

HAWKSVIEW STATION

Edited talk by Roslyn Webb (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, February 2004 and reprinted from the March 2004 A&DHS Bulletin No 433)

The Hume and Hovell expedition passed through this terrain in November 1824 as they sought a crossing of Hume's River (renamed Murray by Charles Sturt in 1830). Eventually they and their six assigned convicts floated their two bullock wagons across with the help of tarpaulins. This was at a place where the hills ran steeply down to the river, not heavily timbered, near the present Lake Hume Resort.

Eleven years later (1835) William Wyse brought cattle south from Yass for his boss, Charles Hotson Ebdon, and formed *Mungabareena Run*. It extended from Albury to Tabletop to the Murray River beyond Bethanga Bridge and followed the Murray back to Albury. Wyse also crossed the river and formed the *Bonegilla Run*.

In 1836, brothers Charles and Paul Huon de Kerrilleau (known as Huon) arrived and squatted south of the river on what became the *Wodonga Run*. Soon after, another brother, Aime, and brother-in-law Robert Brown, arrived. They were persuaded to set up a store for travellers near Hume and Hovell's first sighting of the river. This store, at what was known as *The Crossing Place*, was the start of Albury.

The Mitchells: By 1837 *Mungabareena Run* was gazetted in the name of the Mitchells. Mrs Elizabeth Mitchell (sister of the Huon brothers) was widowed soon after and sent her eldest son Thomas, aged 19, down from their home *Brisbane Meadows* at Bungonia, near Goulburn, to take charge. Following the death of her mother in 1842, Elizabeth brought the rest of her children down to the Hume. *Mungabareena Run* was enlarged and then gradually eroded by the encroaching city of Albury and the effects of the Robertson Land Act. Under her pre-emptive right Elizabeth bought as much of the riverside land as was permissible and around 1859 gifted the upstream portion to her son John Francis Huon Mitchell. He named it *Hawksview* after the view from Mount Hawk and soon made it freehold. Mount Hawk may have been named after the Peregrine Falcons flying about. The third riverside home of the Mitchells was built in 1852 on the western slopes of Mount Hawk and is still standing today.

The previous homesteads were near the present-day Albury Pumping Station and at the end of Hawkscote Road. J F H Mitchell's infant daughter Mabel is said to be buried on present day *Hawkscote* after dying as a result of scalding (1869).

Mrs Mitchell became known as "The Mother of Albury" and her children played a key role in settlement of the Upper Murray

Following the Mitchells: In 1875 *Hawksview* was purchased by Elms and Scott who added Shelley's land to it. In 1876 *Hawksview* was 10,712 acres (4,335 ha) freehold plus stock. By 1877 it was owned by Mackellar and Burnett, passing to King in 1888. In 1902, Hogan and Fell bought it, added Smith's land and also fenced it. The next owner was the Honourable William Lionel Russell Clarke.

The Heywood and Webb Families: The Hon Mr Clarke sold *Hawksview*, now 4,300 acres (1,740ha), to his friend Mr P T Heywood in Sept. 1919. The purchase fulfilled a promise to Mr Heywood's son, Mr P R Heywood who was recently discharged from the British Army after being gassed and held prisoner in Germany during World War I. Later, P T Heywood's grandson, Mr S P P Webb (Phil) joined the property (1941). It is interesting to note that Phil

and his uncle Captain P R Heywood married sisters (Daintry and Beatrice Gillett). The property is now owned [2004] by P T Heywood's great grandsons John and Michael Webb. Michael and his family live in the old homestead, making a fifth generation of Heywood/Webbs at *Hawksview*. Hence the present property *Hawksview* is the remainder of the first run on the Murray.



Mining: The Hawksview range was tunnelled for gold in the 1880s without exciting results. There are many vertical shafts on the western slopes. The 'Pride of the Hume' crushing battery was visible on the banks of the Murray off Smith's paddock when the weir was low but its state is now unknown.

Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Interest: It was thought that the hills were denuded of trees during the mining time by gangs of Chinese workers. However, in 1925 *Hawksview's* lagoon area was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary and the remainder was declared a wildlife refuge in the 1940s. Approximately 200 species of birds have been recorded on the property. Mr and Mrs Phil Webb were very interested in wildlife and conservation and many of the projects started by them are being continued by their children and grandchildren today eg fencing and revegetation of the banks of Hawdon's Lagoon. Hawdon was the first mail contractor between Melbourne and Sydney (1838). He used to camp at *Hawksview* on his run from Corryong to Adelaide.

Lake Hume: During the early 1930s rich Hawksview flats were inundated by Lake Hume. Although the acreage was reduced the submerged land still remains with *Hawksview*, the authorities owning flood easement only. Hawksview bridge, which gave access to Bethanga and the Upper Murray, went under the water and was replaced by the Bethanga Bridge. The road from Albury to Lake Hume sliced through the property.

Buildings: One of the original buildings still standing (built 1852) has pit sawn slabs, wooden shingles, home-made bricks, hessian ceiling, a large cellar and gun slits in the walls for defence against aboriginal attacks. The Mitchell family enjoyed an easy relationship with the local Wiradjuri tribe, but following a night raid from another tribe some years before at the Thurgoona homestead, they were taking no chances. By 1860 most of the aborigines had gone, succumbing to European diseases and competition for resources.

The Heywoods roofed over three of the original five buildings in 1926 to form the present homestead. Many of the old features were retained. The inner brick walls rest on log foundations and the shingles are covered by tin. A beam with the date 1838 was found during renovations but sadly one of the workmen burnt it!

The original wool shed (built in the 1870s) is still in use and was converted from an eight-stand blade shed to a six-stand machine shed in 1909. A 1905 Hornsby Oil engine was used to drive the overhead gear and this has been restored by Mr Bernard Smith of Tallangatta. Later a Lister Petrol engine and subsequently an electric engine were installed. The main supports for the shed are whole tree trunks and the catching pens are all wood.

There is a machinery shed with a central drive way for easy access for loaded wagons (probably 1890s). Unfortunately, the stables with stalls, hay loft, chaff house and harness room was ravaged by white ants and replaced. A blacksmith's shop with forge, bellows and anvil still stands. Shearers' quarters by the lagoon, originally one hut in the 1870s, with tiered bunks, was altered in keeping with the Rural Accommodation Act.

These buildings were used by the local Naval Cadet Unit for fifteen years. Just west of the shearers' quarters is a grove of elms that were planted to shade the sheds for the station dog pack of 40 to 50.

Diaries of 1927 show 'rabbiting' entries every second day. Whippets and greyhounds were used to chase rabbits. In January 1928 a cyanide machine was bought to gas the burrows. Rabbit stew was common food. They had a full time 'rabbiter' who had his own hut. During the 1950s, 200,000 rabbits were killed on *Hawksview* over three years at a cost of £6,000. Wages were around £15 per week at the time so it was an expensive exercise. The introduction of myxomatosis had a profound effect!

Present Enterprise [2004]: *Hawksview*, now just 3,000 acres (1,214 ha), has seen its share of flood, pestilence and drought but still grazes Hereford and crossbred cattle for the export market, fine wool Merino sheep and cross bred fat lambs. Sires are purchased each year from well-respected studs. Gone are the days when six or seven-year old steers were walked to the rail head at Ebdon for transport to the Newmarket saleyards in Melbourne. Similarly, the family no longer watches the wool being sold at the auction rooms in Dean St Albury (now the Commercial Club). Cattle are trucked to Wodonga or sold direct from the property. Wool is sold by description in Sunshine Victoria, although samples are still made available for overseas buyers to handle. Farm forestry, Landcare and small-scale farm tourism have been introduced.

We members of the Webb family are thankful to those who have come before us and are proud to be associated with *Hawksview*. Hopefully, as our understanding of sustainable agriculture grows, we will be able to hand this land on in even better condition than it is now.

Roslyn Webb, February 2, 2004