

## Diamond mining in Kimberley 1867 onwards

Kimberley is one of the most historically significant diamond-mining regions in the world and is widely recognized as the birthplace of large-scale industrial diamond mining.

### Key words

<b>Mineral</b>	<b>a substance that is mined</b>
<b>Claim</b>	<b>the piece of land which a digger 'claimed' as the place he would be allowed to dig for Diamonds</b>
<b>carat</b>	<b>the unit of measurement for precious stones, one carat weighs 0,2 grams (200 milligrams)</b>
<b>monopoly</b>	<b>to have all the power in an Industry</b>
<b>illicit diamond buying (IDB)</b>	<b>The illegal selling and buying of diamonds</b>

### Why diamonds are valuable



### Diamonds are valuable for the following reasons:

- Diamonds are the hardest and purest mineral on Earth.
- Diamonds are so hard that only a diamond can cut another diamond. Hundreds of millions of years ago, diamonds were formed in Earth's core by intense heat and pressure.
- Diamonds are rare. For every million diamonds found, only one is a high quality diamond of at least a carat in size. Most diamonds are very small, and of poorer, or industrial quality.
- Industrial diamonds are used for things like drill points to cut into steel and glass.
- Diamonds, when they are cut and polished, become beautiful gemstones that reflect light.
- Diamonds were first discovered in India about 3 000 years ago.

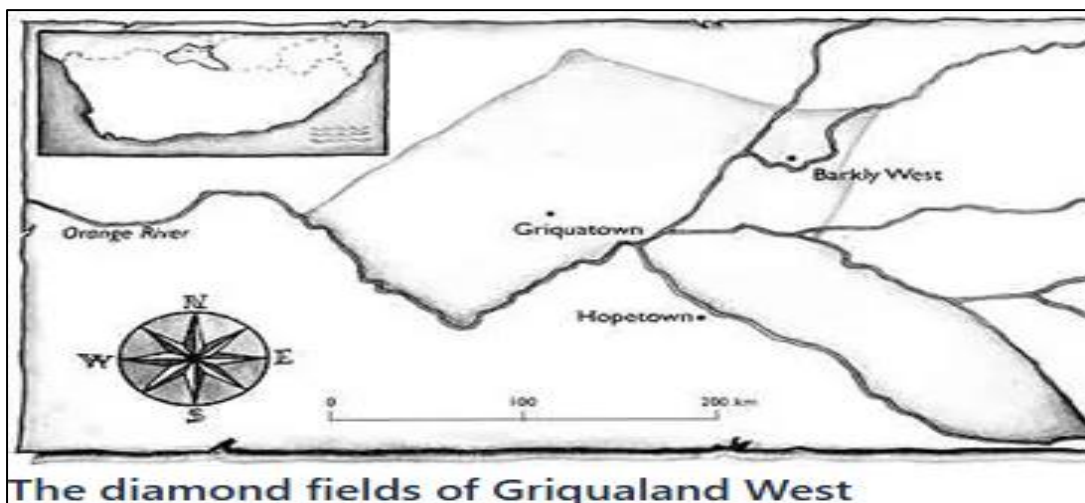
- Ever since then diamonds have been used to make beautiful jewellery and to show wealth.

### The discovery of diamonds in southern Africa



- The first diamonds were found in 1867, at Hopetown and along the banks of the Orange/ Gariep and Vaal Rivers near where the rivers join.
- Black and white miners, usually called diggers, hurried to the river diggings as the news spread that diamonds were to be found.
- Between 1870 and 1871 a wealth of diamonds were found in dry areas away from the river on Boer farms south of Klipdrift (Barkley West).
- Diggers left the river diggings and rushed to these dry diggings.

### In whose territory were diamonds found?

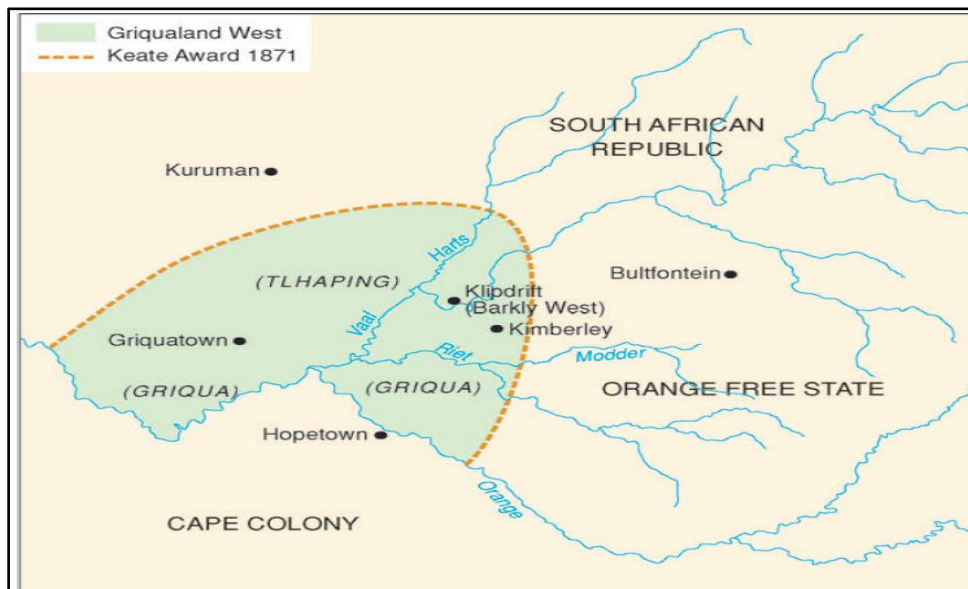


Even before the diamonds were discovered, many groups had rights to land in the area of the Vaal and Orange/Gariep Rivers:

- Thlaping and other Tswana-speaking groups, had land west of the Vaal River.
- Griqua had settled in the area north of the Orange/Gariep Rivers (on both sides of the Vaal River) in the early 1800s.
- The Boer republic, the Orange Free State (between the Orange/Gariep and Vaal Rivers), had been agreed to by the British in 1854.
- The Boer republic, the South African Republic (Transvaal) north of the Vaal River, had been agreed to by the British in 1852.
- The Cape Colony lay south of the length of the Orange/ Gariep River.

When diamonds were discovered in the Northern Cape, a dispute (argument) began about who owned the land.

### The Keate award



In 1871 Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, RW Keate, was the judge in a legal court case to decide on the ownership of the 'diamond elds'.

Keate decided that the Griqua had the strongest case, and awarded the whole area to them.

The Griqua were persuaded to ask for British protection against the boers.

The diamond fields became the British Colony of Griqualand West in 1872. It became part of the Cape Colony in 1880.

## **Diamond mining and the development of a monopoly**

The first major diamond discoveries were made near Barkley West along the banks of the Vaal River.

Diamonds were found near the surface of these 'wet' or 'alluvial' diggings.

Later, large quantities of diamonds were found in four extinct volcano pipes.

The biggest of these 'dry' diggings was called 'New Rush' and later became known as the Kimberley Mine or the Big Hole.

After the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West in 1872, diggers hurried today what is today Kimberley. The Big Hole of the Kimberley Mine, the site of an extinct volcano, was dug by thousands of diggers, each working their own **claim**.

### **One person one claim**

For the first ten years of diamond mining at Kimberley, individual diggers each owned a small square of land called a 'claim'.

Each person was only allowed one claim. And the size of the claim was limited. This stopped people with lots of money buying up lots of claims.

The laws worked in the interests of small, independent diggers.

When a digger arrived at his site, he marked out a square with wooden corner pegs and string.

But as diggers dug deeper, the 'walls' between the claims began to collapse and mines filled with falling rock.



## What happened to black claim holders?



About two thirds of the people who came to the diamond fields were black.

They came from all parts of southern Africa.

The other third were white people who came from the surrounding republics and colonies, as well from Australia, Britain and America.

At first there were both black and white claim holders.

The white claim holders outnumbered the black ones.

In the early 1870s white claim holders ganged up against black claim holders and attacked them.

The British had, by this time, taken over control of the diamond fields and they made a law which made it illegal for black people to own claims.

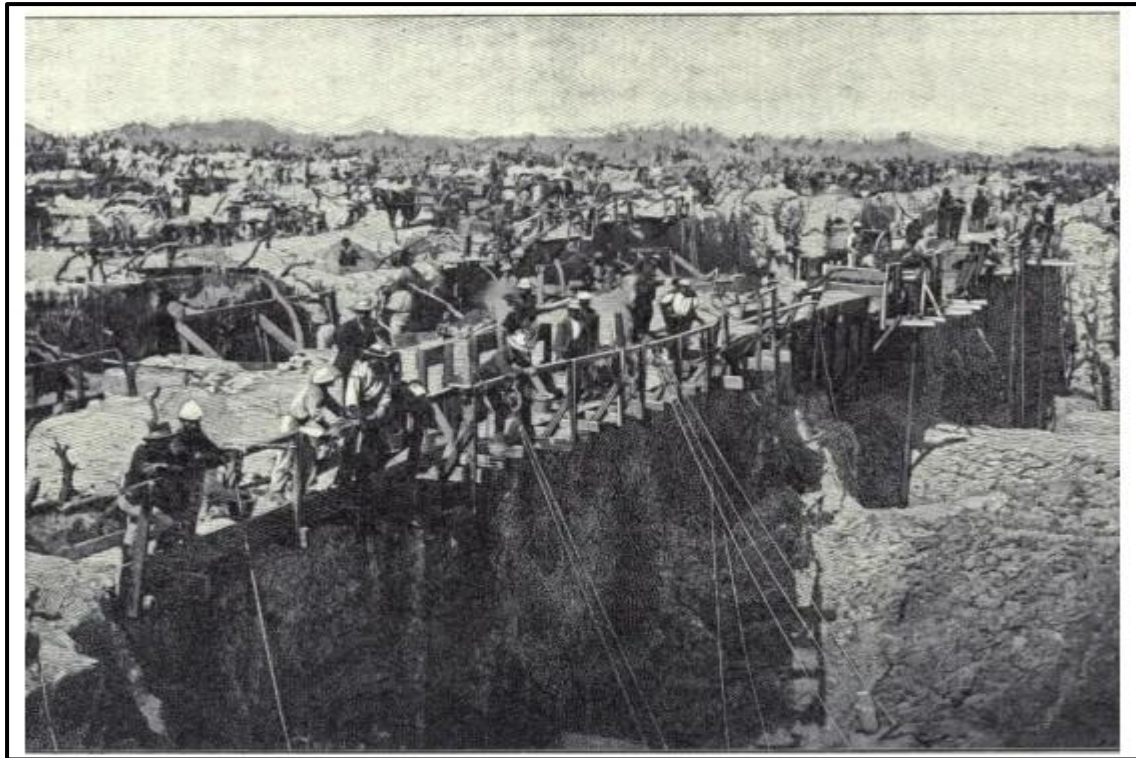
Black men then worked for white diggers on their claims.

The more successful claim holders put pressure on the British government to change the law which prevented one individual from owning more than one claim.

**In 1876, new laws were passed.**

**The new laws lifted all restrictions on claim holding and wealthier diggers began buying more claims.**

## Problems related to digging deeper



grahamlesliemccallum.wordpress.com

Mines were dug deeper and deeper, and the 'walls' between claims gradually collapsed.

Claim holders had to agree to leave a wider wall for pathways between claims.

The deeper the mine, the more difficult it became to pull buckets of soil and gravel out of a mine.

The soil and gravel had to be separated and sifted to find diamonds.

The deeper the mines went, the more difficult it became to drain them of water.

By the late 1870s it was no longer possible for a claim holder with a few workers to mine successfully without money to buy machinery.

Small diggers soon went out of business.

## The formation of companies

There was an **economic depression** in 1881–82.

**During a depression, businesses close down, people lose their jobs, the cost of living increases and people have less money to buy luxury goods.**

Many small diggers went bankrupt during the depression.

They could not sell their diamonds and so, were forced to sell their claims.

Soon wealthier diggers got together and formed companies.

In the 1880s, the mines got even deeper.

Mining became more difficult for small companies as the equipment was so expensive. And so the process of amalgamation or joining together of companies continued.

More and more diamonds were being dug up.

The price of diamonds began to drop as there were too many diamonds on the market.

### **Cecil John Rhodes**



Cecil John Rhodes came to southern Africa from Britain in about 1870, when he was seventeen.

- He was a clever businessman, and made a lot of money from his pumping company that pumped water out of mines.
- In 1880 Rhodes formed the De Beers Mining Company.
- Within a few years, Rhodes' company had bought up all the claims in the De Beers Mine.
- Rhodes began buying up claims in other mines. By 1885, Rhodes had control of three of the four mines in the Kimberley area – De Beers, Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein.

## Barney Barnato



Barney Barnato was born in a poor part of London. He left school at the age of 14.

- His original name was Barnett Isaacs.
- He worked as a bouncer, a singer, a juggler and a comedian and changed his name to Barney Barnato.
- Barnato was talkative and had a great sense of humour.
- His friendly personality drew people to him, and on the diamond fields he soon became a diamond buyer.
- He made a good profit selling diamonds, and was able to buy the Kimberley Mine.

## The formation of De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited



By 1888, Rhodes and Barnato controlled two of the largest diamond mining companies. Rhodes controlled the De Beers Company and Barnato controlled the Kimberley Central Mining Company.

Many smaller companies went bankrupt in the next big depression – the depression of 1886.

This left these two main companies competing against each other for monopoly control over all diamond mining in Kimberley.

In 1888 Rhodes got a huge loan from the Rothschild International Bank, and bought Barney Barnato's Kimberley Mine.

Rhodes' De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited became the owner and controller of the mines and diamonds, at Kimberley.

### Regulating supply and price of diamonds

Date	Number of claims at Kimberley
1870s	1600
1880	400
1888	1

### Source E: The number of claims on the diamond fields

Rhodes' De Beers Consolidated Mines now controlled diamond mining at Kimberley – it had a monopoly.

Only De Beers could trade or sell diamonds.

If too many diamonds were traded or sold at the same time, the price of diamonds would fall, and De Beers' profits would fall.

Rhodes kept a careful balance between how many diamonds were produced and how many were sold, to keep the prices high to make big profits.

De Beers might have controlled the mines, but if they could not control the theft of diamonds from mines, the price of diamonds could drop through illicit diamond buying.

Diamonds are small and easy to swallow.

To limit the theft and selling of diamonds, black workers were made to live in closed compounds throughout the whole term of their contracts.

## Worksheet

### Topic: Mining and Minerals in South Africa

#### Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Which province is best known for its early diamond discoveries in South Africa?
  - A. KwaZulu-Natal
  - B. Northern Cape
  - C. Limpopo
  - D. Mpumalanga
2. The discovery of diamonds in 1867 led to the rapid growth of the town of:
  - A. Johannesburg
  - B. Kimberley
  - C. Rustenburg
  - D. Durban
3. What is the name of the large open-pit diamond mine in Kimberley?
  - A. The Big Pit
  - B. The Great Hole
  - C. The Diamond Shaft
  - D. The Big Hole
4. Diamonds are formed mainly from which element?
  - A. Gold
  - B. Carbon
  - C. Oxygen
  - D. Iron
5. Which mining method is commonly used to extract diamonds from deep underground pipes?
  - A. Open-pit mining
  - B. Shaft (underground) mining
  - C. Panning
  - D. Alluvial mining

#### Short-Answer Questions

6. Name **two negative environmental impacts** of diamond mining.
7. Give one way in which diamond mining contributed to the economic development of South Africa.
8. What is alluvial diamond mining, and where does it usually take place?

9. Explain why migrant labour became common in the diamond mines.
10. State **two safety risks** that miners face underground.

### Source-Based Questions

#### SOURCE A: The Big Hole, Kimberley



*The Big Hole is one of the world's largest hand dug excavations. It was mined from 1871 to 1914. Thousands of miners worked using picks and shovels. More than 2,700 kg of diamonds were extracted.*

- 11.1 Why do you think so many miners were needed during this period?
- 11.2 Suggest one challenge workers might have faced while digging by hand.

### Paragraph Question

**12. Write a paragraph of 8–10 lines explaining how diamond mining changed South Africa socially and economically.**

Use the following words in your answer:

*Kimberley, migrant labour, companies, wealth, inequality*