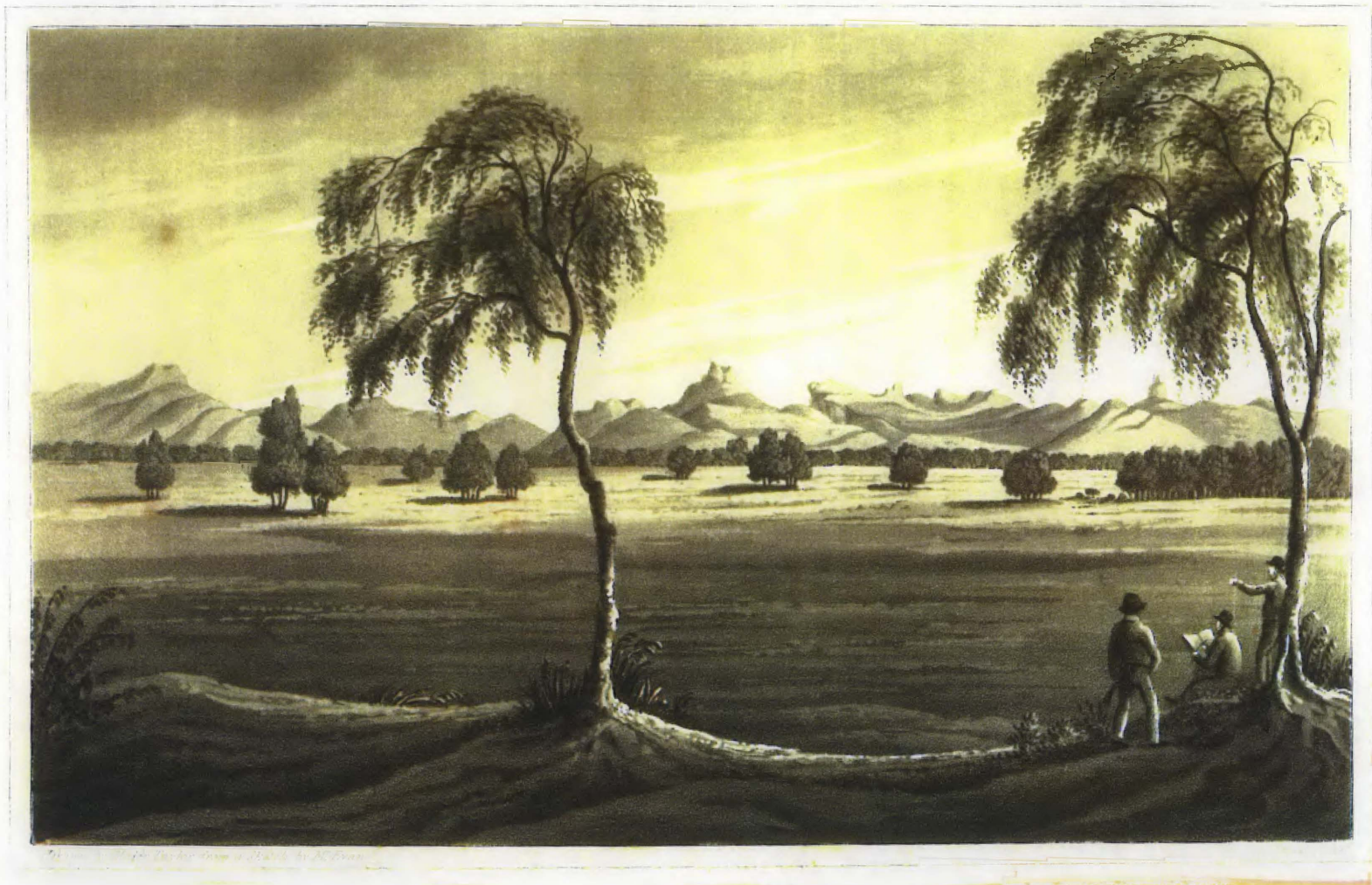


**The geomorphic evolution of the Warrumbungle Volcanic  
Complex, New South Wales, Australia.**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of New England**

**July 1998**



71. The Valley of the River of the South.

**Cover page:** Arbuthnot's Range (the Warrumbungle Volcanic Complex) from the west, redrawn by Major Taylor from a sketch by Mr Evans during John Oxley's 1818 expedition into the interior of New South Wales.

## Declaration

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*I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.*

*I certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.*

---

## Acknowledgments

There are many people I wish to thank and I apologise for any omissions:

My principal supervisor Dr. Robert Haworth (Department of Geography, Planning, Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology) for encouragement, as well as constant reading and editorial comments on the many drafts and the final version of the thesis.

Co-supervisors Associate Professor Peter Flood (Department of Geology) and Dr. Morrie Duggan (Australia Geological Survey Organisation, Canberra) for helpful comments and editing. Dr. Stephen Gale provided supervision and assistance in the field for the first two and a half years of my candidature. His helpful comments and instruction were gratefully received.

The landholders who allowed access to their land, particularly the successive custodians of “Wandiallah”, Mr Ross Craigo, and Mr Tony Morse (who has shown considerable interest in the nature and origin of the Wandiallah area). Staff of the Warrumbungle Office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service provided valuable local knowledge and support, as did the staff at the Armidale branch of the Department of Mineral Resources, particularly Rob Barnes.

The successive Heads of the former Department of Geography and Planning (Associate Professor Jack Hobbs, Professor Jim Walmsley, Associate Professor Tony Sorensen and particularly Associate Professor Jeremy Smith), and the newly formed Department of Geography, Planning, Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology Head, Associate Professor Iain Davidson, for making available Department facilities and funding.

The administrative personnel in the Department: Megan Wheeler, Helen Creagan and Jan Hayden for their cheerful help and support throughout my candidature. Thanks also to Janice Johnson and Pat Mortell for their assistance in Ellis Thorpe Library and in technical matters, respectively. Other much needed assistance with computing has come from Terry Cooke and Alan Jones, and Mike Roach produced the excellent maps throughout the text.

The Faculty of Arts (UNE) for providing annual equal opportunity stipends and Internal Research Grants, and the UNE for the provision of a UNE Research Scholarship,

without which it would have been impossible to undertake this study. In addition, I thank the staff of the UNE Geography Department for their support, particularly Fran Rolley, Neil Argent, Barbara Rugendyke, Jeremy Smith and Robert Baker.

Lin Sutherland and Rob Jones at the Sydney Museum contributed to discussion on volcanism in Australia and fossil identification respectively. Emeritus Professor J.F.G. Wilkinson provided useful discussion on the general geology and the suitability of the application of geochemical techniques in the Warrumbungle Complex. Janet Knutson (Australian Geological Survey Organisation) is thanked for useful discussions on volcanism in the Warrumbungle Complex and Dr. Warwick Sivell of the UNE Department of Geology assisted in field identification of lithology and participated in useful discussion on volcanism in general. His interest and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated.

Coonabarabran, Coonamble and Gilgandra Shire Councils kindly responded to all requests for information, as did the Coonabarabran Tourist Information Centre. I also thank the technical staff of the UNE Geology Department and Mr Peter Garlick of the Electron Microscope Unit. I acknowledge the contributions of the late Professor John Milburn of the UNE Department of Botany for his helpful discussions on diatom extraction techniques, and Hay War Memorial High School for their continued interest in my studies. The PhD officers were extremely helpful and I am grateful for their assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have supported me strongly throughout this endeavour: Bob Haworth, my brother David who assisted with work and play, Alison and Michelle, Mum, Dad and Kristen, Grandma, Bob and Colleen, Chris and Kerry, Rob and Tanya, Shari, Lynda, Ngaire, Chase and Michele and Tracey. I also thank Associate Professor John Humphreys, Dr. Bernard Swan and Tilak Kuruppuarachchi, who were never too busy to offer words of support, encouragement and to pass on relevant information. Tilak also assisted with the statistical analysis of diatoms. I especially thank Chandelle Duthie for her assistance and support.

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this work to my Pop, who passed away during my candidature, and to Chandelle.....*

## **Abstract**

Geomorphic analysis of the mid-Miocene Warrumbungle volcanic complex in north-central New South Wales revealed a highly dissected multi-vent ovoid shield, 55 km long and averaging 32 km wide. The volcanics rest unconformably on a pre-volcanic medium-relief sandstone landscape of broad valleys and flat interfluves.

The degree of dissection, a function of the exceptionally large proportion of easily erodible pyroclastic material erupted during the volcano's 3.7 million year active life, varies considerably between the distal and proximal zones of extrusion. The proximal zone is preserved only in a skeletal state and is dominated by less erodible domes, plugs, and dykes. By contrast, the distal zone presents a characteristically gently sloping shield landscape with terraces where flow units are exposed.

Remarkably, and probably as a result of the large number of explosive eruptions that were a dominant feature of Warrumbungle activity, four previously unrecorded crater remnants were recognised, as well as other previously unrecognised features. The preferential preservation of their lithology is perhaps a result of the partial/complete burial of these features by coeval activity and the development of dual scale radial drainage networks, with exhumation only occurring when local sub-drainage had been captured.

There is strong structural control on volcanic morphology, with a fracture joining the ends of offset parallel lineaments. This fracture corresponds to a 40 km long northeast-southwest trending belt that controlled the emplacement of some 100 vents. This belt may reflect the migration of the Indo-Australian Plate over a fixed sub-lithospheric heat anomaly. However, analysis of age trends indicate a west-east (age-longitude) younging of volcanics contrary to the expected east-west younging, and no significant north-south (age-latitude) younging.



The geomorphic evolution of the Warrumbungle Complex is a consequence of the interaction of sub-basement structure, multiple dome emplacement and preferential preservation of lithology caused by compositionally diverse pyroclastic ejecta and lava distributed disproportionately in the proximal and distal zones respectively. Coeval activity, dual scale drainage and denudation that was highly localised over time and space allowed preservation of individual landforms, while the overall radial pattern of a volcanic centre combined with the effects of pre-volcanic topography to reshape regional drainage.

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