

Newspaper article as printed in 'The British Colonist' on July 29<sup>th</sup>  
 Based on the original letter from Robert Brown to the VIEC, about the 'Leech River' gold discovery.  
 Dispatch No. 4 - July 27<sup>th</sup> 1864.

**THE BRITISH COLONIST**

Friday Morning, July 29, 1864.

**THE SOOKE DIGGINGS.**

**RICH DISCOVERIES!**

**EXTENSIVE GOLD FIELDS**

**LETTER FROM DR. BROWN.**

The quiet which has reigned in this community during the last three months was completely dispelled yesterday, and the whole city thrown into a state of excitement by the announcement of extensive surface diggings, of surprising richness, having been discovered by the Exploration party on the Sooke and Leech Rivers. The intelligence is contained in the following letter, addressed to the Exploration Committee, by Dr. Brown, the commander, which will undoubtedly be perused with the liveliest interest.

The Committee met yesterday afternoon at Messrs Franklin's office, and heard the statements of Mr. Foley, one of the party, a miner of considerable experience, who had just returned, and he confirmed the details furnished by Dr. Brown. Mr. Foley had with him specimens of the gold washed out. He represents that during the first four miles of their ascent of the Sooke River, they prospected and found indications of gold, but nothing to pay; but thence up to the junction of a tributary flowing in from the westward, which they named Leech river, after Lieut. Leech, they found good diggings. Some of the prospecting being as high as 25 cents to the pan. The party, consisting of Messrs. Buttle, Foley, Whymper and McDonald, ascended Leech River, a distance of 8 miles, when they reached the Forks of another stream, which they did not explore.

On the banks and bars along Leech river the excellent prospects alluded to in Dr. Brown's letter were obtained. The pay-dirt, which it is believed will be found to yield a "bit" to the pan, is said to be five feet deep, and the diggings are supposed to be sufficient to give profitable employment to several thousand miners.

The Committee, with Corporal Buttle, waited on His Excellency the Governor in the afternoon and consulted with him as to the immediate appointment of a Gold Commissioner, to receive mining licenses and records of claims, and also as to the law to be laid down in the staking off of claims. We understand that His Excellency will appoint a Commissioner forthwith.

Despatch No. 4.

V. I. EXPLORING EXPEDITION, Camp No. 4, }  
 Clem-clem-slats, Indian Village, }  
 27th July, 1864.

**THE V. I. EXPLORING EXPEDITION:**

GENTLEMEN:—I have the honor to announce for your satisfaction the safe arrival of both the detached parties which I sent from Sooke, across country, bringing intelligence the most satisfactory to me, and the results of which cannot fail to prove of the highest importance to the prosperity of the colony and the further up-building of the city of Victoria.

2. The formal reports of Lieutenant Leech I shall forward by the first opportunity after its completion, but the intelligence I have to communicate is of too important a nature to bear delay in forwarding to you, even for one hour. Accordingly I have resolved to despatch a special messenger with this letter and the accompanying specimens, and after mature deliberation have selected Corporal Buttle, R. E., as one on whose fidelity and prudence I can place the most implicit reliance. This will necessitate a delay of about three days, but this was rendered necessary at all events to recruit the party after their fatigue, and Mr. Leech, having severely burnt his foot, it will be fully that time before he is again able to take the field. To-day I will remove to a convenient place near the Quamichan Indian village, on the Nanaimo trail where wood and water is convenient, and salmon are caught on the River weir.

3. The discovery which I have to communicate is the finding of gold on the banks of one of the Forks of the Sooke River, about 12 miles from the sea in a straight line, and in a locality never hitherto reached by white men, in all probability never even by natives. I forward an eighth of an ounce, or thereabouts, of the coarse scale gold, washed out of twelve pans of dirt, in many places 20 feet above the river, and with no tools but a shovel and a gold pan. The lowest prospect obtained was 3 cents to the pan, the highest \$1 to the pan, and work like that with the rocker would yield what pay you

can better calculate than I can, and the development of which, with what results to the Colony you may imagine. The diggings extend for fully 25 miles, and would give employment to more than 4000 men. Many of the claims would take 8 to 10 men to work them. The diggings could be wrought with great facility by fluming the bed of the stream. The banks and benches can be sluiced or rocked. The timber on the banks will supply to the whip saw all the timber that can ever be required for the miner's purposes. The country abounds with game and the "honest miner" never need fear that he can find food enough without much trouble. A saw mill could be erected at the head waters (or say at the Forks of "Leech's River,") and lumber for flumes, pumps, sluices, &c., floated down to the miners, and on the whole the value of the diggings cannot be easily overestimated.

I may add, that there is any amount of "five cent dirt," and with proper tools the average prospect is about one bit the pan. The gold will speak for itself. Corporal Buttle will return to camp No. 24 immediately, and I trust that you will deal liberally with the men when the diggings employ the number of people they are calculated to support, and that the expedition will not be forgot in the Governor's proclamation anent the discovery of gold-fields.

I announce this event with the most lively satisfaction, and trust that our labors are meeting with the approval of the colony. I will communicate the discovery at greater length as soon as possible. Lieut. Leech sent a letter to me with an Indian, and I have no doubt but that you have received before this. It announces the discovery, and closes a small prospect of gold taken further down the river.

I have the honor to be, Gentlemen,

Your very obedient servant,

ROBT. BROWN.

Commander and Government Agent of the Expedition.

**Footnote**

- In the article the editor writes, "The party, consisting of Messrs. Buttle, Foley, Whymper and McDonald, ascended Leech River, ...".
- This is a mistake and should be, "The party, consisting of Messrs. Meade, Foley, Anthony and MacDonald, ascended Leech River, ...".
- In the header of Brown's letter is printed, "Camp No. 4". This is a misprint and should be, "Camp No. 24".
- The price paid for 1 gold (troy) ounce these days was about \$17.-