

## THE EXPEDITION UNDER LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR COLLINS IN 1803-4.

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### 1. THE ORIGIN OF THE EXPEDITION AND THE VOYAGE TO PORT PHILLIP.

IN former papers which I have had the honor to read before the Royal Society, I have endeavoured to trace the influence of French rivalry in hastening the English settlement of Australia. I have shown that to the pioneer work of French navigators we owe the first admirable surveys of the southern coasts of Tasmania, and that it was wholly due to the apprehensions that those surveys excited that Governor King sent Lieut. Bowen from Port Jackson to take possession of the Derwent.

I have also briefly touched on the explorations of our own English sailors in the neighbourhood of the Derwent and in Bass' Strait, and the influence of their reports in deciding the choice of localities for new colonies, while I have followed the misfortunes of the unlucky settlement at Risdon, and described its collapse after a short and troubled life of little more than half a year.

The real history of Tasmania as an English colony begins with the departure from England, in the spring of 1803, of the expedition of Lieutenant-Governor Collins,\* the founder of Hobart; and it is with the origin and misadventures of that expedition on its way to the Derwent that I have to deal in the present paper.

The project of the English Government to found a colony on the shores of Bass' Strait, and the unsuccessful attempt of Governor Collins to plant that settlement

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\*The first lieutenant of the *Calcutta* published a narrative of the voyage of the expedition to Port Phillip, and of its failure there. "Account of a Voyage to establish a Colony at Port Phillip, in Bass' Straits, in H.M.S. *Calcutta*, in 1802-3-4. By James Kingston Tuckey." London, 1805.

The principal official documents relating to the expedition down to the date of its departure from Port Phillip, have been printed by Mr. Francis Peter Labilliere, in his "Early History of the Colony of Victoria," 2 vols., London, 1878, and also by Mr. James Bonwick, in his "Port Phillip Settlement," London, 1883. The Rev. Robert Knopwood's Diary has been printed by Mr. John J. Shillinglaw in his "Early Historical Records of Port Phillip," Melbourne, 1878; 2nd edition, 8vo., 1879. The diary was copied from the original then in the possession of the late Mr. Vernon W. Hookey, of Hobart.

at Port Phillip in 1803, may at first sight appear to be beyond the scope of the history of Tasmania, and to belong exclusively to that of Victoria. But Collins' expedition has absolutely nothing to do with the history of our Victorian neighbours. The sandhills of Port Phillip merely served for a month or two as a resting place for the colonists on their way to the Derwent. The short stay of Collins' people on Victorian soil was only an incident in their passage from England to Van Diemen's Land, like their touching at Rio or the Cape; and the story of those months is an essential part of the history of the first settlers of Hobart.

The idea of the settlement emanated from Captain Philip Gidley King, the then Governor of New South Wales, and was, doubtless, suggested to him by the arrival at Port Jackson of the French ship the *Naturaliste* from Bass' Straits, and the suspicions thus excited in his mind with respect to French designs on His Majesty's territories in New Holland.

Labilliere,  
i., 125.

On the 21st May, 1802—shortly after the arrival of the *Naturaliste*, but before Commodore Baudin's own ship had reached Port Jackson—the Governor addressed a despatch to the Duke of Portland pressing upon him the importance of founding a colony at the newly discovered harbour of Port Phillip, of the soil, climate, and advantageous position of which he had just received a very favourable report from Captain Flinders, who had explored it in the preceding month. The reason most strongly urged by King was the necessity of being beforehand with the French, who, in his opinion, were bent on getting a footing somewhere in Bass' Straits.

When the Governor's despatch reached England there was for the moment peace with France, but French movements were viewed with the utmost suspicion, and a speedy renewal of the war was regarded as inevitable.

Home Office  
to Colonial  
Office, 17th  
Dec. 1802.

H.M.S. *Calcutta* was under orders to take to New South Wales a further detachment of 400 male convicts and some 50 free settlers, and preparations were being made to send her off immediately. King's recommendation therefore came at an opportune juncture, and was at once taken into consideration.

Amongst miscellaneous Colonial Office documents in the Record Office, Mr. Bonwick found a paper which records the result of these deliberations. It has neither subscription nor address, and is undated, though from other evidence its date can be fixed at somewhere in the latter half of the month of December, 1802.

This document is of so much interest as setting forth

the views of the Government on Australian colonisation at this important period, that it is here given in full :—

“MEMORANDUM OF A PROPOSED SETTLEMENT IN  
BASS'S STRAIGHTS.

“The attention of the French Government has recently been directed to New Holland, and two French ships have, during the present year, been employed in surveying the western and southern coasts, and in exploring the passage through Basses Straights to New South Wales. By the accounts which have been recently received from Governor King at Port Jackson, there is reason to believe that the French navigators had not discovered either of the two most important objects within those Straights, namely, the capacious and secure harbour in the North, to which Governor King has given the name of Port Phillip, nor a large island called King's Island, situated nearly midway on the western side of the Straights, and which extends about 50 miles in every direction.

“Governor King represents each of these objects as deserving the attention of Government, but especially Port Phillip, where he urgently recommends that an Establishment should be immediately formed, at the same time observing that, if the resources of his Government could have furnished the means, he should have thought it his duty, without waiting for instructions, to have formed a settlement there.

“The reasons adduced by Governor King in support of this opinion are principally drawn from the advantages which the possession of such a port naturally suggests for the valuable fishery that may be carried on in the Straights, where the seal and the sea elephant abound, and from the policy of anticipating the French, to whom our discovery of this port and of King's Island must soon be known, and who may be stimulated to take early measures for establishing themselves in positions so favourable for interrupting in any future war the communication between the United Kingdom and New South Wales, through the channel of Basses Strait.

“In addition to these reasons, it may be stated that it would be of material consequence to the settlement at Port Jackson, which has now arrived to a population of near six thousand persons, if an interval of some years were to be given for moral improvement, which cannot be expected to take place in any material degree while there is an annual importation of convicts, who necessarily carry with them those vicious habits which were the cause of their having fallen under the sentence of the law.

“ From a due consideration of all these circumstances, it is proposed to adopt the recommendation of Governor King, and to appoint a competent person to proceed in the *Calcutta*, direct for Port Phillip, for the purpose of commencing the establishment there, by means of a certain number of settlers and male convicts, now ready to be embarked in that ship, and, further, that the establishment shall be placed under the control of the principal Government at Port Jackson, upon a similar footing to that on Norfolk Island.

“ The expense of this new settlement, beyond what would necessarily attend the conveyance and supplies for the convicts if sent to Port Jackson, may be calculated at a sum not exceeding £15,000 a year, subject to a small additional charge, if circumstances should render it advisable to send some of the convicts under a sufficient guard to secure the possession of King’s Island.

“ With a view to this service, and for the purpose of keeping open the communication between the two settlements and with Port Jackson, it is thought necessary that a small vessel should be stationed in the Straights, to be employed in such manner as the Lieut.-Governor, acting under the orders of Governor King, may point out.

“ Experience having proved the great inconvenience arising from the establishment of the New South Wales Regiment at Port Jackson, it is conceived that considerable benefit would result from selecting a detachment of the Royal Marines for this service.

“ With a view of exciting the convicts to good behaviour, it is proposed that such of them as shall merit the recommendation of the Governors abroad shall be informed that their wives and families will be permitted to go to them at the public expense as indentured servants; and, to render this act of humane policy as conducive to the benefit of the Colony as the circumstances of the case will permit, it will be necessary that these families shall on no account be sent upon ships on which convicts shall be embarked, and that they shall be informed their reunion with the objects of their regard would depend upon their own good behaviour, as well as upon that of their husbands.”

The recommendations of the memorandum were adopted by the Cabinet. Early in January, 1803, it was ordered that the destination of the *Calcutta* should be changed, and that the convicts, with a detachment of 100 Royal Marines as guard, should proceed direct to Port Phillip, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel

David Collins, who was appointed Lieut.-Governor of the new Settlement. An urgent appeal was made to the authorities by Mr. Secretary King, of the Home Office, to send a proportion of women—to allow the wives of the married convicts to accompany their husbands, and to add a number of female convicts. Secretary King pointed out the mischief that had ensued in the Port Jackson colony from the disproportion of the sexes, and remarked, “To begin with a colony of men, *populus virorum*, will do for nothing in nature but what Virgil applies it to—a Hive of Bees.” It would have been well if this sensible advice had been acted upon; as it was, out of 307 convicts who sailed from England, only 17 were accompanied by their wives. The military guard, officers and men, consisted of 51, of whom some seven had their wives with them. Free settlers were not much encouraged in those days; for, though it was the policy of the Government to introduce a certain proportion, the number was rigidly limited. Mr. Bonwick says that up to the year 1803 the whole number of free settlers introduced into New Holland was only 320, to a total population of over 7000. Thirteen persons obtained Lord Hobart’s permission to throw in their lot with the new colony as settlers; and, of these, not more than three or four had wives with them. The Civil Establishment consisted of a Chaplain, the Rev. Robert Knopwood; three Surgeons, Messrs. Wm. T’Anson, Matthew Bowden, and Wm. Hopley; a Commissary, Mr. Leonard Fosbrook; a Surveyor, Mr. George Prideaux Harris; a Mineralogist, Mr. Adolarius William Henry Humphreys; and two Superintendents of Convicts.

The Colonial Office could probably have chosen no more suitable man than Lieut.-Colonel David Collins as Governor of the new settlement. Collins was an Irishman, having been born in King’s County in 1756. He had seen military service; and, as a young Lieutenant of Marines, had been present at the battle of Bunker’s Hill. When Governor Phillip sailed with the “First Fleet” in 1788, to found Sydney, Captain Collins accompanied him, as Judge Advocate. He served in this important capacity, and also as Secretary to the Governor, for eight years, returning to England in 1796, with high recommendations from Governor Hunter to the Duke of Portland for his merit and services to the young colony. During his stay in England he wrote and published his well known and valuable “Account of the English Colony of New South

Wales," the first volume appearing in 1798, and the second, which carried on the history to August, 1801, being published in 1802. The book met with a very favourable reception, and was reviewed by Sydney Smith, in the *Edinburgh Review*. The reviewer says, "Mr. Collins's book is written with great plainness and candour: he appears to be a man always meaning well; of good plain common sense; and composed of those well-wearing materials which adapt a person for situations where genius and refinement would only prove a source of misery and error." Collins is said to have been a remarkably handsome man, with delightful manners. He seems to have had not a little tact in managing men, and to have possessed many of the qualities requisite in the founder of a colony. If he erred in his judgment of the capabilities of Victoria as a place for settlement, he certainly showed sagacity in his choice of a site for Hobart.

March, 1802,  
to May, 1803.

Bonwick's  
"First Twenty  
Years of Aus-  
tralia."

The preparations for the new settlement were quickly pushed on; and, in April, 1803, the expedition was ready for sea. The 307 male convicts, and their military guard, were to be conveyed by H.M.S. *Calcutta*, in which vessel the Lieut.-Governor himself, and a select few of his staff—viz., Lieut. Sladden, the First Lieutenant of Marines; Mr. Knopwood, the Chaplain; and Mr. P'Anson, the Principal Surgeon—were also to be accommodated. At the period of which we are speaking, which was during the short peace which followed upon the Treaty of Amiens, the ships of the Navy were frequently employed for the conveyance of convicts to New South Wales. In the early days of the colony the convicts were brought out under contract,—the contractors receiving as much as £17 7s. 6d. per head for all shipped. The contractors had no interest in treating the people well, or even in keeping them alive. The consequence was a most scandalous state of things. It was estimated that during the first eight years at least one-tenth of those transported died on the voyage. In the "Second Fleet," in 1790, the mortality was awful. In one ship more than a fourth part died on board, and a large number after arrival. The unhappy people were shut up below, in filthy and stifling quarters; seldom allowed on deck, for fear of mutiny; kept under no discipline; and often subjected to brutal ill-usage. Besides the dreadful mortality on the voyage, the survivors arrived so enfeebled that the hospitals were filled with sick, many of whom succumbed; while a considerable proportion of the remainder never recovered from the effects of the passage. Afterwards, by the

adoption of the system of paying a premium for each person landed, thereby giving the contractors a direct interest in caring for the health of the convicts, a great improvement in their treatment was secured. During the peace, however, the Government preferred using ships of the navy as transports, thus giving employment to officers and seamen whom it was undesirable to discharge, in view of a probable renewal of hostilities, and at the same time ensuring that the convicts would be kept in a better state of order and cleanliness. The vessels could also, on their return voyage, bring home cargoes of timber for naval purposes at a small expense. The ships best adapted for transports were those which had been originally built for the East India Company, and had been purchased into the King's service during the war. The *Calcutta* was a ship of this class. She was commanded by Captain Daniel Woodruff, who had been in New South Wales in 1792 and 1793, and had been so favourably impressed with the capabilities of the settlement that, when he received orders to take out a transport, he petitioned Lord Hobart for a grant of land for his sons, with the view of settling his whole family in the colony. He had as his first lieutenant Lieutenant Tuckey, a young Irishman of great energy and ability, who afterwards wrote an account of the expedition, which was published in 1805.\*

*Gentleman's Magazine,*  
1804.

The *Calcutta* was to take the convicts and military, but a tender was necessary to carry the stores for the whole establishment. For this purpose the Transport Office chartered the *Ocean*, a ship of 481 tons, belonging

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\* "An Account of a Voyage to establish a Colony at Port Phillip in Bass' Strait, on the South Coast of New South Wales, in H.M.S. *Calcutta*." By Lieut. J. K. Tuckey. London, 1805. Lieutenant James Kingston Tuckey was born in 1776, at Mallow, County Cork. He entered the navy at an early age, and served with distinction in the Eastern Archipelago and the Indian Seas, and afterwards in the Red Sea. Broken in health, he was in 1802 appointed first lieutenant of the *Calcutta*, and served during the voyage to Port Phillip, returning to England in 1804 and publishing his book. In 1805 the *Calcutta*, in convoying ships from St. Helena, was captured by the French, after a gallant defence, in which Tuckey particularly distinguished himself. He remained in a French prison for nine years. During his imprisonment in France he married a lady who was his fellow prisoner. On his release in 1814 he was made commander, and in 1816 he obtained the command of an expedition to explore the River Congo. The members of the expedition suffered terribly from fever, which was fatal to 21 out of a total number of 56. Tuckey was one of the victims, dying on 4 October, 1816.—"Narrative of an Expedition to explore the River Zaire (Congo) in South Africa in 1816." London, 1818.

Transport  
Office, Memo.  
7th April,  
1803.

to Mr. Hurris, of Newcastle, and commanded by Captain John Mertho. The stores, exclusive of provisions, amounted to the value of £8047\* ; the freight and probable demurrage were put at £2568 ; total, £10,615. The remainder of the civil establishment, seven in number ; two of the officers of the Royal Marines (Lieuts. J. M. Johnson and Edward Lord) ; and the 13 free settlers and their families, were passengers on board the *Ocean*.

On Sunday, 24th April, 1803, the *Calcutta* and the *Ocean* left Spithead in company, and three days later took their final departure from the Isle of Wight. For the events of the voyage Mr. Knopwood's diary is our principal source of information.† The diary is taken for the most part from the ship's log ; and the chaplain, while he tells us a great deal about the ports at which they touched, and about the dinners and amusements which they enjoyed at those places, says nothing about the condition of the convicts, and but little of the incidents of the voyage. The ships touched at Teneriffe and at Rio de Janeiro, where they stayed three weeks. Off the Island of Tristan d'Acunha the *Ocean* was lost sight of in a storm, and the *Calcutta* put into Simon's Bay, Cape of Good Hope, where she remained a fortnight. The good chaplain was a man who dearly loved good company and genial society, and from the fond way in which he lingers over the delights of Rio and the Cape, at both of which he managed to have a very good time, we can judge how irksome he must have found the long sea life of five months. Though well on in middle age he was still susceptible, for at Rio he remarks of the Convent de Adjuda, which received as boarders young ladies who had lost their parents :—"This I frequently visited, where I conversed with a very beautiful young lady named Antonia Januaria. Her polite attention I shall not easily forget, having received great friendship from her, and should I ever return there again shall be happy to see her." And a few days later he writes :—"I visited De Adjuda for the last time. I saw Antonia this eve at 5, and we took leave of each other with regret. Vale !"

It is so seldom that the chaplain indulges in sentiment

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\* In the list of stores are the following items :—Ironmongery, £2525 ; clothing, &c., £1930 ; naval stores, £723 ; carts and implements of husbandry, £500 ; medical and hospital stores, £1380 ; six pipes port wine, £282.

† Mr. Labilliere discovered the log book of the *Calcutta* at Deptford Dockyard, and gives extracts from it in his book.



that I cannot forbear quoting his reflections on leaving the Cape. "On our departure from the Cape," he writes, "it was natural for us to indulge at this moment a melancholy reflection which obtruded itself on the minds of those who were settlers at Port Phillip. The land behind us was the abode of a civilised people—that before us was the residence of savages. When, if ever, we might again enjoy the commerce of the world was doubtful and uncertain. The refreshments and the pleasures of which we had so liberally partaken at the Cape and Simon's Bay were to be exchanged for coarse fare and hard labour at Port Phillip, and we may truly say, all communication with families and friends now cut off, we were leaving the world behind us to enter on a state unknown." After leaving the Cape the *Calcutta* encountered a severe storm, and reached Port Phillip on the 9th October, where she found the *Ocean* at anchor, having arrived two days before her.

From the Chaplain's diary it appears that the voyage was uneventful, and that good order was preserved throughout, for there are only two or three entries of punishments, for trifling offences. The health of the convicts must have been fairly looked after, only four deaths from illness being noted and one from drowning. This presents a pleasing contrast to the mortality and ill usage which had been too common in the transports to New South Wales.\*

## 2. THE PORT PHILLIP FAILURE.

Collins' ships anchored within Port Phillip Heads about a mile and a half to the eastward of the entrance.

Collins to King, 5th Nov. 1803, Labilliere, i., 131.

\* Lieut. Governor Collins in his despatch to Governor King reporting his arrival, states that he had brought with him 299 male convicts and 16 married women. From this it would appear that 8 convicts and 1 convict's wife had died on the voyage. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the varying statements contained in different documents with regard to the number and names of the free settlers. In a despatch to King, dated 16th December, 1803, Collins says that he has eighteen free settlers with their families, yet his official returns of 26th February and of July, 1804, show only thirteen at the Derwent. We have a list of thirteen persons who had obtained permission from Lord Hobart to accompany Collins' settlement, but apparently this list does not contain the names of all who eventually sailed with him. Thus, it omits the names of Messrs. Pitt, Nicholls, Ingle, Dacres, and Blinkworth, who are known to have come out with Collins to the Derwent as free settlers. The *Calcutta's* log records receiving on the 17th October six passengers from the *Ocean* to proceed from Port Phillip to Port Jackson. Deducting these from the total so far as known, would leave the balance within one of the number given in Collins' return.

On the day of their arrival the Lieut.-Governor and Capt. Woodriff went on shore. They returned in the evening, having found no water, and reported that the soil was very bad. The next morning they set off again to look for a good spot for the settlement. They examined the eastern shore for some miles as far as Arthur's Mount, and although they found a small stream of fresh water, the soil was so poor and sandy, and the shoal water made approach to the shore so difficult that they returned to the ship much discouraged. The next two days were spent in exploring the west side of the Bay for a distance of many miles, but with no better result. The soil was rather better, but there was no fresh water. In the words of the Chaplain—"Along the shore we returned by no means satisfied with the country." From this time Collins made up his mind that Port Phillip was unsuited for settlement, and that his stay could be only temporary, until some more favourable locality was found elsewhere to which he could remove his people. For the present, however, the necessity of immediately unloading his ships was imperative. Capt. Woodriff had instructions to proceed at once to Port Jackson to take in a cargo of timber; the *Ocean* was bound for China, and could not be detained without considerable expense. He therefore gave up further search for a good locality, and on the fourth day after his arrival fixed on a spot about eight miles to the eastward of the Heads—near the present township of Sorrento—where very good water had been got by sinking half a dozen casks in the sand, and here on a small flat of some 5 acres in extent he resolved to pitch his tents and encamp his people and stores. The ships were moved opposite to the selected spot, the convicts and military put on shore, the ground cleared, and the landing of the stores begun. This was a task of some difficulty, as the men had to go up to their middle through the water to carry in the goods from the boats. The bulk of the stores was piled in the open air, and the more valuable and perishable were placed in three large tents, a guard of ten marines being posted to protect them. This done, Lieut. Tuckey, accompanied by Mr. Surveyor Harris and Mr. Wm. Collins, was sent in the *Calcutta's* launch to survey the upper part of the harbour. They proceeded to the north west, and after two attempts reached the head of the Western Arm of Corio Bay, near to where Geelong now stands. The report brought back was not encouraging. The soil was mostly sandy, and, except a few acres at the head of

the Port, there was no land within five miles of the water which would grow corn. Water was everywhere scarce. Snakes were common, and insects innumerable and tormenting, but game was not plentiful and fish scarce. At the head of the Bay, where a level plain stretching to the horizon appeared more promising, the blacks were numerous and hostile. A mob of 200 attacked Tuckey's party, and were so pertinacious and threatening that Tuckey had to fire upon them with fatal effect.

It seemed to the Lieut.-Governor that any attempt to plant his colony in this apparently more favourable situation, amidst swarms of hostile savages, with his little military force of 40 men—already hardly sufficient to restrain the convicts—must only end in disaster. He wrote to Lord Hobart, "Were I to settle in the upper part of the harbour, which is full of natives, I should require four times the strength I have now." Yet this was the only alternative he could see to his present position in a waste of waterless sand. So gloomy was the view he took of the situation, that he even found the Bay itself wholly unfit for commercial purposes on account of its difficulty of access, and that, owing to the dangerous entrance and strong tides, it required a combination of favourable circumstances to enable a vessel to enter without disaster. His sole idea was to remove as soon as possible from these forbidding shores. His instructions from the Colonial Office had contemplated such a possibility, and allowed him considerable latitude of choice as to the final destination of the colony. "Although Port Phillip has been pointed out as the place judged most convenient and proper for fixing the first settlement of your establishment in Bass' Straits, nevertheless you are not positively restricted from giving the preference to any other part of the said southern coast of New South Wales, or any of the islands in Bass' Straits, which, upon communication with the Governor of New South Wales, and with his concurrence and approbation, you may have well-grounded reasons to consider as more advantageously situated for that purpose." With the idea, therefore, fixed in his mind that at Port Phillip nothing but failure was possible, it became his most anxious thought to obtain Governor King's permission to remove his settlement. But here was a new source of embarrassment. By the beginning of November the *Ocean* had landed her stores. Captain Mertho was anxious to proceed on his voyage to China, and to charter the ship for Port Jackson would entail a heavy expense. The

Collins' to  
King, 5th  
Nov. 1803.

Instructions,  
7th Feb. 1803.

Collins to  
Hobart, 28th  
Feb. 1804.

Governor was anxious to detain the *Calcutta* as long as he could, both for protection and to be at hand to assist his removal if affairs took a more serious turn. In this dilemma he found a friend in need in one of the settlers, Mr. William Collins, formerly a master in the navy, who had come out in the *Ocean* on a seal-fishing speculation. This William Collins volunteered to go to Port Jackson in an open six-oared boat to carry despatches to Governor King and to bring back his reply. Six convicts volunteered as a crew,\* the boat was victualled for a month, and on the 6th November Mr. Collins started on his plucky trip. The surf was so bad at the Rip that he could not get out of the entrance for four days. A week later the *Ocean* was ready for sea, and sailed out of Port Phillip on her way to China. She was, however, destined to play a further part in the history of Tasmanian colonisation. When within 60 miles of Port Jackson Captain Mertho came upon William Collins in his cutter. The boat had been nine days at sea, and had had a very rough time of it. The captain took the people on board and carried them to Sydney, arriving on the 24th November, and the despatches were delivered to Governor King. King acted promptly, the more so, as from Grimes' report he was prepared for Collins' unfavourable account of Port Phillip. The *Lady Nelson* was on the point of sailing for Norfolk Island; he immediately changed her destination and sent her to Port Phillip with what little fresh provisions and live stock he could spare, and with orders to return with despatches. He wrote to Captain Woodriff begging him, if it was consistent with his instructions from the Admiralty, to assist by removing the convicts to the Derwent or Port Dalrymple; and, finally, he arranged with Captain Mertho for a charter of the *Ocean* for four months, at 18s. per ton per month, to proceed to Port Phillip to remove the stores. The *Ocean* and *Lady Nelson* sailed within four days after receipt of the despatches.

King to  
Collins, 26th  
Nov. 1803.

Mertho to  
King, 26th  
Nov. 1803.

King to  
Collins, 26th  
Nov. 1803.

Governor King, in his despatch, fully endorses Collins' opinion about Port Phillip. "It appears," he says, "as well by Mr. Grimes' and Mr. Robbins' surveys, as by your report, that Port Phillip is totally unfit in every point of view to remain at, without subjecting the Crown to the certain expensive prospect of the soil not being equal to raise anything for the support of the settlement, unless you shall have made any further observations to

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\* For this service the six men received conditional pardons.

encourage your remaining there. Perhaps the upper part of the bay at the head of the rivers may not have escaped your notice, as this is the only part Mr. Grimes and those that were with him speak the least favourably of. From this circumstance, I shall presume, it will appear to you that removing from thence will be the most advisable for the interest of His Majesty's Service." He then refers to Bowen's settlement at Risdon, and the reports from thence, and sends to the Lieut.-Governor Bass' and Flinders' MS. journals containing a description of the Derwent. He next discusses the relative advantages of the Derwent and Port Dalrymple (*i.e.*, the Tamar). The Derwent has the recommendation of being already settled on a small scale, and as being an excellent harbour for the China ships to touch at, and also for sealers and whalers. However, if it were not for the difficulties of approach in the channel of Port Dalrymple, and the possibility of not finding good land there, he would decidedly prefer the northern locality, as more advantageously situated, and particularly as a place of resource for the sealing and fishing vessels in Bass' Straits, and to protect the fisheries at Cape Barren and King's Island from the Americans. However, he leaves to Collins full freedom of choice between the two places.

In the meantime Governor Collins had got all his people encamped in tents, and had placed his sixteen settlers in a valley near his encampment, where they established themselves in temporary huts. For the first few weeks the general health was good, but after that time sickness began to appear, and he had some 30 under medical treatment. A matter which troubled Collins more was the desertion of the convicts. The people had been very orderly for the first three weeks, but soon a spirit of discontent arose, and, immediately after the boat left for Sydney, three men absconded,—with some vague idea of reaching Port Jackson, or getting on board a whaler off the coast,—and within a week twelve were missing from the camp. Parties were organised in pursuit, and, at a distance of 60 miles from the camp, five of the runaways were recaptured and brought back. Hitherto the Governor had not caused his commission to be read, reserving this ceremony till he should be finally settled. Now he wished to make a public example of the delinquents; and, to add solemnity to the punishment, he had the garrison drawn up under arms, the convicts, clean dressed, on the opposite side, while the chaplain read the commission, the marines fired three volleys, and all gave three cheers for His Honor. The Governor

Collins to  
Hobart, 14th  
Nov. 1803.

Collins to  
Hobart, 23th  
Feb. 1804.

then addressed the people, pointing out the comforts they enjoyed and the ill use they made of them, and the folly of desertion, which could only end in suffering and death, either from the attacks of the savages, or from starvation and hardships in the fruitless attempt to travel 1000 miles through a wild and inhospitable country inhabited only by savages. The five deserters were then brought up for punishment, and, in the presence of all, received 100 lashes each, administered by the drummers. Notwithstanding this example, desertions still continued in spite of all the vigilance that could be exercised. Some of the runaways, after a bitter experience of the miseries of the bush, voluntarily returned, in a deplorable state of illness and exhaustion, having travelled over 100 miles and subsisted on gum and shellfish. One or two were shot, others were recaptured, but on Collins' departure at least seven were left in the woods. What became of them was never known, except in one instance. Thirty years after, when the first party from Launceston went over to settle Port Phillip, they found amongst a tribe of blacks a white man, unable to speak English, and hardly distinguishable from an aborigine. This was William Buckley, one of the runaways from Collins' settlement. Buckley received a free pardon and settled in Tasmania. His huge ungainly form and heavy face were familiar in the streets of Hobart in the memory of many now living.

Collins to  
King, 29th  
Feb. 1804.

Considering the character of the people, and the fact that they were broiling on the sandhills in a Victorian summer, with an insufficient supply of water, and unemployed on any useful work, it is not to be wondered that disorder broke out in the camp. From Collins' General Orders, and Mr. Knopwood's diary, we learn of drunkenness amongst the marines, of plundering of the stores by the convicts. After some particularly daring robberies on Christmas eve, it was found that the military guard was insufficient, and, by the Governor's desire, the officers of the civil establishment, including the chaplain, formed themselves into an association to patrol as a watch at night for the protection of property and the maintenance of order.

Knopwood,  
4th Jan. 1804.

The Governor did his best to find employment for his men by setting them to build huts, and to construct a stone magazine for ammunition, but he made no further effort at exploration, nor did he attend to King's hint that better country might be found at the head of the port. If he had done so it is probable that the systematic settlement of Hobart might have been long deferred,

It is the more inexplicable that the country on which Melbourne now stands was not examined, as the *Calcutta* proceeded up the Harbour and anchored in Hobson's Bay off the present site of Williamstown, actually taking in 55 tons of water from the River Yarra. Yet although the ship was away for some ten days no attempt was made to explore the shores of that river.

*Calcutta's*  
log, 22nd  
Nov. to 1 Dec.  
1803.

On the 13th December the *Ocean* returned from Port Jackson, and with her the *Francis* schooner bringing despatches from Governor King. The appearance of the *Ocean* was hailed with delight, and the satisfaction of Collins was shared by all when they learnt the news of Bowen's settlement at the Derwent, and that the *Ocean* had been chartered to remove the people thither, or wherever the Lieut.-Governor thought proper. Collins' pleasure was rather damped by Capt. Woodriff's informing him that as the *Ocean* had arrived to remove the Colony, the *Calcutta*, in accordance with the Admiralty instructions, must immediately proceed to Port Jackson, where a cargo of timber for the use of the navy was awaiting her, and that she could give no assistance in removing the settlement. This would render it necessary to divide the convicts, the military and civil establishments, and the stores into two detachments, as the *Ocean* could not take them all at once.

Collins immediately set to work to prepare for removal. He set the people to build a temporary jetty, 500 feet long, over the flats, and soon had all hands busily at work loading the *Ocean*. As to his ultimate destination he was still in much perplexity, and for some weeks it was doubtful whether the Tamar or the Derwent would be the site of the principal settlement in Van Diemen's Land. Indeed, in those days the ignorance of the different localities was so great—being limited to the information acquired by Flinders in his flying visits—that the data upon which to base a decision were wanting. By the *Calcutta*, which left him on the 18th December, he writes to King that he will not come to a decision on a point of so much importance until Port Dalrymple had been examined by Wm. Collins, who was leaving in the *Francis* for that purpose. He will, in deference to King, give the northern port the preference, though he himself inclined to the Derwent. King in reply tells him that a schooner which had just arrived from Port Dalrymple reported the entrance and channel very dangerous, and the natives troublesome, and advises him to give up the idea of going there, and to decide for the Derwent.

Collins to  
King, 28th  
Feb. 1804.

This advice only confirmed the conclusion to which Collins had at last brought himself. He gives as his reasons, in addition to King's recommendation, that the advantages of being in a place already settled had great weight with him, but that a stronger consideration was the mutinous spirit amongst his soldiers, which, he thought, would be checked by the presence of the detachment of the New South Wales Corps at Risdon; and, moreover, that he considered the Derwent better for commercial purposes than any place in the straits, and that he hoped before long to see it a port of shelter for ships from Europe, America, and China, and a favourite resort of whaling ships.

The Lieut.-Governor was so anxious to get away from the place he detested that he kept his people at work loading the *Ocean* all the week round, Sundays included. He says, in his General Order of Sunday, 31st December, "It has never been the Lieut.-Governor's wish to make that day any other than a day of devotion and rest; but circumstances compel him to employ it in labour. In this the whole are concerned, since the sooner we are enabled to leave this unpromising and unproductive country the sooner we shall be able to reap the advantages and enjoy the comforts of a more fertile spot; and as the winter season will soon not be far distant, there will not be too much time before us wherein to erect more comfortable dwellings for every one than the thin canvas coverings which we are now under, and which are every day growing worse."

Collins to  
King, 27th  
Jan. 1804.

When Wm. Collins, on 21st January, returned from Port Dalrymple in the *Lady Nelson*—which vessel had taken him from Kent's Group, the *Francis* having proved too leaky to venture across the straits—he found the *Ocean* loaded and ready to go to the Derwent. The fact that he brought a report on the whole very favourable to Port Dalrymple did not induce the Lieut.-Governor to alter his mind.

A few days sufficed to select the people he intended to leave behind him, some 150 in number, of whom Lieut. Sladden, with a small guard, was to have charge, and to embark the majority, some 200 souls, on board the *Ocean*, the settlers finding a place on board the *Lady Nelson*. On the 27th January Collins writes to King that he was now only waiting for an easterly wind to clear the Heads and leave this inhospitable land behind. They had to wait four days for the wind; and on the 30th January, 1804, the *Ocean* and *Lady Nelson* sailed out of Port Phillip in company, and headed for the Derwent.



In his narrative of Collins' expedition Lieut. Tuckey says of the country he had just left: "The kangaroo seems to reign undisturbed lord of the soil, a dominion which, by the evacuation of Port Phillip, he is likely to retain for ages."—Surely as unlucky an attempt at prophecy as was ever made!

Could some truer prophet have lifted the veil of the future for Collins, he would have shown the disappointed Lieut.-Governor a picture which would have more than surprised him. He would have shown him, within little more than thirty years, a small party of adventurous squatters leaving Van Diemen's Land to seek a new land of wealth on the shores of Port Phillip. Amongst them he would have noticed a man—whom he himself had brought out as a boy in the *Ocean*, and taken to the Derwent,\* and who was now returning to the unpromising and unproductive country which the Lieut.-Governor had abandoned in despair, to find in it a land of fair plains and of springs of water—a land of promise—a veritable Australia Felix—soon to be wealthy in flocks and herds. Such a prophet would have shown him this country, which he and Governor King agreed in thinking wholly unsuited for settlement, within another fifteen short years invaded by tens of thousands of eager emigrants rushing to secure at least some small share of its wonderful wealth, until in another generation it had grown into a land of gardens and farms, rich in corn and wine, crowded with villages and cities; and on the unpromising shores of Port Phillip there stood a great city, the centre of a free and prosperous state numbering more than a million souls.

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\* Mr. John Pascoe Fawkner.

