

Wandong History Group

Hamilton Hume and William Hovell, 13th December 1824, Wandong

Hamilton Hume and Captain William Hovell began their journey towards Wandong on the morning of the 13th December, 1824, They set out from the junction of Sunday Creek and Dry Creek, Broadford, where they had camped the previous night. They named the main stream Sunday Creek and the distinctive Sugarloaf peak overlooking them Mount Piper.

The party was running short of food and there was a great urgency to get free of the Great Dividing Range surrounding them and on to the coastal plains. Hume saw low hills to their south that promised a passage through the mountains so he led them in that direction. The party was forced to travel for seven miles along Sunday Creek in a South by East direction (nearly due South), before they could find a crossing over its muddy banks at the now Waterford Park.

From there, Hume led the party through a series of low passes between the hills, the first was to the north-west and the next two trended south. This path led them straight through the middle of the future Wandong township during the afternoon of the 13th December, 1824.

Hume continued towards the lowest part of the mountain range that he could see in front of him. He was on horseback scouting ahead of the party and took them across that lowest point, Hume's Pass, that is 1260 metres south of the now Arkells Lane, Wandong. Hume still could not see forward through the eucalypt canopy but was going downhill, a promising sign.

He led the party for another mile beyond Hume's Pass to what is now Eastern Ridge, Wallan, to about the present-day Emilia Court intersection. This is at the distance of fifteen miles as measured by Hovell from their Broadford camp of the night before.

This was the most dramatic part of the journey. Hume found a break in the canopy and the party could see views ranging from 'S. by E.' (Hovell) through 'far to the south' (Hume) and on to the 'S.S.W' (Hume).

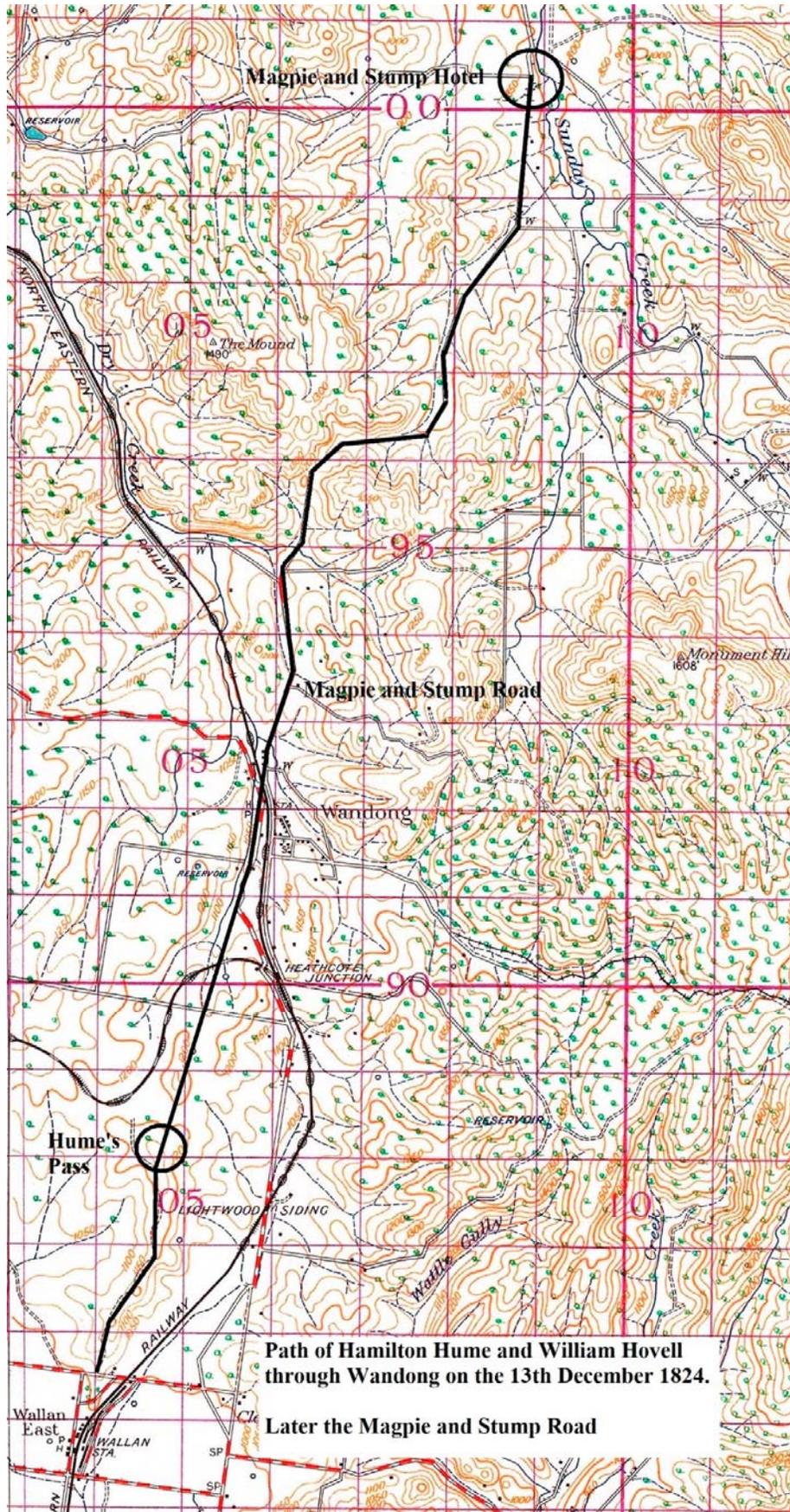
This caused great rejoicing. They had reached the end of the mountains and they could see the coastal plains laying before them. Their entire trip was now vindicated and a success.

All of the previous facts have been demonstrated in a 2021 Royal Historical Society of Victoria research paper, Hamilton Hume Sketch Maps, Origins and Current Usage. [1]

The track taken by Hume was used again as soon as European settlers reached this area from 1838 onwards.

By 1855 the area was well established with large pastoral runs. In that year the Surveyor General's Department of Victoria produced a map that shows all of the runs from Mount Piper, then owned by Emily Gavan; through Sunday Creek, Glenburnie Run that was level with Waterford Park, The Dean Run the next south, and then Broadhurst Run, Wandong.

The map shows the route taken by Hume through the same series of low passes in 1824, through the middle of Wandong and across Hume's Pass to the now Wallan East. [2].



Path of Hamilton Hume and William Hovell through Wandong on the 13th December 1824.

Later the Magpie and Stump Road

This same path came to be known as the Magpies and Stump Road, and later still the bulk of the Wandong-Broadford Road. Much of it was intact in 1916 and can be seen on the Army Survey map of 1916 that is shown above.

The low passes between adjoining hills can be seen quite clearly against the contours just north of Wandong in this map. [3]

The southern end of the road was still intact in 1913 as a track and was shown by the later General Sir John Monash in the survey that he conducted in 1913. [4]

Wandong thus became was the second future town in Victoria that Hume and Hovell trekked through, but it was the crucial passage across Wandong's Hume's Pass that guaranteed the success of the entire journey.

That made Wandong central to the success of the journey of Hamilton Hume and William Hovell from Gunning in New South Wales to Geelong on Port Phillip Bay in 1824.

[1] Martin Williams, Hamilton Hume Sketch Maps: Origins and Modern Treatment, Victorian Historical Journal, Volume 92, Number 1, June 2021

[2] Run361, Western Port District; Alexandra ... Panyule, Public Record Office of Victoria, Historic Plan Collection, VPRS 15899, VPRS8168, c 1855.
<https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/5B0130F6-F844-11E9-AE98-CD1903FEBFEE?image=1>.

[3] Map, Kinglake, South J55 M/I, Australian Section, Imperial General Staff, War Office, 1916, State Library of Victoria, MAPS VP820A 1916.

[4] Map, Wallan and Donnybrook Districts; Monash John L., 1913, Historic Plan Collection (VPRS8168), M/DEF127. Public Records Office of Victoria.

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Ocean Grove Vic

13th January, 2023.