

Hamilton Hume Sketch Maps: Origins and Modern Treatment

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Abstract

Hamilton Hume and William Hovell made the first overland journey of exploration by Europeans from southern New South Wales into Victoria in 1824. The eyewitness accounts of this journey include original journals and writings by Hume and Hovell, a combination of the two journals edited by William Bland (first edition 1831), and three sketch maps attributed to Hamilton Hume. The three sketch maps have been the least studied of these indisputably primary sources and form the basis of this article. A re-evaluation of these maps offers remarkable new insights into the journey, showing that Hamilton Hume altered the original of the maps to indicate falsely that he knew that he had reached Port Phillip, while William Hovell also was less than honest when it suited him. The Hume and Hovell records were misquoted or ignored in the nineteenth century, but in the 21st century they suffered misinterpretation once again when, in 2015, the peak heritage protection authority in Victoria accepted flawed evidence to endorse the proposition that Hume and Hovell had been physically present at a particular central Victorian location—Monument Hill, Kilmore. This article demonstrates that this was not the case and that, had Hume and Hovell found themselves at that location in 1824, they would have been forced to abandon the expedition and return to New South Wales as failures.

Exploration Skeleton Charts

Hamilton Hume was the source of three sketch maps that originated from exploration skeleton charts with which he and William Hovell were provided to help guide their journey in 1824. Hume provided this description of the skeleton charts in an account of the journey published in 1855: 'the government ... furnished us with ... two skeleton charts for the tracing of our journey'. 'I then on the skeleton chart ... drew a line from the point of departure to Western Port, to serve as a base on which to act throughout the journey.'¹ An exploration skeleton chart consists of an empty grid of meridians of longitude and parallels of

latitude of the region of interest, and typically with an outline of known features marked on it.

The party was also given a 'perambulator' or odometer to provide accurate measurement of distance. As Hume wrote: 'The perambulator and a pocket compass were kindly lent me by my friend, Mr. Surveyor Meehan.'² Meehan had been deputy surveyor general in New South Wales and was thus well positioned to provide professional surveying equipment and charts to Hume.³

Hume indicated that he was meticulous in filling in his course on the skeleton chart from his daily readings of compass bearings and distances and that he was observed to do so. 'The very day after we started from my station, I began the tracing of my course on my skeleton map and continued it throughout, sometimes marking our work daily, invariably every second day'. He quoted a member of the expedition, Thomas Boyd, in confirmation of this claim: 'Mr. Hume always kept the reckoning of our course and day's progress; it was his regular afternoon's work'.⁴

Further insight into the nature of these skeleton charts can be obtained by analysing the three sketch maps attributed to Hume.

Hume (Mitchell) Sketch Map

The State Library of New South Wales holds the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map, which explicitly credits Hamilton Hume as the author in its handwritten title: 'H. Hume's sketch of a tour performed by W.H. Hovell and himself from Lake George to Port Phillip, Bass's Straits'.⁵

This sketch map became the personal property of Sir Thomas Mitchell, the surveyor general of New South Wales, and was bequeathed to the library through his family in 1920. It was drawn on James Whatman paper with a watermark date of 1825. The map in question was professionally drafted. It includes surveyed outlines of Western Port, Wilsons Promontory, and the New South Wales coast through Twofold Bay and onwards for another 140 miles. Added to the map is a clearly marked line of travel of the journey in both the forward direction towards Western Port and the return. It also includes the commercially important annotations: 'The end of the Downs was not seen in this direction', and, 'Apparently a fine grazing Country'. The labelling is meticulous and it was written in two distinct forms of handwriting.

The sketch map contains further evidence of Mitchell's ownership and his use of this specific map in 1836 during his journey of exploration of Australia Felix (Victoria).⁶

It has three separate pencilled annotations relating to Mitchell's journey, showing first, Mount Hope in north-western Victoria, second, Mitchell's own camp site on the approaches to the Ovens River on 14 October 1836, dated and marked with a cross, and third, another cross marking the location of Mitchell's next camp site on the banks of the Ovens, which the party crossed on 15 October 1836.

Mitchell recorded in his journal that he used the sketch map when on the top of Mount Hope to differentiate between the Murray and Goulburn rivers on the distant horizon: 'On reaching the summit of Mount Hope, I saw ... the trees of the Murray ... or the Goulburn (of Hovell and Hume); for it was uncertain, then, which river we were near.'⁷ He used it again at Deegay Creek near the Goulburn River on 8 October 1836 to identify the form of Mount Disappointment: 'Westward of the gap or ravine, stood a large mass, which I thought might be the Mount Disappointment of Mr. Hume.'⁸

On 16 October 1836, the day after camping beside the Ovens, Mitchell commended the accuracy of the map in relation to the Goulburn and Ovens rivers: 'I hoped to find the Murray, according to the map of Messrs. Hovell and Hume, which in the two rivers we had recently passed, seemed wonderfully correct.'⁹

Further confirming that Mitchell carried this sketch map on his journey for his personal use is the fact that he also made twenty references in this journal to his use of a John Oxley 1817 map and four to an Arrowsmith 1832 map in exactly the same way to check on both their accuracy and his own navigation.

Hume (Gellibrand) Sketch Map

The Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map is held in London in the Colonial Office records of the despatches of Colonel George Arthur, governor of Van Diemen's Land in 1835.¹⁰ It will be shown that the map was commissioned and owned by Joseph Tice Gellibrand and has been titled accordingly.

This map was drawn on light-weight paper and is a tracing of the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map. I was able to verify this by reproducing both maps to the same scale and viewing them superimposed through a light table. They have nearly identical treatment of the courses, widths

and shapes of the rivers on the journey, the other topographic features and the overall path of travel.

This map was last in the possession of Joseph Tice Gellibrand and John Batman on 25 June 1835 when they gave it to the governor of Van Diemen's Land, Colonel George Arthur, to help substantiate their right to lands they claimed to have just purchased in Port Phillip from their Wurundjeri owners.¹¹

The map was professionally drawn but has twelve omissions from the original. These include the coastline of Wilsons Promontory, all of the coastline of NSW north of Twofold Bay, the feature labels, 'Ram Head', 'Green Cape', 'Reids Ck', 'Emu Creek', and the two commercially important annotations mentioned above that are on the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map. The omission of these annotations indicates that the purpose of the exercise was navigation and the defining of territory rather than the promotion of the pastoral potential of the land. Other elements omitted from the Hume (Gellibrand) map include samples of the two handwriting styles present on the Hume (Mitchell) map. This further reinforces the fact that the Hume (Mitchell) map was the earlier of the two.

Date of the Hume (Gellibrand) Sketch Map

Gellibrand and Batman had first sought official permission to move from Van Diemen's Land and settle at Western Port in January 1827 when they wrote to Governor Darling requesting land at the proposed settlement there.¹² That meant that, in 1827, the venture was prominent in Gellibrand's mind.

Gellibrand certainly possessed this map in 1835 when he gave it to Governor Arthur, but he had had the opportunity to commission its drafting personally where it was held in New South Wales on three occasions before that year, including in 1827. Gellibrand was successful as a barrister and trader in Van Diemen's Land and visited Sydney in September 1827 for the long period of two months¹³ and twice again in 1828 for a fortnight each time.¹⁴ No other member of the Port Phillip Association, including John Batman, visited Sydney between 1827 and 1835 except for the peripheral investor John Robertson, who travelled there in 1834.¹⁵ Robertson did not participate personally in the settlement of Port Phillip and was one of the first to sell out of the Port Phillip Association in March 1836.¹⁶ This left Gellibrand as the only individual in a position to commission the tracing of the original

Hume (Mitchell) sketch map, and September/October 1827 as the time during which he had the longest opportunity to do so.

The map itself reveals that the commissioning was done in person. Instructions were given to the draftsman to leave out certain of the topographical features and descriptions, and to produce a near identical copy of the rest. These attributes had to have been approved on the spot when the tracing was still pinned to the original map.

The venture to Port Phillip was referred to routinely in Van Diemen's Land as being led by Gellibrand 'the leading Gentleman of the Port Phillip Company' and never Batman.¹⁷ Governor George Arthur, in writing to Lord Glenelg, the colonial secretary, on 4 July 1835, did, however, refer to Batman's expedition to Port Phillip, because Batman personally went there. But Arthur went on to explain that Batman had the subordinate role of acting 'on behalf of an association [The Port Phillip Association], of which, it appears, he is the agent'.¹⁸

The records indicate that Gellibrand had a greater role in the settlement of Port Phillip than history has sometimes credited him with, and, as a person of substantial wealth, who left an estate of £40,000 made up of high-cash-flow businesses, he had the finances to support it.¹⁹ In comparison, Batman was a regional sheep farmer who had no such ready cash resources and did not travel beyond Van Diemen's Land until settling at Port Phillip. It was Gellibrand who wrote the letters to Governors Darling and Arthur and the deed of purchase with the Wurundjeri people, and he also represented the Port Phillip Association in negotiations with Governor Richard Bourke in Sydney in 1836.²⁰ Batman's journal indicates that all of those things were beyond his talents; he was barely literate.²¹ James Bonwick in 1867 relied on letters from John Helder Wedge and William Sams to assert that Batman was the sole originator of the notion to settle at Port Phillip.²² The pair had no knowledge of the central initiating role of Gellibrand from 1827, nor of the numerous other Van Diemen's Land individuals who had had the same idea, from the Henty brothers in 1834 to the equally wealthy George Palmer Ball group of eight individuals in the same year.²³

Hume (Pettingell) Sketch Map

The Hume (Pettingell) sketch map is held by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.²⁴ This map carries the annotation that it was drawn for Gellibrand by Joseph William Pettingell. It was prepared with ordinary script handwriting and lacks precision in the elementary copying details

of topographic features; it also shares all of the omissions of commercial information left off the Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map and an additional eleven features, making a total of 23 items missing that had been present on the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map. This map originally had been cut into eight segments and pasted onto linen board for use in the field. When a copy of the map was cut and reassembled with no gaps by the author, it showed the same line of travel as the Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map. These features indicate that it was derived from that map.

Date of the Hume (Pettingell) Sketch Map

The date of creation of this map can be deduced from Joseph Pettingell's personal history. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land in September 1834 under his wife's name, Linden.²⁵ He left a journal of his trip from Liverpool to Hobart that contains sketches of the voyage in an untrained hand.²⁶

Pettingell initially set up business in Hobart as a tailor, across Campbell Street from Joseph Gellibrand.²⁷ He established a school in May 1837, advertising that he could teach surveying subjects,²⁸ and claimed to have been chosen as the surveyor for the Port Phillip Association by Joseph Gellibrand, notwithstanding the fact that John Helder Wedge was both the surveyor of, and a shareholder in, the association.²⁹ By May 1837 Gellibrand had died and was not present to dispute Pettingell's claims. A few months later, in September 1837, Pettingell was gaoled for debt.³⁰

Pettingell must have drafted the map sometime between September 1834, when he arrived in Hobart, and 25 June 1835, when Batman and Gellibrand gave the Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map, from which Pettingell's map was derived, to Colonel Arthur.

This analysis has demonstrated that the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map was the earliest and original of the maps, that the Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map was a tracing of it, and that the Hume (Pettingell) sketch map was derived from the Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map.

Western Port or Port Phillip?

On 24 January 1825, six days after returning from the expedition, Hume wrote to the governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, stating unequivocally that he and the party had reached Western Port;³¹ he then repeated the statement in three newspaper articles published between February 1825 and 15 December 1826.³² This claim was repeated by Dr William

Bland in nine newspaper advertisements between December 1825 and December 1826, their purpose being to publicise the book he was preparing on the expedition based on the journals of both Hume and Hovell.³³

In January 1827 the first revelation was published in the press that Hume and Hovell had not been to Western Port but, rather, had reached Port Phillip.³⁴ This occurred when Hovell was present with the settlement expedition then at Western Port, and he confirmed it personally. The pair were rebuked for the error of not identifying Western Port correctly since they were now implicated by association with the wasted expense of setting up a new settlement there based upon their fulsome recommendations.³⁵

Notwithstanding the fact that Hume and Bland had previously and repeatedly declared that they had reached Western Port, both of them from this time on wrote that their party had in fact arrived at Port Phillip, and the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map, derived from Hume's skeleton chart, showed a destination of Port Phillip. In addition, in the 1837 edition of his book, Bland produced a purported map of the journey showing a destination of Port Phillip.³⁶ It appears to be hurriedly hand-drawn and leaves off the concluding point of the journey at Kennedy's Creek (Lara) despite the detailed description provided in the text. The error was corrected in the next edition of Bland's book; all of the missing section was inserted.³⁷

Francis Labilliere as early as 1878 provided proof, including Hume's letter of 1825 to Governor Brisbane cited above, that from 1825 onwards Hume had publicly issued false statements that he knew all along that the party had reached Port Phillip and not Western Port.³⁸ It was a logical extension of this behaviour for Hume to have drawn his Hume (Mitchell) sketch map to show a false destination of Port Phillip. It was also a demonstration of astonishing risk-taking by Hume for him then to give the map to Sir Thomas Mitchell.

The Original Hume Skeleton Chart



Figure 1: Hume (Mitchell) Sketch Map

My additions to this Hume (Mitchell) sketch map include:

- An upper line drawn from Hume's station at Gunning to the western shoreline of Western Port, much as it would have appeared on his original explorer's skeleton chart.
- Four coordinates all marked with a capital X: one recorded by Hovell on 16 December 1824 and three listed by Hume on 24 January 1825.
- A lower line drawn from Hume's station to his version of the western shoreline of Port Phillip. It forms an angle of 4.5 degrees from the line to Western Port.

The true composition of the original skeleton chart now becomes critical to this argument. It can be deduced from Hume's account that he drew a line on it from his station at Gunning to Westernport. I have thus inserted a straight line from Hume's station at Gunning to what was initially an arbitrary location on the western margin of Western Port. It is the upper line in Figure 1.

On 16 December 1824 Hovell recorded his coordinates in his journal for that day: 'I was enabled to get a Meridian Altitude, which gave the latitude $38^{\circ}.6. S.$ and my Longitude $145^{\circ}.25. E.$ '³⁹ These coordinates were in fact on this same upper line (Figure 1, Hovell 16 December 1824)

and were 42 miles east of Hovell's true location at Port Phillip on that day. Hume provided the three following coordinates six days after his return from the expedition in his report, dated 24 January 1825, to Sir Thomas Brisbane:

On Tuesday, 16th November, when in Lat. $36^{\circ} 20'$, Long. $147^{\circ} 25'$, we came on an extensive river [Hume/Murray] ... on the 24th November and 3rd December we fell in with and crossed two more considerable streams, the former of which is in Lat. $36^{\circ} 24'$, Long. $147^{\circ} 10'$; [Mitta Mitta] and the latter, the last stream we crossed before we arrived at Western Port, is in Lat. $37^{\circ} 22'$, Long. $146^{\circ} 25'$ [Goulburn].⁴⁰

On 21 November 1824 Hovell had measured with his perambulator that the Mitta Mitta was four miles from the Hume river.⁴¹ Hume's coordinates placed it 14.3 miles south west of the Hume, a clear error that has been corrected for this particular exercise and is shown in Figure 1. All four of the coordinates—Hume/Murray, Mitta Mitta, Goulburn and Western Port—have been shown with a capital X. Given that Hume's original line was to Western Port and had to accommodate all four of these coordinate readings as well as that of Hume's station, the line of best fit was the upper one to the western shoreline of Western Port as drawn. It shows where the original line must have been present on the Hume skeleton chart. It also demonstrates that none of the four coordinates was instrument based. They were all read off the skeleton chart, a recognised method of estimating coordinates at the time that was referred to as the 'by account' technique in navigation. This means that Hovell did not get his longitude wrong by 'an error of about thirty or forty miles in longitude' as Bland wrote in the 1831 edition of his book⁴² and as became a staple of nineteenth-century historians. Rather, Hovell had read the coordinates off the skeleton chart in front of him on that day, 16 December 1824. By then, the skeleton chart displayed the long path of journey painstakingly drawn on it by the explorers during sixty days of travel. That path was eleven miles from the Western Port on the chart. Hovell had every reason to believe what their path showed him and wrote down the coordinates from it. He immediately proved his reliance on the chart alone by travelling that eleven miles in the south-west direction that it showed to the sea, when he was a mere two miles west of it. He had the option of discovering their correct location by performing an instrument measurement, but he did not do it.

Hovell's later account confirms this interpretation. In 1874 he wrote that 'No observations were taken with the instruments' and blamed Hume: 'Mr. Hume gave me the time so carelessly, that they were of no value even as an approximation.'⁴³ Hume's next step in creating a new destination of Port Phillip was to alter his skeleton chart by rotating its recorded path of journey and all of the inland topographical features with it through 4.5 degrees clockwise in order for the final destination shown to be his version of the western shoreline of Port Phillip rather than Western Port. I have inserted this line in Figure 1 on page 12. This rotation was deliberate and required the skilled use of a pantograph to perform. But Hume's chosen angle of rotation was guesswork because in reality it requires a rotation of 6.0 degrees to get the line of journey to reach the true western shoreline of Port Phillip.

Further evidence that Hume used this technique was that the outlines of Western Port and Wilsons Promontory and all of the coast north of Twofold Bay remained present on the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map in their correct coordinates (Figure 1). Hume did not alter those coastlines because they were already known and could be checked in Sydney; rather, he altered the inland path of journey and all of the topographical features with it, a record of the route travelled that no one could dispute because no one else had been there.

Hume then drew in a version of Port Phillip Bay on his sketch map. The western coastline that he created for it appears to owe key features to the shape of the Western Port shoreline and its sea entrance as they appeared on the skeleton chart in front of him. The dominating form of the Bellarine Peninsula was shown as about one-tenth of its true size, and with a visible sea entrance inaccurately placed nearly due south.

Hume continued to maintain this charade in July 1831 when he published what were purported to be excerpts from his original journal of 1824: 'The entrance from the sea, at least, the place which we supposed to be the entrance, bore by compass S by E ... and a distant view of the ocean was obtained.'⁴⁴ There was no such view of the ocean.

Hovell recorded Hume's vantage point on 17 December as being '4 or 5 miles' from the fresh water that the explorers found at 'Kennedy's Creek' (Hovell's Creek, Lara).⁴⁵ Hovell personally showed the location to the Victorian surveyor general, Alexander Skene, 'near the Bird Rock', when he returned to Geelong in 1853.⁴⁶ He described it fully in 1874: 'We never reached, and never saw, Port Phillip at all. The spot where

we made the saltwater was the Bird Rock, opposite Bird Island, and an inlet of what is now called Corio Bay.⁴⁷ These accounts by Hovell were delineated on a County of Grant, Victoria, surveyed map in 1874,⁴⁸ then personally by Skene for the Department of Lands and Survey in 1879,⁴⁹ and in high detail by that department in 1884.⁵⁰ They confirmed that Hume's vantage point was adjacent to Bird Rock, Point Lillias, Avalon. From that location any potential view of the ocean was blocked entirely by the sixteen-mile-long Bellarine Peninsula all the way to the due east, not merely to south by east. This demonstrated that Hume's description of the ocean view in July 1831 did not come from his journal of 1824 but from what he himself had drawn onto his Hume (Mitchell) sketch map. Hume had to support the map with its false destination of Port Phillip because he had already given it to Thomas Mitchell, as will be shown shortly, and could not alter it.

Hovell left separate evidence that the location was Point Lillias. He recorded bearings that were transcribed by William Bland: N45W to Mt Berry (Mt Buninyong), S45W to 'high land' (Mt Cowley), which were correct for Point Lillias, as was a third bearing of N5W to Mt Woolstonecraft (You Yangs). Bland erred in transcribing this last bearing as N25W, which was to a featureless flat plain. The reading of N10W to Mt Woolstonecraft, taken when Hovell was two miles inland from Point Lillias, was also correct. Bland transcribed two other bearings of N76E to Mt McIntosh (Mt Dandenong) and N85E to Mt Campbell (Mt Beenak) that were correct for the location of Hovell's 'Maredian Altitude' eleven miles north east. The final bearing of N50W to Mt Woolstonecraft was taken half way between there and Bird Rock.⁵¹

John Batman Detected the Deficiencies

These deficiencies were confirmed the first time that a Hume map was used, and by John Batman on his journey to Port Phillip in May 1835 in the sloop *Rebecca*. He carried what must have been the purpose-made Hume (Pettingell) map: 'Mr. Batman reached the hill marked out by Mr. Hume, on his expedition with Howell [Hovell].'⁵² Well before Batman had reached that hill, he had to have observed that the Bellarine Peninsula and the Port Phillip shoreline bore virtually no resemblance to Hume's version of them. The large expanses of the Bellarine Peninsula that Batman wanted to include in the purchase by the Port Phillip Association were not even on the Hume map.

Within two weeks of Batman's return to Launceston on 11 June 1835, a new map had been prepared and handed over to Governor George Arthur on 25 June 1835.⁵³ This new map restored the nine-tenths of the Bellarine Peninsula that had been left off by Hume. The map was based on Flinders chart of 1803, which was freely available commercially and was certain to have been carried to Port Phillip by the experienced master of the *Rebecca*, John Barker Harwood, in order to guide him into the bay.⁵⁴ This discovery also provides the explanation for the odd event of Gellibrand giving away his seemingly valuable Hume (Gellibrand) map to Governor Arthur; it was of no further practical use to him.

Absence of Port Phillip Shoreline

It was evident that Hume's original skeleton chart did not have the western shoreline of Port Phillip drawn onto it despite the fact that Grimes in 1803 had surveyed both it and Western Port. It was present on the Flinders chart of 1803.⁵⁵ Indeed that chart was the basis of all of the coastlines that were copied onto the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map. The draftsman had put in part of the eastern shoreline contiguous with the destination of the western side of Western Port and had left off the rest.

There was logic to the omission. Port Phillip was publicly known to have been dismissed as unsuitable for settlement in 1803 so there was no point in travelling there.⁵⁶ The destination this time was the new frontier, the unknown land side of Western Port.

When did Hume Create the Hume (Mitchell) Map?

Hume had been a confidante of, and explorer with, successive surveyors-general, John Oxley and James Meehan (as a deputy), and could expect to have the same standing with the incoming Thomas Mitchell when he arrived in the colony in September 1827. This was precisely what happened. Hume travelled with Mitchell in December 1827, almost immediately after his arrival, to show him the road to Bathurst he (Hume) had just pioneered.⁵⁷

Mitchell's imminent arrival in September 1827 gave Hume the motive to create a new map showing a destination of Port Phillip. It was in his interests to present Mitchell with a map showing Port Phillip as a *fait accompli* so that it could not be an issue of conjecture. This also happened to be the time when Gellibrand had the longest opportunity to copy the map in turn. The fact that it was drawn on James Whatman paper made in 1825 provides further circumstantial evidence to support

the creation of the new map relatively soon after that year. This was a reckless act, and doomed to failure, unless Hume had control of the whereabouts, or the contents, of the versions of the skeleton chart that had been made during the expedition. Evidence of the existence of these versions is as follows: Alexander Berry asked Hume to see a copy of ‘your journal, the map’ on 2 June 1825;⁵⁸ Hume himself wrote that he took from Hovell ‘my chart of our overland journey ... six and twenty years’ before 1854;⁵⁹ and the explorer Johann Lhotsky used Hovell’s copy of ‘the chart of Mr Howell’s [Hovell’s] journey’ to plan his own journey of exploration on 11 January 1834.⁶⁰

Test of Hume Sketch Maps

Whilst Hume rotated his path of travel and all of the associated topographical features with it by 4.5 degrees to create the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map, this technique should have left the inland topographical features in their same relative positions. This can be shown by comparing Hume’s sketch maps with the written journals at one specific location that contains distinctive topographical features described by the explorers and still readily identifiable. Indeed many still carry the names that were given to them by the explorers in 1824.

The location I have chosen is the immediate vicinity of Mount Disappointment in Central Victoria. The region contained the Twisden (Goulburn) River, King Parrot Creek, Mount Disappointment itself, and Sunday Creek. All were named by Hume and Hovell and were described by Hovell in his original journal. The region is shown in Figure 2. It is a portion of the Hume (Mitchell) sketch map, the earliest and most credible of the three sketch maps. It also shows the then-unnamed Black Swamp Gully and Dry Creek.

Amongst the derivative maps, the Hume (Gellibrand) sketch map did not name Reid’s Creek but showed all of the rest, whilst the Hume (Pettingell) sketch map omitted Reid’s Creek and the southern reaches of Sunday Creek. All three maps show the same path of travel of the journey in this region.



A. Goulburn (Twisden) River. D. Black Swamp Gully.
 B. King Parrot Creek. E. Sunday Creek.
 C. Mt Disappointment. F. Dry Creek.

Figure 2: Hume and Hovell at Mount Disappointment

Hovell described this part of the journey in great detail. His original grammar, spelling and punctuation are replicated in the interests of historical accuracy. On 7 December the party made an attempt to climb to the peak of Mount Disappointment in the hope of seeing the coastal plain, but they did not reach it and returned to King Parrot Creek. They made a second attempt on 9 December and reached the peak but were unable to see through the dense forest and camped on the mountain that night.

Hovell then wrote that they were under pressure to get to the coast before their food ran out: 'we have not been able to penetrate ... across the range ... to have a sufficiency of Flowr left to return to Agrylshire with ... unless we find a Country at the West end of this range.'⁶¹ They resolved to descend the mountain again to King Parrot Creek and find a path through the mountains further to the west: 'Friday 10th ... we set forward on our journey, about 2, oClock, following the Course of the King Parrot Creak down.'⁶² They camped on King Parrot Creek that night and struck a passage towards the west the next day but were blocked by fire: '11th December ... Set forward with intention to Keep about a

West Course, but ... found it advisable to return ... fire and smoke was blown full in our faces'.⁶³

On 12 December they crossed a feature now known as the Murchison Gap: 'we now decanded the Mountain ranges, and took our Course for a remarkable looking Sugar loaf hill ... it bore W. b. S.'⁶⁴ The hill was Mount Piper, which they named, and Hovell gave it that precise bearing in his journal in his unmistakable handwriting. His use of the term 'W. b. S.' meant the navigational west by south, which was one point of the compass, namely 11.25 degrees, south of due west. It was not south west. It meant that the bearing from the Murchison Gap to Mount Piper was 258.75 degrees. The party continued on that bearing, crossed Black Swamp Gully, and reached the confluence of Dry Creek with Sunday Creek (now Broadford). The journey in a direction of W. b. S. was shown on all three of the Hume sketch maps when corrected by 4.5 degrees, as was their reaching this same confluence of creeks and gully (Figure 2). The party stopped at this location: '12th December. at 5 we stoped, haveing travelled 12¼ Miles, beside a Creak which we call Sunday Creak'.⁶⁵ Hovell's journal indicated that the party had traversed precisely 26¾ miles in a forward direction from the night of 9 December to that of 12 December. That fits correctly with the actual distance today.⁶⁶



Figure 3: Georgian Wooden Pocket Compass c.1820 (Courtesy Compass Library, Lancashire, England, at <https://www.compasslibrary.com>)

This shows a typical British Pocket Compass, c. 1820, displaying individual points of the compass, including W. by S. and S. by E. Hovell could read his bearings directly off such a compass.

The eyewitness accounts and sketch maps continue to be consistent in describing the next section of the journey, and Hovell provided similar precision in recounting it. He wrote on 13 December that the party ‘could not cross Sunday Creak, it being too muddey’, and that they were required to travel seven miles along Sunday Creak in a direction of ‘S. b. E’ (11.25 degrees east of due south) before they could find a place to cross.⁶⁷ This provides another precise location of a feature that the party reached. It is now known as Waterford Park.

From there Hovell recorded various explicit topographical features. The party:

passed over several ranges ... at 15 miles ... we came in sight of a plain ... backed in by Mountains—for this place we shaped our course, its bearings being S. by E., distant about seven or eight miles ... we descended the range ... and stoped at the end of 16 Miles beside some waterholes ... the Creak run to the southward.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, Hume made these observations in his journal:

On the 13th we ascended a main, or a dividing range, and saw at a distance of five or six miles, in a S.S.W. direction some extensive plains ... We encamped ... on the bank of a small stream, running to the Southward. This stream was the first met with running in that direction.⁶⁹

Nearly 30 years later, in 1855, Hume added graphically to these observations:

The same day, 13th December, we crossed the dividing range, (now known as the “Big Hill”) and being some distance in advance of the party I observed an opening and fall of land far to the south; thinking the struggle at last won, my heart rose, and I cheered long and loud, most of the men left their cattle, and rushed towards me, Mr. Hovell among the number.⁷⁰

In 1831 Bland pointed out that the last of the ranges was a dividing range: ‘the waters ... on the north side, run to the northward ... Those on the southern side proceed to the southward ... discharge themselves into the sea.’⁷¹

The sole location that matches all of these eye-witness accounts is the watershed peak on the dividing range 1,260 metres south of present-

day Arkells Lane, Wandong–Heathcote Junction (37° 23' 09" S; 145° 00' 47" E.). It is quite distinct on the skyline. The separate north- and south-flowing watercourses are only 200 metres apart. It is fourteen miles from the party's camp of the previous night.

According to Hume the party crossed the dividing range and proceeded for another mile down what is now Eastern Ridge, Wallan, to about the present-day Emilia Court intersection, which is at the distance of fifteen miles as measured by Hovell and must have provided the views ranging from 'S. by E.' (Hovell) through 'far to the south' (Hume) and on to the 'S.S.W' (Hume). One mile further distant, on a bearing of S. by E., was the Merri Creek at about present-day Kelby Lane, Wallan.

This location fits the local topography and is further substantiated by the three Hume sketch maps. The maps indicate that after the party crossed Sunday Creek they moved south west. This would have taken them through a low pass across the range straight in front of them, the obvious route to take as it was the easiest and quickest for the pack animals. It is now part of the current Hume Freeway. (37° 19' 17" S; 145° 02' 16" E). At its top there was another low pass that took them further towards the south as Hume indicated, again the obvious route to take. It followed what is now Broadford–Wandong Road. Immediately upon crossing it there was a third low pass along the valley formed by the tributary of Dry Creek through present-day Wandong–Heathcote Junction. This final valley has at its highest point the watershed ridge south of Arkells Lane. It in turn was the obvious high point for Hume to head for on horseback in front of the party. Hume also showed on his map that the final direction of the party out of the mountains was south by east.

The route through Wandong described here required the crossing of three ranges in accordance with Hovell's 'several ranges'. It was first shown on an official Victorian Department of Lands and Survey map, County of Dalhousie, in 1884.⁷² Herbert Hansford in 1924 referred to the crossing as being 'near Heathcote Junction railway station', which is inclusive of this location,⁷³ as is Alan Andrew's 'Hume's Pass' of 1981.⁷⁴ It also fitted with Hansford's own map of 1924.⁷⁵

The journals and maps were consistent; the explorers had broken free of the Mount Disappointment impasse.

Hume and Hovell Records Misquoted

Some elements of the Hume and Hovell records were misquoted or ignored over time. In 1842 English cartographer John Arrowsmith published a map that purported to show Hume and Hovell's line of journey. He had the party travelling across the top of a feature labelled 'Mt. Piper' although the journals showed they had not, and furthermore Arrowsmith mislabelled it for the current Mt Hickey. He placed the true Mt Piper six miles north of its actual location with no label at all.⁷⁶

Hume himself unintentionally caused a drift in accuracy. He wrote in 1855 that on 12 December 1824 'we came to Sunday Creek, near the present site of Kilmore ... and ... we crossed the dividing range, (now known as the "Big Hill")'.⁷⁷ Hume had never returned to Victoria. These two place names were clearly read off a contemporary map as his reasonable approximations to the original locations. This was confirmed by Hume himself when he wrote in 1867: 'I was by that time as far as "Big Hill", or rather the Dividing Range on my return to New South Wales'.⁷⁸

The eyewitness accounts of both Hume and Hovell provide the evidence that the 'Dividing Range' referred to by Hume was the watershed ridge south of what is now Arkells Lane, Wandong–Heathcote Junction. It was three miles east of what was later named 'Big Hill'.

Hume's casual approximations were accepted as precise locations by seemingly credible nineteenth-century historians. Henry Kingsley wrote in 1865 that Hume 'passed through the town of ... Kilmore' with no citation.⁷⁹ George W. Rusden extended it further in 1871 to: 'Hume passed over at the "Big Hill" on the Kilmore Road', also with no citation.⁸⁰ George Grimm magnified the errors in 1888, and again with no citation: 'The most serious difficulty ... was a boggy creek in the locality where the town of Kilmore now stands ... the Dividing Range, in this part known as the Big Hill, was finally crossed'.⁸¹

Modern Treatment: Errors

If nineteenth-century writers misquoted or ignored the original Hume and Hovell accounts, worse was to come in the 21st century. In June 2015 Victoria's peak authority for protecting heritage, the Heritage Council of Victoria, made a formal Decision that, contrary to the eyewitness accounts left by Hume and Hovell, effectively endorsed a proposition that the party was physically present at a location now known as Monument Hill, Kilmore, on 13 December 1824. This followed the

receipt of public submissions relating to the historical significance of the location. Two such submitters were singled out: ‘In verbal submissions, following evidence led by Ms Goble and Mr McInnes, the Executive Director’s representative submitted that it was probable that Hume and Hovell did climb Monument Hill.’⁸²

Whilst the Decision used the term ‘probable’, the implied degree of uncertainty was minimised and the proposition converted into a citable historical fact by the declaration that ‘a circle of forty (40) metres diameter from the centre of the tower, is of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria’ and thereby protected under the Heritage Act 2017.⁸³

Evidence to the panel was led by Anne Goble and Ken McInnes.⁸⁴ Goble purported to quote William Hovell’s actual journal: ‘took our course for a remarkable looking ~~Shugar~~ Sugar loaf hill It appears clear all on the east side, to the top, but thick of timber on the other sides. It bore WxS’.⁸⁵ While Goble transcribed Hovell’s spelling and punctuation errors, she altered his critical sentence, misconstruing its meaning. Hovell wrote explicitly that the bearing was ‘W. b. S’, meaning one compass point, or the angle of 11.25 degrees, south of due west and, to the lay person, virtually due west. In 1921 Professor Ernest Scott transcribed Hovell’s identification of the location correctly as ‘W. by S’, as did Alan Andrews in 1981.⁸⁶ Goble, however, went on to claim that the misquoted sentence had the following meaning: ‘he [Hovell] is saying they travelled from the top of the Tallarook Ranges in a South Westerly direction for a distance of 8 and a ½ miles’.⁸⁷

This is incorrect. Hovell did not write that the party approached Mt Piper on a south-west bearing, but rather on a W. b. S. bearing, namely 11.25 degrees south of due west. Hovell’s location when he measured Mt Piper to be at a bearing of W. b. S. was at the northern edge of the Murchison Gap, a low pass between Mt Disappointment and Mt Hickey. That direction took the party across Black Swamp Gully and to the junction of Dry Creek and Sunday Creek, where Hume and Hovell wrote that they camped on the night of 12 December 1824. This exact location was shown on all three of the Hume sketch maps (Figure 2).

Goble also misconstrued the directions in Hovell’s journal for the next day, 13 December 1824, and altered them to read: ‘for this place we shaped our course, it’s bearing being SxE dis about 7 or 8 miles’.⁸⁸ Hovell did not write ‘SxE’, he wrote quite plainly in his own hand in his

journal 'S by E', meaning one point, or the small angle of 11.25 degrees, east of due south. This alteration to the record was followed by an additional obfuscation: 'The noted rock change we believe to be the volcanic bluestone rock (basalt), located through the Bald Hills, NxE of Kilmore'. None of 'WxS', 'SxE' or 'NxE' are terms known to navigation. They do not mean either south west, south east or north east. With these alterations to Hovell's journal exposed and the resulting errors revealed, Goble and McInnes's conclusions about the explorers' location fall apart. Hume and Hovell were miles away from Monument Hill on 13 December 1824.

The faults in Goble and McInnes's evidence could have been identified with elementary checks against the original journals. Hovell wrote that the distance between the campsite on Mt Disappointment on 9 December and their campsite at Sunday Creek on 12 December was the precise distance of 26³/₄ miles.

If the party had indeed approached Mt Piper from the south west across the Tallarook Ranges, then the equivalent distance back to the Mt Disappointment camp was 38.8 miles, twelve miles too far. Furthermore, Hovell measured that the party had travelled sixteen miles from their camp of 12 December to that of 13 December 1824. If they had left from the campsite purported by Goble and McInnes to be north of Broadford and had travelled via Monument Hill, then their camp at the end of the sixteen miles on 13 December would have been near McKercher's Lane Bylands, still on the northern side of the divide, not in a valley, and nowhere near a south-flowing creek.

The Heritage Council of Victoria panellists made two site inspections of Monument Hill in 2014 and 2015.⁸⁹ Perhaps they were misled by the large sign beside the monument that repeats the words used by Hamilton Hume one mile south of Wandong–Heathcote Junction on 13 December 1824, just after he had crossed the dividing range: 'being some distance in advance of the party I observed an opening and fall of land far to the south; thinking the struggle at last won.'⁹⁰ The sign makes the erroneous claim that these words were said at that very location on Monument Hill, seven miles from the true location.

The panellists could have seen for themselves the fatal defects in the evidence put before them. By standing on the top step leading to the monument and turning south, they would have been at about the eye level of a seated horse rider. They would have found that their view

to the south was fully blocked by the rising ground of the same ridge immediately to the south, and additionally by forest.

That forest was still present in 1911 when John Monash (later General Sir John) produced the first survey map of the region for the Easter Manoeuvres on the Kilmore Plains.⁹¹ The forest was also present when the land was set aside for a town reserve and commonage for Kilmore in 1861,⁹² and it was present in December 1824.

If, hypothetically, Hamilton Hume had been able to stand at a height of 7.3 metres (as measured by the top of today's monument), he still could not have seen over the forest to the coastal plains that he sought. If he had risen another ten metres above that, the view would have been one of continuous forest across the Big Hill (Pretty Sally Hill) complex, stretching along the Plenty Ranges all the way to Mt Dandenong and as far south as Port Phillip Bay. He would have seen no coastal plains from this location, just endless dense forest to battle through. The party, already demoralised and running low on supplies, would have had no choice but to abandon the trip and return to New South Wales as failures.

Proximity to Monument Hill

Hume and Hovell did travel near to Monument Hill, Kilmore, but that was on their return journey. William Bland wrote that on 22 December 1824 Hume and Hovell 're-cross[ed] the Jullian Range by the same pass by which they had entered ... on the 13th ... and camped on Sunday Creek near ... a small stony range stretching obliquely.'⁹³ That small stony range was five miles north of Broadford. Hamilton Hume's maps (Figure 2) in fact show that the party travelled not by the 'same pass' of Bland, but along Dry Creek, Kilmore East, to get there. In doing so they came within about 1.4 kilometres of Monument Hill to the east, but that was as close as they ever got to it.

Putting the Record Straight

The Heritage Council of Victoria has been the unwitting victim of the misunderstanding and alteration of William Hovell's journal. The Hume and Hovell journey is of seminal significance in the history of Victoria, New South Wales and Australia. It would be a travesty of historical accuracy if this Decision, endorsing even the remotest possibility that Hume and Hovell were physically present at Monument Hill on 13 December 1824, were not overturned under the provisions of the

Heritage Act.⁹⁴ This should be done both for the credibility of the HCV itself and because of the imminent bi-centenary of the Hume and Hovell journey in 2024, when the rest of Australia will take historical accuracy for granted.

The Three Sketch Maps

The three Hamilton Hume sketch maps have had eventful lives central to the exploration history of New South Wales and Victoria. The earliest map, the Hume (Mitchell) map, began life when Hamilton Hume chose to alter the destination of Western Port shown on his 1824 explorer's skeleton map to Port Phillip on this new map. Hume's narrow purpose was to prove that he alone knew that he had reached Port Phillip rather than Western Port. The need for the alteration arose because a draftsman had left the western shoreline of Port Phillip off the skeleton map. This simple omission bedevilled Hume and Hovell. It resulted in their misidentification of Port Phillip, the abortive settlement at Western Port in 1826, their loss of reputation, and years of deception by Hume. However, it did arguably have the dramatic effect of ensuring that Victoria began its existence as a free state and not as a convict settlement once the Western Port settlement had failed in 1827. This same map was used personally by Sir Thomas Mitchell during his journey of exploration of Australia Felix in 1836.

The next two maps were commissioned by Joseph Tice Gellibrand. His Hume (Pettingell) map was used personally by John Batman during his first trip to Port Phillip in May 1835. Batman discovered that the western side of the bay as represented on the map bore virtually no relationship to the true Port Phillip shoreline, and a new map had to be created immediately to reflect accurately the area of land purchased by Gellibrand's Port Phillip Association. The commissioning of the new map allowed Gellibrand to make a gift of his earlier Hume (Gellibrand) map to Governor George Arthur. The evidence associated with Gellibrand's commissioning and use of the two maps between 1827 and 1835 demonstrates that he had a far greater role in the settlement of Victoria than John Batman.

The misrepresentations and errors of interpretation associated with the journey and the maps continued for nearly two centuries. In 1855, Hume himself published a casual approximation to the location on the Great Dividing Range of his first view of the coastal plains of Port Phillip in 1824. This resulted in 157 years of wrangling, culminating in

the erroneous declaration by the Heritage Council of Victoria in 2015 that the location was further inland where there is no view of the coastal plains. Hume's crossing of the Great Dividing Range on 13 December 1824 was the critical point of the entire journey because it demonstrated to the doubting party members that they had succeeded in their quest. The location, now accurately identified, is as important to the history of Victoria as is Mt Disappointment, yet it remains unrecognised and unnamed.

The rich story of the three Hamilton Hume sketch maps can now enter the historical record of Victorian exploration and settlement and, in the process, correct some previous misunderstandings and misrepresentations.

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