

IN SEARCH OF A RIVER

Two Little-known Voyages To Moreton Bay

by

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INTRODUCTION

In 1913 H. J. Diddams & Co. of Brisbane published Thomas Welsby's book "The Discoverers of the Brisbane River" based on certain newspaper articles previously written by the author.

This work traversed the already well known accounts of the voyages of exploration of Cook, Flinders and Oxley so far as they related to Moreton Bay and its environs, but it broke new ground in that the author stated, as his own surmise, that an idea, based on the writings of Cook and Flinders, prevailed in the early nineteenth century that a large river existed somewhere in the vicinity of Moreton Bay.

Welsby noted from the preface of the "Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales", edited by Barron Field, the editor's statement that the master of a Colonial Government vessel had been sent to survey Moreton Bay only a few months before Oxley's voyage there and discovery (with some unexpected assistance) of the Brisbane River. To his credit he tracked down the man who he thought must be the one referred to by Barron Field. It must be realised that Australia's public records were far less organised and accessible in 1913 than they are to-day, but Welsby, having identified his man, had the good fortune to track down his descendants also and obtain access to original material in their hands.

However, Welsby was unaware that there had been another unsuccessful forerunner of Oxley and so there the matter stood until 1956.

In that year Dr George Mackaness published in a limited edition (135 copies for sale and 15 for presentation) a two part monograph entitled "The Discovery and Exploration of Moreton Bay and the Brisbane River (1799-1823)".

He again dealt, as Welsby had, with Cook, Flinders and Oxley, but published the relevant sections from the explorers' journals in full and in the case of Flinders he had located in the Mitchell Library the explorer's original report to Governor Hunter on his 1799 voyage to Moreton Bay, a document which had been lost sight of and was feared no longer to exist.

Not only did Mackaness deal, as well, with the master of the Colonial Government vessel, the unsuccessful forerunner of Oxley discovered by Welsby, but he went two better.

In the first place he located the actual log book kept by the master concerned when he made his voyage of exploration to Moreton Bay and published the relevant portion in his monograph. Mackaness also adopted Welsby's surmise that Colonial officialdom of the early nineteenth century had an idea, based on the writings of Cook and Flinders, that a large river existed somewhere in the vicinity of Moreton Bay.

Secondly, he located the report of yet another master of a Colonial Government vessel who had been sent to survey Moreton Bay some months after the man considered by Welsby to be the one referred to by Barron Field.

It is the purpose of this article to consider more fully the extant reports of these two little known forerunners of Oxley and the reasons that must have lain behind their being sent to Moreton Bay within a matter of months of each other. It would also be appropriate to consider the possible reasons for their failure to find the river they were sent to seek out.

Lastly the writer will try to show how slender was the basis of the surmise that the writings of Cook and Flinders could have given birth to the idea that a large river existed in the vicinity of Moreton Bay. In this regard the aid of Phillip Parker King and of Oxley, himself, has been enlisted. It is considered that

their attitudes towards the problem are themselves sufficient to indicate that neither of the 1822 explorers could have been seeking out something which neither Cook nor Flinders suspected or even hinted at.

THE MYSTERIOUS RIVER

Familiar as we are now with the many navigable streams which enter the Pacific along our eastern coastline it is perhaps hard to realise how well hidden those streams were from the ship-borne explorers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The great Cook in his description of New South Wales says "It is indifferently well watered, even in the dry seasons, with small Brooks and springs, but no great Rivers unless it be in the wet Season when the low lands and Vallies near the Sea I do suppose are mostly laid under water; the small brooks may then become large Rivers but this can only happen with the Tropick."¹

The equally great Flinders expresses his disappointment that his 1799 explorations of Moreton Bay and Hervey Bay did not result in the discovery of a river large enough to enable him to penetrate into the interior of New South Wales as he had hoped and goes on to say

but, however mortifying the conviction might be, it was then an ascertained fact, that no river of importance intersected the East Coast between the 24th and 39th degrees of south latitude.

A conviction which his examination of Port Curtis in August 1802 gave him no reason to alter.²

The seamanship and scientific proclivities of both men must ever be a source of wonder when one considers the, by twentieth century standards, primitive vessels and instruments at their disposal. Both did much to advance the science of navigation and their charting of our eastern coastline, particularly in the case of Flinders, served mariners for many generations subsequently.

Why then this, if it may be termed such, "blind spot" in relation to the rivers of our east coast? It may be that men accustomed to the well defined river estuaries of the British Isles, and in the case of Cook the mighty St. Lawrence of Canada, did not expect to find rivers of magnitude virtually sneaking into the sea from around the backs of headlands or lying masked by sand dunes or mangrove islands as so many of our rivers do.

As late as December 1817 Oxley wrote after his first expedition it would be as presumptuous as useless to speculate on the probable termination of the Macquarie River, when a few months will (it is to be hoped) decide the long disputed point, whether Australia, with a surface nearly as extensive as Europe, is, from its geological formation, destitute of rivers, either terminating in interior seas, or having their estuaries on the coast.³

Then in September 1818, he discovered his first significant coastal river—from the land—when he sighted and named the Hastings River and followed it down to its mouth where he arrived on 11 October 1818, and found to his delight an inlet which on the following day he named Port Macquarie.⁴

On 19 October 1818, he made a pertinent remark in his Journal—

We had now fully experienced how little dependance can be placed on the best marine charts, to show all the inlets and openings upon an extensive line of coast. Perhaps no charts can be more accurate than those published by Captain Flinders, the situation of the principal headlands and capes, with the direction of the coast, being laid down with the most minute attention to truth; but the distance at which he was obliged to keep, although it did not prevent him from laying the coastline down with an accuracy of outline sufficient for all nautical purposes, did not allow him to perceive openings which, though doubtless of little consequence to shipping, yet present the most serious obstacle to travellers by land; and of which, if they had been laid down in the chart, I should have hesitated to have attempted the passage without some assistance from the seaward, or means wherewith to have constructed boats.⁵

Oxley is, of course, referring to the many inlets and entrances to be found on the coast between Port Macquarie and Port Stephens, most of which are invisible from a mile or more offshore in the absence of any navigational aids.

Even so, Flinders did venture inshore on occasion, but, as remarked earlier, with a remarkable lack of fortune so far as the discovery of rivers of any size is concerned.

On 17 July 1819, in the Preface to the Journal of his 1818 expedition Oxley is still speculating on the probable termini of the Lachlan and the Macquarie Rivers. After commenting that the highest land crossed on the way to the coast (and Port Macquarie) lies in lat. 31.S. and long. 151.10E. he goes on to say—

The bounding high lands to the north-west seem to take a direction nearly parallel with the coast line, and the evident declension of the country northerly affords strong ground for belief, that if these interior waters have any outlet to the sea, [Oxley's own footnote to this—The observations made in the recent voyage of Lieutenant King along the west and north coasts preclude every reasonable hope of any opening being found on those coasts. The voyage which he is at present prosecuting will doubtless determine that point beyond all future question.] it will be found in that direction.⁶

When the *Endeavour* was off Cape Moreton on 17 May 1770, Banks recorded the following entry—

The sea in this place suddenly changed from its usual transparency to a dirty clay colour, appearing as if much charged with freshes, from whence I was led to conclude that the bottom of the bay might open into a large river.

but Cook says—

From Cape Morton the land trends away west farther than we could see for there is a small space where we could see no land; some on board was of opinion that there is a river because the Sea looked paler than usual, upon sounding we found 34 fathom water a fine white sandy bottom which a lone is sufficient [to] change the apparent colour of sea water without the assistance of Rivers. The land need only to be a[s] low here as it is in a thousand other places upon the coast to have made it impossible for us to have seen it at the distance we were off. Be this as it may it was a point that could not be clear'd up as we had the wind, but should anyone be, desirous of do[ing] it that may come after me this place may always be found by three hills which lay to the Northward of it in the latitude of 26°53'S. [the Glasshouses].⁷

Apart from demolishing Bank's conjecture this statement seems to confirm as far as this part of the coast was concerned the general view later expressed by Cook. Although stating it was a point that could not be cleared up he does not seem to regard it as anything out of the ordinary; a viewpoint which Flinders 1799 voyage seemed to confirm.

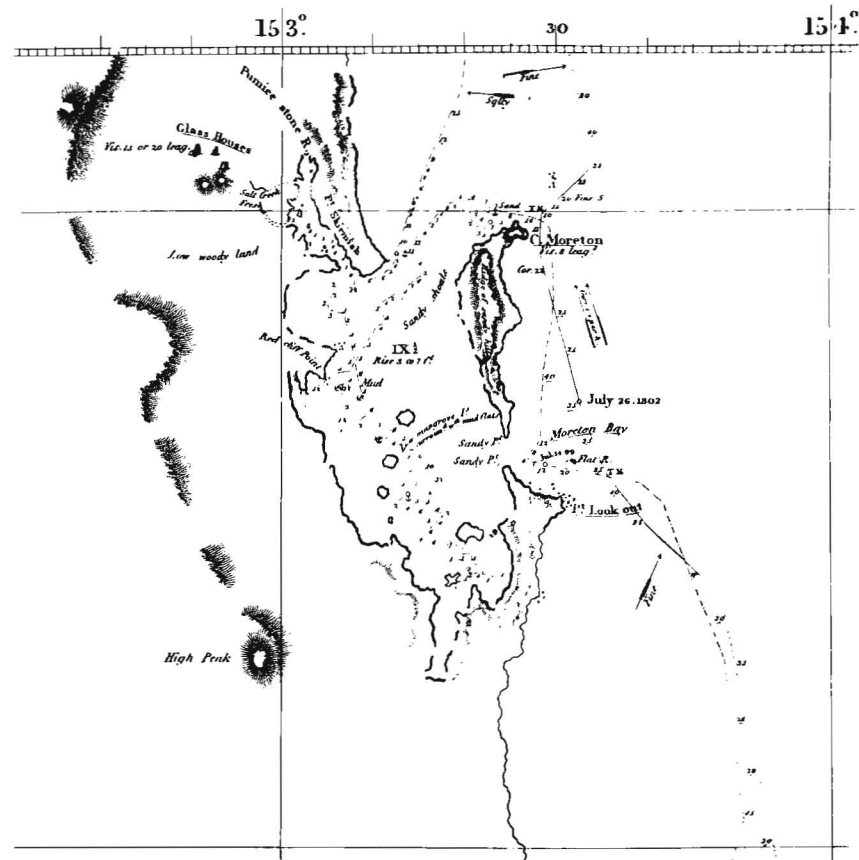
The next navigator of stature to carry out exploration of the Australian coastline was Lieutenant Phillip Parker King the worthy successor of Cook and Flinders. His principal duty was to explore that part of the coast of New Holland not surveyed or explored by Flinders. He was also instructed to discover whether there was any river

likely to lead to an interior navigation into this great continent.⁸

King's four voyages between December 1817 and April 1822, provided the material for his "Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia. Performed between the years 1818-1822", which was published in London in 1827 by John Murray.

In May 1819, after surveying Port Macquarie with Oxley, he proceeded north for Torres Strait. On 23 May, when abreast of Mount Warning, he expressed the belief that a large body of water lay between the mountain and the coast and conjectured that there might exist some opening of consequence in the coast as its outlet. He expressed the view that any such opening probably lay closer to Point Danger; that is further north than the position due east of Mount Warning. In his published journals a footnote mentions the discovery and naming of the Tweed River by Oxley in 1823; proof of the correctness of King's conjecture of four years earlier.⁹

On three of his four voyages King passed Cape Moreton, but never entered the waters of Moreton Bay.¹⁰



Section of Plate IX. Flinders's voyage to Terra Australis in the *Investigator*, 1799-1802 (East Coast, Sheet II).

The Sailing Directions in his Narrative include this entry—

Moreton Bay*. In addition to the account of this Bay by Captain Flinders†, Lieutenant Oxley has lately discovered the Brisbane, a very fine fresh water river that falls into it in 27°25' latitude, abreast of the Strait between Moreton Island and Point Lookout. *This bay was originally called Glass House Bay in allusion to the name given by Captain Cook to three remarkable glass house looking hills near Pumice-stone River; but as Captain Cook bestowed the name of Moreton Bay upon the strait to the South of Moreton Island, that name has a prior claim and is now generally adopted. A penal settlement has lately been formed at Red Cliff Point, which is set a little to the North of the embouchure of the Brisbane River.

†Flinders, Introduction cxcvi.¹¹

Up to the end of 1821 a summary of the position appears to be—

(a) Cook comments on the lack of "great Rivers", but thinks tropical streams could increase to "large Rivers" in the wet season;

(b) Flinders is certain there is "no river of importance" for the 900 miles between 24° and 39° South latitude;

(c) King knows of Oxley's discovery of the Hastings River, thinks there may be an opening of consequence in the coastline south of and near Point Danger, but offers no conjecture as to the existence of any other river between Port Macquarie and Sandy Cape; and

(d) Oxley has discovered the Hastings River and expresses a belief that if the "interior waters" have any outlet to the sea, it must be to the north of 31° South Latitude.

(e) Whilst the ubiquitous whaling ships seem to have made Cape Moreton a landfall from the time of Flinders onwards there is no evidence of the entry of any of them into Moreton Bay.¹² In any event, so close to Sydney, they would be looking for whales to seaward and not for places of refreshment on shore.

In the light of the available evidence it does not seem that the writings of either Cook or Flinders could give rise to any impression that somewhere in the vicinity of Moreton Bay there existed a large river. Banks' suggestion that the bottom of Moreton Bay might open into a large river is so effectively countered by Cook, the practical seaman who had spent a good deal of his sea time in soundings (i.e. shallow navigable

waters), that it is hard to believe that any seaman would subscribe to Bank's theory in preference to Cook's explanation of the change in colour of the sea off Cape Moreton.

Whilst King's principal duty lay elsewhere he was too good an officer and keen an observer to ignore completely the coastline from Port Macquarie to Sandy Cape as witness his observations in relation to what turned out, subsequently, to be the Tweed River. It is fair to assume that had either Cook or Flinders suggested the existence of a river of consequence flowing into Moreton Bay, King would have attempted to seek it out; his orders covered such a contingency. By the time he returned to Australia in 1817 King was an experienced hydrographer and, in the light of the duty assigned to him, would have been thoroughly conversant with the logs, journals and other writings of his two great predecessors. References in his "Narrative" emphasise this.

In some quarters it has become fashionable to utterly denigrate Oxley as belonging to "the dismal-swamp school of explorers" and being "the most overrated and incompetent of Australia's early explorers".¹³ Whatever the deficiencies of Oxley's character and despite any ineptitude he may have exhibited in land exploration, his mistaken theory of an inland sea provided a spur not only to later explorers, but to himself to find the outlet of that interior sea to the ocean. As Surveyor-General, his insistence that such an outlet must lie to the north of Port Macquarie must have found some credence in official circles and was probably a factor that helped to bring about two little known events that took place in 1822 during the first year of Sir Thomas Brisbane's regime as governor.

Apart from King's voyages, which were being conducted under the direct orders of the British Government, little exploration of any moment took place from 1819 to 1821 under the auspices of Governor Macquarie. The unsettling presence of Commissioner Bigge (arrived 26 September 1819, departed 14 February 1821), all the implications of his inquiry and the closing in of Macquarie's enemies, as they hoped, for the kill, probably deterred the Governor from instituting any major new journeys of exploration. Thus, for a time the search for the interior sea and its outlet languished.

However, the pressures that were to bring about a renewal of the search were building up. In Earl Bathurst's letter of 6 January 1819, addressed to Commissioner J. T. Bigge, he said *inter alia*—

Should it appear to you, as I have too much reason to apprehend will be the result, that the present settlements are not capable of undergoing any efficient change, the next object for your consideration will be the expediency of gradually abandoning them altogether as receptacles for convicts; and forming on other parts of the coasts, or in the interior of the country, distinct establishments exclusively for the reception and proper employment of the convicts who may hereafter be sent out. From such a measure, it is obvious that many advantages must result. It would effectually separate the convict from the free population, the labour of forming a new settlement would afford constant means of employment, and that of a severe description.¹⁴

Elsewhere also the Instructions indicate the desire of H.M. Government of the day to bring about the re-establishment in the public mind of an *in terrorem* regard for transportation to a penal establishment in New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land.

In Commissioner Bigge's Report on the State of the Colony of New South Wales he recommended that settlements should be formed at Moreton Bay, Port Curtis and Port Bowen

to effect an entire separation of this body of convicts [some 4,000] from the mass of the population.¹⁵

Except for Port Bowen, these places had not been visited since their examination by Flinders in either 1799 or 1802. Accounts of them appeared in "Terra Australis" including a Westall drawing of Port Bowen and coastline profiles in the Atlas. On 20 to 22 July 1820, King visited Port Bowen and deals with it at some length in his Narrative.¹⁶

On what appears to have been the strength of these accounts alone the Commissioner not only recommended the three places as settlements but solemnly drew up estimated establishment

expense tables and regulations for the conduct of the settlements.¹⁷ Of course, this can hardly be considered unusual when one recalls how the first settlement of all came to be founded.

However, Bigge's Report was not completed until 6 May 1822, and did not become public until ordered to be printed by the House of Commons on 19 June 1822.¹⁸

As Bigge had sailed from Sydney for England in the Storeship **Dromedary** on 14 February 1821, and Brisbane arrived in Sydney on 6 November 1821, after a tedious voyage of over five months¹⁹ the possibility of discussions between them seems fairly remote.

On 9 September 1822, Bathurst instructed Brisbane to send Surveyor-General Oxley or any other suitable officer to inspect and report on Ports Bowen and Curtis and Moreton Bay as sites favourable for penal settlements.²⁰

In the meantime, however, Brisbane had acted. The authority for or basis of his actions must remain a matter for conjecture. Some knowledge of Bigge's intended recommendations must have come to him; whether from Macquarie, Colonial Secretary Goulburn or Bathurst himself remains an open question. Be that as it may, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Oxley had expressed to the Governor his views on the interior sea and its outlet which he believed lay to the north and perhaps had captured the Governor's attention and imagination. What Brisbane caused to be done in 1822 provides the subject matter of the balance of this article.

^ PÊLE-MÊLE

In 1825 Barron Field edited, for publication by John Murray, "Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales". On page x of the preface he wrote—

The most important discovery which the following pages record is certainly that of the navigable river in Moreton Bay . . . The honour of this discovery has fortunately fallen to the lot of Mr. Oxley . . . The wonder is not that he discovered it, but that this adventure should have been reserved to him; for the Master of one of the vessels belonging to the Colonial Government had been to Moreton Bay only a few months before Mr. Oxley for the very purpose of Survey.

The question immediately arises as to the identity of both Master and vessel. As it happens there are two masters and two vessels, either of whom or which could answer to Barron Field's description.

Thomas Welsby asserts that it was John Bingle²¹ and the Colonial Cutter **Sally**, but he does not appear to have been aware of the other pair of protagonists.²²

Welsby's assertion is based on a letter dated 2 January 1822, from the Colonial Secretary (Goulburn) addressed to Bingle—

Sir,

I am directed by His Excellency Sir Thomas Brisbane to authorise your taking command of the sloop Sally on her departure for Port Macquarie and proceeding in her in search of a large river supposed to exist between Port Macquarie and Sandy Cape.

Wishing you a pleasant and prosperous voyage and trusting that should you verify so desirable a discovery you will not fail to bring back with you specimens, both of the water it contains and the soils by which it may be bounded together with an accurate delineation of the course it pursues until it ceases to be navigable.

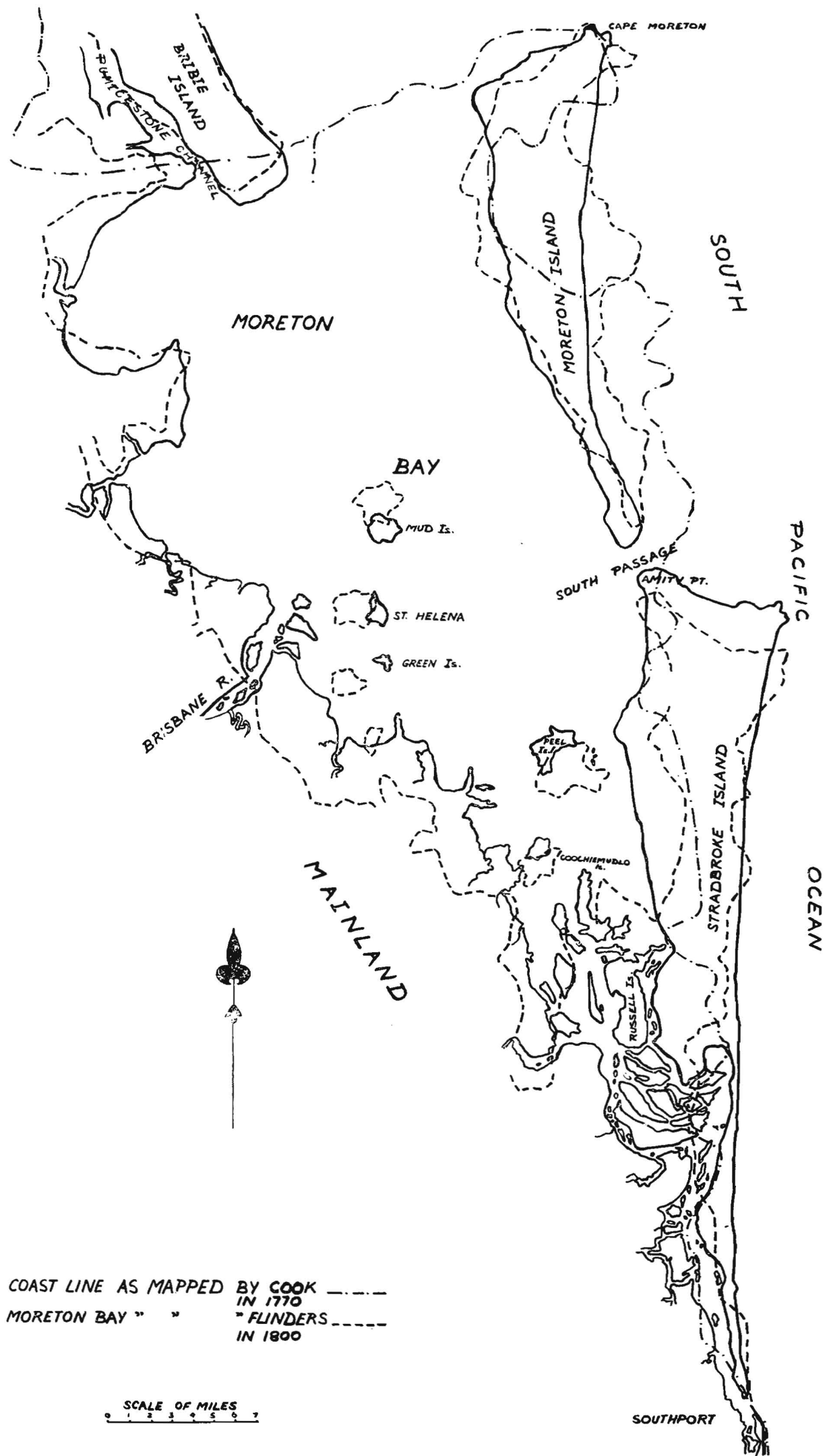
I am Sir
Your obedient servant
F. Goulburn
Colonial Secretary²³

Mr. John Bingle,
Sydney.

A copy of the foregoing letter is located in the Archives Office of New South Wales.²⁴ There are some small variations in text, punctuation and spelling from the version published by Welsby. Mackaness's paraphrase of the letter in his introduction to the relevant part of the Log of the **Sally** so nearly follows the text of the letter published by Welsby that it is reasonable to assume that Welsby, certainly, and Mackaness, probably, both used the original of the letter held by Bingle's descendants.²⁵

Welsby goes on to say—

There is evidence hereby that both the writings of Captain Cook and Captain Flinders had established in the Colonial Secretary's Office, Sydney, a knowledge that some large river was in the vicinity of Moreton Bay—at least that is what I surmise from the foregoing.²⁶



Sketch showing Moreton Bay coastline as it is, with coastlines as charted by Cook and Flinders superimposed.

Mackness adopts this surmise also stating it in these terms—

It seems fairly certain that during the administration of Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane, and probably much earlier, there prevailed amongst the officials of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Sydney, an idea based largely on the writings of Captain Cook and Captain Matthew Flinders, that somewhere in the vicinity of Moreton Bay there existed a large river.²⁷

The present writer has tried to demonstrate that neither the writings of Cook nor those of Flinders can be regarded as giving rise to any basis for a theory that such a river existed. If such an idea may be attributed to anyone, it would appear that Oxley, in supposing an outlet to the interior sea lay to the north of latitude 31° South, must be given credit for it.

John Bingle's "Voyage of Discovery" took place very early in his Australian career. Born in 1796 (15 May) at Gillingham, Kent, England he was the son of John Rayden Bingle, a naval draughtsman of Deptford, whilst his mother (nee Owens) was a relative of Lieutenant William Bradley of the *Sirius*. He was educated at Chatham, and employed at the naval dockyard from 1812 to 1817, when he joined the merchant marine (the Honourable East India Company, says Mackness). He arrived at Port Jackson as a settler on 16 December 1821, in the *Minerva*.²⁸

He must have brought with him more than usually strong recommendations, as within a fortnight of his arrival he was in the employ of the Government and on 1 January 1822, assumed command of the Colonial Cutter *Sally*. From 1 to 3 January he was employed in getting the vessel ready for sea and in that time received his written instructions from Goulburn. On 3 January he took on board the prisoners he was to take to Port Macquarie and that night moved out from his berth ready to sail from Port Jackson, which he did early on 4 January.

Although an experienced seaman, it was remarkable that Bingle with no experience at all of Australian coastal conditions should be employed as commander of a voyage of discovery on the east coast of the continent. As a good seaman should be, he was wary of shoal waters, but perhaps too much so for an explorer. He does not appear to have been blessed with the patient curiosity of Cook, Flinders and King, who were prepared, without being reckless, to enter shoal waters and try to find a navigable passage through them. No official record exists of his report and the charts he prepared of his survey. In fact, outside his family, his voyage in 1822 was in danger of being forgotten until resurrected by Welsby in 1913.

By the time Mackness published his monograph in 1956, Welsby's contemporary Walter D. Bingle, a grandson of the mariner, had apparently died. Mr Alison D. Bingle a great grandson introduced Mackness to Mrs W. Maxwell Little, the widow of another of Bingle's grandsons, who had in her possession the original log of H.M. Cutter *Sally* covering the period 1 January 1822, when Bingle assumed command, to 18 March 1822, when *Sally* returned to Port Jackson.²⁹

The Mitchell Librarian (Mr G. D. Richardson) advises that the Mitchell Library received the log book of the *Sally* from the Little family in 1957.³⁰ A photo copy of the log book is also held in the Oxley Memorial Library³¹ as are photo copies of Goulburn's letter of 2 January 1822, and a certificate given by Brisbane to Bingle (of which more anon) on 20 April 1822.³² The last mentioned appear to be photographs of the original documents, but their provenance is uncertain.

The Mitchell Library have no other original papers about the *Sally's* voyage in 1822 and nothing from the index to the Sydney Gazette.

Dr J. S. Cumpston states that the Naval Officer's Quarterly Reports for the period 1 January to 30 June 1822, have not been found; although some arrival and departure records can be obtained from Ship's Musters and the Sydney Gazette they are not necessarily complete.³³ This is evidenced by the fact that no reference to the *Sally's* departure on 4 January and her return on 18 March 1822, is to be found.

That part of the log of the *Sally* prior to 4 March 1822, is of no relevance to this article, so the example of Mackness is followed in reproducing that portion only of the log that relates

to the Queensland coast in general and Moreton Bay in particular. It should be observed that Bingle adopted the naval day, that is from 12 noon one day to 12 noon on the next. Thus each day's record commences with times *post meridiem* and concludes with times *ante meridiem*.

The log is by no means as discursive as a journal would have been, confining itself to the technical matters of navigation, but nevertheless it contains a number of statements worthy of comment which will be dealt with subsequently.

EXTRACT FROM THE LOGBOOK OF THE "SALLY".
H.M. CUTTER "SALLY"

Monday, March 4th, 1822

Pleasant S Etlly breeze and fine weather throughout. At 4p.m. got in with the land about 6 miles to the N°wd of Pt. Danger. At 1p.m. Mount Warning S.W. by W. Pt. Danger. S.W.¼W. At 6 while running down the Coast which appeared a low swamp observed a large break about 2 miles wide with scarcely any water on it and as far as I could see from the Masthead it appeared to be the entrance of a large Lagoon inclining No by So—at the back of it having a Range of very high Mountains. At 7 shortened sail and stood to Etwd at midnight. Tack'd at daylight and made all sail and stood in. At 7 a.m. Mt. Warning S by W Pt. Lookout N by W½.W. At ½ past 10 Pt. Lookout W.S.W. Flat Rock N.W.¼W. At noon Latde per obsn 27.18 So

Tuesday, March 5th

First part light E.S.E. wind and clear weather. At 4p.m. rounded Cape Morton and stood in for the Bay—The Reef bearing N½ E Cape Morton S.W. steering W or in a line with the Glass Houses about 7 miles and then altering the course to S.W.¼W. or direct for Pt. Skirmish carrying 8 fms. water while steering Wt and then gradually shoaling to 2½ fms. that being the least water on the bar where I cross'd about ¼ mile within, I shoal'd to 3 fms. and from that to where I anchor'd carried from 6 to 9 fms. At 7 Anchor'd in 9 fms. sandy bottom GlassHouse Mounts. bearing W by N½N Pt. Skirmish' W.S.W. At 8p.m. Latde per Moon 27.5.43 So Longde per Moon and Stars 153.18.45 Et. At day light weighed and stood for Pt. Skirmish carrying from 8 to 10 fms. when abreast the Pt. Shoald to 2 fms. water—the wind being to the Sowd and the Ebb Tide setting out was obliged to haul off and Anchor in 9 fms. Glass house N.N.W. At. noon cloudy with flying showers—

Wednesday, March 6th

N.N.Etlly winds and fine weather throughout. At 2p.m. weigh'd for the Pumice Stone River at ½ past 3 rounded Pt. Skirmish carrying 2 fms. water in the shoalest parts and proceeded up the River carrying from 5 to 7 fms. At ½ past 5 Anchor'd in 4 fms. muddy bottom about a cables length from the shore. Many natives, keeping weigh with us along the Beach from Pt. Skirmish. At daylight hoist'd out the Boat and proceeded up the River carrying 3 and 4 fms. about 2 miles and gradually decreasing to 2½ and 2 in a narrow Channel and from that to 4.5.6.7. ft in large spaces 3 miles wide—finding as I went up the River to be nothing but a low Mangrove swamp fill'd with Islands and creeks—the main part running N.N.W. about 25' and then to No.Et. Wd—the water being equally salt as far up as I went and from the direction the River takes (if it may be so call'd) I have no doubt there is a similar entrance into the Main as the one I saw on the 4th to the So.Wd. of Morton Bay—

Thursday, March 7th, 1822

NETly winds and fine weather throughout. Employed overhauling the Rigging & c.

Friday, March 8th

Pleasant NETly breeze and fine weather. Employed variously. At 7 am. weighed and sail'd down the River. At 10 the wind dying away Anchor'd off Pt. Skirmish in 4 fms—

Saturday, March 9th

First and middle parts NETly breeze and fine latter light Soly airs At ½ past 10 (highwater) Weighed and work'd round Pt. Skirmish.

Sunday, March 10th

Pleasant Soly SETly breeze throughout with fine weather. At ½ past 12 p.m. cross'd the Bar in 2¾ fms that being the least cast. At ¼ past 2—shoaled to 3 fms and from that to 4.5 and 6 on a very large bank running from Et to Wt about 6 miles and No to So 2—when on the shoalest part the No most Glass house We by So. At 3 got round the Pt. and stood in the Bay when in the middle of it could see from the Masthead a large space of Water inside but no entrance into the Main Haul'd off and stood along the coast at 7 shortened sail and stood off the land at midnight made sail and stood in. At 9 a.m. off Double Island Pt. at ½ past 9—Double Island Pt. W½ S. the Rock N. by W½.W. at 10 Double Island Pt. S.S.E. Rock E.S.E. at 11 got in with Wide Bay and stood for the entrance on coming close in could see nothing but breakers all round in the form of a half moon for about 6 miles seeing no place where I could go in with safety in the Boat haul'd close to the wind to clear the Breakers and stood out of the Bay—as far as I could see from the Mast-head the middle appeared shallow water and full of shoals—Lat. per obs 25°40'

Monday, March 11th

First and middle parts light Et winds and fine weather latter Vbble from So and Et.Wd. at 7 p.m. Indian Hd. S.S. Et. finding the Coast nothing but a High ridge of Sand Hills and no chance of an opening stood off the land intending to stand to the So.Wd. at day-light. At 9 a.m. tack'd and stood to the So. Wd.—Lat. per obn 25 54 So

Tuesday, March 12th

First and middle parts light Etly airs latter Calm with fine weather throughout at 6 p.m. Double Island Point N.W. by N. Glasshouse S.W. by W. at daylight Cape Moreton S½ E. At noon Cape Morton S½ W Glass house W. by S.—Lat. per obsn 26 49S.

Wednesday, March 13th

First and middle parts lightly Etly airs and fine weather with a heavy swell from the So Wd. At 5 a.m. strong gale from S.E. with heavy squalls and rain and a heavy sea tack'd off the land in 3rd Reef Main Sail. Reef'd F sail and set 2nd jib—at 11 the Gale increasing Ballanced reef'd the Main sail and hove too to E.W.—at noon cloudy no observation—Lat. per acct. 27° 42'S

Thursday, March 14th

Fresh E.S.E. gale throughout with Rainy weather—standing with her head E.N.E. at 5 a.m. more moderate. At 10 the wind hauling more Etly. Wore and stood to the S.W. at noon, Cape Byron W.S.W.—Lat. per obsn 28° 33'S found by observation we had drifted 51 miles to the SoWd although we made at least 2 knots pr hour while standing E.N.E.

The log entry for 4 March 1822, is the first recorded reference to what Oxley subsequently ascertained to be the southernmost entrance to Moreton Bay³⁴; the Boat Passage into the present day Broadwater off Southport. At that time the passage would have been several miles south of its present location. Both Cook and Flinders would have had too much offing to have seen it, after avoiding the reefs off Point Danger.³⁵

Mackness in a note expresses the view that the “very high Mountains” at the back of the lagoon are Wangalpong or Flat Top Mountain called also Tamborine, 1850 feet.³⁶ Bingle says the lagoon inclined north by south. Tamborine is due west, but at the head of the lagoon, i.e. to the south or back of it are Springbrook (3106 ft.) and the Lamington Plateau culminating in Mt. Hobwee (3860 ft.) and it is considered that these are the very high mountains of Bingle.³⁷ On a fine late afternoon or early evening in summer Springbrook and the Lamington Plateau dominate the landscape and Tamborine appears insignificant by comparison.

Bingle's anchorage for the night on 5 March 1822, is not easy to identify. It would be out of historical context to read off his position on a modern chart; on the other hand if the position he gives (27°5'43"S 153°18'45"E) is plotted on Plate IX (East Coast—Sheet II) of the “Terra Australis” Atlas the anchorage is located off the western shore of Moreton Island between Comboyuro Point and Cowan Cowan in the present day North East Channel. This does not agree with the bearings from the anchorage of either the Glass House Mountains (W. by N.½N.) or Point Skirmish (W.S.W.). However, if a fix is taken from the bearings (again using Plate IX) Bingle's anchorage would appear to be in the vicinity of that shown on Plate IX in position 27°4'30"S 153°13'45"E. The variation of latitude is a little over a mile, but the five mile variation in longitude is a fair indication that even as late as 1822 mariners still experienced difficulty in obtaining the meridian with any degree of exactitude.

On 6 March 1822, Bingle made his most significant contribution to the exploration of Moreton Bay when after sailing *Sally* some miles up the Pumice Stone River and anchoring for the night, he proceeded at daylight by boat further up the River and after observing it ran N.N.W. about 25 miles it then turned North Eastward he went on to say—

the water being equally salt as far up as I went and from the direction the River takes (if it may be so called), I have no doubt there is a similar entrance into the Main as the one I saw on the 4th to the Sowd. of Morton Bay.

He also mentions that on that day many natives kept pace with them along the beach from Point Skirmish. On 7 March Bingle remained at anchor in the Pumice Stone River. His crew were employed in overhauling the rigging etc. It was probably on 7 and 8 March that he had his contact with the natives of Bribie Island the account of which is published by Welsby³⁸ and republished by Mackness.³⁹ The Principal Librarian and

Archivist of New South Wales advises that there is no record held of this account of the Bribie Island natives and it would appear that Welsby is the sole source.

On 8 and 9 March Bingle worked his way out of the Pumice Stone River and round Point Skirmish; a ticklish business dependent on light winds and the tides.

By 3 p.m. on 10 March he was clear of Moreton Bay having come over the banks adjacent to the present North West Channel. A modern authority on Moreton Bay states that Bingle's *Sally* outward bound became the first ship to use the South Passage (i.e. between Moreton and Stradbroke Islands).⁴⁰ This cannot be reconciled with Bingle's log entries for 10 March 1822.

The point he rounded at 3 p.m. on 10 March appears to have been Caloundra. The large space of water with no entrance into the Main would be Lake Currimundi during a period when its entrance was silted up and the waters inside were spread over a large area, which still periodically occurs.

Thereafter Bingle tried without success to enter the inner part of Wide Bay, stood north to beyond Indian Head and finding no chance of an opening, turned about and began his voyage to the South at 9 a.m. on 11 March 1822.

Despite a gale on 13 and 14 March, at the height of which he hove to, he found he had drifted South 51 miles in twenty-four hours. Thereafter he made good time to Sydney where he arrived on 18 March 1822.

The log of the *Sally* is in itself conclusive evidence that Bingle did not discover the Brisbane River, or for that matter, come within miles of doing so. He confined his explorations to the northern head of Moreton Bay and the Pumice Stone River, which he penetrated some miles further north than Flinders had done. He correctly surmised the insularity of Bribie Island. He also discovered from the seaward side the southern entrance of Moreton Bay, without, however, recognising it as such.

The references to the Reef off Cape Moreton and the Rock off Double Island Point indicate that he was using Flinders's charts and was on the lookout for these navigational hazards.

Despite the fact that his voyage of discovery proved abortive in that he did not find the river which was his primary objective Sir Thomas Brisbane was not unappreciative of his efforts as witness the certificate given to Bingle by the Governor, the text of which is reproduced in full by both Welsby and Mackness, viz.

These are to certify that Mr. John Bingle was employed on board His Majesty's Colonial Cutter 'Sally', surveying the coast of New Holland, to the Northward of this port, so far as latitude 25 deg. South, from the 31st day of December, 1821, to the 24th day of March 1822, during which time he used his utmost endeavours to perform effectually the service he was employed on, and conducted himself throughout very much to my satisfaction. The charts of his survey, which he submitted to me, were highly creditable to his Nautical abilities, and I recommend him as deserving of notice.

Given under my hand at Sydney, New South Wales, 20th day of April, 1822.

[Signed] Thos. Brisbane.⁴¹

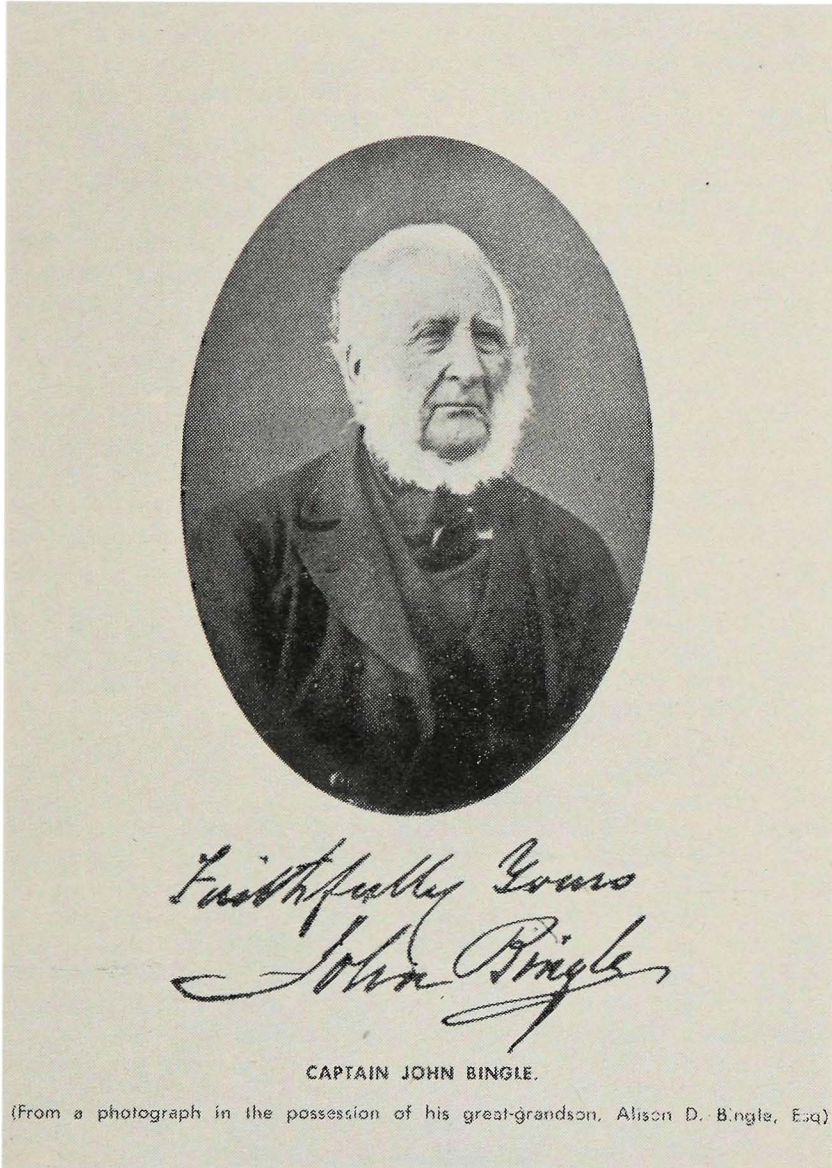
The Archives Authority of New South Wales has been unable to locate this certificate. The following series have been searched:

Colonial Secretary: Letters received 1822.
Colonial Secretary: Copies of letters sent within the colony, 1822-20 March 1823 (4/3504a-4/3507).
Sir Thomas Brisbane: Letterbooks 1822-5 (Mitchell Library A1559-1-3.).

The New South Wales authorities do not appear to hold further Bingle material relating to the voyage of the *Sally* in 1822. There are held, however, other letters and petitions from Bingle asking for land grants, etc. These are:

Colonial Secretary: Memorials received 4/1775p. 188, 4/1835 No. 19, 4/1836 No. 67A, 4/1840 No. 52.
Colonial Secretary: Letters received re Land. 2/7801 John Bingle.

Bingle's influence continued to stand him in good stead. He was permitted, later in 1822, to establish the first regular trading service between Sydney and Newcastle.⁴² He must have chartered



Reproduced from G. Mackaness.—*The discovery and exploration of the Brisbane River.*

Sally from the Government as from September 1822, she was for a while in the control of Bingle & Co.⁴³ William Kinnair (or Kenneir or Kinnaird) who had been Bingle's First Mate on the voyage of discovery was master on the first voyage for Bingle & Co.⁴⁴ but was replaced by A. Livingston until about 18 March 1823, when **Sally** appears to have reverted to the Government service with Kinnaird as master.⁴⁵ By this time Bingle's vessel **Eclipse** had been built at Newcastle, making her maiden recorded voyage on 18 January 1823, under the command of Livingston.⁴⁶

Apart from 5 years in England (1837-1842) Bingle remained on the Australian scene, enjoying some measure of prominence, until his death at Newcastle on 10 April 1882.

The **Australian Dictionary of Biography** says of him—

Autocratic, impetuous, often over-confident of his ability and judgment, he was prepared at all times to accept public office and to discharge his duties, even when, as in dealing with bushrangers, personal risk was involved. He was a man of initiative, enterprise and imagination.⁴⁷

It would be easy at this point in time to indulge in cheap denigration of Bingle's voyage in view of his lack of success. However, it must not be overlooked that he had been little over a fortnight in Australia when he undertook his voyage. He had no empirical knowledge of Australian inshore coastal conditions and when he encountered them at first hand, who could blame him if he was bluffed by what he found? His somewhat helter skelter type of exploration is in accord with the assessment of his character appearing in the **Australian Dictionary of Biography**. On the other hand his personal courage was undoubted; the account of his meeting with the Aborigines of Bribie Island as

published by Welsby and Mackaness is reminiscent of the Flinders's approach to the natives of this continent—conciliatory yet firm. It should also be borne in mind that he was at the time only twenty-five years of age. Although Flinders was of the same age when he visited Moreton Bay in 1799 he was a prime example of the proverbial "old head on young shoulders". Also to Flinders exploration was an end in itself and when he was allowed to explore he virtually counted his blessings. To Bingle exploration appears to have been a means to an end, which he hoped would result in preferment, giving him a good start in his new life in a new land. That he succeeded in his aims remains apparent, although until much later in life his autocracy, impetuosity and overconfidence more than once nearly brought about his downfall.

EX UMBRIS.

The second master and vessel to have the opportunity to feature importantly in the annals of Queensland received their chance, again through the agency of Sir Thomas Brisbane, within months of Bingle's return to Sydney. The man did not live to enjoy a prominence like that later enjoyed by Bingle; he emerges from the shadows, that surround so many of the minor officials of early Australia, for a brief period, and then, claimed by death, returns thence finally and irretrievably. The ship, which was built and launched in Australia, for a while sails back and forth across the pages of our history and then sails into the limbo.

The dramatis personae on this occasion were William Lawrence Edwardson and the Colonial Cutter **Snapper**.

The Mitchell Library's card index to the "Sydney Gazette", which covers the period from 1803 to the latter part of the 1820's, contains entries of various kinds under Edwardson (no Christian name), Edwardson, W.L. and Edwardson, William Lawrence, from 15 April 1820 to 4 February 1826. Some of these are of a trifling nature. The more important, however, will be referred to as the need arises.

On 24 July 1820 with a number of major and minor Government officials and leading citizens he was a signatory to the Proclamation of the accession of H.M. King George IV to the throne of the United Kingdom.⁴⁸

Then as a member of the Commissariat Department he was, according to the "Sydney Gazette" of 2 December 1820, a witness at a trial for robbery.

Howe's Australian Almanack for 1821 at p. 37 lists Edwardson among the Commissariat staff of New South Wales as Confidential Clerk, Sydney.

A little more is learned about him in Governor Macquarie's Despatch No. 5 for 1821, B, per ship **Shipley** to Earl Bathurst bearing date 15 March 1821. This despatch is a Report of an Investigation into "frequent alarming irregularities" which "have occurred in the Commissariat Department since the period of Mr. Depy. Commy. General Drennan having taken charge of it"; and finally "the discovery of Frauds to a very large amount by Forgeries".⁴⁹

Among the enclosures that accompanied the despatch is the Report of the Board of Investigation (Enclosure 4) under date 1 September 1820. This states inter alia that Mr Edwardson was Drennan's principal clerk and that he usually kept the key of the Commissariat Treasury Room;

but that key has sometimes been left with the messenger of the office all night, a man of the name of Parsons, who, although he has held that situation eight years, came to this Colony as a Convict, and is somewhat given to intoxication. And your Committee finds that there have always been in that Room closed chests of uncounted Dollars and open Tubs of uncounted halfpence.⁵⁰

Despite Edwardson's remissness in creating a situation whereby Parsons could have had access to the dollars and halfpence, he appears to have incurred no penalty other than removal to another branch of the Government Service. Howe's Almanack for 1822 no longer lists him amongst the Commissariat Staff. This was not necessarily a demotion as he became master of a colonial vessel—the Colonial Cutter **Snapper**.⁵¹

Snapper was built and launched at Sydney on 18 May 1821. Her maiden voyage, under the mastership of Stephen Milton, was made on 25 May 1821 when she carried 30 prisoners to Newcastle. She made a remarkably quick round trip, for she arrived back in Sydney on 27 May. Another voyage was made to Newcastle on 14 June 1821 with prisoners.⁵²

Then on 4 July 1821, **Snapper** is recorded as arriving at Sydney from Port Macquarie, after having assisted in the survey of the latter Port which had been carried out by Surveyor-General Oxley.⁵³ It is on this occasion that Edwardson is recorded as master of the vessel.⁵¹

For a time subsequent to this the records are mute—in fact the next recorded sailing of **Snapper** is not until 7 November 1822, when she departed for New Zealand.⁵¹ That Edwardson was still in command is evidenced on the vessel's return to Sydney on 28 March 1823, with one ton of prepared flax.⁵⁴ As already stated in relation to Bingle's voyage in the **Sally**, Dr Cumpston advises that the Naval Officer's Quarterly Reports for the period 1 January to 30 June 1822 have not been found.³³ Although some arrival and departure records can be obtained from Ship's Musters and the "Sydney Gazette" they are not necessarily complete as has been shown by the discovery of a report of a voyage of the **Snapper** under Edwardson's command in June and July 1822. This remained lost until located and published by Mackaness in 1956.⁵⁵ This was the voyage that created the opportunity for Edwardson to rise out of obscurity and which he appears to have lost by reason of—

- (a) a lack of initiative—as will be demonstrated he did little more than follow in the track of Flinders in Moreton Bay, when he could have tried to cover the areas necessarily left unexplored in 1799;
- (b) a circumspection in regard to the Aborigines (Bingle's approach to the Aborigines was light hearted by comparison but in view of his lack of local knowledge it could well have been a case of ignorance being bliss.)—it might be argued he had only a small vessel (42 tons with a crew of 6⁵⁶), but in the **Norfolk** Flinders had an even smaller vessel (25 tons but a slightly larger crew of 10 men⁵⁷); in fairness, however, it should be added that since 1799 there had been some very bloody conflicts between Europeans and Aborigines in both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, whilst some hair raising tales had come through from New Zealand about the seizure of small vessels and the massacre of their crews by the Maoris⁵⁸; and
- (c) the gubernatorial habit of setting time limits on voyages of exploration. After having survived one scrape under Macquarie, Edwardson was hardly likely to lay himself open to the wrath of Sir Thomas Brisbane.

To come to the point, there lies in the Archives Office of New South Wales a report from Edwardson addressed to His Excellency Sir Thomas Makdougall Brisbane, Governor of New South Wales etc. etc. in the following terms:

H.M. Colonial Cutter "Snapper"
July 29th 1822.

Sir,

I have the Honour to inform your Excellency of my Arrival in the **Snapper** as above, and in the execution of your Excellency's Orders by leave to report as follows.

Having delivered the Provisions and Stores for Newcastle to the Commandant at that Station, I proceeded with all possible despatch along the Coast to the Northward and arrived at the latitude of 28° 30S at Noon of the 14th Ultimo, the Line of Coast then became the Object of my closest Investigation. From this Latitude to Point Danger the Land is High with Sandy beaches in front, bold to half a mile and clear of Danger, without any openings or places of Shelter. Off Point Danger lies a small Island, High and bold to, which may be seen about 12 miles off between this and the Reefs to the Eastward of it is a Channel of about two miles wide perfectly safe by keeping the Island close on board and steering in about 10 fathoms.

The Reefs are a set of Dangerous Shoals and bear from the Island S.E. 2½ miles and stretch as far as E.N.E. they appear to occupy a space of about 4 miles in a N.E. direction.

From Point Danger a few miles Northerly the Land is very High, with low Sandy Land in front, and thence to within 20 miles of Point Lookout, low sandy land. The whole space between those two Points is one continued Half Moon Sandy beach with Regular Soundings and to within one mile of the Shore perfectly safe to approach.

The opening at the South part of Morton Bay can only be entered by Boats as there is only Nine feet at low water, and the inside barricaded by dry sands. In Bad weather it breaks right across, and the Tide runs about 4½ Knots. Finding it impossible to get the Cutter through this passage I made way round the North end of the Island and worked up. First about 7 miles up the Pumice Stone River and then proceeded in the Boat 11 miles further, this last part was completely choked with Mangrove Flats, Sand and Mud banks; both shores a continued line of Mangrove bushes and in many Places barely passable for the boat; from the head of this River the Glass Houses bear W.S.W. The Ships channel into this place the only one possible to get through, is close to the Beach of Point Skirmish and has 4 fathoms at Low Water. From this Point to the South part of the Bay a distance of about 30 miles by 22 miles the whole is composed of Sand ridges and Deep Holes interspersed with Mangrove Islands and these again surrounded for miles by Mud Flats and Oyster and Muscle Beds. The tide running in various directions at the rate of 3 to 4 miles per hour stirs up the Mud and Sand so thickly as to hide all appearances of Shoals or Sands and in deep water causing such strong over-falls as to give it the appearance of shallows. After repeated exertions to get the Cutter up to the Bottom of the Bay I found it was impossible and was obliged to proceed up the South River in the Boat. This River extends about 27 miles in a S.E. direction and is only separated from the Sea by a Narrow neck of low Sandy Land, is full of Shoals Sands and Mangrove Islands with deep water but no regular Channel. It is with much difficulty that a passage can be made in even a Boat, as the Sands are so extensive and shallow, and the Tide falls so fast in many places as to leave you aground a mile dry. The Natives in both Rivers are too numerous to risk a landing except on the Islands. Taking a view of this place it is in my Humble opinion extremely Dangerous for even the smallest vessels to enter and except in the Pumice Stone River does not afford the least Shelter or safe Anchorage. The Island is one entire body of sand and has a few natives upon it consequently Fresh Water. The Bay formed by Point Lookout affords Good safe Anchorage from W.N.W. by South to S.E. Gales. The Rocks off this Point are bold to and no Dangers but such as are visible. Between Cape Morton and the Shore to the Northward about six miles off the latter, lies an extensive flat having only 6 feet and in fine weather is not easily discovered. In proceeding to the Northward from Cape Morton to Double Island Point in Latde 25° 54 South the Land is alternately High and low with Sandy beaches but bold to one mile, and clear of Danger without any Openings or places of Shelter. Ten miles N.W. of this Point which is High and safe to approach lies an Entrance from Wide Bay to a safe capacious Anchorage having from 14 to 3 fathoms for many miles—Soft muddy bottom and forming a Channel or Strait into Hervey's Bay renders the Great Sandy Peninsula of Captain Flinders an Island of Seventy miles in length and in some parts 14 or 15 in Breadth. The Channel into this place is between the Northern Breakers and the Shore, and affords room to work in with any wind. At the South Point of this Anchorage a River extends some distance to a S.W. to S. direction and has deep water. The Natives are numerous and Hostile. My very limited time of return to this Port prevented me from being able to make more than a Hasty Sketch of this most excellent Harbour. I am happy to add that the Bank of Shoals laid down by Captain Flinders between the two Southern Solitary Islands does not exist. The whole of them are bold to except two Rocks N.W. of the S.E. Island stretching off one mile but affording a safe channel between the largest Rock and the Island. The very continued Southerly Winds prevented any return to this Port by the appointed time namely the 24 Instant. I called off Port Macquarie and Newcastle for their Despatches which have been respectively forwarded. I am happy to say that His Majesty's Cutter has not received any injury on this Service.

I have the Honor to be Your Excellency's
Most Obedient Humble Servant
W. L. Edwardson.⁵⁹

Thus, over a year before Oxley's visit to Moreton Bay in H.M. Cutter **Mermaid**, Edwardson like Bingle had had, and lost, the opportunity to become the "father" of Queensland.

Flinders's report to Governor Hunter on the 1799 visit to Moreton Bay and Hervey Bay was on record in Sydney as were the charts compiled at that time. These appear to have been available to Edwardson. This assumption is supported by the comparison of the texts of Edwardson's and Flinders's Reports which follows. In this instance the recapitulation of Flinders's Report which appears in "Terra Australis" has been followed, as it is more comparable with the brevity of Edwardson's report.

Edwardson does not appear to have been familiar with the text of "Terra Australis". In 1799 Flinders in reference to Hervey's Bay says

The east side is formed by a great sandy peninsula, of which the cape [Sandy Cape] is the northern extremity.

In 1802, lacking positive evidence to the contrary the conscientious Flinders still showed Great Sandy Island as a Peninsula on his chart, but in his text he entertains a conjecture as to its insularity, which he had not done in 1799. Edwardson's statement that his discovery of a channel or strait from Wide Bay into Hervey's Bay renders the Great Sandy Peninsula of Captain Flinders an Island of Seventy miles in length and in some parts 14 or 15 in Breadth indicates that he was unaware of Flinders's 1802 conjecture as published in "Terra Australis" in 1814.⁶⁰

In the comparison of texts set out hereunder there necessarily has been some editing to prune out irrelevant matter, but every endeavour has been made to preserve the basic factual sense of what each writer sought to convey.

EDWARDSON 1822

The Opening at the South part of Morton Bay can only be entered by Boats as there is only 9 feet at low water. In bad weather it breaks right across and the tide runs about 4½ knots. Finding it impossible to get the cutter through this passage I made way round the North end of the Island and worked up

First about 7 miles up the Pumice Stone River and then proceeded in the boat 11 miles further, this last part was completely choked with Mangrove Flats, Sand and Mud banks; both shores a continued line of Mangrove bushes and in many Places barely passable for the boat; from the head of this River the Glass Houses bear W.S.W. The Ships channel into this place the only one possible to get through is close to the beach of Point Skirmish and has 4 fathoms at low water

From this Point [Skirmish] to the South part of the Bay a distance of about 30 miles by 22 miles the whole is composed of Sandridges and Deep Holes interspersed with Mangrove Islands and these again surrounded by Mud Flats and Oyster and Muscle Beds. After repeated attempts to get the cutter up to the bottom of the Bay I found it was impossible and was obliged to proceed up the South River in the Boat. This River extends about 27 miles in a S.S.E. direction and is only separated from the Sea by a narrow neck of low sandy land, is full of Shoals Sands and Mangrove Islands with deep water but no regular channel. It is with much difficulty that a passage can be made even in a boat, as the sands are so extensive and shallow, and the tide falls so fast in many places as to leave you aground a mile dry

FLINDERS 1799

The opening in Moreton Bay is small and formed by two sandy points, beyond which a large extent of water was visible. We stood up to within two miles of the opening, but seeing it blocked by many shoals of sand, and the depth having diminished from 12 to 4 fathoms, the course was altered for Cape Moreton

Whilst beating up amongst the shoals an opening was perceived round the point [Point Skirmish]. Proceeding up the opening I found it more than a mile in width: and from the quantities of pumice stone on the borders, it was named Pumice Stone River. We got into the river after many difficulties, arising principally from shoals in the entrance which could only be passed at high water. The sloop was laid on shore on the east side five miles above Point Skirmish. We proceeded two miles further up the river amongst mangrove islets and muddy flats. I landed on the west side as far above the sloop as the boat could advance; steered [walked] north westward for the Glasshouse peaks.

From the top of a stony mount . . . [saw] a considerable extent of water which bore N.80°E. and was about six miles above the sloop.

We had passed two low islands surrounded with shoals and were at anchor in six fathoms abreast a third. Next day we beat up against a southern wind to a sixth island; but the shoals then became more numerous and the channels between them so narrow, that it was very difficult to proceed further. The sixth island was 27°35' being 34 miles south of Cape Moreton at the entrance of the Bay. Above [South of] this island, the east and west shores, from being nine or ten miles apart, approach each other within two miles, and the space between them takes the form of a river; but the entrance was too full of shoals to leave a hope of penetrating by it far into the interior, or that it could be of importance to navigation. Under this discouragement and that of a foul wind, all further research at the [Southern] head of Glasshouse bay was given up.

The natives in both rivers [Pumice-stone and South] are too numerous to risk a landing except on the islands. Taking a view of this place it is in my humble opinion extremely dangerous for even the smallest vessels to enter and except in the Pumice Stone River does not afford the least shelter or safe anchorage.

The Island [Moreton] is one entire body of sand and has a few natives upon it consequently Fresh Water.

Between Cape Morton and the shore to the northward about six miles off the latter lies an extensive flat having only 6 feet and in fine weather is not easily discovered.

Ten miles N.W. of this Point [Double Island] which is high and safe to approach lies an entrance from Wide Bay to a safe capacious anchorage having from 14 to 3 fathoms for many miles—Soft muddy bottom and forming a Channel or Strait into Hervey's Bay renders the Great Sandy Peninsula of Captain Flinders an Island of Seventy miles in length and in some parts 14 or 15 in Breadth.

It will be obvious that whilst in Moreton Bay Edwardson did no more than cover the ground already covered by Flinders apart from proceeding closer towards the northern and southern limits of the Bay, until deterred from proceeding further by the sight of numerous natives. He left the western shores untouched despite the fact that Flinders's East Coast Sheet II (Plate IX in the "Terra Australis" Atlas) shows a break in the shoreline in the approximate position of the mouth of the Brisbane River, although, it must be conceded, the low mangrove islands at the mouth of the River hide it from the casual observer.

Although he approached the shore between Point Danger and Point Lookout much closer than Flinders or Cook he failed to locate the lagoon seen by Bingle—the present day Broadwater. It is noteworthy that Edwardson makes no reference to Bingle's voyage.

Inside Moreton Bay he appears to have been unable to proceed further up Pumice Stone Channel; he must have got into a deadend channel, as Bingle records 25 miles of progress as against Edwardson's 18 miles. At the Southern end of the Bay it is difficult to assess how far he went as, whilst the beginning point of his distance of 30 miles is obviously Point Skirmish, he writes about the South River extending about 27 miles in a S.S.E. direction. He does not say at what point the 27 miles should be measured from. However, from his reference to the river being separated from the sea by only a narrow neck of low sandy land he must have proceeded down the channel on the

There was a party of natives on the point [Skirmish] and our communication was at first friendly; but after receiving presents they made an attack, and one of them was wounded by our fire. [Later] I am happy to say they were all friendly, which is attributable to their opinion of us having undergone a salutary change from the effect of our fire arms at Point Skirmish.

The long slip on the east side, which I have called Moreton Island, . . . is little else than a ridge of rocky hills with a sandy surface; but the peninsula further south had some appearance of fertility. I judged favourably of the country on the borders of what seemed to be a river falling into the head of the bay, both from its thick covering of wood and from the good soil of the sixth island, which lies at the entrance. The other islands in the bay are very low, and so surrounded with forests of large mangrove, that it must be difficult to land upon them.

The entrance of Glasshouse Bay from Point Skirmish to the inner part of Cape Moreton is eight miles wide, but it contains so many shoals that a ship would have much difficulty in finding a passage.⁶¹

1802

. . . but in curving round Wide Bay the sandy land becomes very low, and a small opening was seen in it, leading to a piece of water like a lagoon; but the shoals which lie off the entrance render it difficult of access, if indeed there be a passage for anything larger than boats. Had the Lady Nelson been with me, I should have attempted to get her into the lagoon, having previously entertained a conjecture that the head of Hervey's Bay might communicate with Wide Bay.⁶⁰

western side of Stradbroke Island and been somewhere on the bay side of the present day Jumpin Pin. It is officially recorded in the Survey Office, Lands Department, Brisbane, that the present opening to the sea at Jumpin Pin did not come about until a combination of gales and very high tides caused the break through of the sea on or about 13 May 1898.

Edwardson showed considerably more initiative in regard to his exploration of Wide Bay. He established the insularity of Great Sandy (Fraser) Island, although his report does not make it clear whether he sailed right round the island. He refers to a capacious and safe anchorage and a river at its south part extending some distance in a S.W. to S. direction. Mackaness believes this to be the Mary River on which Maryborough now stands.⁶² However, the writer considers, having regard to the location and bearing given by Edwardson, that he is referring to what is now known as Tin Can Bay, an opening having an appearance not unlike the "Pumice Stone River" and "South-River" of Moreton Bay.

There is a certain irony in that having missed fame, Edwardson's Report to Brisbane of 29 July 1822 was apparently so thoroughly pigeonholed that, like Bingle's, it was omitted from the Historical Records of Australia and the only recorded report by him in that work is a letter to Colonial Secretary Goulburn under date 13 September 1822, accounting for 459 lbs of soap ex Ship **Morley**, being part of medial comforts supplied by the Masters of Convict Ships to Military Hospitals at New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land and in respect of which H.M. Government had called for a general accounting.⁶³

Edwardson, as already stated, was still in command of **Snapper** when she returned from New Zealand on 28 March 1823.⁵⁴

Then on 3 April 1823, preferment came his way and he was appointed Deputy Harbour Master and Resident Pilot at Sydney.⁶⁴ In Howe's Almanacks for 1824, 1825 and 1826 he is listed as occupying these offices and the N.S.W. Colonial Secretary's Returns of the Colony, 1825, p. 110 record him as the incumbent of these positions. After his appointment he made one further recorded voyage as master of **Snapper**; when she sailed for Otaheite on 25 July 1823.⁵⁴ After this **Snapper** appears to have passed into the command of Thomas Abrill. After she sailed

for New Zealand and Otaheite on 25 or 28 September 1824, there is no further record of her up to the end of 1825 at least—it is not improbable there was none thereafter.⁵⁶

The end for Edwardson was not far off either—in the "Sydney Gazette" of Saturday, 4 February 1826 (p. 3 col. 5) is the following entry:—

Died, At his residence, in Sydney, universally respected, on Thursday last, Mr. W. L. Edwardson, of the Pilot Service.

And so he returned to the shadows.

However, whilst the Archives Office of New South Wales and the Mitchell Library have no other Edwardson material than that already referred to, he did gain one small shred of immortality. In King's "Narrative" is included the following entry in the Sailing Directions:—

Wide Bay—Entrance 25°49'. Examined by Mr. Edwardson master of a Colonial Government Vessel who found it a good port with an entrance channel of not less than 3 fathoms. It communicates with Hervey Bay making an island of the Great Sandy Peninsula.⁶⁵

Whilst Edwardson was apparently possessed of more patience than Bingle and thus more suited for exploration work, he appears to have lacked the genius for this type of work than Cook, Flinders and King had in common. However, when one considers the voyages he undertook in a 42 ton vessel—New Zealand, Otaheite and the like—and the hardships that had to be endured in such a small vessel on long voyages it is not to be wondered that he died before his time.

EPILOGUE

Whilst the reasons behind Bingle's and Edwardson's voyages to Moreton Bay must, for lack of positive evidence, remain matters for conjecture, it is considered one sure conjecture may be made. It was as a result of their reports on Moreton Bay being of such a negative nature, that when Oxley was sent north in 1823 (in obedience to Bathurst's Despatch of September 1822) he went first to Port Curtis. When he found it unsatisfactory for the purpose for which it was proposed to be used, he then fell back on Moreton Bay and, thanks to Finnegan and Pamphlett, discovered the Brisbane River, thereby gaining the fame that Bingle and Edwardson had missed.

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