

DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF THE AREA BY WHITE MAN

Major Mitchell was the first white man to discover the Wedderburn area. There is a cairn on the Calder Highway approximately two miles south-east of Wedderburn commemorating his third expedition in 1836.

Mitchell arrived at the site of Swan Hill on 20th June 1836, then struck south and south-east to a land he termed "Australia Felix" because of its rich appearance. On July 8th, he crossed the Loddon and reached Mount Korong on 10th July, 1836. Mitchell climbed Mount Korong, which he gave the Aboriginal name "Barrabungale".

It has also been suggested that Mitchell climbed Spring Hill, just south of Wedderburn and erected a stone cairn at the summit.

The first squatter to take up land in the area was John Catto in 1840. His run covered 64,000 acres with a capacity of 14,000 sheep. There appeared to be a rush for land in 1844, 1845, 1846 and 1847, for the following runs were occupied in those years :

- Avoca Forest - Area of 30,720 acres, occupied first by Ellis and Shore in 1844.
 - Edgar Plains or Fernihurst - Area of 89,000 acres, first occupied by Abel Thorpe in 1845.
 - Buckerbanule - Area of 67,000 acres, first occupied by Robert and William Kay in 1845.
 - Torphicen - Area of 25,000 acres, first occupied by Robert Forsythe in 1845.
 - Salisbury Plains - Area of 77,000 acres, first occupied by Abel Thorpe in 1845.
 - Bealiba - Area of 48,000 acres, first occupied by George Coutts in 1845.
 - Coyurah Springs - Area of 23,040 acres, first occupied by George Elliot in 1845.
 - Richmond Plains - Area of 25,600 acres, first occupied by Henry and John Cooke of Spring Hill in 1846.
 - Spring Hill - Area of 76,800 acres, first occupied by Henry and John Cooke in 1846.
 - Powlett Plains and Korong - Area of 83,720 acres, first occupied by Benjamin Heape and Richard Grice in 1846.
 - Kingower - Area of 50,786 acres, first occupied by William Hunter in 1846.
 - Kingarara Creek - Area of 22,790 acres, first occupied by William Hunter in 1846.
 - Glenalbyn - Area of 16,640 acres, first occupied by Sim and Patterson in 1847.
- Kingower North and Kingower South were first occupied by John Andrews on 29th April 1873.

The Shire of Korong Centenary booklet gives an excellent description of early life on the runs -

"The life of the first settlers could only be described as extremely difficult. Their first homesteads were constructed of local timbers, roofed with split shingles or sheets of bark. Nails were not common and wooden pegs or strands of cowhide were used for fastening the timbers. Lighting was obtained from a wick in tallow. Supplies came by bullock team from Melbourne only two or three times a year. The settlers worked twelve hours a day or longer in the summer months; runs were not fenced and sheep were shepherded by day; at night they were placed in rough brush yards as a protection against dingoes and other wild animals."