

William Hovell

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William Hovell was born on April 26, 1786 in Yarmouth, Norfolk, England. At age ten he went to sea and at age 22 he was made captain of a merchant ship the *Juno*.

At age 27, Hovell arrived at Sydney aboard the convict ship, *Earl Spencer* with his wife Ester (*nee* Arndell) and their two children, Elizabeth and Arndell. As a free settler he was granted 600 acres at Narellan.

Through meeting Simeon Lord, a ship merchant, he continued his association with the sea. He captained a ship trading along the east coast of Australia and to New Zealand until his ship *Brothers* was wrecked on the Kent islands of Bass Strait in 1816.

Retiring, he settled with the family at Narellan. When in 1824 Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane approached Hamilton Hume to lead an exploration south to Western Port, Simeon Lord, familiar with Hovell's navigational skills, put forward Hovell's name to the Governor. Hovell met Hume and they agreed to join as co-leaders, sharing costs.

The expedition officially left from Hume's outstation at Gunning on October 17, 1824, and returned on January 16, 1825, three months later. Hovell kept a detailed journal of flora, fauna, the direction of travel and distances covered each day. This journal's 170 pages cover the period from the commencement of the expedition to reaching the sea on December 17, 1824. The traditional view is that they arrived at Kennedy's Creek, now named Hovell Creek, Lara. My research (see a later article) indicates the termination was at the Werribee River.

Hume and Hovell were each rewarded with a grant of 1200 acres though it is said these were sold to recoup the cost of the expedition. Hovell received a further grant of 1280 acres for his part in the late 1825 exploration of Western Port for settlement. It was during this expedition that he realised the error in assuming that they were at Western Port during the 1824 expedition. This fact he never made public, nor did Hume acknowledge the termination to be any place other than Western Port.

After this time Hovell appeared mostly to lead a quiet life at Narellan. On his visit to Albury enroute to Geelong in 1853 he refurbished the Hovell Tree and placed a surrounding fence. At Geelong he caused discord when in the newspaper he was misquoted saying his leadership got them through. Hume reacted and wrote several letters and produced two statements describing the journey. The animosity between them continued for the remainder of their lives.

Hovell died at Sydney on November 9, 1875, two years after Hume.

