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EUROPEAN OCCUPATION AND EXPLORATION OF THE VICTORIAN ALPS

A BRIEF HISTORY

1835 - 1865

BY

P.D. GARDNER

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by the author:
Gippsland Massacres
Through Foreign Eyes
Our Founding Murdering Father
Names on the Omeo Highway
Names around the Gippsland Lakes
Names of the Victorian Alpine district
Names of East Gippsland
Names of South Gippsland
Names of the Latrobe Valley and West Gippsland
The Scab Train
Too Old to Rat

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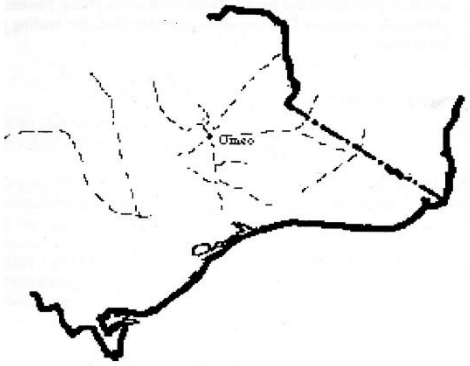
Cover : sketch by A. Howitt of Omeo scene c. 1870

Schematic Map of European Movement 1835-1850 (Approx.)

Aboriginal Tracks & Routes (Approx. only)



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Introduction

This booklet is based on the second part of a paper prepared for Historic Places branch of the Department of Conservation, Forests & Lands in 1988 entitled "Aboriginal Contact and European Occupation of the Victorian Alps". A monograph based on the first part of this paper will hopefully be published some time in the future as "A brief History of the Aborigines of the Victorian Alps". There is a small, but unavoidable, amount of duplication between these booklets. Also since the paper was written with the express purpose of examining the Aboriginal occupants of the Victorian alpine regions both before and after the advent of Europeans readers will certainly notice that their role is emphasized in this regard. Thanks to Rhonda Miller, Marion Le Cheminant, Margaret Gardner and Janice Morphett for reading the manuscript.

P.D.G Sept. 1996

Part 1

Pre-1835

Aboriginal Occupation

It is a generally believed misconception that the alpine regions were unoccupied at the advent of Europeans 150 years ago. In fact the foothills and alpine regions were occupied by some 2,500 individuals from 8 tribes. This figure probably expanded to over 3000 individuals in the summer months. Archaeologist Josephine Flood has suggested that the elevated regions of the Alps have only been recently occupied in the last 5000 years.(1) However evidence in the foothills at Buchan and on the Snowy River suggests an Aboriginal presence of close to 20,000 years tends to contradict this and indicates a general presence in the region, if not in the high country camps, of some antiquity. That they were there in numbers immediately prior to the advent of Europeans is not questioned and in particular the newcomers made abundant use of Aboriginal tracks, routes and guides.

Aboriginal Tracks and Routes

Corryong historian John Murphy noted that "many of the local roads and tracks follow the same paths that had been used by the aborigines for thousands of years and it is surprising how often you can still find discarded stone axes and other implements along these routes."(2) It seems more than a coincidence that the major tracks to be used both into and out of the Omeo district were tracks most certainly known of, or used by, the Jaitmathang. These tracks include the Omeo - Monaro and Omeo - Gippsland tracks as well as tracks to the Bright and Tawanga districts by way of Mt. Hotham and Bogong High Plains and Mt. Fainter. The tracks seldom climbed to the mountain tops but made efficient use of valleys, long spurs and ridges and low passes. Aboriginal historian Phillip Pepper noted C.J. Tyers' description of a mountain route from Gippsland to Melbourne. Pepper stated:

> As the occupation of Gippsland continued, the white people made use of the Aborigines knowledge of the country. Tyers suggested that someone should explore a route to Melbourne which was 'infinitely superior to the one now in use!' He said that the Kurnai had told him two years earlier that this was their route to Melbourne and

> some of the Wurundjeri came to the lakes along the same track. Leaving Sale by way of Glenmaggie the Aborigines 'ascend to the Dividing Range, where it is gradual, cross the large plains, with running streams on either side, and reach Ryries station on the Yarra Yarra in four days. The route is well grassed all the way without any scrub and is a good way for drays'. (3)

As with the routes between districts so too were the tracks from the low to high country well defined. Alfred Howitt when ascending Kosciusko in 1866 from the upper Murray followed an Aboriginal track for part of the way.(4) Likewise more than twenty years earlier in the first European ascent of the highest mountain on the continent Strzelecki and his companions also used similar tracks. H.M.E. Heney's *In a Dark Glass* uses James MacArthur's diary to describe the ascent. Before midday they stopped above the tree line "in the place where every year the local natives gathered to eat the bogong moth grubs which collected there, and round the party were the abundant signs of the Aboriginal encampments".(5) Almost certainly another example of European use of Aboriginal tracks includes that by Cobungra stockmen Jim Brown and Jack Wells in their route from the Bundarah River to the Bogong High Plains. As a final example the Rev. W.B. Clarke left an account of a party of Aborigines who had been caught in a snowstorm whilst crossing the Alps from the upper Murray to the 'Maneroo' with the result that two of them were smothered in a snow drift and one was severely frost bitten.(6)

Aboriginal Guides and Blacktrackers

As with the use of Aboriginal tracks so too the encroaching Europeans used Aboriginal guides and trackers to their advantage. There are few examples of frontier squatters that did not have Aboriginal guides to assist them. One noted example was the attempt by Angus McMillan to cross through the rugged hill country from Ensay to the Bruthen district in late 1839 which was a singular failure.(7) With the addition of two Jaitmathang guides the next effort to get to the clearer country around Bruthen was successful. As well as using the guides Cobbone Johnny and Friday to obvious advantage this venture also travelled, at least partly, on Aboriginal paths. Whilst many of the Aborigines employed were local, either from the Ngarigo or Jaitmathang, many squatters brought Aborigines from outside the district. Strzelecki and Macarthur in their journey through the south-east used Charlie Tarra, an Aboriginal from the Ngunawal tribe in the Goulburn district. On their ascent of Kosciusko they employed an extra local guide named Jackie, most probably of the Djilamatang tribe. It seems likely that Jackie then directed Charlie Tarra and Strzelecki on the best route over the Gibbo Range to Omeo. Other squatters to employ Aborigines as guides from outside the mountain district included P.C. Buckley's George Gilbert from the 'Liverpool' tribe and the tracker for the Hunter brothers called Pigeon. Jemmy Gibber from the Ngarigo has achieved notoriety through McMillan's account of his supposed attempted murder of him. Prior to McMillan, Jemmy Gibber acted as a guide for E.W. Bayliss.

Whilst some accounts mention lone efforts to find new squatting country it must be remembered that these accounts are referring to Europeans only and take no account of Aboriginal guides. Also a number of accounts mention that Aboriginal guides were used but make no attempt at identifying them. Of the local guides it is surmised that Matooka or Matoka guided Walter Mitchell to Bruthen and showed him the pass in the dividing range known as the Gap. It is also quite possible that Matooka took Edmund Buckley down to Tongio on the Tambo River. Since Walter Mitchell used guides it is fairly certain that his uncle, the secretive James MacFarlane, also used them. Also since the use of Aborigines as guides and trackers was an essential ingredient in the success of a squatting venture it can be inferred that those successful ones used them wherever, and whenever, they were required and that in the absence of information to the contrary it should be assumed that many squatting parties used Aboriginal co-operation to help them achieve their goals.

Part 2

EUROPEAN OCCUPATION

S.H.Roberts in his *The Squatting Age in Australia 1835-47* noted:

> Perhaps the most fascinating story of Australia is the way in which stockmen, absolutely unaided by the Government, and often in defiance of it, pushed into newer and ever newer country and gradually spread over the face of the continent. (8)

More specifically regarding the Victorian Alpine area and for the years 1835 - 40 John Wilson wrote:

> From the Monaro stock were on the move everywhere, and hastening the process was the fact that by the beginning of 1839 the pastoralists were being ground between the upper and nether mill stones of prolonged drought and a fast developing financial crisis in the colony.(9)

Whilst squatting parties secretly vied for the gateway to what was later to be called Gippsland, north of the mountains they began queuing to take up all the suitable pastoral country along what was known as 'the Major's Line'. By 1840 there were 20,000 cattle on the line between Yass and Melbourne.(10) With no physical barriers to access to grazing lands the occupation from this quarter was a process of acting in turn and taking over country not occupied previously by other squatters.

Elsewhere the pastoral expansion through the mountains was highly dependant on the knowledge of the Aborigines and the advantage of a few months was all that was needed for squatters to secure substantial financial benefit by the occupation of huge tracts of ungrazed lands. (11) Thus whilst the squatting process continued in a similar manner as that which was occurring further north - of one squatter 'leapfrogging' or passing another and taking country 'further out' - the hallmark of squatting through the Alps was the secrecy in which it was enshrouded in the search for a route to Gippsland and other suitable runs. Peter Cabena noted:

> Graziers like McFarlane were secretive about newly discovered pastures so reports of new discoveries were sometimes slow to spread; as they were spending time and effort and money searching for pastures the pioneer graziers expected to be able to capitalize on the initiatives; the fewer hassles with competitors the better.(12)

Thus whilst the squatting occupation north of the mountains was the equivalent of a flood, that through Omeo and the Alps was a trickle. It was not until May 1840 that Strzelecki's tales of vast tracts of land and naming of 'Gipps Land' were publicised in the Melbourne press. And it was only when the port of Port Albert was established and McMillan cut a track linking Omeo to the port in 1841 that the rush of land grabbers descended on this newly named province.

Amongst this general movement a few individuals, notably Strzelecki followed by McMillan, made conflicting claims for 'priority' and 'discovery'. However this 'heroic' approach to history is a distortion, and the reality of what occurred is much more mundane; a story of squatters motivated by greed and obsessed with secrecy; but also a story of being threatened by drought and bankruptcy and above all by the resistance of Aborigines whose lands they were unceremoniously taking.

1835-45

(i) <u>The Far East.</u>

In 1834 Dr.John Lhotsky travelled into what was later to become known as the Tubbut area of far eastern Victoria and was almost certainly the first European in the mountains in this state. According to Norman Wakefield, who made a study of Lhotsky's two journeys in the Monaro district in this year, Lhotsky was accompanied by an Aboriginal guide. Wakefield wrote:

> What is more interesting to us in Victoria is the story of the second excursion, for it mentions names which, though spelt a little differently, can be recognised as Mount Tingaringy, Dellicknora, Jingalalla and Mount Deddick. Lhotsky must have obtained these names from Aborigines, or perhaps his party was led through the country by an Aboriginal guide.(13)

and

> On the second excursion, Lhotsky's party must have included an Aborigine. This is demonstrated by the direct route taken - particularly the short-cut across the mountains from Dellicknora to the Amboyne Crossing area and by the abundant use of native place names.(14)

An examination of Lhotsky's map shows Lake Omio and the Omio Plains. The information on Omeo and in a letter to the Sydney Gazette Lhotsky stated that he had obtained this information 'from the only man of the Monaro tribe who had been once at this plain.'(15) About the time that this letter was being published James Macfarlane had established an outstation for his Currawong Station at what became known as MacFarlane's Flat. By an accident - a stroke of a line drawn on a map - MacFarlane became the first squatter in the Alps in Victoria. It is on the strength of this same accident that Lhotsky's claims to priority also reside.

Other squatters who took up country in the far east of the study area include the O'Rourke family who took up Wulgulmerang in 1838 and Black Mountain in 1840; (16) Thomas Moore who took up Tibbut (Tubbut) in 1838; John McLoughlin who took up the Dellicknora station 16 miles south-west of Delegate in 1838; William Bradley at Kirkenong (Croajingalong) in 1841; Ben Boyd who took up Deddick at Suggan Buggan in 1842; Charles Lawson at Gingellalla (Jingalalla River) in 1845; and J.J. Hensleigh in 1845.(17) It is interesting to note that Billis and Kenyon are not always accurate as to when runs were taken up and who took them up, as runs were often held for some years before being registered, or taken up and abandoned without ever being registered. An example of this is the Gelantipy run taken up by Hughes and McIntyre in 1842 which E.W.Bayliss claimed to have taken up in 1839. Bayliss also claims to have reached the Buchan district before Angus McMillan and that he also took his Aboriginal guide, Jemmy Gibber of the Ngarigo. Another interesting possibility is the route that the Scott's of Delvine Park supposedly took from the Monaro into Gippsland in the early 1840s. This route was east of the Snowy and passed Sardine Creek. There appears to be no evidence to support this other than in *Providence Ponds* Porteus's fictional account of early Gippsland. (18)

> tempts were organized by James McFarlane in concert with Lachlan Macalister, and that it was intended that the subsequent 'discoveries' would be equally exploited by the two men. Cabena noted that "they were friends, not partners, but their collective interests were nevertheless represented by one person, named Angus McMillan, who eventually reached Port Albert from Ensay in 1841".(21) The latter task however, was completed on the fourth attempt and only after unplanned publicity necessitated a hasty occupation of the choice lands.(22)

Since then the reminiscences of William Thompson have been published in the Gippsland Heritage Journal.(23) These brief memoirs alter a few minor points I made above. Mitchell's journey was in April 1839 and he returned to Omeo on the 3 May. McMillan left Currawong on 20 May and it is now most likely that he was aware of Mitchell's successful trip before he departed. However the memoirs' basically confirm the general thrust of my argument. In particular they confirm that Mitchell travelled to the Gippsland Lakes in April 1839 and that the Thompson reminiscences were probably John Wilson's source; that there definitely was an agreement (a partnership in deed if not in name) between Macalister and Macfarlane to locate the grazing country of Gippsland and equally exploit it; that McMillan and Mitchell were both employees of these squatters and equally minor figures although McMillan persevered and reaped many rewards; that the men acted in concert and that McMillan already knew about Mitchell's journey to the Gippsland Lakes when he set off towards Buchan. This latter fact leaves itself of only two explanations - either the Macalister/ Macfarlane organization had heard of Bayliss's trip to the Gippsland Lakes via the Buchan district and had sent McMillan in an attempt to verify and, or pre-empt this, or else the explorer was hopelessly lost. If the former it suggests that at least Macalister and Macfarlane believed that Bayliss had made his way to the Gippsland Lakes the previous October.(24)

In early April 1840 Paul de Stzelecki, James MacArthur, James Riley and Charlie Tarra called at the Macalister outstation at Ensay set up by McMillan. Just previously Strzelecki and party had climbed and named Australia's highest mountain. They had then followed an Aboriginal route from Nariel to Omeo.(25) After leaving Ensay and suffe-

(ii) Omeo.

In 1835 McKillop, Livingstone and MacFarlane, accompanied by an unnamed Aboriginal guide, and whilst attempting to find a route from Monaro to a southern port, journeyed to Omeo. They appear to have been stopped by thick scrub towards the headwaters of Livingstone Creek. MacFarlane is then supposed to have returned from Currawong in the spring and set up the Omeo B station on the Omeo plains. He appears to have been quickly followed by Edmund Buckley who took up the Benambra run at Beloka and the Pendergast brothers who took up the Omeo A station in 1837. Jane Vince Pendergast in *Pioneers of the Omeo District* has Edmund Buckley travelling alone as far as Tongio and Ensay.(19) This seems unlikely, but, in the climate of secrecy that existed, was just possible. In 1841 Edmund Crooke took up the Hinnomunjie Station on the Mitta Mitta River.

(iii) Gateway to Gippsland

There were two immediate barriers on the occupiers' route to Gippsland - the Great Divide and the relatively low hills between what later became Ensay and Bruthen. It is likely that Edmund Buckley, with Aboriginal assistance, was the first to cross over the Dividing Range, although Walter Mitchell and Aboriginal guide Matooka may have 'discovered' the 'Gap' and travelled all the way to the present township of Lakes Entrance.(20) It is certain that in April 1839 Mitchell overcame this second obstacle. Mitchell's journey raises the question of why MacFarlane did not immediately follow up his work. The answer probably lies in the mysterious MacFarlane - Macalister connection.

In 1989 I wrote:

> In April 1839 Angus McMillan, employee of Lachlan Macalister, set out from MacFarlane's Currawong Station for the Buchan district to find a path to Gippsland. Almost certainly he was acting on reports of E.W.Bayliss' previous trip to that area and he had with him his guide, Jemmy Gibber. When this attempt failed he returned to Currawong via Macfarlane's Omeo B station where he probably learnt of the success of Walter Mitchell's trip. A ready explanation for the reason why McMillan made the Buchan attempt can be found if McMillan and Mitchell made their attempts at the same time, and that these at-

ing much hardship and deprivation, Strzelecki's party finally reached the occupied district of Westernport. Soon afterwards, his claims of 'discovery' of the plains of Gippsland were publicised. There ensued a bitter debate between McMillan and Strzelecki supporters as to who 'discovered' and named what, which, for the purposes of this essay is not significant. The true significance of this so-called controversy was that, initiated by ambitious,vain men, it set the parameters for debate and study, and subsequent bias, for more than one hundred years.

(iv) North of the Divide

As explained in the introduction the situation facing the squatters in this district was completely different from that experienced at Omeo. Peter Cabena noted:

> The push effect of drought and the attractive pull of new lands combined to encourage a flood of graziers overland to Port Phillip. The flat open country north and north west of the mountain region was taken first, and only with the passing of time, when much of the land along Mitchell's route had been grabbed, did squatters advance up the valleys leading towards the Alps. In this way north-eastern squatters eventually located themselves at the very foot of the snow country, for example at the base of the Buffalo Plateau.(26)

To describe the squatters' 'Who's Who' of the north-east would be tedious. It should be noted that because of the ease of travel and lack of obstacles Aboriginal guides were not necessary. It appears, for instance, that the first drive of George and William Faithfull had neither Aboriginal guides nor Aboriginal stockmen. Along with the Faithfulls at Oxley Plains, early squatters in the foothills of the Alps included John Hillas at Myrtleford in 1837; James Roberts and John Hillas at Dederang in 1838; William Wise at Mitta Mitta No.1 in 1837; James Smith at Nariel in 1838. In the Corryong district Elyne Mitchell wrote:

> No-one had penetrated the Upper Murray...until Charles Huon de Kerilleau was led across the northern end of the mountains by Aborigines, in 1837, coming down into the Murray Valley somewhere near where the Tooma River joins it.(27)

(ii)Prospectors and Miners

Immediately following the discovery of gold in the new Colony of Victoria in June 1851, prospectors and then miners moved into the area in what is aptly described as a series of rushes. Prospectors worked alone or in small groups and were continually seeking and occassionally locating rich finds of gold. They worked their way into the mountains and like the squatters before them were highly secretive about their prospects and finds. It was essential for prospectors to locate and exploit the richest auriferous areas before a rush developed around them. However it was usually impossible to keep a rich strike secret for more than a few months. This was for a number of reasons, not the least being the muddied water of streams to be found a long way downstream of alluvial workings.

Officially the first discovery of gold in the study area was made by W.B. Clarke in December,1851 and the announcement of discoveries in other areas quickly followed. It is of interest to note that although Clarke found gold at Omeo, downstream on the Gibbo River he found evidence that a prospecting party had preceded him.(33) Likewise some years later Alfred Howitt, when leading the Government Prospecting party found an abandoned prospectors camp in the wilderness of the upper Dargo River.(34)

By the end of 1855 it is most likely that this most transient of beings, the prospector, had been in, and sampled, all but the most inaccessible of mountain streams. Likewise the alluvial miner depended to a great extent on moving quickly to any new find. If the miner could not find suitable ground, or if the pay was not rich enough, he moved on to the next find. Consequently miners' were continually 'rushing' from one find to the next. Some, perhaps the most adventurous and resourceful, must have taken the shortest possible routes. As gold was being exploited on the upper Ovens and Omeo by 1852 it is quite likely that miners travelled the route over Hotham, before Jim Brown and Jack Wells. It is most likely that this was also an Aboriginal route, to both the the Cobungra and Dargo High Plains and most certainly some miners and prospectors used Aboriginal advice, information and even possibly guides, to their advantage.

assumed control of his runs in March 1863 and Eaglevale appears to have been abandoned at this stage.

Further east, pastoralists of dubious credentials, were using the Nunniong High Plains for the first time. James Mitton claimed to have located this country with the assistance of Aborigines. Cabena wrote that "Mitton is known to have been friendly with the aboriginals"(40) and that cattle duffer James Bentley was one of the first occupants of this country. With the rushes that followed the discovery of gold food was often in short supply and a market in stolen stock quickly developed. The most legendary of the many shadowy figures that exploited this situation was called Bogong Jack. Bogong Jack is reputed to have developed a network of tracks through the mountains to convey stolen stock from one district to another. Like Mitton, Tom Toke and many others, it is most likely that this work was done with Aboriginal assistance.

(ii) Government Men - The Surveyors

There is little in the literature about government surveyors. For the early part of Gippsland's European history they appear more concerned with surveying towns, roads and establishing station boundaries. Unfortunately most of the surveyors' work remains unpublished. An example of this unpublished material is the report of John Wilkinson who surveyed the Mitchell River in 1850.(41) It appears from this report that Wilkinson was probably the first European in the Moroka Gorge and the Wonnangatta Valley. It is also likely that a number of these government employees made first ascents of peaks in the pursuit of their occupation and some examination should be made of the work of Townsend, and perhaps C.J.'Tyers, in this regard. Townsend is supposed to have used Charlie Tarra as an assistant and surveyors Pettit and Dawson's work in the Omeo district was accompanied by an interest in local Aborigines. Dawson later provided A.W. Howitt with a vocabulary of the Jaitmathang tribe.

Two other government parties are, by contrast, well known. The first group was the Prospecting Parties of 1860 where Alfred Howitt led a party to search for gold in the Mitchell watershed and Nicholson led a party further east into the Tambo and Snowy River areas. The second was the Alpine Track cutting expedition led by Angus McMillan in 1864 to link the isolated gold districts of Omeo, Crooked River and

(iii) Ferdinand von Mueller - Man of Science

In February 1853, the newly appointed Government Botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller, in the company of assistant John Dallachy, left on a wide ranging, specimen collecting tour of eastern Victoria. It was the first of a number of such trips throughout the mountain district and he made the first European ascent of a number of mountain peaks the most notable of which was Mt.Buffalo, but also included Hotham, Feathertop, Loch, and Cobberas.(35) He also ascended many other peaks of significance including Kosciusko and Buller. It is interesting that whilst his total journey was carried out solo, he "normally travelled in the company of others and wherever possible gained directions and advice from graziers and miners"(36) Also, according to Elyne Mitchell, "the Aborigines were very good to him, trusting the man that was so trusting of them and so friendly."(37) Stella Carr noted:

> Mueller undoubtedly followed the tracks established when settlement was extended from Monaro to Benambra and the N. part of Gippsland. To record these things does not detract from Muellers achievement. His was a great and difficult journey, but it is more correct to regard him as the first official visitor than accord him the status of original explorer.(38)

On the contrary, Mueller, motivated by scientific curiosity and in the pursuit of knowledge, was more interested than those that preceded in the profitless ascent of mountains. In this he had priority and was, thus, in every sense an explorer.

Later Activities 1855-1865

(i) Grazing - Official and Unofficial

The exploitation of much of the unexpropriated land was completed during this period. Angus McMillan took up the vast Eaglevale Run which included the Dargo High Plains, the Snowy Plains and the Wonnangatta Valley about 1857. How much of this country was stocked, exploited or even "explored' by McMillan is not known and the boundaries of the run are ill-defined. Richard Bennison was stocking the Bennison High Plains in 1860 and had taken up the Mt.Wellington Run, on the boundary of Eaglevale, in 1861.(39) McMillan's creditors

Woods Point. Howitt took the opportunity to have his official "prospecting combined with exploration."(42) As well as eventually locating gold in payable quantities on Good Luck Creek, Crooked River, Howitt managed to make a number of early ascents of mountains including Mt. Birregun and Mt. Howitt. His party was the first group of Europeans to thoroughly 'explore' the Mitchell watershed. McMillan's later work was, by comparison, more pedestrian, though still a singular achievement. He and his party, including his Aboriginal guide and companion Jimmy Raymond, completed the blazing and cutting of the track of over 200 miles in three months and made the major discovery of gold bearing quartz, called the Pioneer reef, which later became the Grant goldfield. Aside from his one attempt in 1839 to travel from Ensay to Bruthen without any Aboriginal assistance whatever, McMillan was known to always have had Aborigines as guides, trackers, interpreters or companions with him.(43)

(iii) Men of Science - Howitt and von Mueller

Von Mueller was again active in this period making a first ascent of Baw Baw in 1860 and visiting Mt.Wellington on another trip about this time when he was caught in a snowstorm. However for this period and a long time afterwards, Alfred Howitt was the main European 'pioneer' of Gippsland and the mountains, as well as being a pioneer in botany and geology in a national context, and anthropology in an international one. After his amazing recovery of King and the bodies of Burke and Wills from Coopers Creek, Howitt was rewarded with the position of Police Magistrate and Warden of the Goldfields at Omeo. This involved an enormous amount of travelling through the bush by horseback and there is no doubt that Howitt used this travelling to his advantage in pursuing his scientific interests in botany, geology and later anthropology. In 1866, before moving from Omeo to Bairnsdale, Howitt climbed Kosciusko. M.H. Walker in *Come Wind, ComeWeather* described one of his later excursions:

> In January 1875 Howitt was enthusiastically mapping the valley of the Mitchell River, and to study it further had made a canoe trip with two Brabrolung Aborigines through the gorge between Tabberabbera and Glenaladale where the river had carved its way through high cliffs. Having sent Charley Boy, Long Harry(Turlburn) and the horses up in charge of a reliable man, Howitt met them by arrangement at Tabberabbera Station at the head

> of the gorge, and found that they had already made two bark canoes for the journey.(44)

Howitt was also involved in several attempts at getting to Lake Tarli-Karn but was not the first European to reach there. Howitt probably learnt of the lake from one of his many Aboriginal informants and an Aboriginal stockman, Jimmy Snowden, is credited with the 'discovery' of the lake.(45) Taken overall, both within and outside Gippsland and the mountain region, Howitt's career is amazing and it is fitting that Nial Brennan should describe him as "one of Australia's greatest explorers."(46)

Summary

Of all the Europeans claiming priority only Howitt, Mueller, Lhotsky and perhaps Strzelecki need be considered seriously. And even then the importance of Aboriginal assistance to their achievements should be closely considered. As Aboriginal historian Phillip Pepper stated:

> But the explorers would never have succeeded if their Aboriginal guides, Jemmy of the Maneroo, Tarra, and Cobban and Friday from Omeo, had not provided them with food, water and shelter, (and) directed them through dangerous country...(47)

Thus a more balanced account of the history of this period shows an invading force of squatters, occupying the lands of the Alpine Aborigines, and displacing, and in most instances, completely destroying them. The self-proclaimed heroes, so readily adopted and promoted by most local historians, were primarily motivated by greed and self-advancement, and did not hesitate to exploit or murder to achieve their ends. After this, perhaps inevitable, frontier conflict, these ruthless men were succeeded by a small group of men concerned with detached scientific inquiry, of whom Howitt and Mueller are representative, and to whom the titles 'explorer' and 'pioneer' can justly be applied. But we can only wonder at how many adventurous Aborigines there have been during their almost ageless occupation of their lands, and can only offer as a poor substitute a brief list that includes Larnie, Matooka, Jemmy Gibber and others, as amongst those whose feats warrant as equal an amount of attention by historians, to that now accorded mainly to the early invaders.

END NOTES

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2. J. Murphy - personal communication, Aug.89
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7. For a critical analysis of McMillan's claims see my *Our Founding Murdering Father*, Ngarak Press, Ensay, 1990
8. S.H.Roberts *The Squatting Age in Australia 1835-47*, MUP, Melbourne, 1935, p.127
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13. N.Wakefield "Dr.John Lhotsky's Two Excursions into the Australia Alps", in The Victorian Naturalist, Vol.92, No.11, Nov.75, p.229
14. Ibid p.243
15. Sydney Gazette 16.4.1834 Reported in J.Flood 1980 *The Moth Hunters*, AIAS, Canberra. p.116
16. H. Stephenson *Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains*, The Author, Melbourne, 1980, pp.27-9; N.A. Wakefield, "Aspects of Exploration and Settlement of East Gippsland" in East Gippsland Symposium, RSV Proceedings 38:1:1969. Wakefield has an in depth analysis of the occupation of Suggan Buggan and Wulgulmerang stations and concludes that the the O'Rourke claim for 1838 is erroneous. Whilst it is clear that they definitely did not reside there at this date it is quite possible that the area was used as an outstation, and without following proper licencing procedures.
17. All information on squatting dates and locations taken from Billis & Kenyon *Pastoral Pioneers of the Port Phillip District*, Stockland Press, Melbourne, 1974, unless otherwise indicated.
18. Porteus, Stanley. *Providence Ponds*, Australian Publishing, Sydney, 1951.
19. Pendergast, J.V. *Pioneers of the Omeo District* , The Author, Melbourne, 1968
20. J.Wilson op.cit., A major problem with Wilson's material is his lack of verifiable information on sources. However it seems certain that his source for this information was Thompson's memoirs first published in the Gippsland Times 6.6.1890
21. P.Cabena, op.cit., p.8
22. Gardner, P.D. unpublished paper, 1989. Note that part of this paper forms the basis for this booklet.
23. 'The Recollections of Edward Thompson" and "Notes on the recollections of Edward Thompson" (by P.D. Gardner) in Gippsland Heritage Journal, No. 8 June 1990
24. N.A. Wakefield, "Aspects of Exploration and Settlement of East Gippsland" op.cit. This conclusion is directly opposite to that reached by Wakefield which relied heavily on the veracity of the McMillan accounts.
25. Note that this route now roughly corresponds with the present Coryong - Benambra road.
26. P. Cabena op.cit., p.16
27. E. Mitchell op.cit., p.8
28. L. Barraclough The Hunters' Journeys into Gippsland in Voice of the Mountains, 1981, No.6
29. Billis & Kenyon op.cit.
30. D. Johnson *Alps at the Crossroads*, VNPA, Melbourne, 1974, p.36
31. S. Carr "The Discovery of the Bogong High Plains", in Proceedings of the RSV Vol.75 Part 2, p.385
32. Ibid.
33. Rev. W.B. Clarke *Researches in the Southern Goldfields of New South Wales* Reading and Wellbank, Sydney, 1860
34. M.H.Walker *Come Wind Come Weather*, MUP, Melbourne, 1971, p.110
35. P. Cabena op.cit., p.15
36. There is no evidence that the Aborigines had any interest whatsoever in climbing peaks and as they usually took routes with the least resistance it is quite possible that some of the European ascents were the first ascents by man. On the other hand it is more likely that over thousands of years most of these peaks would have been trodden on at some time. It is the climbing of peaks, rather than naming them from a distance, that sets many of the early Europeans apart from those concerned primarily with economic gain.
37. E. Mitchell op.cit., p.43
38. S. Carr op.cit., p.385
39. L. Barraclough "Richard Bennison", in Voice of the Mountains, 1985, p.44
40. P. Cabena op.cit., p.21
41. M.H.Walker op.cit., p.108
42. VPRS 44 Box 1 PRO Laverton
43. Those who definitely worked for McMillan in some capacity included Jemmy Gibber, Cobban Johnny, Friday, Jacky Warren, Jimmy Raymond and William Login.
44. M.H.Walker op.cit.p.198
45. Stephenson op.cit. p.193 Snowden knew of the lake, or had seen it, but refused to go there. As Howitt's Aboriginal sources were also aware of its existance the question of discovery is, again, merely academic.
46. N.Brennan *Tales of the Snowy Mountains*, Rigby, Melb., 1979 p47
47. P. Pepper op.cit. p.17