*

*Shortly he was followed by Mr William Myers, and in the first of the 40's they were safely established amongst the early squatters. It was not, however, till a few years before the discovery of gold that Mrs Myers joined her husband on the station. Prior to her arrival she states that the blacks were both numerous and dangerous, in one fight with them Mr Grice receiving three spear wounds to his body. That was however, the most serious of the quarrels with the blacks, for on her arrival in 1850 they were most friendly, and to the number of about 200 - men, woman and piccaninnies - treated her to a complimentary corroboree by way of*

*welcome to the homestead over which she was to be presiding mistress.*

*Though not at all lonely in regard to the aboriginal visitors to the station, there was in those days a great dearth of European neighbours. The nearest neighbour was Mr Campbell, of the Bullock Creek hotel and station, four miles away, and the next nearest was Mr John Catto, of the Loddon, whose homestead was 15 miles distant. The Mouat Bros, then held the Yarraberb station, but Mrs Hayward does not appear to have been well acquainted with them. There were some settlers along the Campaspe, but as the country was a wilderness between, she knew none of them personally until later years.*

*There was a squatter, named McIntyre, who seems to have been in possession of the country about Kangaroo Flat and Big Hill. In those early days [1839 to 1850] the country was all open as far as Swan Hill and beyond, and where every inch of it is now selected in small holdings of 320 acres, great stations were to be taken up by anyone who had the capital and the courage to face solitary life and the blacks.*

*The seem to have prospered excellently Messrs Myers well until the breaking out of the goldfields. Theirs was a sheep station, and the headquarters were about the site now known as Buzzas paddock, some distance below the Myers Flat police station. The grazing land was excellent, and over 40 years the Messrs Myers cultivated wheat, oats, and barley with success. They had three separate paddocks of those cereals, which they cropped for several years, and were thus the first who put a plough in the soil of Bendigo.*

*Touching on the origin of the present name of the county of Bendigo, Mrs Hayward - it will be read with pleasure by those who do not quite relish the idea of our district having been christened after the famous or notorious pugilist, is positive that it had nothing whatever to do with that celebrity. There is a tradition amongst us that the Messrs Myers had in their employ a hut keeper who was continually, and whenever travellers came in his way, talking of the victories of the pugilist. He became known far and wide for this propensity [so the legend says], and eventually was himself nicknamed **Bendigo**, and through him the whole district. But Mrs Hayward takes the romance out of this tradition by asserting that there was no such man on the station. She explains that the term originated thus wise: The best grass was in the bends of the creek and in directing the aboriginal shepherds it was customary for her husband and brother-in-law to tell them to *bendy-go*, meaning of course that they were to go to the bends. **Bendy-go** thus became a standing order on the station, and when the first diggers arrived they soon seized it as the name of the goldfield, but adopted the*

*orthography of the English pugilists name. It is, therefore to such an accident as this that the district owes its name, a name which will probably survive when the present century has become a period of ancient history for future generations of the hundreds of millions, who according to Mr Hayter, are to compose the Australian nation.*

*Early in 1851 gold was found near Ballarat, then at Forest Creek. The country was aflame, but as yet the Messrs Myers were able to carry on their station work without difficulty, as their men did not care to leave, until they were certain that the real metal was to be got in abundance. However, in a very few months they were in the thick of the gold fever. One day in November 1851, two men rode up to the homestead, enquiring of the road to Melbourne. Mr William Myers put them on the track, and in conversing with him the travellers informed him that they had just found gold down the creek. At first Mr Myers would not credit it, but next morning, on the advice of Mrs Myers, he rode out to see if there was anything in it. He was disagreeably astonished after traversing the creek for some distance, to come upon a party of about fifty diggers.*

*Where they had come from, or how the news had spread so rapidly, he could not tell. But there were the diggers, and as the days went past, swelled to thousands, and before the end of the next year there were about 50,000 or 60,00 stalwart men on the station, and its neighbourhood, digging for gold with more or less success - principally with success.*

*The station property was ruined. Wages for ordinary station hands went up to a pound a day, but as sheep also rose in proportion, this might have been borne had the army of diggers left any water for the sheep to drink. It was summer time when the first diggers appeared, and in the following summer of 1852 water in the creek was so scarce that the police, under Superintendent Gilbert, had to be called on to prevent the diggers leaving the station without a drop of water, Besides this, sheep stealing and horse and cattle lifting was prevalent, so much so that in 1852 the brothers were compelled to abandon the station and return to Melbourne.*

*Amongst Mrs Haywards reminiscences is a visit which in 1852 the late Dr Backhaus paid to the station shortly after he came to Sandhurst. Young Bendigo had already begun to make its presence noticed; there were several infants whom the Rev gentleman had to baptise.*

*The good ladys memories of these early times is almost as clear as if she had recently left the district, instead of 35 years [a whole generation] having passed since the struggle between the diggers and the sheep for*

*water, when the general overturning and upsetting of affairs led to the abandonment of their homestead at Myers Creek.*

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*Another version in the naming of Bendigo.*

**Bendigo Advertiser (Vic. : 1855 - 1918) Sat 2 Oct 1897 Page 4**

### **HOW BENDIGO WAS CHRISTENED.**

The following letter appeared in Tuesday's Argus:

Sir,- Some years ago a very interesting discussion arose in your columns as to the origin of the name of Bendigo, and much ingenious reasoning and many varied reminiscences were brought forward in support of your correspondents' theories and ideas on the subject. Through missing one or two of the later contributions, I do not know whether the question was definitely settled or not. If finality in regard to the matter was not reached, I am in a position to solve the problem.

Some three months ago I was out in the back country of the East Murchison gold-field, and there met a prospecting veteran named Bourke, who, in the course of a long conversation, claimed to be one of the earliest pioneers of the gold-fields of Victoria. He gave me a short history of his experiences there following the various rushes, and incidentally mentioned that of Bendigo.

Face to face with one of the pioneer band of Victorian gold-seekers, the association of ideas immediately conjured up the possibility of the old man's knowledge as to the origin of the name. "Do I know anything about it," he said in reply to my question. "Why, I was the means of christening it." Naturally I was surprised at finding myself in the company of the godfather of the Quartzopolis (*meaning a term or name for Bendigo*), and draw from him many particulars of the affair.

Condensed, they amount to the following:

- Bourke arrived in Victoria from California with a Portugee named **Bernard Deigo**. They followed several rushes together, and eventually found themselves working alluvial some miles from where Bendigo now stands. "We had plenty of luck there," said Bourke, adding with a touch of dry humor, "but it was bad luck," and after a while his mate suggested pushing further out to prospect. Accordingly he went, but returned a few days afterwards, having struck something likely.

He then left Bourke to shift camp, and went back to the find. Both men were friendly with the diggers in the neighbouring camps, and in answer to an inquiry Bourke told them he was going out to **Ben Deigo**, by

which name the Portuguese was known to those living in the vicinity of his camp.

By-and-bye a few others also determined to "go out to Ben Deigo," and the locality began to catch on, till strangers, unaware of the personality of the Portuguese, joined the two words and pronounced them **Bendigo**. This is, I believe, the true origin of the name of the far-famed city.  
- Yours, etc, MORGAN S FIELD.  
Mount Magnet, W.A., 14th September.

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### **What's in a Name - by Tom Luke**

Briefly, Bendigo was called Castleton from 2nd December 1852. However on the 18th January 1853 it was gazetted as Sandhurst after the famous British Military Academy in Berkshire. This name was never popular with the locals and on the 8th May 1891 a poll of the city voted for a change in name to Bendigo by the widest of margins.

It is generally acknowledged that Mrs John Kennedy and Mrs Patrick Farrell, wives of workers on the Ravenswood Run produced the first gold from an area on the creek known now as the Rocks on Bendigo Creek in Golden Square in November 1851.

We ask the question ? what were two women doing so far from home and one with a newborn baby.  
The obvious but never able to be proved answer is that they were told, perhaps by a shepherd, of gold in the creek?  
Undoubtedly they produced the first gold, - but did they discover it?

In 1890 this problem could not be solved, so we do not think it will be in 2014.

**Tom Luke**  
**September 2014**

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