

Getting Started – An Overview

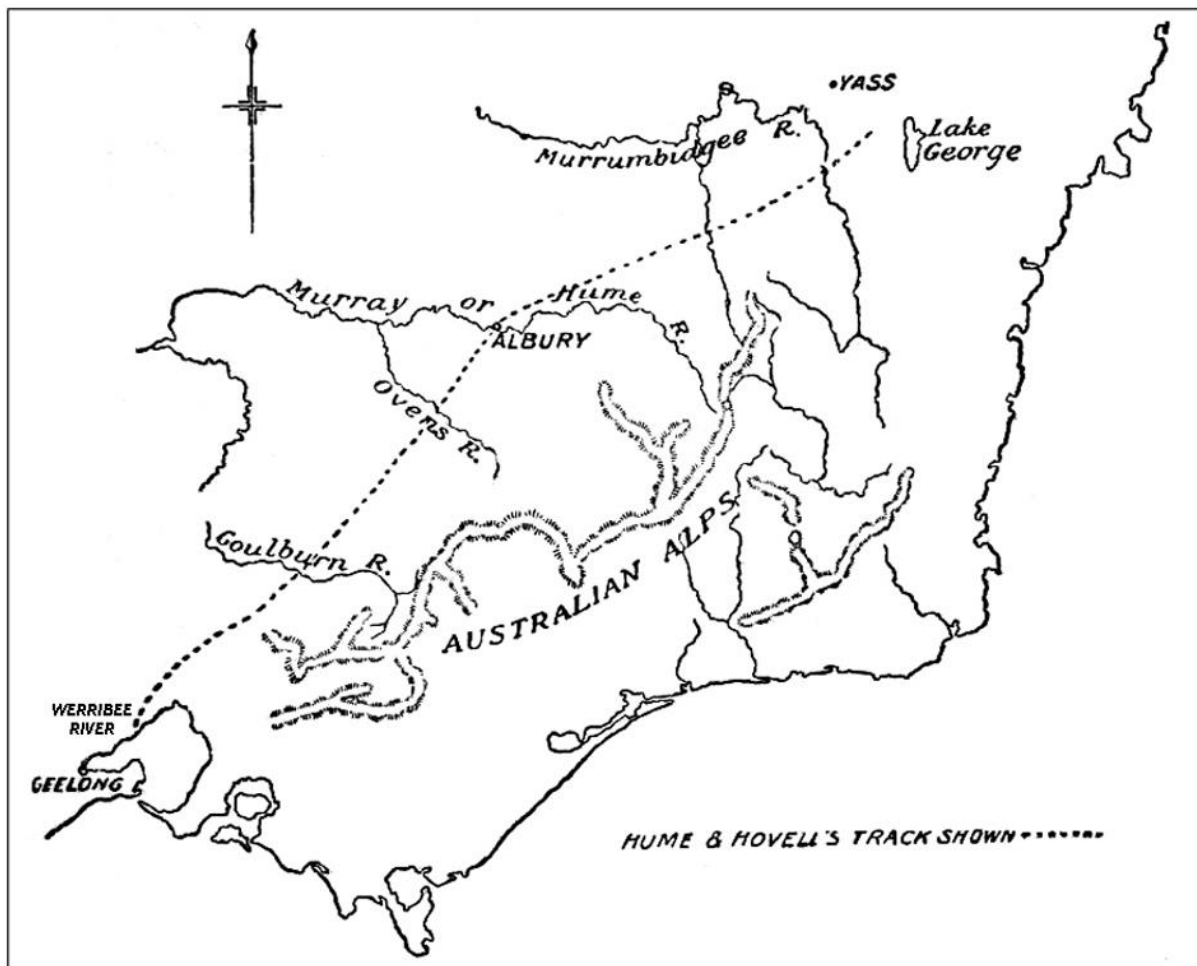
Paul Muntz

The 1824 expedition left the Gunning area southwest of Sydney, traversed NSW and into what became Victoria in 1851, and ended at Port Phillip on Bass Strait.

Why have an expedition?

The Governor of NSW, Thomas Brisbane, was determined to extend exploration of the new colony, to locate additional grazing land south of Sydney, and to also solve the mystery of where the western rivers of NSW flowed. Whilst the coastal regions of eastern Australia had been carefully mapped by Matthew Flinders, the inland areas were basically a 'blank sheet'.

Brisbane was so convinced that there were grazing opportunities to be found, that he even offered to drop off prisoners at Wilson's Promontory, and to grant to them both a free pardon and a parcel of land, if they managed to make it back to Sydney!



After gathering at Lake George on October 12, 1824, the expedition left from the Gunning area, arriving at the Werribee River on Port Phillip on December 19.

So, who were Hume & Hovell?

Hamilton Hume was a bushman born in Australia, aged 27 and his companion, William Hovell was a former English sea captain who, at the tender age of 38, had curiously retired from that profession.

The expedition

Although Brisbane appears to have tried to control the process, ultimately Hume and Hovell independently agreed that they would undertake an expedition from Lake George. This was to be a brave excursion, as no European had previously ventured beyond Lake George. Apart from endeavouring to locate the grazing land so desperately sought by Governor Brisbane, the expedition was keen to find if there was another land route down to Bass Strait.

Hume and Hovell secured some men, horses and bullocks and the government provided them with pack saddles, tarpaulins etc and for each of the six convict members of the expedition, an item wonderfully described as 'a suit of slops' (roughly a full outfit of sailors clothing). The supply manifests also included, in addition to the usual items of flour, pork and tobacco (as well as 30 litres of rum!), items such as '1 false horizon' and '1 perambulator' (for measuring distance) – clearly all possible events on the journey had been planned for!

Departure

Hume, Hovell and the six members of the expedition travelled from the Sydney area and gathered in the 'Lake George' district which is near to modern day Gunning. After an excursion to the lake, the serious business of the expedition began on 17 October 1824, with the expedition setting out and, a couple of days later, passing through the Yass Plains.

So far so good, but the problems are about to begin.