

## THE HUNTERS JOURNEYS INTO GIPPSLAND

In 1840, as Angus McMillan was pioneering a stock route into Gippsland from the drought-stricken Monaro region of New South Wales, Alick McLean Hunter, Edward Bell and Watson arrived at the Broken River from Tumut with stock. Parties led by Alick Hunter were soon to discover an alternate route into Gippsland, which although never used, left the legacy of the name "Hunter's Country" on what we now call Licola.

Hearing of the new pastures just over the ranges in Gippsland, Alick Hunter, then in his early 20s, became determined to find a route whereby he could take in his stock to take up new runs. In May 1841 he left Devil's River with a party of Archibald Jamieson, Andrew Ewing, Edward Bell and an aboriginal called Pigeon. Despite an accident to Bell's horse which forced him and Pigeon to wait near Mount Skene, the party reached the area around Glenmaggie, which they from then on claimed to have named. They did not go far enough to reach settlement, returning to the Devil's River to collect stock for a return journey into Gippsland. They were frustrated however, by bad weather, and unable to make the trip.

In October 1843 Crown Lands Commissioner Charles Tyers visited the run in an attempt to enter Gippsland via the same route so as to take up his duties in Gippsland. On 26th October James Hunter noted shortly "the Government mob are on their way into Gippsland". He was more detailed on the 5th November - "Met Mr Tyers looking very miserable. He and his people have had nothing to eat for 4 days except one scone each, two of their horses have died, another one was lost, and all the rest were knocked up and left in the ranges. Some of the men were so much done that they wanted to be left to die where they were. Their boots were all cut to pieces by the sharp stones and rocks." Tyers official explanation placed all the blame on the horses "arising from their want of rest after previous hard work." He returned to Melbourne and finally reached Port Albert by sea, leaving behind a rumour that the route into Gippsland did not exist. This incensed Alick Hunter and his party, who then became determined to retrace their steps.

On 28th October 1844, Alick, James and Campbell Hunter and Jourdan set out on the route.

The party had no packhorses, each man carried flour, sugar, tea and sun-dried meat rolled in a blanket on his saddle. By 1st November they had reached Mount Sunday, and camped that night at the Plum Pudding Rocks near Mt Skene. Alick Hunter amused himself that night over the campfire by frightening Jourdan, "a very timid fellow", hoaxing him into believing that the nearby aboriginals, "a very fierce wild set", were all around the camp. They camped the next night on the junction of the two Barkleys, crossing Grimme's Hill next morning and reaching Glencairn Creek. Here they saw aboriginal camps about every half a mile. Also it now appears this would have been the party which carved initials including "A Mc." for Alick McLean Hunter on a tree at Glencairn. This tree has for many years been attributed to Angus McMillan, despite a lack of any other evidence that he was ever in that area. They continued on down the Glencairn Creek to the Barkley, and from there to the Macalister, which they followed to Glenmaggie which they reached on the 5th November. Here Alick <sup>wrote</sup> ~~said~~ "we were congratulating ourselves on finding a beautiful run when we came upon the tracks of some infernal sheep!" Glenmaggie was by then an outlying part of McFarlane's Heyfield run. Many years later one of the Buntine's, ~~then~~ a child <sup>at the time</sup> recalled their arrival - "there was great excitement at the outstation as we all thought they were bushrangers, they carried pistols and rifles and were armed to the teeth. They were all rough and unshaven with their clothes in rags from fighting through the scrub on the mountains."

This time the Hunters had proven there was a route through, even though it never became a practical stock route into Gippsland.

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