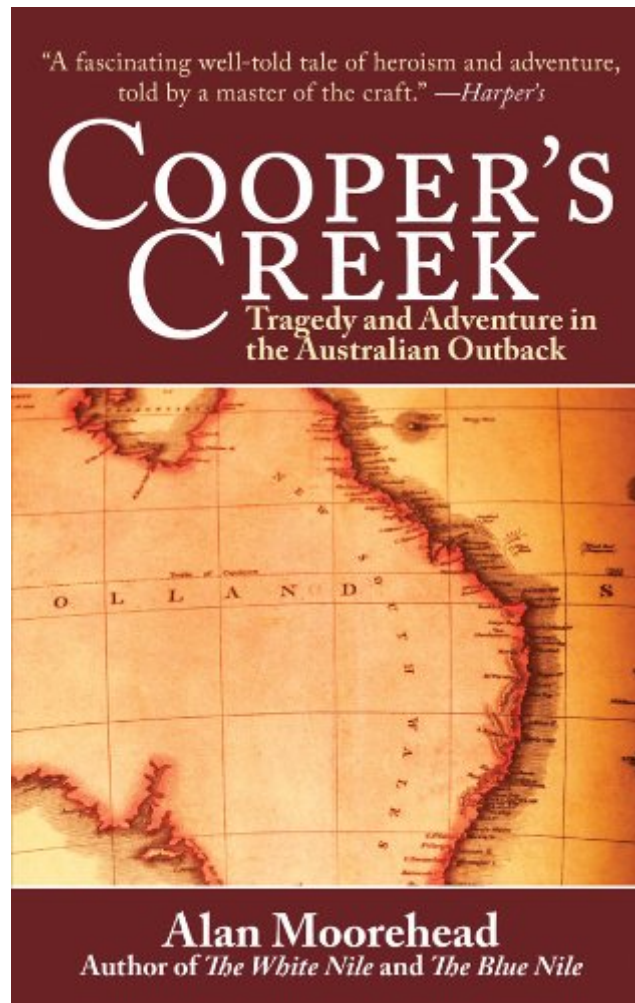


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# Cooper's Creek: Tragedy And Adventure In The Australian Outback



## Synopsis

In 1860, an expedition set out from Melbourne, Australia, into the interior of the country, with the mission to find a route to the northern coast. Headed by Robert Oâ™Hara Burke and William John Wills, the party of adventurers, scientists, and camels set out into the outback hoping to find enough water and to keep adequate food stores for their trek into the bush. Almost one year later, Burke, Wills, and two others from their party, Gray and King, reached the northern shore but on their journey back, they were stranded at Cooperâ™s Creek where all but King perished. Cooperâ™s Creek is a gripping, intense historical narrative about the harshness of the Australian outback and the people who were brave enough to go into the very depths of that uncharted country.

## Book Information

File Size: 1745 KB

Print Length: 224 pages

Publisher: Skyhorse Publishing (August 1, 2010)

Publication Date: August 1, 2010

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0064DFRW8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #34,753 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #7 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Australia & Oceania #8 inÂ Books > History > Australia & Oceania > Australia & New Zealand #24 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > World > Expeditions & Discoveries

## Customer Reviews

This is a great little book. It tells of a journey of exploration that went wrong, of rescues that were inept, and other treks that went off like clockwork - all woven into a well-told tale. Most such stories fall into one of two categories: Follies dripping with ineptness, irony and tragedy (such as Scott's fatal expedition to the South Pole); or well-planned and executed journeys that are practically dull and boring in their expert execution (Amundsen's successful "first" to the South Pole). "Cooper's

Creek" has both - and more. In 1860-61 an expedition northwards from Melbourne across the largely unknown interior to the north coast of Australia ended with the deaths of three of the four explorers that had made the final dash. The fourth lived due to rescue by the local natives (the "black gentlemen"). The outcome was made more dramatic and tragic because men of the base depot upon whom the four depended had returned south one day before the exploring party returned. There are dozens of "what ifs" that could have changed the outcome. These (along with the interplay between individuals and supporters) make this book as much a mystery or detective story as a tale of adventure. It is also both interesting and tragic to read of these outsiders suffering and dying as they trek through groups of black gentlemen who have mastered the country. You can't but wonder to what extent the explorers' seeming contempt of the native Australians must have, in the end, turned to admiration.

I love first-hand historical accounts of outdoor adventure and exploration, and this one is a classic. The descriptions of wildlife alone are worth the read, but this is also a riveting story of an expedition run amok. Like the equally fascinating "Desperate Passage" and "The Ice Master," this story is also often brutal and heartbreaking. As a sensitive person who cries easily, I am nevertheless drawn to these stories because they have so much to teach us about human nature, and the extremes of cowardice and bravery of which it is capable under survival conditions.

Alan Moorehead is one of the most readable history writers I know. I purchased "Cooper's Creek" based on my knowing his previous work and was not disappointed at all. I recommend this as an interesting history lesson on Australia and its development as a frontier colony not unlike us in America.

I've been a staunch admirer of Alan Moorehead's best-known books about the exploration of little-known areas of the world (The Blue Nile and The White Nile) for many years. Happily I discovered that he had written a book about the dangerous and ultimately deadly attempt to fill in the map of the center of Australia soon after the middle of the 19th century, and I discovered it shortly before leaving for a trip to Australia, so the timing could not have been more perfect. The expedition seemed at first to have been very well planned, but human failings, misunderstandings, ego, arrogance, bad weather, and some singularly unfortunate decisions that were not in themselves bad ones and were fully in character ultimately led to tragedy. The center of Australia--a hot, waterless desert much of the year, inhabited by Aborigines, with whom the white settlers so far

had very little connection--could hardly be more different than the Nile valley and the heavily populated jungles of East Africa that were the settings of the two earlier books, yet as before Moorehead combines an account of the almost superhuman exertions of the party to survive and the interaction of personalities that made the chances so risky. One does not need to be crossing the Australian outback to be captivated by the book, though it is a gripping companion for such an experience. But, as always, Moorehead reveals the strengths and weaknesses of men in a very challenging situation, and makes it compulsively readable.

I loved this book. It takes you back to the period by describing the actual provisions and other details of the excursion. The author gives good insight into the motivations of the key players. As you read this book you will feel as if you are with Burke and Wills on their amazing but doomed journey. There are some "old English" terms which one has to deal with but they add to the authenticity of the book. One criticism, I would have enjoyed more maps of the journey as the one map in the book is too small to be useful.

It's a marvelous book. It's hard to believe the trials this group went through - the exploration of Australia is remarkable for the hardships people went through to map that continent. Even though I've never been able to go there, I've got any number of books and have read extensively and it's still amazing to me how very large and relatively unpopulated the country is.

This isn't the type of book I usually read, but I picked it up because my daughter has moved to Australia. I found the story fascinating. The author does a good job telling the story, giving enough facts to help you understand the story, but not burdening the reader. It's an amazing, interesting story.

A stirring account of brave explorers navigating parts inhospitable of the Australian interior. A wonderful country replete with awesome tales of adventure, daring and self sufficiency. A wartime correspondent, himself brave and hearty, Mr. Moorehead was superbly talented, writing with ease and clarity and great recollection, pacing twists and turns across his narrative so beautifully. A terrific read.

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