

The Hume & Hovell Expedition Crosses the Murray River

The Hume and Hovell expedition was one of the most important journeys of exploration undertaken in eastern Australia. In 1824 the Governor of NSW, Sir Thomas Brisbane, commissioned Hamilton Hume and former Royal Navy Captain William Hovell to lead an expedition to find new grazing land, and also to find an answer to the mystery of where NSW's western rivers flowed.

They departed Lake George on October 17, 1824. When they encountered the Murrumbidgee River they crossed by converting their carts to punts. Beyond that, the heavily timbered country forced them to abandon their carts.

The party arrived on the banks of a "fine river" on November 16. Hume named the river "the Hume" after his father (later changed to the Murray River). They recorded that the river was "not less than 80 yards wide" and too difficult to cross at that site. So after both Hume and Hovell carved their initials in trees at the site (Hume's tree burnt down in the 1840s) they started looking for a place to cross.

Hovell's journal records that on the 17th, several of the party moved seven miles downstream but finding crossing even more difficult, they returned.

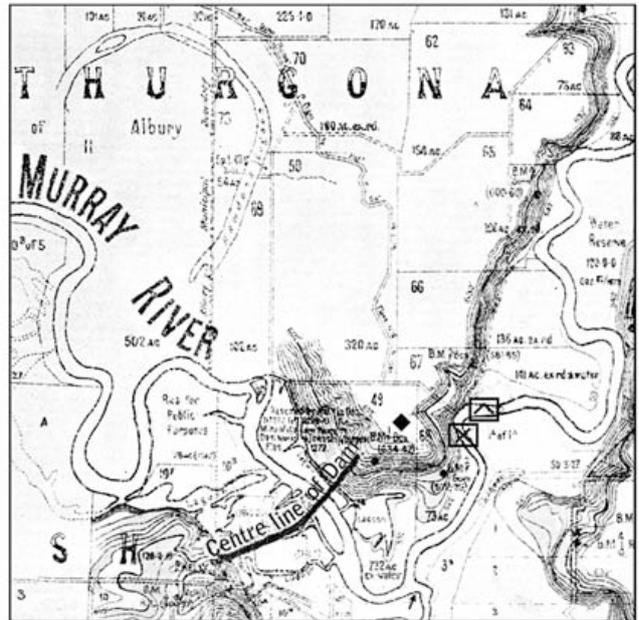
On the 18th and 19th they ventured nine miles upstream reaching a rocky islet that the natives called "Thurgoona." Four miles further east they had passed the point where the Mitta River enters and found that the river was now just 40 yards across. They had gone east just 6 miles from where they first met the river, but 13 miles following the winding course of the river.



The crossing place of the river by the Hume and Hovell expedition in a photograph taken in December 1919 as surveyors prepared for the Hume Dam construction.

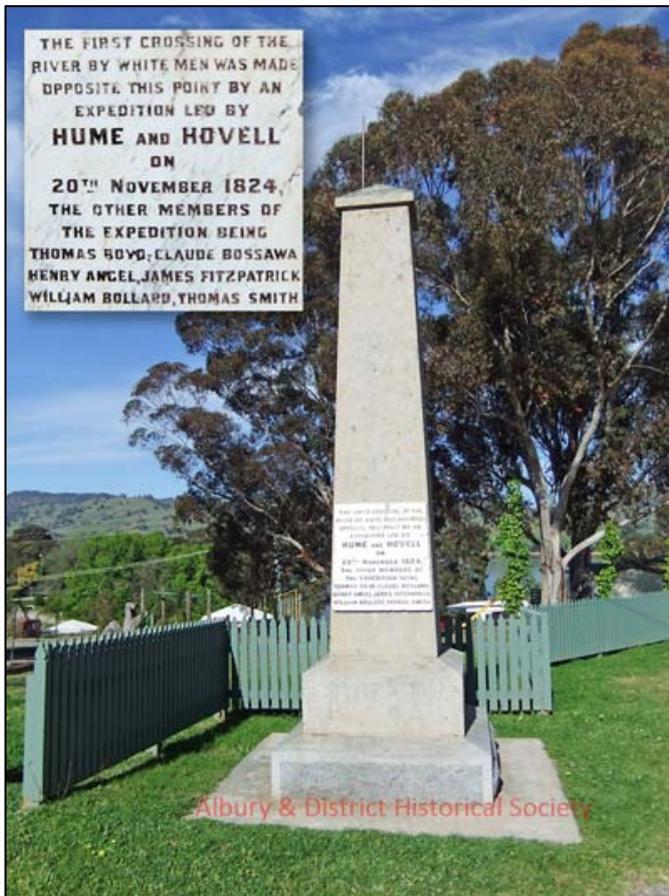


A wood engraving by F A Sleaf from 1888 showing the Hume & Hovell party crossing the Murray. It appeared in the *Illustrated Australian News*.



Crossing place as marked on the 1919 map of Dr Andrews
 Crossing place as marked on the map in the 1924 Hume & Hovell Centenary booklet
 ◆ Hume Weir Village ↗ Point at which the Mitta River enters the Murray River

The map is an edited version of the map published with the 1924 Hume & Hovell Centenary Souvenir Programme.



The Hume & Hovell obelisk at Hume Weir Village

The next day the party crossed the river after Thomas Boyd swam across with a rope and then towed their possessions across in a sapling framework covered with tarpaulins. They later had several other rivers to cross including the Mitta Mitta.

The site chosen to cross is now under the water at Lake Hume. Historian Dr Andrews writing for the *Victorian Historical Magazine* in April 1919 located the crossing site as just upstream of a bend in the river below what is now Hume Weir Village. In the 1924 Hume & Hovell Centenary Programme, a map marks a spot just downstream from the same bend.

On the Victorian side of the Hume Weir near Ebden by the Tallangatta Road is a second obelisk with the wording:

HUME & HOVELL
 PASSED HERE
 21st NOVEMBER 1824
 ERECTED NOVEMBER 1924