

Remembering Hume and Hovell

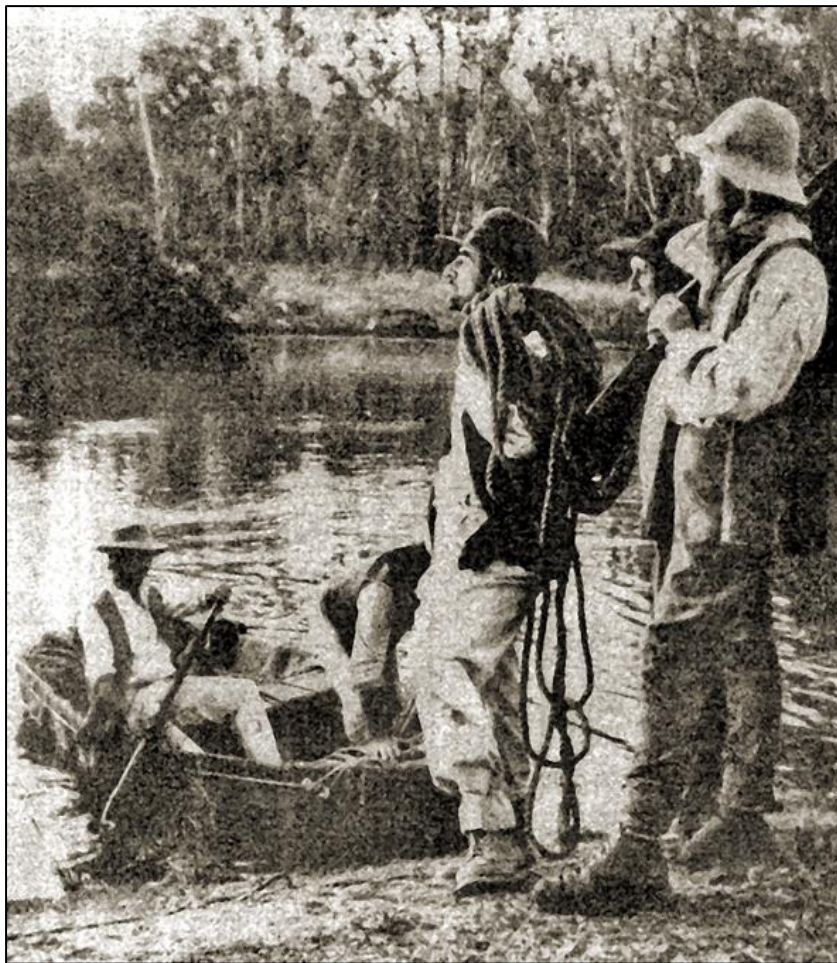
Bruce Pennay

Border district residents seem to remember well the Hume and Hovell expedition of 1824.

In 1924 they organised a week-long program of events to mark what was billed as 'the centenary of Albury'.

Since then, they have organised more festivities on anniversary occasions, including lively events such as reenactments (pictured 1984).

Locally the name 'Hume' has been adopted variously for a dam, bank, service station and street for example. The Hovell Tree has become a local tourist icon. More widely, there is a Hume Freeway, electorate and region.



A depiction of the Hume & Hovell expedition party preparing to cross the Hume (Murray) River.

Nationally the acclaim for Hume and Hovell has been relatively mute. There were, from the start, questions about the destination they claimed to reach. Their trip was made at a bad time. Government dissuaded colonists from moving far from Sydney. Nobody rushed to follow their track. It took another eleven years for overlanders to realise Hume's hopes that their route would be used by travellers with carts.

One of the most insightful commemorative activities has been Kiera Lindsey's soundscape of 2007. It is still available from the ABC – [Hume & Hovell: Pathfinders](#)

Lindsey thought most people remembered the expedition as a tug of war between the two men, who argued for years about the credit each should receive.

And importantly, she thought people twenty years ago would see the expedition as an act of intrusion.

Hovell's daybook revealed the explorers had few direct encounters with the Aboriginal peoples whose countries they passed through. But Hovell thought they were numerous. He noted evidence of the ingenious ways they eked a living from the rivers and land. He sensed that the exploration party was intruding into other peoples' places.

In 1838 many pastoralists pushed down the Murrumbidgee and across the Murray in search of land. Aboriginal people resisted these prolonged intrusions.

Government declared Hume's track the official route between Sydney and Melbourne. Travellers along the frontier road were guarded from attack by military posts at official crossing places. New towns were created as places of protection, including Albury in 1839.

In 2024 it is appropriate to honour the enterprise of Hume and Hovell. Theirs is an inception story of the inland route but also an intrusion story.

In the wake of the failed national referendum and the shift in emphasis towards reconciliation at a local level, it is also appropriate to view the Hume and Hovell story alongside other foundation stories that focus on dispossession and resistance, resilience and survival.