

A Potted History Of North East Victoria

Based on

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¹North of Rutherglen in the Gooramadda-Howlong area, Major Mitchell had crossed the Murray River on his return journey to Sydney in 1836. Even prior to Mitchell, squatters had moved into Victoria further upstream. In 1835, Mackillop and Macfarlane moved up the Mitta Mitta tributary to establish a run further south in Lake Omeo district. Charles Ebden was the first to take up a run in the north-east; during 1835 he established the Mungabareena run on the north bank of the Murray at the present site of Albury. Within weeks Ebden had crossed the Murray and established the Bonegilla run on the flats between the Mitta and Little River (Kiewa). With Ebden were William Wyse and James Gullifer; the latter established a run just south of Rutherglen in 1844.

During Mitchell's 1836 trek, Spalding attempted to settle Thologolong on the Murray above the junction with the Mitta Mitta; Vardy moved into this run in 1837 because Spalding had been forced to retreat temporarily when aborigines killed two of his men. West of that run, Waite took up Bungil, east of Mt Granya, with Jobbins at Talgarno, further west on the banks of the Mitta Mitta junction and Cobham to the south along that tributary at Wagra. Down the Murray past the Bonegilla run and the Kiewa tributary, Charles Huon squatted at Wodonga and in 1837 built the Baranduda homestead.

Not that Mitchell's tracks were unused even in 1836; while overlanding cattle to the year-old Port Phillip settlement, Hepburn, Gardiner and Hawdon met some of Mitchell's party at Gundagai. The overlanders followed Mitchell's tracks to Howlong, skirted the Indigo Creek, named the Black Dog Creek where Hawdon shot a black dingo, and crossed the Ovens where Wangaratta now stands.

²However, the route taken by some overlanders changed in 1837. Brodribb crossed the Murray at Albury not Howlong, followed in general today's main rail-road route, crossed the Indigo, continued through the gap in the ranges to the site of Chiltern, and over Black Dog Creek to rejoin the Major's line at Rocky Water Holes Creek. Although John Conway Bourke, the first Melbourne to the Murray mailman, still crossed at Howlong in 1838, many overlanders preferred the new route. Among these Joseph Slack drove his stock from Goulburn to graze them for a few months at Barnawartha during a drought in 1837 (the Indigo Crossing was included in this run). East of Slack Osborne squatted at Yackandandah, south of Wodonga (thus Osborne's Flat today). On the Ovens that year, the first to settle was Bowman at Tarrawingee and Hillas occupied land further upstream at Myrtle Creek (Myrtleford). Near the latter run Hume and Hovell had crossed in 1824; their name for the Ovens River was retained and Hume named the plains to the south after his friend, Surveyor Oxley, ere they moved on to cross the King River, a tributary that joins the Ovens at Wangaratta.

The year 1838 saw rapid settlement. Downstream from Wangaratta, Faithful settled Bontharambo Plain, north of the Ovens; in April Aborigines killed eight of his stockmen at the Broken River (Benalla) and some settlers joined in a punitive attack on tribes in the area; in June

1 P 879

2 P 880

further trouble with Aborigines forced Faithful to move upstream to Oxley's plains where he later named his homestead Wangaratta. This allowed the Docker family to settle Bontharambo in September, but the well-known mansion was not built until 1858 after goldrush prosperity; peacefully settled, too, for Docker had friendly relations with Aborigines while, upstream, Faithful continued to have strife with them. So busy was the Ovens Crossing (Wangaratta) in 1838 that Rattray commenced operating a punt, charging 12s per trip, as a sideline to his sly-grog store on the south bank. The same year, Clarke established the Ovens Crossing Station there, bought out Rattray's store next year, and later built the Hope Inn and operated a larger punt.

Another 1838 arrival was Dr Mackay who established Myrree between King and Fifteen Mile Creek to the west. At the suggestion of his brother-in-law, Hume, Mackay had moved to the area (both had married Dight sisters whose brothers bought land at the first Collingwood land sales and built a water mill on the Yarra). Mackay, also clashed with the Aborigines and withdrew. When he returned, Chisholm had taken Myrree so Mackay moved up the Ovens towards its tributary, Buffalo River, for the Whorouly run. Again Aborigines caused trouble burning a hut and killing a servant in 1840, but Mackay persisted and later purchased other nearby runs. Near Myrtleford, Forlonge settled Happy Valley in 1838; further up past the Buckland tributary he also took up Wondillegong (including the site of Bright) in 1845, the same year in which Buckland himself took up the junction where German Creek joins the Ovens from the east (thus Germantown of the gold era).

³North-east from Wangaratta, David Reid established Carraragarmungee in 1838 on Reid's Creek corrupted to Reedy Creek, which flows from near Beechworth to the Ovens. On this creek, the 1853 Woolshed goldfield was so named because Cropper, en route to settle Laceby, south of Wangaratta, had to build a shed there in which to shear his sheep. Reid later held other stations including Lower Yackandandah; there in 1845 he was excavating a water race for his flour mill when workers found gold. Reid, a typical squatter, derided the discovery refusing to believe that gold existed in Australia; after the rush had invaded his property, he sold Yackandandah to purchase Barnawartha where he built The Hermitage.

North of Carraragarmungee in 1839, Baker established Barambogie which included the site of Chiltern. ... In 1842 Baker changed the name of his run to Eldorado, hence the name for the 1855 goldrush township on Reedy Creek.

Albury had so developed that in 1838 it was surveyed as a township. Here in June, the Kingchington family first crossed the Murray on the way to Kergunia in the Kiewa Valley. Opposite Kergunia, on the east bank, Hume's nephew, Charles Barber, took up Gundorunga. Through this association Kingchington worked with the Dwight brothers in the building of the Yarra mill before he established the Thilingananga run for himself south of Yackandandah in 1845. Other 1838 Kiewa settlers were J Smith at Tangambalanga and J Roberts at Dederang. Roberts also took up Bungonia on the left bank of the Mitta Mitta with D Johnston at Bethanga on the opposite bank the same year. William Wyse had settled in this valley with his brother James at Noorongong in 1837, where Mackay's stock grazed after the retreat from Myrree. Only in 1840 did Wyse take up his own station at Mitta Mitta south of Yabba. Yabba itself was settled in 1838 by Redfern, as was Tallandoon by Lockart and Clarke and Tallangatta by T Walker. Near Guy's Forest, the Guy (or Guise) brothers settled Towong and Walwa in 1838. The same year McLeod leased Burrowye, east of Thologolong, and the Shelley family the Tintaldra, Cudgewa and Wermalong runs; hence the name for Shelley township. ...

... 1844 ...

In the same period the western borders of the region and the southern part of the King were Plains west of Wangaratta, Futter's Range was renamed Warby's. ...

⁴By 1843, the Ovens Crossing had Clarke's slab and bark Hope Inn on the south bank and an opposition store on the north, Albury boasted a Hume Inn, a Commercial Inn and a population of 50 and between Echuca and Corryong it was estimated 149 squatting runs had been occupied.

...

In 1851 a sale notice of the Tarrawingee property claimed that nearby Wangaratta had a population of 400 with Mail twice a week from Melbourne in 26 hours. According to the 1851 census, the population of the Benalla district, which incorporated far more than the Upper Murray region was 3,060. In the Upper Murray region itself the only Government school was at Wangaratta. ...

Gold discoveries changed the population picture. Ironically one of David Reid's former shepherds is credited with the first strike in the region in 1852; on one of Reid's properties, in the May Day Hills, J. Meldrum found gold at Spring Creek, a tributary of Reid's Creek, near the stone bridge crossed as one enters Beechworth. ⁵In November a rush occurred on Reid's creek; another of Reid's shepherds, Howell, was assisting two Californian prospectors when Reid rode up to find that middling luck consisted of a pint pannikin of gold. Although this Woolshed rush was first limited by water problems and did not boom until 1854, by November 1852 8,000 people had camped on the Spring Creek-Reid's Creek-Pennyweight Flats fields. During 1853 other finds in the area included Nine Mile Creek (Stanley) and Yackandandah, another of Reid's holdings. The discovery of gold was now welcomed to halt the population exodus to New South Wales fields. Reid quickly profited by selling goods and buying gold in a hut by his Creek. In 1854 more finds were made along the Creek past Woolshed to Eldorado, yet the 1854 census unreliable gave the population of Eldorado-Beechworth-Yackandandah-Kiewa goldfields as only 2,814 Europeans. Later figures for these fields were: 10,671 Europeans in 1857, 11,377 in 1861, 13,027 in 1871. Included in these were figures for Beechworth. Now developing rapidly, Beechworth in 1853 was surveyed as a township where a Roads District Board was established in 1856; by 1860 the Post Office and powder magazine had been built, and buildings of the 1860s included the Burke Museum in memory of Robert O'Hara Burke; in charge of Beechworth police from 1855 till he led the tragic trans-Australia trek in 1860-61.

The Dockers also profited from the increased population. At the height of the Beechworth rush they would drive 30-40 bullocks from Bontharambo to the goldfields every two or three days to sell at over £10 per head. However they rode home through the bush to avoid robbers. ... Although the 1861 census gave Beechworth mining district population as 23,361, the district included Ovens River, Chiltern, and Rutherglen fields.

On the Ovens, the Harrietville rush began in 1852, and in 1853 a rush to the Buckland valley occurred. On the Buckland in 1857 fierce anti-Chinese riots broke out; depressing working conditions in water encouraged disease and, as the field lacked most social refinements, violence erupted. The 1856 rushes were to Morse's and Growler's Creeks, Wandiligong, situated near the confluence of those streams, was called Growler's Creek until 1872, and Bright lies at the junction of Morse's Creek and the Ovens. Another 1856 strike occurred at Myrtle Creek, a crossing on the Beechworth-Buckland route; later strikes were made along the Buffalo river. In 1858 Myrtleford township was surveyed. By 1861, Myrtleford had a population of 176, 130 lived on the Buffalo River and Myrtle Creek gold workings, 160 on the Upper Ovens, 994 on the Buckland and 1,388 at Morse's and Growler's Creeks. However the Buckland field began to decline and next year the County Court moved to Morse's Creek (Bright). Not until 1879 did Wandiligong's population begin to fall, two years after a new school had been erected for a peak population.

4 P 882

5 P 883

... ⁶Rutherglen was named after the Scottish home-town of J.A. Wallace who owned the Star Hotel on that hill and other Star Hotels in various north-eastern mining towns. By 1861 the district had a population of 2,586 and a bridge was built over the Murray at Wahgunyah. From some 5,000 people in 1862, the population declined within a decade, as the alluvial gold dwindled to 2,894 in 1871. Later goldfields included Edi on the King River; the Mitta Mitta gold workings at Wombat Creek, Snowy Creek and Granite Flat (990 people in the 1871 census); the Upper Murray goldworkings at Thougla, Wabba and Tube Creeks (540 people in the 1882 census) and Dartmouth on the Mitta Mitta in 1884.

To serve the goldfields, river transport developed to overcome the difficulties of overland transport. When Mary Docker went to a Melbourne school about 1842, the journey took four days; travel to Melbourne from Beechworth or Rutherglen goldfields could have taken twenty-four hours by coach; however the more cumbersome wagons, such as those transporting dancing girls to work as partners in saloons attached to hotels, would take eight to ten days to reach Wahgunyah from Melbourne. To meet the need of bulk transport to the goldfields, paddle steamers began moving up the Murray in 1853. The township of Carlyle was surveyed as a port in 1853 with three-chain roads radiating towards Chiltern and Wangaratta; but the port that emerged in 1856 was Wahgunyah a half-mile downstream, a private township development by John Foord who had arrived there in 1839 and later built a mill near the bridge. ...

⁷Wodonga-Albury was the last port of call beyond which paddle steamers did not venture. In 1854 Wodonga was credited with a population of 34, growing to 214 in 1857 with another 68 in the suburbs. As an indication of the importance of Wodonga, the 1856 statistics for the port of Belvoir were: imports £407,314, exports £05,097 (the gold being transported overland to Melbourne). The official name Belvoir was changed back to Wodonga when a separate shire was created in 1876. Despite customs regulations between protectionist Victoria and free-trade New South Wales⁸ until Federation and although railway transport replaced river steamers, Wodonga has continued to grow from 188 (1861) to 8,640 (1966) especially because of recent industrial development.

The main Benalla-Wangaratta-Wodonga railway line was completed by 1873; in 1876 Wangaratta was linked with Beechworth and this line extended to Yackandandah in 1891; along the Ovens the Wangaratta-Myrtleford line opened in 1883 and was extended to Bright in 1891; from Springhurst a branch line opened to Wahgunyah in 1879 and the river transport began gradually to decline from the 1870 s.

...

⁹Following the 1872 Act, the [Education] Department in its first decade faced an increasing demand for schools in the Upper Murray Region as settlement developed under the *Land Selection Acts* of the 1860 s; during the 1870 s, Shires were proclaimed in the Towong and Yarrawonga districts as the population of each increased by more than 1000 people. By contrast, Beechworth's goldfield's population declined. Even before selection land sales had encouraged settlement. Under an 1854 Act a squatter gained the pre-emptive right to select and buy 640 acres on his run at £1 per acre and the Dockers first took advantage of this at Bontharambo Plains; the same year John Foord, having resumed the Wahgunyah lease in 1852, used his right to purchase land for a private township and developed the town as a Murray River port. Town lots had been sold in Wangaratta since 1849; in 1858-60 nearby country lots were also offered for sale in what is now Milawa, at Hurdle Creek, Bobinawarra, Oxley and Moyhu. Selection later increased the area sold and by 1878 the following areas were alienated or held under license; around Wangaratta; upstream along the King; downstream along the Ovens to the Murray; along the Murray from Yarrawonga to above Albury (but with only a scattered selection in the Upper Murray around Towong and Corryong); along the

6 P 884

7 P 885

8 To escape a border poll tax, cattle were swum across the Murray.

9 P 887

Murray tributaries, Kiewa and Mitta Mitta; the Ovens to Myrtleford and the Barwidgee Creek north of that township. An example of selection under the 1862 Act is around Corryong, where selection began in 1865. Under the 1865 Act, Whitfield and Greta on the King were examples of the areas selected. Examples of the 1869 Act are Killawarra, Taminick, and Bontharambo Hills. Later settlement under the 1898 *Closer Settlement Act* occurred, for example, around Whitfield again and population figures for the Oxley shire reflect the resulting growth at the turn of the century. The 1871 ratepayer s list in the North Ovens (Wangaratta) Shire illustrates the impact of selection; in the Estcourt Riding forty-two ratepayer s were listed as farmers whereas only Alfred Bould titles himself a squatter; diversification was even more apparent in the Central Riding, closer to the Eldorado goldfield [45 farmers, 2 squatters, 1 dairyman, 2 gardeners, 4beershop keepers, 2 publicans, 4 shopkeepers, 9 carriers, 1 clergyman, 2 diggers, 1 ginger-beer manufacturer, 2 millers, 3 carpenters, 9 laborers and 1 seamstress).

It was in this period of agricultural settlement that the railway era, already mentioned, developed. To serve the Yarrawonga settlement a branch line was built from Benalla in 1886. Because of closer settlement on the Upper Murray, the Wodonga-Tallangatta line was constructed in 1891, but it was not until 1921 that this line was extended to Cudgewa. Special mention must be made of Victoria s narrow gauge line between Whitfield and Wangaratta in 1899 and in service until 1953. Road competition also closed the Beechworth-Yackandandah line in 1954 and has eliminated passenger services on other lines e.g. to ¹⁰Beechworth, Bright and Wahgunyah. Construction of the Benalla-Wodonga railway in 1873 caused the main road of the Region to be re-routed. West of Faithful s Oxley Plains on the King River lay the Myrree straddling Fifteen Mile Creek, and on this creek-crossing Greta township was surveyed in 1853. From Greta, two three-chain roads were surveyed, one to Beechworth via the Tarrawingee punt and the other via Whorouly to Bright. In 1873 the railway was constructed through the Glenrowan Gap west of Greta, and the main road then followed the main line. No longer was Beechworth on the main Sydney-Melbourne route although it continued to be the centre of the region until the turn of the century.

Although Greta ... to this depressed area of the King Valley came Ellen Kelly (nee Quinn) and her eight children, including Ned aged twelve, in 1867; they settled on a selection four miles west of Greta. ... the inability of the Quinns and Kellys to make an economic success of their small farms must be emphasized; the hatred of the police was not just Irish nationalism, but the result of selector hatred of the squattocracy who controlled Parliament and the troopers. ...

¹¹It was in the Ovens Valley late last century that the cultivation of tobacco and hops was established. Hops were first grown in this region in 1860 and tobacco is reported to have been grown earlier in the Buckland valley by Chinese during an opium shortage. By 1917 flue-curing of tobacco leaf had mostly replaced the old method of air-curing and since 1902 experimental plots had been planted at Edi, Beechworth, Whitfield and Gapstead. Between 1920-30 experiments continued on the Government nursery at Wahgunyah, a Government tobacco research station was at last opened on leased land at Myrtleford in 1938, but not until 1952 was the present Myrtleford site purchased. As early as 1856 the Mansfield family began travelling and guiding to Mount Buffalo; by 1910 the State Government had opened a chalet on the plateau.

... population of what was to become Towong Shire had reached 2,274 in 1871 and 3,310 in 1881. Obviously the increased population was due to selection as well as to later goldrushes in this shire: land settlement townships included Corryong, Tintaldra, Towong and Tallangatta: gold-rush townships included Mitta Mitta and Granite Flat.

... Beechworth was another mining district where a general population decline was noticeable over the century.

¹⁰ P 888

¹¹ P 889

Town	1857	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1954	1961	1966
Beechworth	3,042	2,866	2,399	2,528	2,550	3,409	3,153	3,508	3,555
Wangaratta	583				2,621				15,188
¹² Eldorado			517	243	398			251	
Harrietville			80	67	411			90	
Wodonga		359	788 ¹³		909		5,259		8,640

... dredging which had commenced in Harrietville in 1899 and in 1906 the boom spread to Wandiligong. Soon there were fifty dredges working the Ovens River between Porepunkah and Harrietville: the industry helped produce the district's first millionaire (Pearson Tewkesbury, OBE, 1869-1953 was later associated with a taxi company). Another ten dredges worked the Buckland Valley where the population jumped from 86 (1901) to 344 (1911). Largest dredge in the area was the Tronoh working in the Harrietville area 1941-47; it was the last Ovens dredge to operate and in 1956 it was shipped to Malaya for tin mining. The Red Robin mine near Mt Hotham, found by William Spargo in 1941, was still in production in 1971.

... ¹⁴in 1934 the first stage of the Hume Weir was completed and a second stage added in the 1950s
...

... ¹⁵Wandiligong School opened on 24th September under James Brookes. He had neither training nor previous experience but worked hard and became a qualified teacher by July 1862.

... In April 1876 tenders were called for a substantial brick building to house the 200 children. That of Grieg and Wilson for £1,270 plus £25 for extra roofing was accepted and the new school was opened on 28th February 1877. A fourteen inch brass bell was placed in the tower.

... Hillsborough¹⁶ was established on 1st March 1868. Its average attendance was 19 boys 11 girls. The school closed on 31st December 1897. The school was in Yackandandah Shire.

... Bethanga¹⁷ on 20th of September 1876, a petition from M. Keogh and others asked that a school be established in the mining township of Bethanga. The department leased the Bethanga Hall from R. Cole for £1 weekly, and in this building SS1883 Bethanga opened on 26th of July 1877. George Forman was HT in that year. In September 1877 there were 134. Later the school was conducted for some years in the 50ftx35ft Wesleyan Church leased for £52 p.a. After a conflict over site was resolved, a new wooden, State building of two rooms 50ftx20ft and 21ft20ft was built on a 1% acre site on Allotment 2, Section 6. This new building was first used in January 1887. The bell tower and bell came from Northcote. The school became overcrowded and additions and remodelling costing about £884 were completed by April 1912. During building operations the school was held for sixty-four weeks in both the Wesleyan Church and Gloster's Hall, each leased for £1 per week. ... In 1939 a steep portion of the 5 acre site was revoked and sold. A new school building erected in 1960, caused much controversy, even though the PWD had reported that the old one did not warrant repairing because of its age and very poor condition. A local resident purchased and removed the old building in 1963.

... House Creek¹⁸ On the 8th of October Mathew Parnaby and others applied for the establishment of a school, between Huom and House Creeks, about 4 miles SW of Wodonga. The DI approved

12 P 891

13 P 902

14 P 892

15 P 905

16 P 920

17 P 958

18 P 971

and Albert Schlink offered 2 acres of freehold land as a site, 4 chains from the SE corner of Allotment 8, Section 10, of the Parish of Wodonga in the County of Bogong. A portable schoolroom, 22ftx14ft, with quarters erected at a total cost of £192, and SS2266 opened on 1st June 1880 with Edwin Davis as HT. In 1883 the a.a. Ranged between 12 and 20. Both school and quarters fell into a very bad state of repair. Temporarily closed in 1894 the school reopened as a result of a petition by Ferdinand Goode and others. By 1902 the school had a NE of 37, the grounds had been fenced, and a shelter shed erected by local effort. By 1907 the NE had risen to 45 with a a.a. Of 37. F.V. Goode served as Correspondent of the Committee in 1911. House Creek was unstaffed in February 1917 and closed on 8th November 1917. It reopened on 4th August 1921 but, with a NE of 6, closed on 24th July 1926. The buildings were sold for removal.

... Springdale¹⁹ For SS2862 a site of a acre at the NW corner of Allotment 1A, Section 20 was acquired from Jas. Pooley in 1887 for £5. A wooden 23ftx14ft portable schoolroom with two residential rooms attached was removed from SS1752 Black Dog Creek and re-erected at Springdale. This latter school was opened on 30th January 1888. Mary Burke was HT. The correspondent of the first official Committee was W.A. Lobban. In 1916, the school closed and the Department sold the building. In August 1925, the Hon. H. Beardman, MLA, submitted an application for a school and in August 1929 the school reopened in a room in a vacant four-room house. Enrolments reached 19 in 1932, and parents purchased a government building at Hume Weir which they shifted in sections and erected in front of the existing school.

... Tangambalanga²⁰ A previous school no 2682 had existed at Tangambalanga but had been removed in December 1906 to Red Bluff. On 9th August 1909 Wm Coish and others petitioned for a new school on the E side of the Kiewa River as their children were often unable to attend SS1472 Kiewa because of floods. Reports by DI Lewis and the HT of Kiewa, Henry Bull, in December 1909, favored the establishment of the new school. A 2 acre site Allotment 11, Section VII, Parish of Tangambalanga, was purchased by the residents and transferred free to the Department. A new wooden 21ftx21ft building, erected at a cost of £435, was opened on 1st September 1912 by HT Henry Bull (transferred from SS1472 Kiewa).

By July 1918 48 pupils were in attendance, and DI Armytage suggested the building be enlarged to house 55 pupils. The school rented a public hall for use during the renovation in 1921, and the following year the department purchased a 1 acre block adjoining the school. Here it built a teacher s residence in 1929. A ballot conducted among parents in 1950 revealed that all were in favor of Tangambalanga being incorporated in the proposed Kiewa Valley Consolidated School, to which the school moved in 1951. SS3724 officially closed on 9th of February 1953.

19 P 991

20 P 1015