

Grade 5 HASS
Australian History

Australian Explorers

Burke and Wills

Expedition Timeline Activity



Burke and Wills Expedition Timeline



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11th February, 1861
On this day Burke recorded that they had reached the northern-most point of their journey. They could just see the sea but due to thick mangroves and mud they didn't get to the beach. After only resting a night Burke, Wills, King and Gray turn around and start the journey back.

17th April, 1861
Gray dies from starvation and exhaustion. The three remaining men stop for a day to bury him before continuing the journey to Cooper's Creek.

11th November, 1860
The second expedition party arrive at Cooper's Creek in Old. Here they set up a base camp and wait for the group to arrive from Menindee, but they never make it.

21st April, 1861 - Morning
After waiting four months Burke and his men are sick with scurvy and hungry. They think that Burke and his party must have died or are lost. They bury some supplies at the base of a tree and engrave 'DIG' on it just in case Burke and his men return.

30th March, 1861
Burke, Wills, King and Gray run out of supplies and out of desperation kill a camel for meat and then later horses. They dry the meat out so they can take it with them.

29th April, 1861
Bourke meets up with Wright and the survivors from the Menindee supply camp. Bourke decides that he will return to the Cooper's Creek camp to see if Burke and his men have returned.

16th December, 1860
A Royal Commission is held to determine who is responsible for the disastrous outcome of the expedition. The report found that Wright, Bourke and Wills held responsibility for Burke and Wills' deaths while Burke and Wills held responsibility for their poor decision making and terrible journey.

11th September, 1861
A man named Alfred Howitt leads an expedition party to Cooper's Creek to search for Burke's party. They find King alive, living with local Aboriginal people who looked after him. They take the remains of Burke and Wills back to Melbourne.

21st April, 1861 - Afternoon
Burke, Wills and King arrive at the Cooper's Creek camp and find the supplies and note left by Bourke in the morning. They are too weak from hunger and exhaustion so do not try to catch up with the other group.

23rd April, 1861
Burke persuades Wills and King that they have no hope of catching up with the supply party and that they should try to get to M^o Hopeless instead as it is not as far away. Before they leave they bury notes at the base of the Dig tree but do not change the marking or leave another sign.

June, 1861
No one can be sure of the exact dates as there are no reliable written records, but it is believed that Burke and Wills died in late June at different places on the Cooper's Creek.

20th August, 1860
The expedition party sets off from Royal Park in Melbourne. The party consists of 18 men, 25 camels, 22 horses, some wagons, a 2 year supply of food, 80 pairs of shoes, beads, hats, buckets and some firewood.

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30th May, 1861
Wills travels back to the Dig Tree to see if anyone has been there, hoping there are some records. Sadly, thinking no one came back, he finds the camp just as it was and travels back to Burke and King.

15th October, 1860
It took 8 weeks for the party to get to Menindee. Burke decided to leave some of the men at Menindee as a supply camp who would catch up with them at Cooper's Creek while Burke leads a smaller party north.

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30th May, 1861
Bourke and Wright make the journey back to Cooper's Creek but can't see any signs of Burke and Wills having been there. They don't bother to dig under the tree as nothing looks like it was ever disturbed. They head back to Melbourne.

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