

EARLIEST POLICE PRESENCE

Although the Monbulk Police Station opened in 1967 there is evidence of a presence of police in the Monbulk area as far back as 1859 when miners were seeking gold in this area. The following article was printed in the July 1991 Victorian Police Association Journal.

LOST IN EMERALD WILDERNESS

IN November 1859, Senior Constable Patrick Moylette disappeared while on patrol in the bush east of Emerald. A comparative newcomer to the country, his lack of bushcraft and subsequent panic led him further and further into the pathless wilderness. His own actions were to cheat a determined Police search party of the success they so richly deserved, as they put in a courageous effort to scour the bush for their missing comrade. Paradoxically the trooper's horse, which he abandoned in the bush, managed to find its way back to civilisation once free of its master's control. Moylette's story graphically illustrates the fact that ignorance of their environment placed some early Victoria Police in as much risk as that of any murderous attack by bushrangers. The stage was set for this tragedy on 3 November 1859 when Patrick Henry Moylette was appointed Senior Constable in charge at the Emerald Police Station.

A 32-year-old Irishman with eight years experience in the Irish Constabulary, he had joined the Victoria Police in June 1856. His registered number was 930.

On 9 November 1856 he rode out to inspect the Britannia goldfield, which was described as being "at the foot of Blue Mountains, 12 miles above Briartys Station, at the head of the Yarra, 57 miles from Melbourne". (Britannia Creek, on which the goldfield was situated, crosses the highway a few kilometres west of Warburton.)

At that time the country between Emerald and Warburton was an empty wilderness covered in dense vegetation, impenetrable in places, with few marked trails.

When combined with the rugged nature of the terrain, it was hardly surprising that an unskilled newcomer such as Moylette was at risk in such an environment.

Despite the difficulties that faced him, he reached the diggings where some 200 miners were working, then set about returning to his station. At this point his luck ran out.

He was last seen on 12 November by a party of diggers. He was lost, went off the main track and about seven miles from Emerald.

He asked directions of them, then set off, only to return a short time later seeking further information. The lads said he appeared "completely un-nerved, as if he had lost all confidants in himself"

It seems that, in his panic, he set off blindly in the wrong direction and was never to be seen again, although strenuous efforts were made



Lost in the bush—from the Illustrated Melbourne Post, 25th October 1865.

to find him.

As soon as it became obvious to those at Emerald that something had gone wrong, the alarm was raised. The matter was reported to Superintendent Dana who ordered Sergeant Sutherland to commence a search.

On 20 November, (eight days after Moylette was last seen), Sutherland, together with Constables Davey and McKee, set out from the Police Depot at Richmond.

In those times the normal route to Emerald was via Dandenong and, while passing there, they recruited the services of Jemmy, an "intelligent and experienced native guide". Mr Dunbar, the proprietor of the local hotel, also volunteered to join the party.

The group moved on to Emerald, then commenced the search in earnest. Some eight or nine miles past the Emerald Police Station they came across Moylette's tracks and followed them in a north-east direction for about an hour.

At this point Jemmy said that the tracks showed Moylette had dismounted and was leading his horse. Nearby they also found a number of other signs of the missing man, including a handkerchief in which he had tied oats for his horse, and his stirrup irons and leathers, which he had hung on a tree.

The search party continued on through very dense bush and came to a log fallen over the Cockatoo Creek across which Moylette had led

his steed. Unfortunately, once across, he had made some 20 or 30 abortive attempts to press on but each time had circled back to the creek. The density of the bush and the multiplicity of tracks finally defeated them and after two days at the scene, they returned to Dandenong, arriving on 24 November. On their return they had to replace their uniforms, their original clothing having been so badly torn in the scrub. On learning of these results, Chief Commissioner Standish, despite his own pessimism as to the fate of Moylette, ordered the search to be resumed urgently. By 26 November, Sutherland and his party (which now included Constable Sharp) travelled via Dandenong, where they again picked up Jemmy, and headed off into the bush. They returned to the creek crossing and there they came across two other searchers who had been sent out by Constable Ryan of Emerald.

After scouring the bush they eventually picked up Moylette's tracks heading east and, while following them, found one of Moylette's spurs. The weather was very inclement at this time and their pack horse could not get through the dense vegetation. So, on the 30th, each man made up a swag of provisions and they sent the animal back to the station in the care of Constable Ryan (who had accompanied them from Emerald).

They went on for another 15 miles and then found the trooper's saddle and bridle and a

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tethering rope tied to a tree. The trooper and his horse had parted company here and, while the unskilled bushman headed further east into even more desolate country, the animal followed its more primitive instincts and turned west, retracing its master's steps and heading back home.

Meanwhile the searchers continued the arduous task of following the missing man through very dense and rugged country, at times taking up to half-mile casts through the bush to pick up the faint tracks left behind.

The next day, 1 December, they found a "mimi", or wigwam, he had constructed. Then for two more days they doggedly persevered before finally losing the tracks in an area where the prolific birdlife had scratched up the ground so much that the trail was finally lost.

Despite their best efforts they could go no further, nor could they find any sign of a body in the vicinity (which would have been noticeable by the circling of birds or the howling of native dogs).

Finally defeated, they headed back to the Richmond Barracks where they arrived at 1 pm on 6 December. As soon as he arrived Sutherland set to and wrote his report to the Chief Commissioner of Police, in which he handsomely complimented the dedication of his men, who were sorely tried by the conditions.

When Standish received Sutherland's report on 7 December, despite the hopeless nature of the case, he again ordered the search party out.

Although they had hardly recovered from their previous expedition Sutherland and his party set out once more on 7 December. This time they located the missing man's horse, which was extremely weak and "very cut up".

Sutherland and Jemmy took the beast back to Emerald from where (on 10 December) Sutherland wrote a further report to the Chief Commissioner of Police, before returning to the wilderness for the last time.

Despite searching until 26 December, no trace of the missing man was found and Sutherland later reported that, in his opinion, the missing man was long dead, the remains having probably been eaten by wild dogs.

By the time the search party got back to the Police Barracks on 28 December, they found their own lives were being feared for and rumors were abroad that they too had been lost.

Their return signalled the end of the searches for Moylette. His remains have never been located.

In the turbulent years that followed the story was all but forgotten and the details came to light again only in the research undertaken for the Police Honor Roll project:

Temporary police stations were operating on the corner of the present David Hill Road and Monbulk-Emerald Road Monbulk known as *Emerald Diggings* during the berry picking season between 1907 and 1909. The station was manned by Constable James Morey 14 Dec 1907 – 1 April 1908 and then Constable Thomas Munsor 15 Dec 1908 – 22 March 1909.

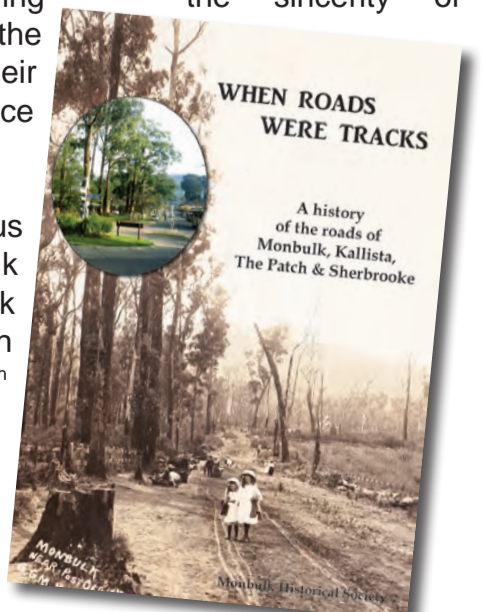
In the years that followed Monbulk did not have its own police station but was visited by the Emerald policeman and later covered by the



Constable Fleming, the Emerald policeman on his horse on Baynes Bridge. The men in the jinker are Hugh McAlister and Joseph Haynes of The Patch C1913-14.

Belgrave and Olinda police stations. After increasing incidents of vandalism in the town, the Monbulk Progress Association (MPA) felt it was time for Monbulk to have its own Police Station. After numerous requests for a greater presence by the police, the 12th June 1957 MPA minutes record a visit from Senior Constable Jones of Belgrave, who explained the various difficulties encountered in providing police coverage throughout the large district. It was moved that letters should be written to request assistance and support in procuring a police station at Monbulk. At the July meeting a suggestion for the Association to make a request to the Minister for a police station or, as an alternative, a sub-station and approach the Government with a case showing the sincerity of the community, emphasising the enthusiasm of the population in their endeavours to obtain the police station.

It took many years of continuous pushing from the Monbulk community when the Monbulk police station finally opened in the main street of Monbulk on 8th March 1967.



Monbulk Historical Society is proud to announce that our latest book **WHEN ROADS WERE TRACKS** is in its second print run and is available for \$35.00 at the Monbulk Hub, Bendigo Bank, Kallista Community House and Kallista General Store.