

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

“AUSTRALIA AND HER NAVIGATORS”

[By the President, COMMANDER NORMAN S. PIXLEY,
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(Read at a Meeting of the Society on 24 September 1970.)

Joseph Conrad in his writings, refers to “The mysteriously born traditions of seacraft, command, and unity in an occupation in which men’s lives depend on each other.”

Still true today, how much more was this so with the mariners of long ago, who sailed in small ships for thousands of lonely leagues through unknown seas, for on them alone rested the safety of the ship and all on board.

Dr. Johnson wrote “No man will be a sailor who has contrivance to get himself into jail, for being in a ship is being in a jail with the chance of being drowned.”

There was more than an element of truth in this, for the seaman who refused to sail could be clapped in jail; whilst



THE PRESIDENT, COMMANDER NORMAN S PIXLEY

those who did sail faced months in a confined space with acute discomfort, severe punishment at times, and provisions and water which deteriorated as the voyage proceeded.

Scurvy killed more than storm and shipwreck until James Cook in his first voyage proved that it could be prevented.

Clothing was rarely changed, the sailor coming wet to his hammock from his watch on deck in bad weather.

Rats and cockroaches lived and thrived amongst the provisions, adding to the problems of hygiene and health.

Yet, despite it all, sailors, after coming home, set forth to sea again; the numbers of ships grew, navigational instruments improved and the mysteries of the unknown seas were gradually solved.

VALUE OF ACCURATE CHARTS

To discover was one thing; but it was important for the discoverers to produce accurate charts and carefully kept journals to show and describe where they had been and which could be also used for the guidance of mariners who were to follow.

Publication of these in those times had to be undertaken by the captain on his return and some, rightly, profited from this.

William Dampier was one, whilst from the sales of the published charts and journals of James Cook, his widow Elizabeth Cook was a wealthy but lonely woman when she died on 13 May 1835, at the age of 93, all her children dead long years before.

Early last century, the Admiralty established a hydrographic office for the production of charts and other navigational information, appointing Alexander Dalrymple as hydrographer to the Royal Navy. Dalrymple it was who handed to Joseph Banks before *Endeavour* sailed for the Pacific, evidence long forgotten, indicating that Torres had sailed between New Guinea and New Holland.

Australia is this year celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the discovery of its eastern seaboard by James Cook, taking possession of his discovery in the name of the crown.

Though the smallest continent, Australia is the world's largest island. This would seem an appropriate time to look back to Cook and to the other navigators who discovered, explored, and charted our enormous coastline of some 12,000 miles, of which Queensland alone has 3,236. The Great Barrier Reef, in reality a vast complex of reefs, coral shoals and islands, stretches for 1200 miles from just south

of the Tropic of Capricorn almost to the shores of New Guinea.

Known as Terra Australis until approximately 1650, it was re-named New Holland by the Dutch following their discoveries, which extended from 1606 to 1696 and from which stemmed the numerous Dutch names on our coast.

New Holland it remained, until christened Australia by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1817. This name had been previously suggested by Matthew Flinders.

EAST TO THE INDIES

After Vasco da Gama had opened the way to the East, the Portuguese came in 1512 to the Spice Islands, which lie to the north-west of our Continent and developed a highly lucrative monopoly in the Spice¹ Trade with Europe.

The Dutch, whose ships were plying between European ports, shared in this profitable business until they were suddenly forbidden by Philip II of Spain to trade in any Spanish or Portuguese territory. Consequently, if they were to retain their share in the spice trade, they would have to go all the way to the Spice Islands to get it.

Holland, under the Spanish yoke, was fighting her 80 years war of independence but, with the power of Portugal weakened by Spain, Drake's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 altered the course of history. The Dutch quickly took advantage of the opportunity to seize the Spice Islands.

They made their first voyage in 1595. Within seven years 65 ships sailed to the Spice Islands. The powerful Dutch East Indies Company was formed, consolidated its position and began to look for new fields to exploit, in trade and treasure. After all there was the legendary great "Southland" to discover, with the enormous wealth it was supposed to contain, and there was New Guinea which was known, but not explored. So it was that late in 1605, Willem Jantz, the

1. The tantalising flavour and piquant qualities of spices have made them sought after from the earliest times. In the early days of history spices were worth fabulous sums because of the difficulty of obtaining them and the high cost of transportation. When Alaric the Goth conquered Rome in 410 A.D., he asked as a ransom 3,000 lb. of pepper, then worth more than its weight in gold. The first organisation of dealers was the "fraternity of pepperers," and it was in the 14th century that the name was changed to the "guild of grocers," which depicted on its coat-of-arms six cloves. Pepper was known to the ancients. Hippocrates employed it as a medicine, and Pliny expressed his surprise that it should have come into general use, considering its want of flavour. In the Middle Ages, pepper was one of the most costly spices, and in the 13th century a few pounds of it were reckoned a princely present. Venice at its height traded in spices to the amount of £6 million in English money, annually, and it vied with Portugal in securing cargoes from Far Eastern ports. Vasco da Gama, the famous sea fighter, made one of his most important voyages to secure a cargo of pepper, cinnamon, and ginger from India. The Dutch succeeded the Portuguese in the supremacy of the trade in spices, later to have it snatched from them in the 16th century by the English.—Ed.

first European actually known to arrive on our shores, and who afterwards became an admiral, set forth in the yacht "Duyfken" from the Dutch East Indies to explore New Guinea, where it was hoped to find a "Great Store of Gold."

But there was no ancient civilisation in New Guinea or in Terra Australis. In fact, there was no civilisation at all, nor, as Cook later proved, did the great Southland exist.

JANTZ AT CAPE YORK

Having explored the west coast of New Guinea, Jantz sailed south, crossed the strait discovered by Torres later in the same year, and made a landfall at Duyfken Point near the western tip of Cape York in March 1606. Passing south down the coast, he turned away at Cape Keerweer and returned by the way he had come.

Ten years were to pass before the next discovery, this time of the coast of what is now Western Australia.

The Dutch had continued to follow the usual route of early navigators from the Cape of Good Hope direct to the East Indies. This took them through the doldrums, where ships were becalmed for long periods in the heat of the Tropics—delays which increased the dangers of shortages of water and provisions, with the ever present threat of scurvy.

It was Hendrik Brouwer who found in 1613 that the shortest distance between the Cape of Good Hope and Java was not the fastest route to follow. By keeping to the higher latitudes of the south, he found favourable winds which carried him eastwards until he reached roughly the longitude of Java, towards which he then steered north, completing the journey in half the usual time.

DIRCK HARTOG'S VOYAGE

Dirck Hartog, captain of *De Eendracht*, 250 tons, with 32 guns, sailed from the Zuyder Zee in January 1616 with four other ships in company. None on board knew that he would accidentally take them to the shores of Terra Australis, nor could Gillis Mibais van Luyck, the supercargo, representative of the East Indies Company or his assistant, Johannes Struys, imagine that their names, scratched on a pewter plate, could be preserved for posterity.

It was not until August that the four ships reached the Cape after suffering severe privations.

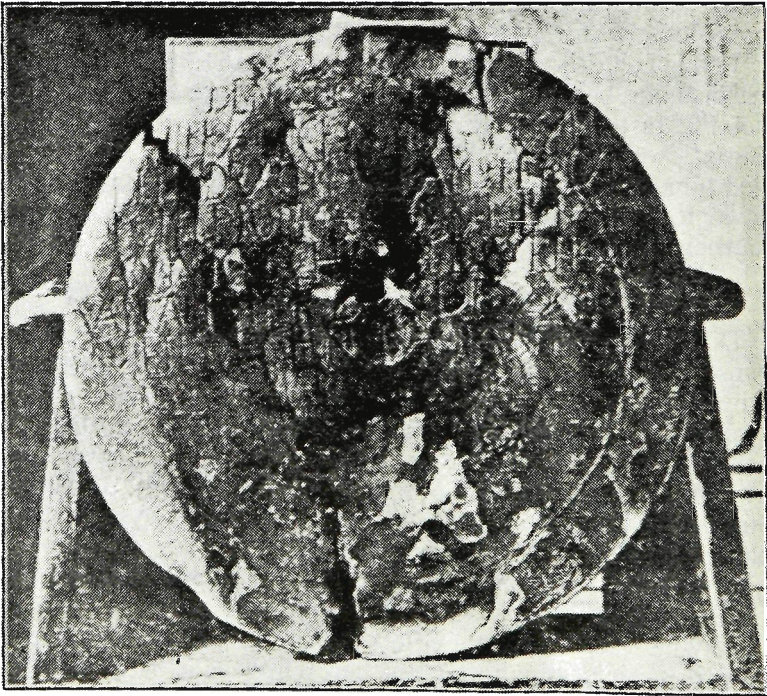
Having victualled, they left on a north-easterly course towards their destination. But here Dirck Hartog decided to leave the convoy and follow Brouwer's route along the 36th Parallel. The distance between the Cape and Australia is

some 4,000 miles, and there were many problems for the early navigators.

They had the mariner's compass which years before had come from the East in more primitive form: The 15th century cross staff for taking the altitude of the sun was a simple and effective apparatus, whilst the 16th century nocturnal and the astrolabes with which the mariner fixed his position, were instruments with some reasonable degree of accuracy. With the use of these, latitude could be ascertained, but longitude was a different matter due to the lack of a reliable timekeeper; all that was available was a sand glass which usually ran for half an hour. With a possible error of a few seconds in the running of the sand, the delay in turning it every half hour, and worse, the lazy sailor who turned the glass too soon in order to shorten his watch, the error in a ship's time at the end of a long voyage might well run into hours.

HARTOG AT SHARK BAY

So it was that Dirck Hartog, after sailing east for some weeks, sighted the west coast of Australia about the time he was due to head north, and, on 25 October 1616, landed at



DIRK HARTOG'S PLATE, 1616.

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Shark Bay. Finding no water on this forbidding and inhospitable coast, which he named Landt van de Eendracht after his ship, he sailed two days later for Java. Before leaving, a stake was driven into the ground with a pewter plate attached, on which was scratched a record of the landing.

Eighty years later Willem de Vlamingh,² discoverer of the Swan River and Rottneest Island, found the plate, which he despatched to Amsterdam to the directors, as he put it, "in order to be delivered to your worships, who will share our amazement that it has withstood the exposure of air, rain and sun for so many years."

Two years after Dirck Hartog had come, the *Zeewulf* in 1618 discovered land on the west coast in the vicinity of Dampier Archipelago as, in the same year, did William Jantz in *Mauritius* near Ashburton River.

In 1629 Houtman with the ships *Dordrecht* and *Amsterdam* found land between latitudes 33° and 27° south. This he named South D'Edels Land and the group of islands off the coast Houtman's Abrolhos.

The first British ship to reach Australia was the *Tryal* wrecked on Tryal Rocks off Barron Island in 1622, the year when the *Leeuwin* traversed the west coast between latitudes 35° and 33° 45'' South.

CARSTENZ IN THE GULF

In the following year Jan Carstenz with *Pera* and *Arnhem* explored the Gulf of Carpentaria which he named after Pieter Carpentier, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies from 1622 to 1628.

By 1630 after the discovery of the south coast from Clifty Head to the eastern end of the Great Australian Bight by Francois Thyssen in the *Gulden Zeepart* in 1629, the directors of the Dutch East Indies Company had pieced together the information received from their captains. From this they were able to produce fairly accurate maps, showing the outline of the coast so far discovered.

Pietersen, between 1637 and 1639 had explored from Bathurst and Melville Islands to that part of the mainland on which Darwin now stands. The gulf between the two islands he named Van Diemen's Gulf.

Thirty-three years had now elapsed since the first discovery. Every report received confirmed that the coast from Cape York round the north-western and southern shore of the continent was barren, desolate and dangerous for ships.

2. See Appendix, The Vlamingh Plate.

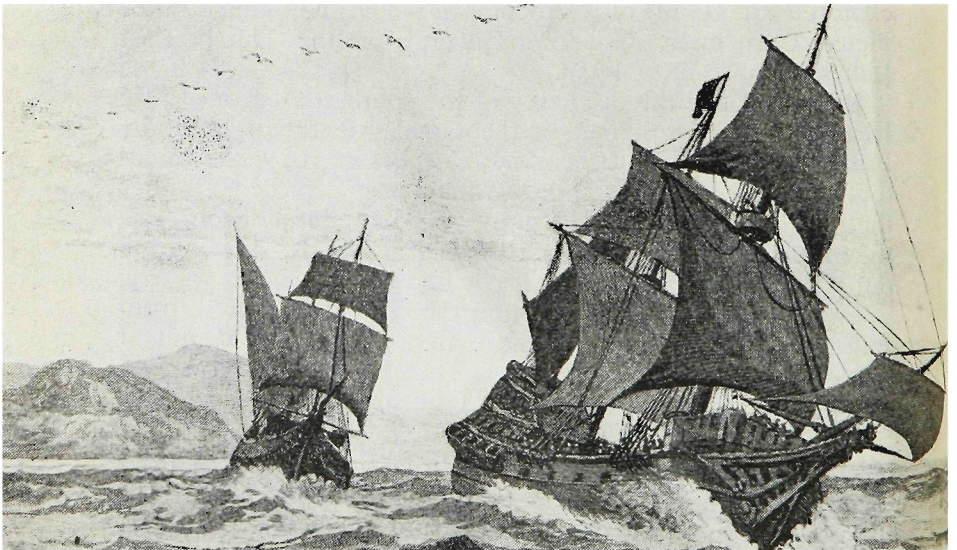
There were no civilised inhabitants; nor were there spices or other goods for trade, or gold. Nowhere could ships obtain supplies of any kind for their use.

ABEL TASMAN'S QUEST

Faced with this disappointing situation, Anthony van Diemen, Governor-General of the Indies from 1636 to 1645 and a man of enterprise, sent Abel Tasman to search for the Great South Land and its legendary wealth.

Sailing from Java on 14 August 1642 Tasman first went to Mauritius and from there to the far south. His search proved fruitless. Turning to the east he discovered Tasmania which he named Anthony van Diemen's Land. He next found the west coast of New Zealand on 14 December and returned to Java by the normal route to the north of New Guinea in 1643. It would appear that Tasman was not aware of the strait which Torres passed through in November 1606. This would have shortened his homeward journey considerably.

Tasman, having proved that Australia was not part of the Great Southern Continent, was sent out again by van Diemen and first followed the course of *Duyfken*, *Pera* and *Arnhem*. He did not find Torres Strait, but explored the Gulf of Carpentaria, rounded Arnhem Land and sailed down the



TORRES OFF CAPE YORK

west coast as far as Eendracht Land, covering the undiscovered gaps not traversed by earlier voyagers.

His return marked the end of major Dutch expeditions. His long and expensive voyages, heroic though they were, revealed no prospects of trade and confirmed the gloomy reports of his predecessors as to the Australian coast.

DAMPIER VISITS NORTH-WEST COAST

William Dampier, the English navigator, naturalist, anthropologist and historian, came twice to the north-west coast, discovered by the Dutch long before; firstly with the *Cygnets* on a buccaneering voyage in 1688 when he made a landfall at Cygnets Bay near King Sound.

He came again in 1699, this time in command of *H.M.S. Roebuck*, planning to sail from England via Cape Horn, a route which would have taken him to the east coast of New Holland.

His departure was delayed, however, until mid-winter, so once more he approached from the west, reaching the coast near Dampier Archipelago. He reported that the country and its inhabitants were the most wretched he had ever seen; but on his homeward journey Dampier spoke highly of New Britain as a prospective colony.

Rivalry between England and France in America and India prevented any further serious exploration in the South Seas until the end of their Seven Years' War, from 1756 to 1763. Bougainville, who had fought to defend Quebec under Montcalm whilst Cook was serving there with the Royal Navy, left in search of new colonies for France. By May 1768 he was at the New Hebrides and sailed west to seek the coast of New Holland. Coming to within 80 miles of the Barrier Reef, he saw nothing but miles of surf and dangerous shoals.

On a lee shore, with south-easterly winds prevailing and short of food, he turned away.

At this time the first of James Cook's voyages was being planned in England.

THE RISE OF JAMES COOK

The conclusion of the Seven Years' War, which sent Bougainville to seek new French colonies, could well have marked the end of Cook's service with the Navy. With ships laid up, he, with many other seamen, was paid off and his future employment uncertain.

Fortunately his services in the *St. Lawrence*, Quebec, Halifax and *St. John's* had not gone unnoticed.

Cook having served as boy, mate and, finally, master in Whitby colliers for nine years, was already a fine seaman on the eve of the war with France.

After one month in the *Eagle*, he was made master's mate and, five months later, became boatswain. As such he was responsible for ropes and rigging, including the cat-o'nine tails, which were wielded as necessary by his boatswains' mates.

Promoted to master of *H.M.S. Pembroke* in October 1750 Cook became responsible for that ship's navigation when she sailed for St. Lawrence to take part in the capture of Quebec.

Two years later, he assisted in the surveys of Halifax and St. John's as master of *H.M.S. Northumberland* flying the flag of Admiral Lord Colville. From the Admiral he received the following high commendation:

"From my experience of Mr. Cook's genius and capacity I think him well qualified for the work he has performed and for greater undertakings of the same kind. These draughts being made under my own eye, I may venture to say may be the means of directing many in the right way, but cannot mislead any."

Re-engaged with the Navy, Cook was employed on surveying duties for the next five years; and on the stormy coast of Newfoundland his reputation grew still further.

HIS FIRST EXPEDITION

On his return to England he was held in high regard by the Royal Society and by the Admiralty and was selected to command his first expedition in April 1768 at the age of 39.

His instructions were, to observe the transit of Venus at Tahiti, to sail southwards to 40° South Latitude in search of the Great Southern Continent and, if no land was found south of Tahiti, to proceed towards New Zealand until he found the unknown east coast of that country.

He was then to return to England by whichever route he thought fit. He decided, fortunately for Australia, to clear up the mystery of the east coast of New Holland and return via the Dutch East Indies.

Torres had passed south of New Guinea in November 1606, but this had been forgotten for many years. Alexander Dalrymple, the seaman and scholar, who had been considered for command of the expedition prior to Cook's appointment, was convinced that a passage existed, and had given this information to Joseph Banks who sailed with Cook.

Leaving New Zealand *Endeavour* made her first landfall

at the south-east tip of the coast of New Holland. The sighting was made by Lieutenant Zachary Hicks on 20 April 1770. Cook named this point after Hicks, but unfortunately it was renamed Cape Everard by Stokes in 1843, and Hicks' name vanished from the map of Australia.³

Cook turned north and traversed the whole of the eastern coast exploring, sounding and naming many islands and parts of the coast as he went onwards through the perilous waters of the Barrier Reef: as always his journal was faithfully kept.

COOK'S 100 DAYS

First calling at Botany Bay, where *Endeavour* anchored on 29 April, Cook resumed his journey on 7 May and crossed the latitude of the present border line of New South Wales and Queensland on 17 May. He spent 100 days on this coast, making ten landings, including the enforced stay in Cooktown to repair *Endeavour* which had narrowly escaped disaster after striking the reef.

Finally, rounding Cape York, Cook discovered and sailed westward through Endeavour Strait between Prince of Wales Island and the mainland.

Aware that he was about to enter the region of Dutch discovery he landed on Possession Island on 22 August 1770. Climbing a small hill he could see no land between south, west and west-south-west, and now felt confident that there was a passage. He recorded in his journal: "Having satisfied myself of the great probability of a passage thro' which I intend going with my ship and therefore may land no more upon this eastern coast of New Holland and, on the western side I can make no new discovery the honour of which belongs to the Dutch navigators: But the eastern coast from the latitude of 38° south down to this place, I am confident was never seen or visited by a European before us and notwithstanding I had in the name of His Majesty taken possession of several places upon this coast I now once more hoisted English colours, and in the name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole eastern coast from the above latitude down to this place by the name of New South Wales, together with all the bays, harbours, rivers and islands situated upon the said coast, after which we fired three volleys of small arms which were answered several times from the ship."

The following day, 23 April, the swell from the south-west and other indications convinced Cook, to his great relief,

3. On 20 April 1970 the cape was re-named Point Hicks.

that open sea lay to the westward. He had proved that New Guinea and New Holland were not one land "which" as he says in his journal, "until this day hath been a doubtful point with geographers."

Landing briefly at Booby Island with Banks, Cook sailed for the south coast of New Guinea en route for Batavia and England. Soon after departing he again referred with characteristic modesty to the passage between the two lands: "We have now put this wholly out of dispute. But as I believe it was known before, tho' not publicly, I claim no other merit than the clearing up of a doubtful point."

Save for a segment in the west between Cape Lewin and that part of the coast found by Houtman, discoveries of our mainland shores had now extended around the coastline north from Cook's first sighting at Point Hicks to Nuijt's Archipelago at the eastern end of the Great Australian Bight.

COMPLETING THE MAP

The area to the south of these two points as far as southern Tasmania was still unknown. The question of whether a strait ran south from the Gulf of Carpentaria, dividing New South Wales from the western part of New Holland remained to be solved.

France, still searching for colonies, sent out expeditions to the South Pacific, and the French ship *Le Marquis Castries*, Captain Marion-Dufresne, visited South Tasmania in 1771.

When Cook called there on his second voyage (1772-1773), Captain Tobias Furneaux of *Adventure* explored the upper section of the east coast and, at the eastern end of Bass Strait, discovered the group of islands which are named after him. William Bligh was master of *Resolution* when Cook on his third voyage came to refresh his ships.

Since Cook's discovery of the east coast, the mainland had remained unvisited by Europeans until the arrival of the First Fleet in January 1788 at Botany Bay. Finding it unsuitable for a settlement, Governor Phillip explored what is now Broken Bay and Port Jackson, both of which were shown on Cook's chart. He selected Sydney Cove in Port Jackson, to which the Fleet sailed without delay and here the new colony was formally established on 26 January 1788.

Shortly afterwards Captain de la Perouse on Pacific exploration with the ships *Le Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe* sailed into Botany Bay to make repairs and refresh his ships. He had heard that a British colony had been established for some time and hoped to find facilities which would have been of assistance. He found the bay deserted.

BLIGH'S ADVENTURES AND DISCOVERIES

It was in 1788 also that William Bligh made his epic journey of 4,000 miles to Timor with eighteen men in a boat from the *Bounty* after the mutiny.

The previous year Lieutenant Bligh had been appointed in command of *Bounty*, 215 tons, and instructed by the Admiralty to proceed round Cape Horn to the Society Islands. There he was to take on board as many trees and plants of the breadfruit tree (so highly praised by William Dampier) as might be thought necessary, and transport them to the West Indies.

The plants, which had been carefully gathered and stowed in the *Bounty*, were jettisoned by the mutineers, so Bligh, on his return to England, set out on his second and successful breadfruit voyage. Commanding *H.M.S. Providence* from 1791 to 1793, he made important hydrographic contributions at Tasmania and in Torres Strait. Bligh's Entrance is still regarded as the most important passage in this latter complex area.

One of his midshipmen on board was Matthew Flinders.

As Bligh was proceeding in *Providence*, *H.M.S. Pandora* (Captain E. Edwards), with the *Bounty* mutineers from Tahiti confined in a small deckhouse christened "Pandora's Box," was wrecked on a reef near Endeavour Passage. Peter Heywood, a midshipman and mutineer, was later tried with the others who survived the wreck. He fortunately escaped punishment, continued in the Navy and rose to the rank of captain.

William Bligh's irascibility, the mutiny and other events during his governorship, have been featured in history for so long that they tend to overshadow his long service as a courageous seaman and skilled navigator.

On his return from New South Wales in 1808, Bligh attained the rank of Vice-Admiral of the Blue, and died in London at the age of sixty-five.

EXPLORING THE COASTLINE

With the colony established and making slow progress, many tasks lay ahead for the navigators. There was an urgent need to explore in detail the coastline already discovered by James Cook and the Dutch, to see what fertile lands, harbours and rivers lay along it.

The great area in the south awaited exploration before the map of New Holland could be completed. Two friends were to accomplish much of this.

BASS AND FLINDERS

Midshipman Matthew Flinders and Surgeon George Bass were serving in *H.M.S. Reliance* when she sailed from England in 1795 taking Governor Hunter to New South Wales.

In the small boat *Tom Thumb*, only eight feet long, owned by Bass, the two set off along the south coast to the Illawarra district and Port Hacking, returning with encouraging reports of the country.

Late in 1797 Bass left Sydney in a ship's boat with a crew of six and sailed south. Passing Point Hicks he continued along the coast until he discovered Westernport Bay. He was now convinced that a strait divided Van Diemen's Land and the mainland.

The following year in the *Norfolk*, 25 tons, Flinders, now a lieutenant and once more with Bass, found the north coast of Van Diemen's Land. He sailed down the west coast to that part already known and established beyond doubt that Bass Strait existed.

Flinders sailed no more with his friend as Bass, after some trading voyages in the Pacific, disappeared in 1803.

As he passed on 17 May 1770 Cook had sighted an indentation between the islands of Moreton and what is now called Stradbroke. This he named Morton's Bay. Flinders, in the *Norfolk*, set off from Sydney and was the first to enter and explore the bay in 1799, but he was now anxious to concentrate on a progressive examination around the continental coast.

This could not be done with the small and unsuitable craft in which, with his courage, skill and masterly seamanship, he had achieved so much during the brief period of his exploration. He must have a suitable ship.

He sailed for England, arriving at a propitious time for realising his aspirations. Fears that the French would establish settlements in New Holland and the influence of Sir Joseph Banks, resulted in approval being given for the voyage. Flinders was now twenty-seven years old and a Commander R.N. In July 1801 he sailed in command of *Investigator*, 334 tons, but others were to discover hitherto unknown parts of the coast before him.

Lieutenant Grant in the brig *Lady Nelson*, 60 tons, left England for Port Jackson in 1800 with orders to proceed through Bass Strait en route. Finding the coast at Cape Banks, he sailed along it to Cape Otway across to Wilson's Promontory.

Leaving Sydney in the *Lady Nelson* Lieutenant J. Murray passed through Bass Strait and, in February 1802, discov-

ered and entered a harbour, which Governor King later called Port Phillip.

BAUDIN'S EXPEDITION

Some months before the *Investigator* left England, a scientific expedition had sailed from France in October 1800. After calling at Mauritius the ships *Geographe*, Captain Baudin and *Naturaliste*, Captain Hamelin, passed up the west coast of New Holland, where Hamelin discovered the missing segment north of Cape Leeuwin.

After reaching Timor, Hamelin proceeded to Van Diemen's Land. He arrived there in January 1802 and departed in March to explore the coast westwards from Westernport. After passing Cape Banks he was on an unknown coast.

Meanwhile Flinders was en route from England. He approached from the west and surveyed the southern coast from Cape Leeuwin where he had made his landfall in December 1801. By 28 January 1802 he had passed the furthest easterly point reached by the *Gulden Zeepaerdt* in 1627 and entered the area of undiscovered coastline. Here he found Spencer's Gulf, Kangaroo Island and St. Vincent's Gulf. Continuing eastwards, he entered Encounter Bay, where he met Baudin on 8 April 1802. He then resumed his survey of the coast, including that portion where Baudin had been, finally entering Port Phillip Bay ten weeks after Murray had discovered it. Flinders, however, was not aware of this until his arrival subsequently in Port Jackson.

It had by now been confirmed that no strait running from north to south divided the continent.

With these discoveries of Flinders and Baudin, the missing segments could at last be added to complete the outline map of the long coastline of New Holland; 196 years had passed since the first discovery by Willem Jantsz in the *Duyfken*.

FLINDERS CONTINUES HIS SURVEY

Leaving Port Jackson on 21 July 1802 Flinders sailed northwards along the coast until he found and passed through Flinders Passage in the Great Barrier Reef near its southern extremity.

Continuing through the outer limits of the reef, he finally rounded Cape York, then traversed the entire coastline of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

His charts of these areas, particularly of the outer limits of the reef and of the Gulf of Carpentaria were used for many years! Those of the Gulf continued to be issued by the

Admiralty until replaced by a modern chart in 1929. Nevertheless, this was still based on the original surveys and, in the north-western portion of the Gulf relied entirely on the work of Flinders.

Unfortunately, his survey of the coast came to an end at Cape Wessel, owing to serious deterioration in the hull of *Investigator*. Sailing to Timor where temporary repairs were effected, Flinders completed the circumnavigation of the continent, nursing his leaking and unseaworthy vessel until he finally reached Port Jackson.

Anxious to complete his exploration of the coast, he took passage for England in the *Porpoise*. Sailing in company with the *Cato*, both ships were lost on Wreck Reef off the Queensland coast on 17 August 1803. Flinders returned in one of the ship's boats to Port Jackson and rescued the survivors, then set off in the *Cumberland* for England. His subsequent detention for six-and-a-half years in Mauritius by the French, followed by illness and poverty, resulted in Flinders' early death on 19 July 1814, one day after his book "A Voyage to Terra Australis" was printed.

PHILLIP PARKER KING COMPLETES SURVEY

Phillip Parker King was sent out to complete the investigation of the coastline which Flinders had been unable to continue. The son of Philip Gidley King, he was born on 13 December 1791 on Norfolk Island. Christened Phillip after his godfather Governor Phillip, he entered the Royal Navy in 1807 and, six months later joined *H.M.S. Diana* as a midshipman.

He saw active service in various ships until 1815 when the Napoleonic wars ended. King then was given leave on half pay for eighteen months and married Harriet Lethbridge at Launceston, Cornwall, on 29 January 1817.

It is possible that during his period of leave he had been influenced towards his interest in exploration by the family friend Matthew Flinders. But it was the influence of Sir Joseph Banks which enabled Phillip Parker King to be sent to continue the work commenced by Flinders.

Governor Macquarie was instructed to provide a suitable colonial vessel and purchased the cutter *Mermaid* of eighty-four tons, not quite twelve months old and built of teak.

King, with his wife, took passage in the transport *Dick* which left Cork on 3 April 1817, reaching Port Jackson on 1 September.

Between 1818 and 1822 King completed investigations of our coastline from Hervey Bay to Torres Strait (including a

running survey of the inner route of the Barrier Reef), and from Cape Arnhem around to Cape Leeuwin in a series of hazardous voyages of circumnavigation of Australia. Three of these were made in the little *Mermaid* and one in the brig *Bathurst*.

King returned to England in 1830 and was promoted to captain on 25 February.

He subsequently returned to live in New South Wales; promoted to Rear-Admiral, he was the first Australian-born officer to reach that rank.

His death occurred suddenly on 26 February 1856.

Of him Geoffrey Ingleton, himself a hydrographer and historian says: "Phillip Parker King, by his scientific surveys in both Australia and South America, and for his subsequent influence on nautical surveying, while living in Sydney and Port Stephens, can be justly called the greatest of the early Australian marine surveyors."

Lieutenant John Oxley, R.N., in the *Lady Nelson* had accompanied King in the *Mermaid* in 1819 examining the eastern seaboard, surveying Port Macquarie and the Hastings River. In 1823 as Surveyor-General of the Colony, Oxley came to Moreton Bay, where he discovered the Brisbane River, returning the following year to establish the first settlements.

POSSESSION OF NORTH-WEST COAST

Phillip Parker King on returning to England in 1823, submitted the results of his surveys in north-western Australia and stressed the importance of the harbour of Port Essington, which he had discovered.

Sir John Burrow in 1824, strongly urged the need to form a settlement in a letter to Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies. He stated that "The Dutch would have a justifiable plea in planting an establishment on any part of the northern coast in our example of taking possession of Van Diemen's Land, the original discovery of which by the Dutch is not to be disputed."

As a result, Captain J. J. G. Bremer, R.N., in *H.M.S. Tamar* was sent without delay to take formal possession of the northern coast between 130° and 135° East Longitude and to settle a small garrison at Port Essington, which would be established as a port for both naval and trading vessels. Leaving Port Jackson on 24 August 1824 Bremer proceeded through Torres Strait and took formal possession of the mainland on arrival at Port Essington on 20 September.

Having done this, he proceeded to Melville and Bathurst

Islands. Taking possession of these on 26 September he decided that Melville Island was preferable as a base, and here he built a fort for the garrison which was officially named Fort Dundas, but there was no trepang so no Malay proas came, nor did other vessels.

THE SWAN RIVER COLONY

With loneliness and epidemics the small settlement languished until the garrison was withdrawn after the annexation of Western Australia and the establishment of the Swan River Settlement. By now Captain James Stirling, R.N., in *H.M.S. Success*, who had examined the Swan River in 1826 and had impressed the Colonial Office with its ideal geographical position and possibilities, was appointed the first Lieutenant-Governor.

Interest in the north was revived in 1836. Once again the Colonial Office agreed, in 1837, to form a settlement for the same reason as that advocated in 1823.

Oddly, after the fiasco of the first expedition, the same leader was chosen for the second. Bremer, now Sir Gordon Bremer, was despatched in *H.M.S. Alligator*, but this time with definite orders to establish the settlement at Port Essington.

PORT ESSINGTON RE-ESTABLISHED

Lieutenant Owen Stanley, R.N., in command of H.M. Brig *Britomart* sailed in company with *Alligator* from Plymouth on 22 February 1838 and assisted Sir Gordon Bremer to establish the garrison and maintain the settlement. In the first two years of the commission, Stanley also investigated the Arafura Sea. He was an accomplished artist and some of his work depicted views of Port Essington.

He was promoted to Commander on 26 March 1839. Born in 1811, Owen Stanley the eldest son of the Bishop of Norwich, entered the Navy in 1824, passing out of the Royal Naval College with a gold medal two years later.

The famous ship *Beagle*, which had previously visited Australia with Charles Darwin, the naturalist on board, arrived at the Swan River Settlement on 15 November 1837 under command of Captain J. C. Wickham, R.N., who subsequently became Government Resident at Brisbane.

WICKHAM'S SURVEYS

He had been sent to continue the exploration and survey work on which Phillip Parker King had been engaged, and had already served for many years as First Lieutenant of *Beagle* before assuming command.

Wickham's work in the north-west included surveys of Gage Roads, Houtman's Abrolhos, the Aroe Islands, and Port Darwin and extended to the western and southern coast as well as Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In March 1841, ill-health compelled Wickham to relinquish his command to Lieutenant John Lort Stokes, who had spent many years with him in the *Beagle* and who now continued the work. Stokes, one of the best of the early marine surveyors, who subsequently retired as an Admiral, made a number of important surveys and his discoveries included the Adelaide and Victoria Rivers, also Port Darwin and Bynoe Harbour.

GREAT BARRIER REEF AND NEW GUINEA

In England about this time, interest was focused on the merits of the inner route inside the Great Barrier Reef to Torres Strait and that of the passage through the Coral Sea. Many shipwrecks had occurred in both, and long discussions took place in which Phillip Parker King took part. He naturally recommended the inner route which he had examined in the *Mermaid* and which was called King's Route, but the main disadvantage for ships using this was the necessity to anchor each night.

The alternative was to proceed outside the reef and pass through one of its narrow openings in the north to Torres Strait! As these were mainly out of sight of land and no accurate chart existed, the Admiralty selected Captain F. P. Blackwood to explore the reefs of the Great Barrier, also to survey and mark the most suitable openings.

Accordingly Blackwood in *H.M.S. Fly* sailed in company with the cutter *Bramble* (Lieutenant Charles Yule, R.N.) on 11 April 1842 from Falmouth.

BLACKWOOD'S ACHIEVEMENT

During the four years Blackwood was engaged on the survey of the reefs of the Great Barrier, he surveyed an area 1,000 miles long and 170 miles wide, and charted from Sandy Cape for 200 miles northwards, including the Capricorn Islands, Swain Reef and the main passages.

Blackwood marked the outer limits of the Barrier Reefs northwards from approximately the latitude of what is now Cairns, for nearly 500 miles. He surveyed Endeavour Strait off the eastern part of Torres Strait and from Cape York to New Guinea, where he discovered the Great Fly River.

As a beacon to mark the most suitable channel for ships to pass through the Barrier Reef, a great stone tower forty

feet high with walls five feet thick was built on Raine Island by convicts, supervised by Lieutenant Ince, First Lieutenant of the *Fly*. Constructed of stone from the island, the tower, though somewhat dilapidated, still stands as a reminder of the *Fly*.

Captain Blackwood left Sydney in *H.M.S. Fly* for home on 19 December 1845, leaving Lieutenant Yule to continue the work. En route from Sydney Yule called at Brisbane where he assisted Captain Wickham to complete his survey in Moreton Bay, thence proceeding to the Gulf of Papua. Landing on a point from which his survey began, Yule named it Cape Possession, and claimed possession of Southern New Guinea in the name of the Queen.

OWEN STANLEY'S SURVEYS

Owen Stanley, now a captain R.N., in command of *H.M.S. Rattlesnake*, returned once more and reached Port Jackson on 16 July 1847. For three years accompanied by the *Bramble* he made a number of valuable surveys. These included the inner route and the examination of the eight channels of Torres Strait, five of which were not previously known.

Charts based on his work along the southern coast of Papua from Cape Possession to the Louisiades, a coast until then unknown, were still in use at the outbreak of World War II.

Ill-health, accentuated by the rigors of his work and the New Guinea climate, had affected his mind so that he could not withstand the shock when news of the deaths of his father and brother awaited his arrival in Sydney.

Agéd thirty-nine, his sudden death occurred on board the *Rattlesnake* on 13 March 1850.

He was buried with full naval honours in St. Thomas' Cemetery, North Sydney, and the Owen Stanley Range perpetuates his name in the annals of Australia's history.

Subsequently many ships of the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy have been continuously engaged in the examination and survey of Australia's coastline, of the Great Barrier Reef and of New Guinea.

Of the numerous able navigators who took part in this work, time permits mention of only one of them in this paper.

CAPTAIN MORESBY OF THE "BASILISK"

Captain John Moresby in *H.M.S. Basilisk* after operating in North Queensland waters, proceeded to New Guinea and made some important discoveries.

On 21 February 1873, he took the *Basilisk* through the passage which bears her name and into the fine harbour which he named after his father, Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Fairfax Moresby.

Subsequently he discovered China Strait, Milne Bay and the islands to the eastward; whilst on returning to England the following year via the north of New Guinea, he discovered and named the coastline between Goschen Strait and Huon Gulf.

Accurate charts and sailing directions are available for the mariners of today; lighthouses around our shores and modern navigational aids help to minimise the hazards for our sea-borne commerce.

From James Cook's discovery of our eastern coast stemmed the first settlement, whence came Australia the nation.

As a nation it is well that we should remember the navigators who have contributed so much to the discovery, to the settlement and of the development of this country since the first sighting of our coast 363 years ago.

Appendix

THE VLAMINGH PLATE

The story of the Vlamingh Plate, the oldest known relic of European contact with Australia, is one of the most fascinating in Australian history. William de Vlamingh, of the *Geelvink*, after removing the plate, replaced it with another metal plate which copied the wording on the original plate, and added an inscription giving the date of his visit, and the names of his officers and of the ships under his command. This second plate remained in position until the visit of Captain Louis de Freycinet (1779-1842), a French naval officer and navigator, who as a junior lieutenant, was appointed to *Le Naturaliste*, commanded by Captain Hamelin, a ship in the expedition of Nicholas Baudin, which in 1801-03 conducted a cartographic survey of the Australian coast. Freycinet was a cartographer-surveyor. In 1817 Freycinet, then a captain, was given command of *L'Uranie* to carry out a voyage around the world, undertaking magnetic and astronomical observations and hydrographic surveys. The expedition arrived at Shark Bay on 12 September 1818. Here the survey commenced by Baudin was completed; here, also, Freycinet removed from its post the plate erected by the Dutch navigator, Vlamingh, and took it to Paris.

Freycinet had seen the plate previously, in 1801, when he was an officer on *Le Naturaliste*, and because it was half-buried in sand, he appears to have wanted to "rescue" it, but Captain Hamelin, his commander, refused him permission to do so. The plate was affixed to a new post. When he visited the spot again in 1818, Freycinet found that the post had been completely destroyed and the plate blown some distance away. Freycinet considered that removal of the plate was necessary. "To have nailed this plate to a new post," he wrote in a letter dated 23 March 1821, addressed to M. Pougens (probably, notes *The Australian Encyclopaedia* (Vol. 9 p. 133), Marie Charles



VLAMINGH'S PLATE, 1697.

From De Freycinet's *Voyage autour du Monde*, 1827. From *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol. XVIII.

Joseph Pougens, author, linguist, and archaeologist) "would have been to risk losing it altogether. Thinking that it would be of historical interest, I have thought it my duty to bring it to France, and I ask you, sir, to be good enough to offer it in my name to the Royal Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres."

Freycinet's "donation" was accepted by the Academy, but in course of time it became lost, and it continued to be "lost", for more than 130 years, until 1940! Soon after its re-discovery, it was presented by the Government of France to the Commonwealth Government.

The circumstances of its re-discovery and return to Australia are told in *The Victorian Historical Magazine* Vol XXIII, June 1950, No. 2 pp. 78-81. In September 1938, Colonel R. A. Crouch, of the Historical Society of Victoria, wrote seeking information regarding the Vlamingh Plate from the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres. The Secretary-Archivist, Francois Renie, in reply, informed him that the relic could not be found, and suggested that possibly Freycinet had "borrowed" it, when writing the account of his voyage and had "neglected" to return it. He furnished Crouch with copies of documents relating to the matter, including a letter from Freycinet, dated 23 March 1821, relating to the presentation.

However, shortly afterwards the missing plate was discovered in a cupboard at the Museum of Humanity in Paris! In December 1944

the story of the relic was narrated in the *Comptes Rendus* of the Academy of Inscriptions. This article (states the account in the *Australian Encyclopaedia*) was read by Colonel T. W. Dunbabin, a Tasmanian who was doing archaeological research at Oxford. He mentioned the matter to his father, Thomas Dunbabin, an Australian journalist, then attached to the Australian News and Information Bureau in London, who wrote in June 1946 to the National Librarian at Canberra.

Meanwhile, in January 1946, Crouch had been informed of the discovery of the missing plate by the Academy of Inscriptions. As a result, the Historical Society of Victoria wrote to the Victorian Agent-General in London, urging that negotiations be opened with the French Government for the transfer of the plate to Australia. The request went on to the Australian Embassy in Paris, which cabled the Commonwealth Government for instructions in what was considered to be a national matter. The Department of External Affairs consulted the National Library, which, having already begun negotiations on the information supplied by Dunbabin, recommended the official action that led to the return of the plate.

The negotiations with the French Government were successful, and the relic arrived in Australia from Paris in 1947. The Commonwealth Government reciprocated the courtesy by sending a number of aboriginal artifacts to France. Care was needed in the handling of the frayed 250-years-old plate when it reached the National Library, and subsequently it was sent to London for treatment by experts. It was then placed on public display in Canberra until June 1950, when it was transferred to Perth. There were protests from some historians whose attitude was that such an historic object should remain in the national capital. Replicas were subsequently made and distributed to institutions in various States. A replica was presented to the Victorian Historical Society on 14 April 1950; and similar replicas were presented by the Commonwealth Government to the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and to the Western Australian Museum, Perth.

In June 1954, a Sydney newspaper suggested that the Hartog Plate should also be returned to Australia. This proposition was made, partly on the basis of the French precedent, and partly in order to mark the fact that 50,000 migrants had, up to that time, been transferred from Holland to Australia since 1945. The proposal was opposed by Dutch officials in Sydney. They stated that the Netherlands had a closer interest than France in such relics, and emphasised also that the Hartog Plate was "one of the most precious relics from the golden age of the Netherland voyages of discovery." Furthermore, they pointed out that a replica of the plate had been given to Western Australia.

The use by Vlamingh of pewter for the plate on Dirk Hartog Island may have been decided upon by the fact that the original *Eendracht's* plate which he removed was pewter. A tablet commemorating both Hartog and Vlamingh was erected in 1938 on Cape Inscription, and there is also a memorial to Vlamingh further south, on Rottneest Island, which he explored and named. The two posts erected on Dirk Hartog Island were removed in 1908 and are now displayed in the Museum and Art Gallery in Perth with the Vlamingh Plate. One post bears an inscription placed on it by P. P. King in 1822, when he landed at Cape Inscription during his survey of the Australian coast. He had hoped to collect the Vlamingh Plate himself, not knowing at that time that it had been removed by Freycinet.

“NOT SO SCRUPULOUS”

In Professor Sir Ernest Scott's *Terre Napoleon: A History of French Exploration and Projects in Australia*, a paragraph reads:

“In 1817, while Napoleon was mewed up in St. Helena, and a Bourbon once more occupied the throne of France as Louis XVIII, the ships *Uranie* and *Physicienne* were sent out under the command of Captain Louis de Freycinet, the cartographer of Baudin's expedition. They visited some of the scenes of former French exploits, and Freycinet took advantage of his position on the west coast to pull down and appropriate for the French Academy of Inscriptions the oldest memorial of European presence in Australia. That is to say he took the plate put up by the Dutchman Vlamingh in 1697 in place of that erected in 1616 by Dirk Harticks on the island bearing the name of “Dirk Hartog” to commemorate his visit in the ship *Eendracht* of Amsterdam. Freycinet had desired to take the plate when he was an officer on *Le Naturaliste* in July 1801, but Captain Hamelin, the commander, would not permit it to be disturbed. On the contrary, he set up a new post with the plate affixed to it, and expressed the opinion that to remove an interesting memorial that for over a century had been spared by nature and by man would be to commit a kind of sacrilege. Freycinet was not so scrupulous.”

It is interesting to record that the Dirk Hartog Plate, taken by Vlamingh to Holland, was in 1821 reported to be in the “Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden” (Collection of Rarities) in The Hague. From that collection it was removed to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, in 1885. Here, according to an account in *The Australian Encyclopaedia* (Vol 4, p. 440) it was lost until re-discovered in 1902 by J. F. L. de Balbion at the Rijksmuseum.

There is considerable variation in the spelling of Dirk, or Dirck, Hartog, the first European known to have set foot on the Australian west coast. He signed his own letters Dirck Hartoochs or Hartooch, but on the plate he erected to commemorate his landing the surname is spelt Hatichs. The Dutch have decided upon Dirck Hartog, but in the title of the island named after him the Christian name is spelt Dirk.

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