Robert O'hara Burke Encyclopedia Article

Robert O'hara Burke

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1820?-1861

Irish explorer best known as the leader of an illfated expedition to cross Australia from north to south in 1860-61. The Royal Society of Victoria sponsored the trip, which included 18 men besides Burke. Midway through the trek, Burke became impatient when supplies did not arrive on schedule and decided to go ahead accompanied by William John Wills, Charles Gray and John King. Unfortunately, his rash actions resulted not only in his own death, but also that of Wills and Gray. Valuable information of the expedition was found in a journal that had been kept by Wills and discovered with his body. It indicated that Burke had died of exhaustion around June 28 in 1861. Later, a statue honoring Burke and King was erected in Melbourne.