Hume Monument commemorates an epic expedition

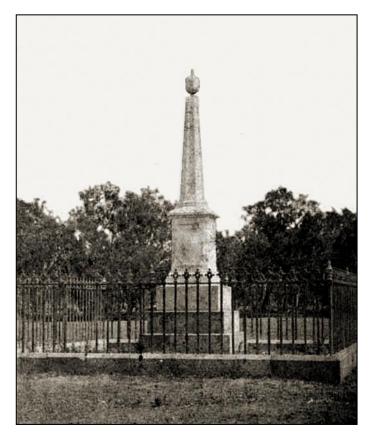*Ray Gear*

In 1824 Hamilton Hume, aged 27 and William Hovell, aged 38, agreed to equally share the cost of leading an exploration party overland with the aim of reaching Westernport Bay. A four month long round trip reached Coria Bay in Victoria then returned home. The expedition alerted white settlers to many potential grazing lands and rivers including the Hume River later named the Murray.

The party first saw the Hume (Murray) River on November 16, 1824. Hume, who first saw the river, named it after his father. On the following day both Hume and Hovell carved their names and date on adjacent Red Gum trees on the riverbank in recognition of their discovery. Fourteen years later in 1838, Robert Brown settled on the bank of the river, building a slab hut and a store near the trees at the place now known as Albury.

Hume's tree was later lost when a camper's fire destroyed it in the early 1840s.

In March 1857, Albury's first European settler, Robert Brown, called a meeting to support erecting a suitable testimonial to Hume near the stump of the old Hume Tree. The proposed memorial would commemorate and mark the site where the exploration party first encountered the Hume (Murray) River. It cost £400, the money raised principally by public subscription. In May 1858, the *Border Post* recording that some one hundred and sixteen locals had made donations.

The Hume Monument with iron railings before its removal to the Botanic Gardens in 1884

A white marble structure with an orb mounted on an eight-sided tapered pillar, resting on a block of granite, the monument was constructed by a Melbourne stone cutter and transported to Albury. It was later surrounded by iron railings.

On July 18, 1858 the Monument was unveiled by Robert Brown. According to the *Albury Telegraph* earlier that month, Albury was "the first country town in New South Wales to erect a public monument in honour of a colonial celebrity."

Twelve years later the *Border Post* of July 27, 1870 referred to the monument as "the solitary offering to the fine arts in Albury." Hume died aged 76 in April 1873 at Yass.

Over the next decade the Hovell Tree and Hume's Monument were left to fall into disrepair, and it was

resolved by Council in January 1884 "to move the Monument to the Gardens in order to protect it." By March 1884 its removal into Albury's Botanic Gardens was complete.