

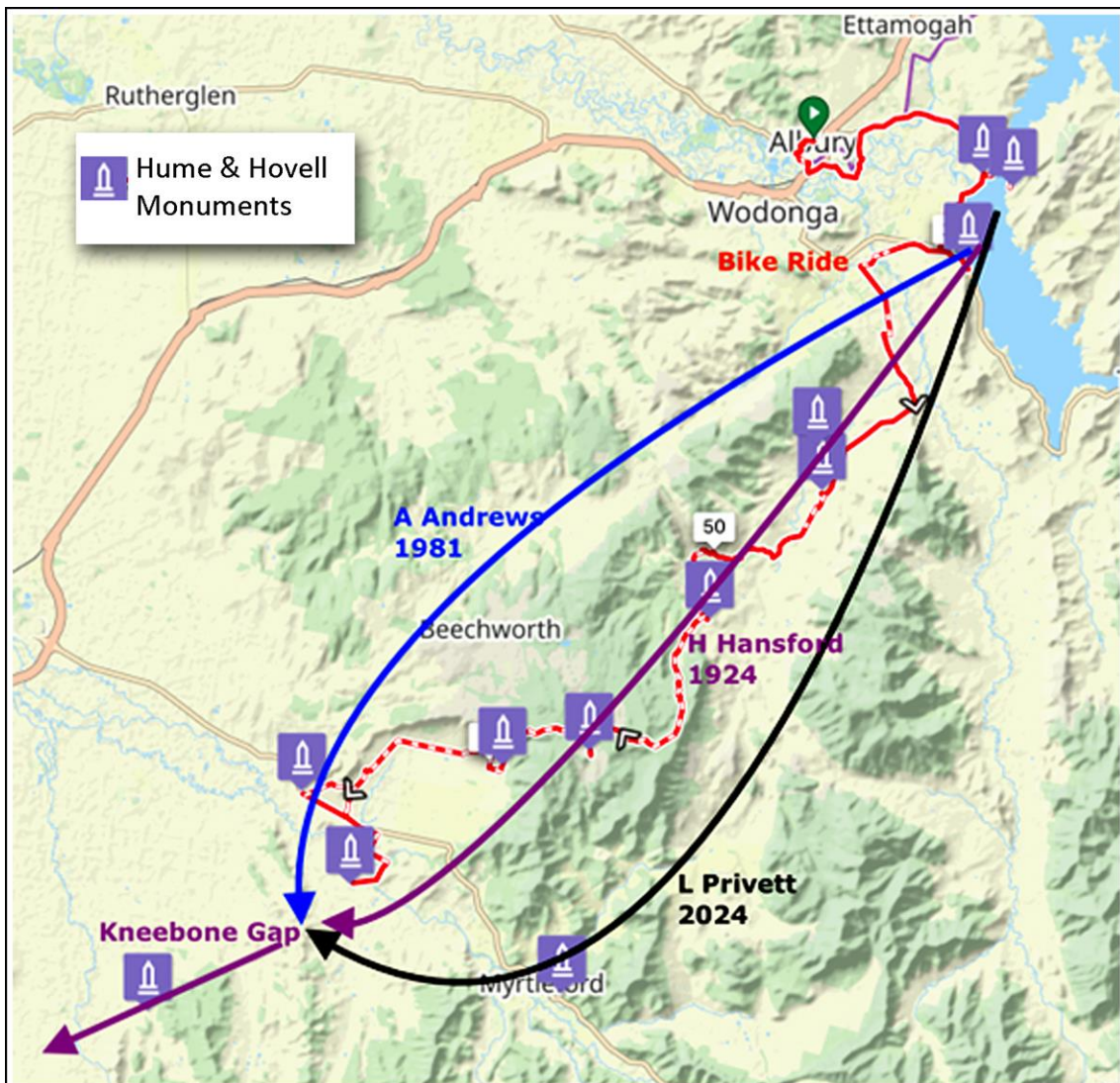
Hume and Hovell: Which way did they go?

Greg Absler and Peter Harper

The Hume and Hovell expedition of 1824 was truly an epic Australian exploration. Hamilton Hume, William Hovell and their six servants faced many challenges on their journey of 1900 kilometres to find an inland route from Sydney to Melbourne. The group assembled in Appin on October 3 and travelled to Hume's outstation at Gunning. From here the exploration of the southern lands to Western Port at Bass Strait began on October 17, 1824 and three months later, on January 18, 1825, they returned emaciated but alive.

On November 16, one month after leaving Gunning NSW, a fine fast-flowing river was reached. Being 80 metres wide and with no boat their southward progress was halted. They named it the Hume River (Murray). After several days of searching, they located a place to cross upstream of Albury, above its junction with the Mitta River.

In 1924, H Hansford¹, surveyor for Victoria, produced a fine map of their journey through Victoria and interpreted Hovell's diary to indicate that they camped on Yackandandah Creek near Osbornes Flat, and continued on past Yackandandah, climbed the range via Back Creek to camp just east of Stanley on November 23. From there they crossed the Dingle Range and descended via Burgoigee Creek to the Ovens River downstream of Whorouly.



Hansford's map formed the basis for local communities to erect the centenary monuments at prominent places near Bellbridge, Ebdon, Staghorn Flat, Allens Flat, Stanley, Murmungee, Everton and Whorouly. Monuments were also built at Myrtleford and Mt Buffalo although these places were not deemed to be on the route.

However, Alan Andrews suggested an alternative routeⁱⁱ. He proposed a more westerly route that followed Middle Creek for 12 kilometres after crossing the Kiewa River and camped near Leneva Gap. They climbed the plateau to camp next at Reedy Creek near Beechworth. Perhaps this may be so, for in 1853, Hovell stated that they "crossed over the very ground where the Gold has been found in such large quantities, namely Reid's [Reedy] Creek." Andrews' view is that their route most likely passed by Beechworth and then dropped into the Murmungee Basin via Horseshoe Gap to follow the Burgoigee Creek to the Ovens River near Whorouly. Perhaps the Everton monument supports this route.

A third option is provided by Leigh Privett, a retired surveyor of Stanley. He maps their course more along the easier valley followed by the Yackandandah-Myrtleford Road to meet the Ovens River at its junction with the Buffalo River. The monument at Myrtleford could indicate this route.

Martin Williamsⁱⁱⁱ examined Hume's sketch map thoroughly in his paper about the route near Kilmore. Recently he reviewed Hume's map for this section between the Hume and Ovens Rivers and with his distance measuring technique he matched the distances to the journal descriptions. He showed their journey followed the traditional route by Hansford. Later he references a map of AJ Skene 1872^{iv} that clearly shows the route travels via the Yackandandah Creek Valley and over the Mt Stanley Range.

Is the problem solved? Well yes except for Hovell's 1853 reference that they passed via the Reed's Creek gold fields.

The commemorative bike ride follows the line of monuments, the Hansford's route.

i State Library of Victoria, Maps collection

ii Hume and Hovell, Alan J Andrews 1981

iii North Central Review, Kilmore, July 1921

iv Map of Victoria / constructed and engraved at the Surveyor General's Office; G.A. Windsor, draughtsman; William Slight, engraver. AJ Skene surveyor