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PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY: G.H. Cumming

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Bro EDWARD HAMMOND HARGRAVES (1816 - 1891)

Edward Hargraves, born at Gosport in the English County of Hampshire on 7 October 1816, was a man of many parts. 1.

The son of Lieutenant John Edward Hargraves and his wife Elizabeth, he was educated at Brighton Grammar School and Lewes but he left school at age 14 and went to sea.

He arrived in Sydney on 1832 and, for a time, he worked on a property at Bathurst. He then returned to the sea where he gathered Beche-de-mer and tortoise shell in the Torres Strait. 2.

In 1834, he returned to Sydney and, moving to the south coast, he acquired 100 acres near Wollongong.

In 1836, Hargraves married Elizabeth Mackay in Sydney and, three years later, they moved to East Gosford where he became an agent for the General Steam Navigation Company and, using his wife's dowry, purchased land and built the Fox under the Hill Hotel.

His venture as a publican did not last long and, in 1843, after just seven years of marriage, Hargraves forfeited his property and left his wife so that he could manage a store and take up land on the Manning River.

Ever the opportunist, Hargraves sold out and, on 17 July, 1849, he sailed for the Californian goldfields. 3.

He met with modest success and, when he returned to Sydney in January 1851, he found that the New South Wales Government had offered a substantial reward for the discovery of a payable quantity of gold.

Hargraves decided to make his fortune, not by digging for gold but by claiming the reward. He remembered his earlier years at Bathurst and decided that the central west of New South Wales, which he thought looked like California, would be the place to start.

On his way to the Wellington district he saw promising specimens at Guyong.

He began prospecting with John Lister in the Bathurst-Orange region and, on 12 February, 1851, they washed the first pan of gold-bearing gravel at the junction of Summer Hill and Lewis Ponds Creeks. The five specks of gold in the pan looked promising but it was not a payable quantity. Hargraves continued searching the area with only slight success.

