

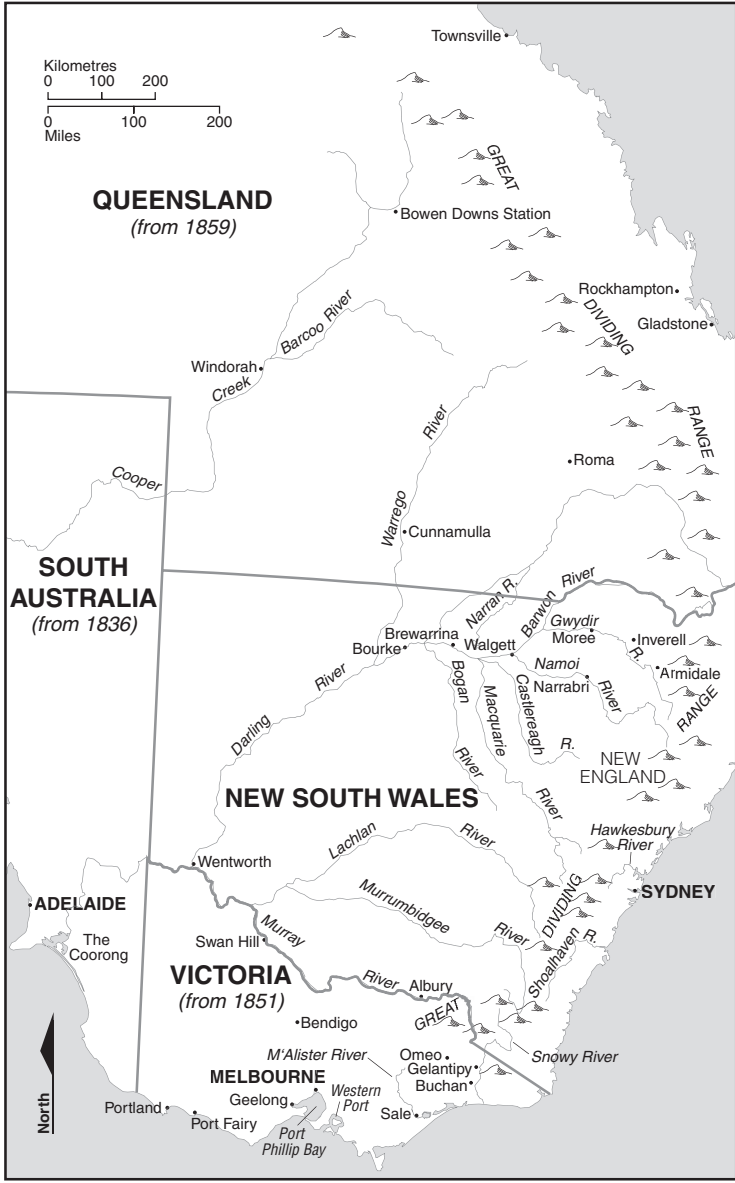
PLACES IN *ROBBERY UNDER ARMS*

MOST of *Robbery Under Arms* takes place in the southern-central region of New South Wales (NSW), in an area bounded roughly by Forbes and Bathurst in the north, and Gundagai and Lake George in the south. The maps on pages 694 and 695 may be used in conjunction with these notes.

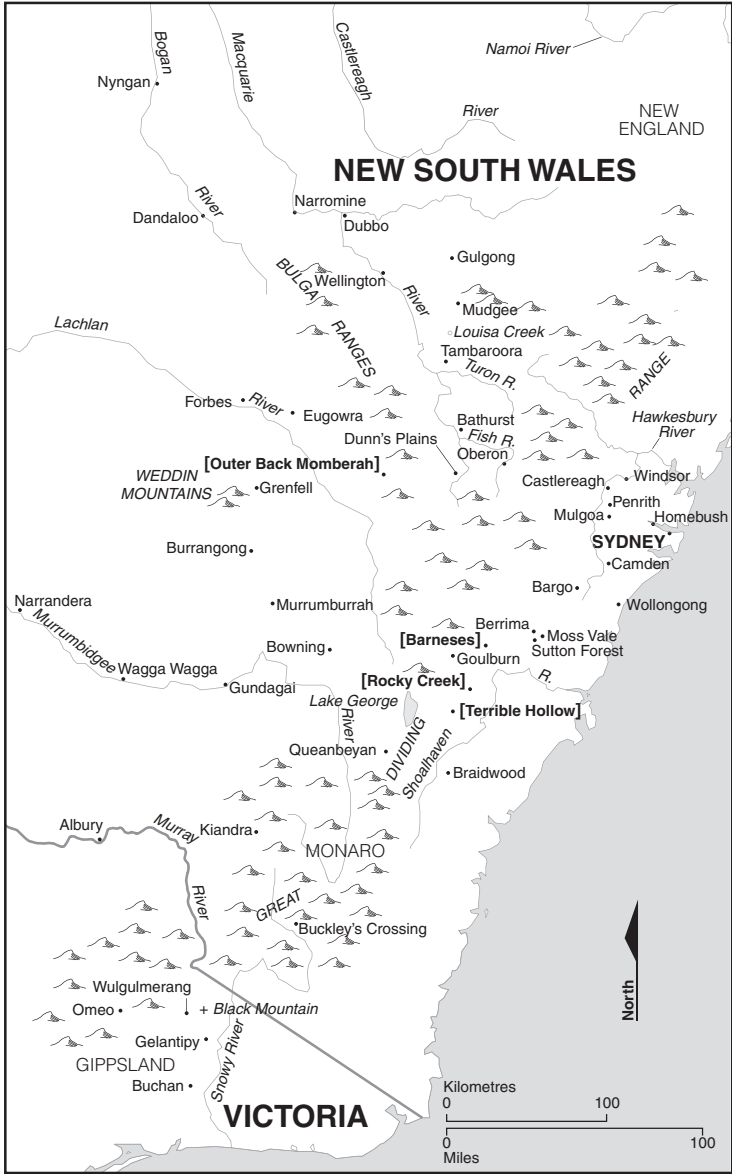
Rolf Boldrewood (hereafter RB) based many of the incidents in the novel on the real and reported escapades of bushrangers, cattle duffers and others. He had travelled widely in Victoria and NSW, but whether he possessed detailed knowledge of the traditional bush-ranger areas in the Southern Highlands and Tableland region of NSW in which he set much of the novel (roughly, Berrima to Braidwood) is uncertain. Like the novel's anachronisms (described in Historical Background, sect. 1), the geographic inconsistencies may be due to the fact that RB wrote the novel as a serial, probably relying on memory rather than maps, and may not have been able to refer back to earlier instalments to check details (cf. note 1 for p. 388). As a result, it is difficult to place the invented places with confidence; accordingly the names are presented on Map 2 within square brackets.

References to the novel (by page-and-line number, with its wording **in bold type**) follow the order of the story, whose main events are summarised here. The references are generally to the first or principal occurrence of the location or feature but are not exhaustive.

Rocky Creek (23:2) or **Rocky Flat** (the name used for most of the rest of the novel) is where Jim and Dick Marston grow up. It is within striking distance of **Bargo** (19:11). The Marstons ride from home to Bargo in a day at 155:26; Bargo is the town from which both



Map 1: Eastern Australia



Map 2: New South Wales
(Fictional place names appear within square brackets and are rough locations only.)

clergy and police come ‘down’ to Rocky Flat. Dick and Gracey are also married at Bargo. RB’s location of key fictional places, including Terrible Hollow, in relation to Bargo suggests either that he believed this settlement to be further s. than it actually is, or was intentionally obscuring the novel’s principal locations. (The fictional geography around Bargo is further discussed below.) In what may have been a simple lapse in memory as he wrote instalments 3–5 (see Note on the Text, p. 7), or a further retreat from geographic specificity, RB changed temporarily to the name **Dargo** (33:24); like Bargo it is implicitly local and probably, though not necessarily, the same township. The reference is repeated at 41:8 (**Dargo Police-station**) and 52:14 (**Dargo Races**). Dargo in Victoria may be the source of the confusion; the name is used only in chaps. III–V; ‘Bargo’ recurs in chap. XIV and then occurs in another eleven chapters till the end.

Mrs Storefield was born near **Windsor** and the **Hawkesbury R.** (28:19–20). **George-street** (28:26) was, and remains, one of Sydney’s main thoroughfares.

To the w. of Rocky Flat (145:5–6) lies the probably fictional **Nulla Mountain** (42:37). It forms part of the **Broken Creek Ranges** (41:1), which are within a few hours’ ride of Rocky Flat and are also probably invented.

Dick refers often and dolefully to **Berrima gaol** (46:2): ‘the largest, the most severe, the most dreaded of all the prisons in New South Wales’ (179:19–21); it opened in 1839 and is still in use. Berrima is a town between Bargo and **Moss Vale** (196:31).

Much of the travel takes place from or in reference to **Terrible Hollow** (50:14). There has been much speculation as to whether it exists and, if so, about where it might be.¹ This confusion exists largely because RB probably based Terrible Hollow on a real place on the Gwydir R. s.w. of Inverell in New England (northern NSW),² which is nowhere near where Terrible Hollow would seem to be in

¹ A location in the Bargo–Camden area was one proposal that responds to indications in the second half of the novel (discussed below): e.g., R. B. Walker, ‘The Historical Basis of *Robbery Under Arms*’, *Australian Literary Studies*, 2 (1965), 3–14.

² Bruce Mitchell put forward the most convincing account of how RB came to know about Terrible Hollow: ‘On the Trail of “Terrible Hollow”’, *Notes and Furphies*, no. 10 (April 1983), 15–16. Mitchell argues that RB must have read an account published in the *Town and Country Journal* (7 March 1874, p. 369) of

the novel: e. of Lake George towards the Shoalhaven R. (The novel's indicators of this general location are given below.³)

Starlight arrives at Terrible Hollow after almost being captured at **Dilligah** (61:15), likely to be an invented place. Jim and Dick go shearing at **Boree shed** (76:30), on Mr Falkand's station, **Banda** (40:23). According to Jim, Terrible Hollow is 'not above thirty miles from Banda in a straight line' (45:10). The closest township to Mr Falkand's station is **Bundah** (81:2). There is a place called Bundah, approximately 80 km n. of Moree, in central-northern NSW – RB has either misplaced this town or appropriated its name for his fictional purposes.

After shearing, the Marston boys take on some bushwork – from wherever they are working, they then ride '70 or 80 miles' (98:34) to **Outer Back Momberah** (105:18) to help steal 1,000 head of cattle. This duffing is based on the theft of a similar number from Bowen Downs station in Queensland by Harry Redford in 1870. Outer Back Momberah is probably an invented station name, intended to be in the general vicinity of Bathurst ('You wouldn't have thought there was anybody nearer than Bathurst', 106:16–17) and supposedly not more than 110 miles from Terrible Hollow (45:10, 98:34): see Map 2 for a rough location.

With the cattle, they head w. to the **Lower Murray and Adelaide** (108:2–3). RB may have partly based this journey on Redford's route from Queensland to Adelaide. The Murray R. forms most of the NSW–Victoria border, until it runs into South Australia. They intend to pass through the **Coorong** (106:35) which is a wetland area on the s. coast of South Australia. After they **crossed the Adelaide border they followed the Darling down to the Murray** (109:7–8). RB is mistaken here: the Darling and its junction with the Murray at Wentworth are e. of the Adelaide (i.e. South Australian) border.

Starlight then pretends to be a rich squatter bringing his cattle from

the arrest of some horse-stealers who were captured at a place on the Gwydir R., known then as Terrible Hollow. The description of this place is memorable but exaggerated; RB seems to have remembered it and further adapted its details (e.g. 51:8–14). See also Ken Stewart, 'In Pursuit of "Terrible Hollow"', *Notes and Furbies*, no. 9 (October 1982), 4–5.

³ Cf. Introduction, n. 153: 'The Stockman's Daughter', with its Devil's Hole hideaway, is also set in this general area.

a station on the Narran R., n.e. of Bourke (109:12). After the sale, Jim and Dick head to **Melbourne** (114:32) by sea. From Melbourne they planned to go to **above Albury somewhere** (118:18). In Melbourne, they find lodgings at **St. Kilda** (119:7), an inner-Melbourne beachside suburb. While in Melbourne Dick and Jim visit the cattle yards at **Flemington** (119:18). The Newmarket saleyards and abattoirs operated in Kensington (a suburb n.w. of Melbourne) from 1856, and extended into Flemington in 1859. Dick compares these saleyards with those at **Homebush** (119:23), a suburb w. of Sydney.

In Melbourne the boys encounter drovers from **Gippsland** (121:12), a district in the e. of Victoria comprising the country between the Great Dividing Range and the coast and extending from the NSW border in the e. to the area around Western Port. **Omeo** (121:28) is a mining town in this area, which from 1835 was a thoroughfare for drovers bringing cattle from the **Monaro** region in south-eastern NSW between Queanbeyan and the Victorian border. Billy the Boy is a **Monaro native** (106:30). Dick and Jim plan to **get back to old New South Wales by way of the Snowy River, and then on to Monaro** (121:30–1). They ride away down to **Sale** (127:5), a town s.e. of Melbourne. From there they go for work to Omeo. **The big lake, I don't know how many feet above the sea** (127:26–7) would be either Lake Omeo, at Benambra, or Lake Dartmouth, in what is now Alpine National Park. Dick later recalls swimming the **head-waters of the M'Alister, in Gippsland** on that trip (198:5–6).⁴

After the shearing season, they head for home along the Snowy R. by **Buchan and Galantapee** (128:32), both towns on the Snowy R. (RB misspells Gelantipy). **Balooka** (128:33) is unidentified, but there is a **Buckley's Crossing** (128:33) s.w. of Cooma. The good hide-out territory Jim speaks of is near **Black Mountain** (129:2), n. of Gelantipy and near **Wagulmerang** (129:6) (spelled Wulgulmerang). Later Dick recalls the snowstorm they braved **in Kiandra way** (198:4) – once a gold-mining town, now a ghost town.

⁴ RB misspells 'MacAlister'. Dick and Jim are roughly following the so-called Convict Trail of prisoners who escaped from Tasmania: see 'Historical Background' in the Academy Edition of *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, ed. Stanton Mellick, Patrick Morgan and Paul Eggert (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996), pp. 586–8.

After Kiandra they take the **Southern road** (130:3; dealt with below) on their way home to Rocky Flat. While at Rocky Flat, the Marstons speak of going **down to the Barwon** to take a job droving (148:12–14). This could refer either to the Barwon R. in Victoria, which runs into Geelong from the s.w., or to the Barwon R. in NSW. Instead, they stay at Rocky Flat and Dick is arrested.

From Bargo, he is taken to **Nomah** (158:17) and tried. Located ‘a week’s travelling or more’ from Berrima (179:2) and with a very hot summer, Nomah is an invented place, the name adapted from Roma, the town in Queensland where Harry Redford was tried and acquitted.⁵ In response to this acquittal, the Queensland government withdrew the criminal jurisdiction from the Roma district court for two years from April 1873 (cf. 173:29–36), although the incident took place twenty years after the events portrayed in the novel. Dick and Starlight are glad they are being tried at Nomah and not at Bargo or **Dutton Forest** (164:13), which is probably a reference to Sutton Forest, a small town s. of Berrima. After their conviction they are taken by coach to Berrima gaol, which they reach on ‘the tenth day’ (179:17).

The locations of Terrible Hollow and the Marstons’ home at Rocky Flat, as well as Dick and Starlight’s next destination, now become clearer from geographic descriptions after their escape from Berrima gaol. They reach the Barneses in about three hours (185:11, 35 and 191:1). It must be located between Berrima and their ultimate destination, Terrible Hollow, though not in a straight line (190:9–11). From the Barneses they ride **near the Shoalhaven country** (196:19). This refers to the Shoalhaven R., known at its northernmost reach for its deep gorges, e. of Goulburn and s.w. of Moss Vale. The river rises about 160 km to the s. and flows through the area to the s. of Goulburn and e. of Queanbeyan near Braidwood, where it is very cold in winter (see note 7 for p. 197). They fear they might be lost: Starlight suggests that they have been travelling in circles, and would end up **about where we’d started from, and find the Moss Vale police waiting there for us** (196:30–1).⁶ This suggests they are heading s. and s.w.

⁵ See Historical Background, sect. 2.

⁶ Moss Vale’s period of rapid growth in the 1870s and 1880s was spurred by the coming of the railway in 1867. A courthouse and lockup were established in 1878,

They arrive at a hut near Terrible Hollow, having ridden all night: the trip is said to have been 'a good 80 miles' (199:20), and they then go on a further '10 miles' to Rocky Flat (200:36). Unfortunately the times taken on horseback and the mileages that are given in the novel seem only to be gestural, leaving the geography unresolved. The following evening they take another, longer route from Rocky Flat to Terrible Hollow and it requires a period from winter 'sundown' till 2 a.m. or so (208:13, 212:31–5, 213:1): a minimum of nine hours indicates perhaps 40 miles (65 km) of very difficult, slow riding (see 211:25). A repeat trip of 'hard and rough' riding also takes 'hours' (284:5) in one case and 'all night' in another (426:13). A distance of 40 miles is affirmed at 532:34. The times taken in the novel for the rides between the Barneses, Terrible Hollow and Rocky Flat indicate greater distances than maps allow, though rough bush tracks or trackless bush, and the difficulty of keeping to the shortest route in the dark, reduce the discrepancies.⁷

Apart from Berrima, the only real-life locations to give anything like a precise bearing are Bargo and Eugowra. Terrible Hollow is about 70 miles from Bargo (238:23, 26 and 243:3–6). Eugowra requires up to twelve hours hard riding each way (say, 125 miles or 200 km: 375:21–2). The location for the fictional Terrible Hollow on Map 2 depends on this information, together with the Shoalhaven R. location and the direction of the ride after the escape from Berrima gaol. As we have seen, Rocky Flat is supposedly within 40 miles of Terrible Hollow. Nulla Mountain is visible from both locations and is traversed as the characters go between them. However, the

the township having been proclaimed in 1861 – all after the action of the story at this point: see Historical Background, sect. 1.

⁷ Terrible Hollow to Rocky Flat is 'a short ride' at 277:14 (and cf. 295:7–8); but this is complicated by there being two ways into Terrible Hollow (284:11–12), the usual one being 'across Nulla Mountain' (421:26), which could alter distances considerably (cf. 294:8–10). Although an ordinary horse might manage only 80 km (50 miles) in a day, in the modern endurance ride, the Tom Quilty Cup, the winners take about 9–10 hours plus breaks to travel 160 kms (100 miles), with the winning horses having to be cleared as still 'fit to continue' at the conclusion of the ride. (Cf. 414:5–7.) Desperate men on horseback could push their horses harder (e.g. 232:34–5, 402:29–33 and cf. 334:2–4), though bush riding in difficult conditions would be much slower. Shorter competitive rides of 120 km (75 miles) require only about 5–6 hours (cf. 206:17 and entry c, and 407:19–20).

many references to Bargo, implied to be the nearest sizeable town to Rocky Flat, points to a more northerly location for the Marstons' home.⁸ However, it has to be recognised that Bargo was for a long time only a district rather than a township, and its soil was of poor quality. As late as 1866, for instance, only Bargo Brush is gazetted, as a tract of agricultural land between the townships of Picton and Mittagong where 'most of the land is taken up by settlers'.⁹ A report from the Inspector of Schools in 1869 notes a hotel and a post office and nine families residing on farms in the area.¹⁰ Although land was released for sale in the village in the 1880s, prosperity was delayed until after 1919 when a deviation of the original 1860s railway line brought it through the township. Goulburn, on the other hand, had an estimated population of 1,200 by 1848, which is roughly when the novel's events start.¹¹ In the novel's fictional geography, 'Bargo', then, may be a simple renaming of Goulburn, a township whose location is consistent with that of Terrible Hollow.

This resolution of the novel's inconsistency is one possible explanation. Another is that RB may not have known the area well or never clarified the fictional locations in his own mind, desiring to achieve only a geographical and historical flavouring rather than definite locations, believing the latter secondary to the changing needs of the narrative, as he wrote, week by week.¹² The newspaper account in chap. LVII of the discovery of Terrible Hollow locates it

⁸ When Dick has to flee the Turon goldfield after Kate's betrayal of him to the police he rides furiously from daylight (346:2), reaching the Barneses for breakfast (347:6). This places the Barneses a good way n. of Bargo, to where Jim is being escorted by police (348:11–15) en route to Berrima gaol. Once rescued in Bargo Brush, said to be a part of the country that Dick and Jim hardly know (351:31–3), they make for Terrible Hollow. The time is nearly sunset (350:9) and they reach the Hollow just before daylight (353:7), again consistent with the Shoalhaven location. Although there is no gazetted Nulla Mountain, there is a Nulla Nulla Hill near Braidwood, though it does not appear in the early gazetteers.

⁹ *Bailliere's New South Wales Gazetteer* (Sydney: F. F. Bailliere, 1866), pp. 26–7.

¹⁰ [Frank Broomham], 'Courtesy of Mr. Frank Broomham. Principal of Bargo Public School' in *Reflections from a Bush Town* (Picton, NSW: Alted Print, n.d.), p. 54.

¹¹ Charles MacAlister, *Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South* (Goulburn, NSW: Chas MacAlister, 1907), p. 100.

¹² De Serville (149, 144–5) identifies only one relevant trip by RB, driving through the Monaro to Gippsland after the failure of his property near Narrandera in late 1869. He stayed for a night in Goulburn on the way. He would presumably have

in the 'TURON DISTRICT' (588:9), which is inconsistent with the locatings of it earlier in the novel.

Gold becomes central to the story. It was first found in the valley of the Turon R. in 1851 (234:33). Mention is made of a nugget found at Louisa Creek (310:4), a tributary of Meroo Creek, upon which the mining town of Hargraves was situated.

The Southern Road (236:12) again figures in the story: this is probably the major (or post) road that later became the Hume Highway. The first part of this road (between Sydney and Liverpool) was commissioned in 1813. By 1835 it ran as a rough track from Sydney, through Berrima, Oldbury and Goulburn; and soon after through Gundagai and Albury. It was used regularly as a mail route from 1839 (hence, 'the Southern line', 234:19). 'Most of our lives we'd been used to the Southern road, and we kept to it still. It wasn't right in the line of the gold diggings, but it wasn't so far off' (236:12-14). This road is also stated to be 'near the coast . . . wasn't on the track to the diggings . . . [but went] through Bargo Brush' (238:5-14). At 197:13-14 we are told that from Berrima, one can take the 'Southern Road to get across the border into Port Phillip' – the name given to what is now Victoria before its separation from NSW in 1850-51.

Bargo Brush (238:14), an area of thick scrub along the Southern Road between two watercourses, was a popular spot for bushranging. It is here that the Marstons rob the Goulburn mail (238:2) at Stony Pinch, Bargo Brush (243:31). There is no gazetted 'Stony Pinch' at Bargo Brush, but there are several places with that name elsewhere in NSW. The young woman in the mail coach, whose money Starlight demands but then restores to her, is on her way to Bowning (241:31), a town s.w. of Goulburn.

The gang robs the bank at Ballabri, where a goodish bit of gold was sent to wait the monthly escort (287:9-10). The name Ballabri could be, like Nomah/Roma, an alteration of Narrabri, whose location s. of Moree is not relevant here. Ballabri is half a day's ride from Terrible Hollow and is somewhere on the road from
got to know the area around Mulgoa (near Penrith), where he married in 1861. His official appointments at Gulgong and Mudgee, and his previous time near Narrandera, would not necessarily have involved travel near the novel's locales for Rocky Flat and Terrible Hollow.

goldfields to a main town. Braidwood fits geographically, and it experienced a gold rush after the discovery of gold at Major's Creek to the s. in 1851; but the name is probably only generic.

Maddie tells the Marstons of how Morringer plans to **knock saucepans out of all the boys between here and Weddin Mountain** (299:2–3). The Weddin Mountain Range is a series of rugged uplands s.w. of Grenfell, in the central-west of NSW. The nature and position of the range made it an ideal hide-out for bushrangers in the early days of the goldfields, and it was often used as a refuge by Frank Gardiner, Ben Hall and others. **Eugowra Rocks** (372:36) was another haunt of these bushrangers, upon whose theft of the gold escort in 1862 the novel's account is based.

Darjallook (406:13), where the Whitman ladies are saved from Moran, is supposedly within 20 miles of the Barneses' (407:19), and also within 85 miles of the Whitmans' **Castlereagh station**, presumably the Castlereagh township near Penrith (406:21, 414:7), proclaimed by Governor Macquarie in 1810.

Heading from Rocky Creek to the Hollow, Ben runs into Moran and Daly, who were **making over to the Fish River** (417:26–7). They would have been heading n.w., as Fish R. runs from Bathurst to Oberon. Fish R. is also where Joe Moreton lives – his home, where he is last seen heading with the police in pursuit, is **over 40 miles away** (455:15) from the Barneses'.

Meanwhile, Burke, Daly and the gang are **cruising about the Southern and Western roads** (459:19–20). The latter probably refers to the Great Western Road from Sydney to Bathurst. A link from the Nepean R. to Bathurst was commissioned by Macquarie in 1814, and by 1832 the Great Western Road stretched from Parramatta over the Blue Mountains to Bathurst via the Victoria Pass (see note 4 for p. 86). The same gang next botches a hold-up further s. **on the Southern Road, not far from Murrumburrah** (461:24–5).

Dick, Jim and Starlight take up gold mining at the Turon. Sir Ferdinand is diverted from the races there by news of a hold-up near **Forbes** (474:33), which is nearly 150 km away to the w.

George Storefield does not go to the race ball as he is away at his station on the **Lachlan R.** (442:20). George runs cattle that he buys from near **Burrangong** (534:26). He also buys land from **round Parramatta and Windsor way, and Campbelltown.**

These were all **old-fashioned sleepy old places near Sydney** (534:32–4), and are now satellite cities of Sydney. George's house is said to be as grand as any at **Darling Point** (535:10), which was, and remains, an exclusive waterside suburb of Sydney, notable for its mansions. While at the Turon Dick pretends to be a gentleman from **Petersham** (472:34), an inner suburb of Sydney. The gang returns to the Hollow.

Their protracted robbery of Mr Knightley is based on the siege of Mr Keightley's house at Dunn's Plains, near Rockley (s. of Bathurst). This incident seems to take place in the novel in about the same location. Afterwards they ride to Black Stump, which was **within a reasonable distance of Bathurst** (522:27–8). While there, Starlight remarks on the sun setting on the **Bulga mountains** (523:34). He is probably referring to the Bulga Ranges.¹³

Dick and Starlight encounter George Storefield when they are taking a ride towards the **Bogan road** (524:25), which is presumably in the vicinity of the Bogan R. George is taking cattle to a run on the **Lower Bogan** (524:33–4). George suggests they head towards his station **Willaroon** (526:16), from where they could make their way across the **Queensland border**¹⁴ to **Townsville** (526:30). Jim hopes to sail from **Gladstone** (527:11). Jim's plan is to **come up the Murray from Melbourne, and so on to the Darling** (533:19–20). Perhaps 'up [to] the Murray' is implied: Jim would then travel down the Murray, although 'up' the map, heading n.w. to the Darling R.

It is decided that Jim is to take a boat at **Swan Hill** (540:29–30). The Murray R. meets the Darling R. near Wentworth. Dick tells Aileen that Jim will travel up the Darling R. to **Bourke** (540:31), then n. to **Cunnamulla** (540:32), in s.w. Queensland, and then across to the coast to **Rockhampton** (540:32).

Dick's plan is to go **down the Macquarie and across by Duck Creek, George's Station, Willaroon**, which is on the lower Bogan

¹³ Dick states that Knightley lived a good way down to the south (504:33). This inconsistency is explained if we assume that RB had the Turon R. rather than Terrible Hollow in mind as he wrote this: the Turon has just been under discussion (503:6) and is mentioned in the next sentence.

¹⁴ Queensland was not proclaimed until 1859 – this is an anachronism throughout the novel.

R. (524:33–4, 526:16), and then **start from there with a mob of cattle to Queensland** (540:25–7). The Macquarie R. runs through Bathurst and Dubbo, meeting the Castlereagh just s.w. of Walgett. There are several gazetted Duck Creeks across Australia: here, probably a generic name for an invented place.

Starlight plans to **get right across by Dandaloo to the back blocks of the West Bogan country, between it and the Lachlan** (548:15–16). Dandaloo is a town w. of Narromine; Starlight would then be heading in the general direction of Bourke, from w. of the Bogan R.

Leaving the Hollow, Dick first heads w., then n.e., till he strikes **the leading range**, presumably the Bulga Ranges, **that falls and falls down to the rivers** (551:8–9). He makes for a **curious bit of water, 20 miles back from the river, called the Bird's Nest** (551:37–8). This is **90 miles** from Terrible Hollow (552:34). He arrives at Willaroon the next day (554:3). He then travels with cattle to Cunnamulla. **Once we sighted the waters of the Warrego**, Dick thinks, **we should feel ourselves more than half free** (556:33–4). The Warrego R. runs through Cunnamulla and into the Darling R.

Once at the shanty **10 miles this side of Cunnamulla** (557:17), Dick says to Jim that there's **no police nearer than Trielgerat** (561:15–16), an invented place. The shoot-out that sees the deaths of Jim and Starlight takes place near Cunnamulla, at **Murrynebone Creek** (564:15) (unidentified).

Moran continues his bushranging career around **Wagga Wagga** and **Narrandera** (585:9).

Dick and Gracey, at the end of the novel, are to start a new life in Queensland, on the **Barcoo** (602:35), which flows into the Cooper Creek just above Windorah.

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