

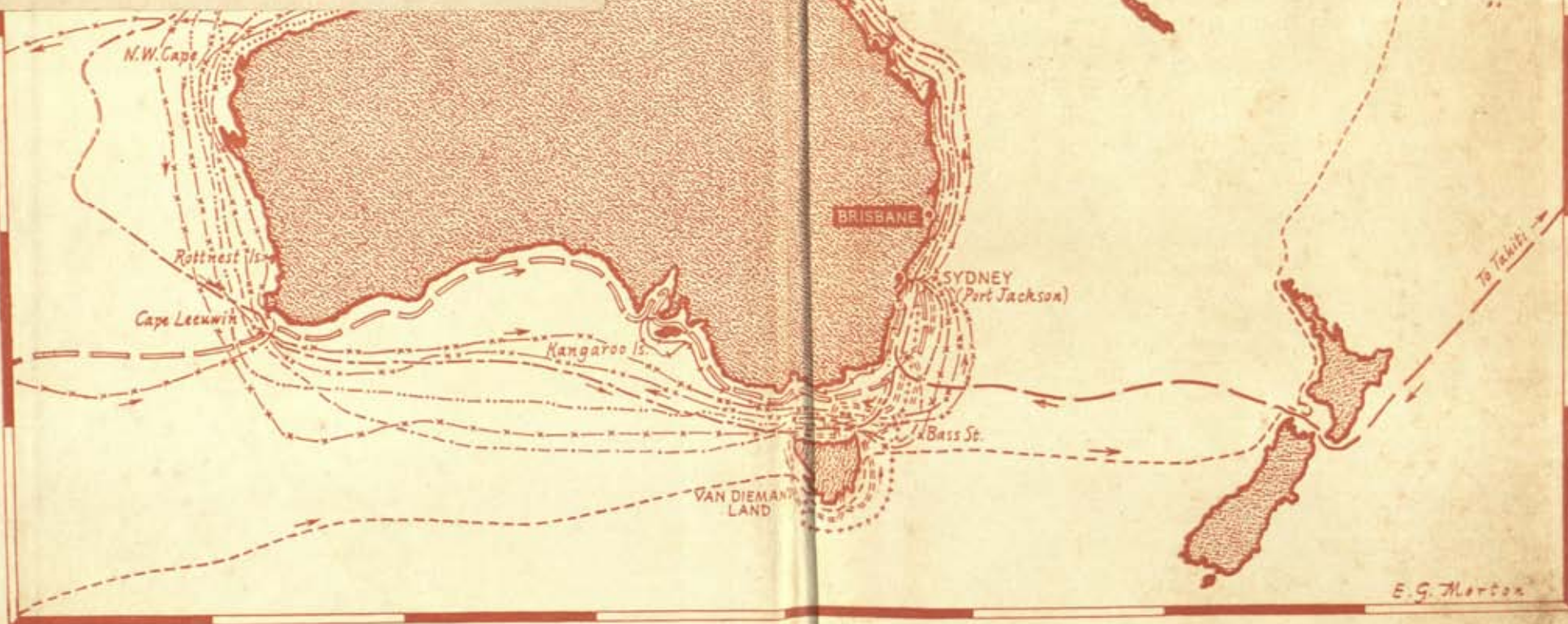
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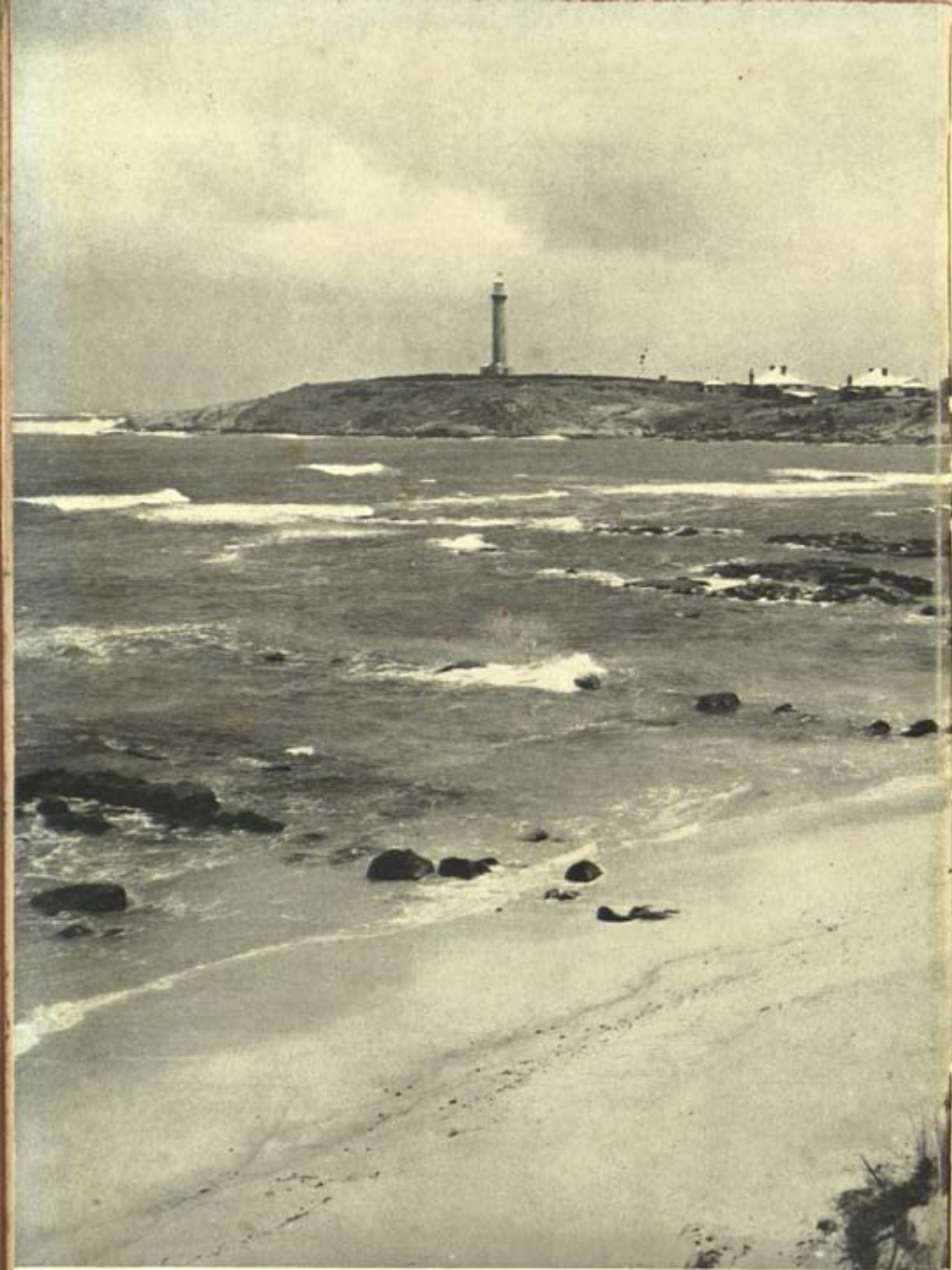


*by Arthur Scholes*

FOURTEEN MEN  
THE SEVENTH CONTINENT







1. Cape Leeuwin, the most southerly point of Western Australia and the first glimpse of the continent for migrants in the days of sail.

# THE SIXTH CONTINENT

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ARTHUR SCHOLES

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## FOREWORD

THIS is the story of the explorers of sea and land who wrote the name Australia on the world map. They came from the old world to lay the foundations of a new life in the south.

It is the story of an island continent, twenty-five times the area of Great Britain and as large as the United States of America, 2,400 miles across and 2,000 miles from north to south.

Defying thirst and starvation, desert storm and ocean hurricane, enduring back-breaking toil and the isolation of the trail, the pioneers of Australia left their bones in the hungry ocean or in unknown graves in the panting heart of the vast inland.

A few fortunate ones won fame and fortune and retired to their native lands. Others who had fled the military dictatorships and oppressive governments of Europe found peace and security in the country of their adoption.

Some of the newcomers were not so happy. Under the bitter lash of the penal code, they toiled and conquered inconceivable hardships to blast the path of progress through uncharted seas, over rugged mountains, across rampaging rivers and the untamed bush.

Their example fanned the embers of freedom that glowed in other hearts. Men followed where the trail-blazers had trod. Today tens of thousands more, uprooted by the ravages of war, oppressed by economic suffering, and in despair of the future, have turned to the south, to the sixth continent, hoping like their predecessors for a chance of a better life.

The struggles of the modern settlers are often hard and bitter. Their story is another chapter in the courage of man and woman, and their iron will to build a new life in a new country.

In telling this story of the pioneer explorers and their struggles, the author has made extensive reference to many works. A list of these and others which may interest those who wish to probe deeper has been given as an appendix to this book.

ARTHUR SCHOLES

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Routes of the Land-Explorers of Australia

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## CHAPTER I

### *The Coast of Doom*

THE first visitors to the far-off Australian coast were probably the members of a Chinese junk fleet. In the year 1420 Admiral Cheng Ho left China for Ceylon with an armada of sixty-two craft. The fleet reached the southern shores of Sumatra, and then turned west. A severe storm harried them, wrecking a number of vessels and driving others to the south. Finally Cheng Ho reached Ceylon with only the remnants of a fleet. Nothing more was heard of the missing craft. Many years after Cheng Ho's return to China, a porcelain map was still preserved at the National Museum at Peking. It showed a clear outline of the sixth continent, indicating that some of Cheng Ho's ships had circumnavigated Australia.

Spanish explorers voyaged across the Pacific from Panama, Peru and Chile to reach the north-east coast of Queensland, but their names and their maps have been disregarded. Spanish seamen, such as Loaysa, Saavedra, Villalobos and Mendaña, to mention a few, sailed north of Australia. Then, after centuries of isolation, a Dutchman and a Spaniard within a few months of each other dramatically sighted the coast-line of the southern continent. It was the end of Spanish exploration in the South-West Pacific and the beginning of the Dutch interest.

In 1605 Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, a Portuguese sailor in charge of a Spanish fleet, with the Spaniard Luis Vaez de Torres second in command, set sail from Callao in Peru. For months the Spanish ships ploughed ahead, leaving their names behind on many islands, their course a point or two north of west. After leaving the Samoan islands, de Quiros bore away south. He reached a fertile land, sailed for two days along its shores and believed that he had found the southern continent.

Actually he had reached an island of the New Hebrides



group. The Spaniards went ashore, and named the rivers and the site for the new capital. Then, after an affray with natives on the beach, they returned to their ships. But it was the end of the dreams of de Quiros. Provisions were running short, bad weather menaced and the sailors mutinied. At night they silently rose against the officers, seized two ships and forced their commanders to turn for home. After a dreadful voyage, only a handful of survivors reached the American coast.

Torres, in charge of one of the other ships, had remained behind. He soon proved that the so-called continent was nothing more than an island. He then pointed his prow north-west towards the Philippines, and in September 1606, the almost incredible happened.

Unknown to Torres, stretching away in front was a coastline 3,000 miles long, with only a small gap, 100 miles wide, near the northern limits.

Destiny drew Torres to that gap. Although he undoubtedly sighted the Australian mainland at Cape York, he described it as a series of islands. He sailed on through the maze of reefs and islands between New Guinea and Australia, and into the gap that bears his name, Torres Strait.

After a long struggle lasting nearly three months, Torres wound his way through the tortuous currents of the Arafura and the Sea of Celebes, and finally landed from his weather-beaten, barnacle-encrusted ship at Manila. Nothing more is known of Torres as an explorer. Quiros died some years later when he was ready to leave Panama at the head of another expedition in search of the southern continent.

While Torres sailed through his strait, a Dutch vessel, the *Duyfhen* (*Little Dove*) was creeping along the southern coast of New Guinea. Captain Willem Jansz steered south and glided into the Gulf of Carpentaria. While he was there, Torres passed unseen on his way to Manila.

Jansz sailed down the west coast of Cape York peninsula. His crew landed and were the first white men to set foot on the Australian mainland, 350 years ago. Spear-throwing natives attacked the sailors, slew several of them, and drove the others back to their ship.



The survivors named the landing site Cape Keer Weer, or Turn Again. When they returned home, they reported that the greater part of the country was desert, inhabited by cruel savage blacks. Matthew Flinders, who later surveyed this part of the coast, named it Point Duyfhen, and thus preserved the little vessel's name from oblivion.

Over the centuries many vessels met their doom on the 12,500-mile coastline of the continent. Dutch galleons homeward bound with the treasures of the Orient, Spanish merchantmen and ships of all nations, foundered on coral reefs and dark forbidding rocks. Mysterious surface currents carried their keels helplessly shorewards. Tropical typhoons tore their canvas to shreds. Submarine earthquakes, ocean waterspouts, shifting channels and tidal waves claimed their victims. In the process the map was studded with stories of murder and romance, of wild adventure and lost treasure.

The Spaniards barred the ports of Southern Europe to Dutch ships, bringing spices and precious cargoes from the Orient, so the Hollanders, being a great maritime and trading nation, decided to establish their own settlements in South-East Asia, and the Dutch East India Company was formed. The commerce of the Netherlands immediately flourished. In 1619 the Dutch settled in Java, and quickly captured the trade from the Portuguese. Later they began to move farther south, searching for new lands with which to trade.

Dutch skippers, beating round the Cape of Good Hope, found that by heading due east for 3,000 miles they avoided drifting through the windless doldrums. They sighted great stretches of sandy barren land along the coast of West Australia, and gave their names and the names of their ships to different parts.

In 1616 Captain Dirk Hartog sailed the *Endracht* into what is now Shark Bay, half-way up the West Australian coast. To record his discovery, Hartog left behind a metal plate on a post. The post and plate were recovered by Vlaming, another Dutch captain, in the ship *Geelvink*, eighty-one years later. Little more is known of Hartog. The Dutch kept few records of the great men who visited this unfriendly coast.

They did not want other nations to reap the benefit of their enterprise.

Three years later two vessels under the command of Frederick de Houtman came upon dangerous shoals, now known as the Abrolhos, opposite the site of Geraldton. In 1622 a ship, the *Leeuwin* (or Lioness), whose commander has been lost to the record, gave its imperishable name to a point of land which, to the home-coming Australian, is what the Lizard Light is to the Englishman, or the Statue of Liberty to the American. A great sandy stretch of land juts out seawards to make Cape Leeuwin. Heaving rollers rush in from the westward. Rocks around the point throw up a constant white spray. In storm or calm Cape Leeuwin is a solitary but welcome sight to the traveller.

It is not difficult to imagine the scene as the little Dutch vessel fought her way round the cape, heaving with the perpetual south-westerly swell, her sails full blown, her crew gazing in awe at the land they had discovered. Leeuwin became the sign-post for Australia-bound sailing ships for 250 years. Leeuwin was the beacon which fired the hopes of settlers who survived the long journey round the Cape of Good Hope. It told them that they were approaching the new land with its infant towns and settlements.

Whether viewed from the wallowing deck of coastal freighter or aboard the pleasant calm of an overseas liner, in the rough seas of winter, or in fair days of summer, this cape is never forgotten. Not a man on ship, passenger or crew, native born or migrant, fails to make the deck rail when Leeuwin lies ahead.

Other Dutchmen left their names on the Australian coast. In 1618 Zeachern in the *Mauritius* found land in the north. In January 1623 Jan Carstens in the yacht *Pera*, accompanied by a smaller vessel, *Arnhem*, followed in the wake of the *Duyfhen* under William Jansz. A landing was made on the coast of New Guinea on February 11th, and the master of the *Arnhem* and ten others were killed in a fight with the natives. At the end of March, Carstens decided to go south and on April 12th the north coast of Australia was sighted near Port Musgrave, on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria, which was named after the Dutch East Indies Governor, General Carpen-



tier. Carstens reached Cape Keer Weer and a tablet was put up recording the visit. The men went ashore at frequent intervals along the coast, but though good soil was found, there was little fresh water. On May 14th they reached the mouth of the Jardine River, south-west of Cape York. Carstens nearly discovered the passage between Cape York and New Guinea, but met adverse winds and decided to go back to Amboina.

Four years later, in 1627, the south coast was discovered. The *Gulden Zeepaert* sailed for 1,000 miles along the Great Australian Bight. Dutch maps named this Nuytsland in honour of the chief merchant aboard the ship *Peter Nuyts*. Of this memorable voyage nothing further is known and the long stretch of coast was left unvisited for 167 years.

In 1629 Francis Pelsart in the frigate *Batavia* lost his way in rough weather while convoying a fleet of Dutch merchantmen from the Cape to the Indies. The *Batavia* struck the reef at the Abrolhos. Only bare islands were visible, when the storm threatened to break up the vessel. The Dutchmen landed, and settled down as best they could. Unfortunately Pelsart failed to find fresh water and was forced to sail for Java, 1,500 miles away, the nearest point of assistance, in a boat decked over for the voyage.

Returning with help in the yacht *Sardam*, Pelsart found that water had been discovered by the marooned sailors, and although they had suffered much they were alive. While he was away, more than half the crew had mutinied and had seized the treasure aboard the wrecked *Batavia*. The ringleader of the mutineers, Cornelius, had forced the women passengers to submit to the lusts of his followers. The mutineers had vowed to kill the other sailors. They murdered some, but others escaped to a near-by island.

When Pelsart returned, Cornelius and his cronies were carousing, decked out in all the sumptuous finery found aboard the *Batavia*. The rebels had planned to seize Pelsart and convert his ship into a pirate vessel, but he was warned in time and overawed the rebels with his cannon.

Some of the mutineers were hanged at once. Two, whose crimes were considered too horrible to merit such an easy

death, were dumped ashore on the mainland and left to take their chance. How long they lived, or how quickly they died is not known, but they were the first white settlers in Australia, forerunners of the convicts who landed with Governor Phillip in Botany Bay. It is unlikely these miscreants lived for long, for there was no water to be found, except by digging, and there was nothing to eat, except shellfish on the beach.

The most successful of the hardy Dutch explorers who sailed into Australian waters in the seventeenth century was Abel Janszen Tasman, the middle name being the equivalent of Johnson. Tasman was born at Lutjegast, Gröningen, Friesland, near the present Dutch-German frontier, in 1603. When he was 21 years old, he joined the Dutch East India Company and set out for Java. He revisited Holland in 1637, leaving a year later for the Malay Archipelago.

Starting as an ordinary sailor, Tasman acquired a good education by his own persistent efforts. His journals were written in first-class handwriting. He was a clever sketcher, and an expert navigator, no mean achievement in those days when illiteracy was common among seafarers. In 1638, with another commander, he made a remarkable exploratory voyage along the coast of China to Japan, and in 1642 he was selected to command the expedition which was to make such important discoveries in Australasia.

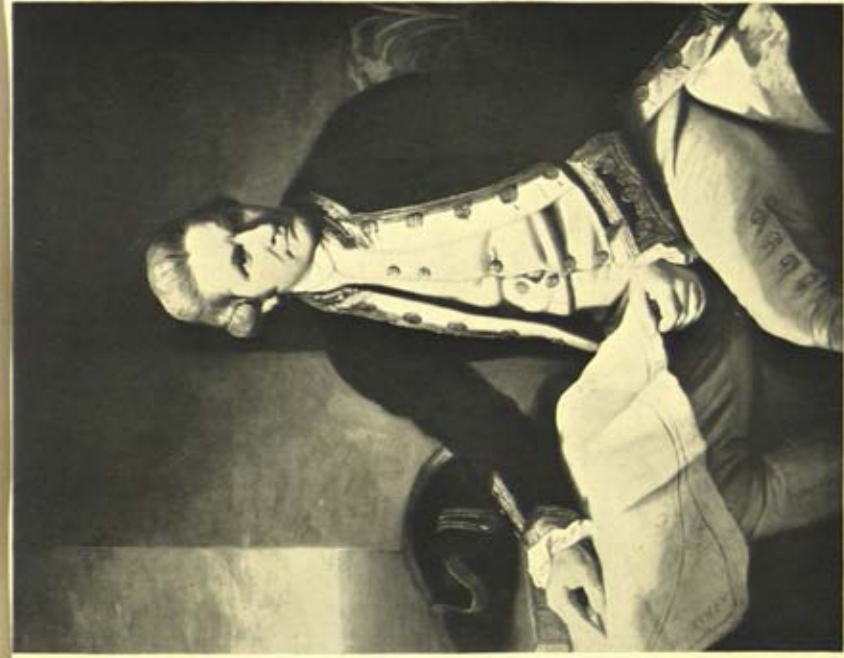
His chief vessel, the *Heemskirk*, described as a yacht, was only 150 tons capacity. The second vessel, *Zeehan* (*Seahen*), was a third smaller than the flag-ship.

After a magnificent farewell attended by the Governor of Dutch East India, Anthony Van Diemen, on August 14, 1642, Tasman cleared the palm-lined Batavia shore with his two small vessels, and headed across the Indian Ocean to the island of Mauritius, which was then a Dutch possession. The Hollanders had already explored the west coast of Australia, and had seen nothing attractive in its inhospitable and barren shore. But they were anxious to find out how far the land extended southwards towards the Antarctic circle. From Mauritius, Tasman sailed east and south, and did not see the West Australian coast at all. His course took him so far south





2. William Dampier, 1652-1715; portrait by Murray.  
(*National Portrait Gallery.*)



Captain James Cook; portrait by Nathaniel Dance.  
(*National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.*)



3. Cockatoo Island (Buccaneer Group), discovered by Dampier off N.W. Australia.  
(*West Australian Government Tourist Bureau.*)

The Great Barrier Reef, where Cook threaded a way through the hundreds of lush tropical islands. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





that he crossed the Australian Bight without even sighting land. Tasman knew he was far south of the country discovered by Peter Nuyts fifteen years earlier. The tremendous swell from the south-west told him that no land was near in that direction.

On November 24, 1642, a hazy outline broke above the horizon. Tasman was off the centre of western Tasmania, near Macquarie Harbour. Cautiously approaching this unknown shore the Dutch commander saw the coast was wild and rugged, with a mass of high green-clad mountains far inland. Next day his two ships anchored off-shore, while the captains conferred. They decided to proceed southwards, and rounded the southernmost point of the land which they named Van Diemen's Land, after the Dutch Governor. Only after years of settlement was the name changed to Tasmania.

Tasman was about to enter a large bay on the south-east corner of the coast when a great storm drove his ships out to sea. For three days they battled with a westerly cyclone during which they almost lost sight of the land. Then, with the storm abated, Tasman nosed his ships cautiously into the bay. They named this Storm Bay, after their recent adventures, and sent two boatloads of armed men ashore to obtain fresh vegetables, water and timber. The musketeers landed in an eastern arm of the harbour near where Hobart, the state capital, now stands.

In the lonely quiet of the undisturbed bush the men heard strange voices and a weird sound like the boom of a gong. When they approached the magnificent timber for which Tasmania has since become famous, the branches stemmed 60 feet above their heads. The sailors saw what they took to be notches hacked in the tree trunks at 5-foot intervals. They thought these must be steps to help the natives reach the tree-tops. They imagined that only a race of giants would take such monstrous steps, and through the low-lying fog or smoke of native signals they thought they saw the huge forms of tall men. They claimed, too, that they saw the footprints of a large wild animal like a tiger. On December 3rd a flagstaff was set up on the shore of Frederick Henry Bay, and Tasman took possession of the land on behalf of the Dutch East India Company.

There seemed no likelihood of trade, so they sailed away, leaving behind the old Dutch names. There is Mount Hemskirk and Mount Zeehan, where they first sighted land. Off the coast are the De Witt, Slopen and Schouten Islands and the large Maria Island. After naming these places, the Dutchmen ventured eastward.

In perfect summer weather their tiny craft rolled onwards through miles of featureless water, over the sea that bears the name of its discoverer. They sighted the north-west corner of the south island of New Zealand and thought it might be part of the fabled southland which geographers in those days said extended from the South Pole northwards to the tropics. Tasman sailed right into the middle of the gulf which divides the north and south islands, the gulf which finds its southern outlet in Cook Strait. Tasman ignored this outlet, believing the gulf to be a very large indentation. He headed up the west coast of North Island to its northernmost tip, which he named Cape Maria Van Diemen, after the Governor's wife. Some distance off the cape were three islets, which Tasman called the Three King's Islands. The sun was sinking in golden glory in the west, and the air was calm and warm, when the two ships anchored a mile off-shore. As the twilight waned, the Dutch sailors saw lights on the land and two native boats approached. The natives blew loudly on a conch shell, making a sound like a trumpet. The Dutch seamen trumpeted back, but it was dark and the canoes turned shorewards. Early next morning a canoe manned by fifteen natives came within hail of the ship and called out to the Dutchmen.

The Dutchmen could not understand the language. The natives were rough-voiced, strong-boned and coloured mid-brown and yellow. Their black hair was worn in tufts, and tied in a bun, Japanese-style. In each topknot they flew a large white feather. Though naked from the waist up, the natives wore clothing made from material like woven cotton or matting.

In spite of the offers of presents and the friendly greetings, the two canoes would not moor alongside the Dutch ships. Later they were joined by seven more canoes from the shore. The Dutchmen became uneasy when the canoes started circling their two vessels. The skipper of the *Zeehan* sent his



quartermaster and six seamen in a small boat to warn the *Heemskirk* officers not to allow too many natives on board at the same time.

Suddenly the *Zeehan's* boat was taken by surprise and violently attacked by a native canoe. In the brief skirmish four Dutch seamen were clubbed and stabbed to death and the remainder jumped overboard and swam back to their ship. The natives made off for the shore as rapidly as their canoes would carry them, taking a dead body with them for a cannibal feast.

As quickly as possible the Dutch ships opened fire, but without effect. The small boat from the *Zeehan* was recovered and Tasman decided to sail without bothering any more about fresh water.

As they left the bay, the lookouts saw twenty-two war canoes lined up near the shore. As soon as the Dutch ships began putting out to sea, eleven fully manned boats were launched in hot pursuit. The Dutch wisely held their fire until the leading canoes were within gun range. Then a crashing volley rang across the bay. The shots did little damage, but the effect was spectacular. The natives turned back in panic for the beach, as though the devil himself was after them. Tasman named this place Murderers' Bay.

The Dutchmen steered for home, discovering many islands on the way, including the most southerly of the Tonga group. Skirting the northern shore of New Guinea, Tasman named Schouten Island and arrived back in Batavia in June 1643, after a ten-month voyage. Incredible as it may seem, he had sailed completely round New Holland, as the Australian mainland was called, without seeing it. But he had proved that it was surrounded by water, and was not part of the greater continent stretching to Antarctica.

In the following year Tasman set out to see if there was a passage between New Guinea and New Holland. Torres' voyage had been kept a secret by the Spaniards. Tasman failed to discover the passage, and sailed along the Gulf of Carpentaria to Arnhem Land, and connected this with the coast of West Australia.

The other expeditions which Tasman led were inconspicuous. After his last voyage he was tried for his life, and only escaped

hanging by the payment of a heavy fine for having unjustifiably executed a soldier for a minor breach of discipline.

He became rich and lived in a mansion in the best part of Batavia. He died in his bed, being survived by his second wife and a daughter by his first marriage. In his will he remembered the poor people of his native village Lutjegast, and left them the equivalent of £25 each, a considerable sum in those days.

The Dutch East India Company kept quiet about Tasman's voyages, but the people of Amsterdam took a great pride in his accomplishments and inlaid the floor of their Town Hall with a map of the two hemispheres and his discoveries.

The last of the Dutch explorers of this era, Captain de Vlaming, while on a voyage to India in 1696, searched for a vessel which had disappeared ten years earlier. In the course of the voyage Vlaming surveyed the Australian coast from Rottnest Island to North-West Cape, but he failed to find the missing ship. He did find Dirk Hartog's iron plate, and took home a number of black swans, now the national arms of West Australia. Vlaming reported that the whole country was rocky, dry and forbidding, the soil sandy and barren, and the inland waterless.

Following the reports of their discoverers, the continent of New Holland was regarded as completely valueless. The Dutch could not trade there, so they forgot about it, and the rest of the world learnt little from their reticent leaders.



## CHAPTER II

### *The First British Landing*

**B**EFORE the last voyage of the Dutch explorers to the West Australian coast, the first British ship, the *Tryal*, arrived on the scene. The ship was wrecked there, but intriguing uncertainty hovers over the exact spot on the long coastline where this occurred. It seems, however, that English sailors landed on the coast of West Australia sixty-six years before Dampier's bucaneeering expedition in 1688.

After making lengthy preparations for her voyage, the *Tryal* left Plymouth late in 1621. She set a southerly course for the Cape and then turned east to take advantage of the trade winds for the run to Java. When the log indicated it was time to set a northward course, the *Tryal* was approaching the coast of West Australia. On May 25, 1622, in poor visibility she ran on to a low shoal of rocks and was completely wrecked. Two months later the ship's boat with ten men and a pinnace with thirty-six others arrived at Java. Ninety-seven persons were left behind on the tiny island to which the survivors struggled when the ship ran aground. Not a word was heard from them, nor any relics found which might indicate the exact location of the shipwreck.

Geographic researchers claim that the *Tryal* struck shoals at about  $20\frac{1}{2}$  degrees south latitude,  $115\frac{1}{2}$  degrees east longitude, at the northern end of Barrow Island, south of the atom test site of Monte Bello. Today maritime charts show two small rocks emerging from the sea at this point. They bear the name Tryal Rocks.

Dutch captains, after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, were told to bear down on the West Australian coast at 27 degrees south latitude, so as to avoid the Tryal Shoals. The exact location of these rocks caused confusion among mariners for two centuries. The Tryal rocks were the dread of every voyager to the East Indies until their posi-



tion was finally charted by a Royal Navy survey ship in 1840.

Until they attracted the attention of the nuclear physicists, the Monte Bello Islands were the haunt of the pearler, the beachcomber and the professional fisherman. At one time it was proposed to produce culture pearls there, but in all the subsequent activity nothing has been found to prove conclusively that near here the first British landed on Australian soil.

As the Spanish influence steadily declined throughout the world, robbing Spanish vessels became a popular pastime among seafarers. On board one of these pirate vessels in the year 1688 was an intelligent adventurer, William Dampier, who was to go down in history as the first known Englishman to land in Australia.

Son of a farmer, Dampier was born at East Coker, near Yeovil, Somersetshire, where he received a grammar school education. His interest was drawn to seafaring by the bustling sea-borne trade of southern England. When he was 17, Dampier at his own request was apprenticed to a shipmaster at Weymouth and made his first voyage to Newfoundland. The cold of the North Atlantic so disgusted Dampier that on his return he cancelled his indentures. Then in 1671 adventure called again and he shipped out as a seaman on an East India Company vessel bound for Java. Dampier fought against the Dutch in the reign of Charles II, and afterwards was sent out to Jamaica by the lord of the manor as a plantation manager, bossing negro slaves. Except for a short visit to England in 1678 for his marriage, Dampier lived chiefly in the West Indies and on the coast of Central America.

The high-spirited young man soon tired of plantation work and joined the international brotherhood of buccaneers who were raiding the Spanish galleons and plundering towns in the Caribbean. Dampier joined up with a daredevil, Captain Coke, who raided both coasts of South America at the head of a fleet of pirate vessels. In 1686 Dampier left this fleet, and with Captain Swan set out aboard the *Cygnat* for Guam in the Ladrone Islands, a voyage made by Francis Drake in 1580

and Sir Thomas Cavendish in 1588. The terrors of this 7,000-mile crossing of the Pacific had diminished with the frequent passage of Manila galleons carrying bullion and precious cargoes to Mexico. After a fiercely-fought mutiny in which Captain Swan and thirty-six followers were dumped ashore on Mindanao, in the Philippine Islands, Dampier and his band of cut-throats slipped away for further plunder. Looking for a quiet spot where they could overhaul and careen their vessel, they headed for the unfrequented coast of tropical north-west Australia and landed at Buccaneer Archipelago on January 4, 1688. During the ten weeks in which the crew were repairing and cleaning the *Cygnets*, Dampier examined the country.

He found the land sun-blackened, dry and sandy. It was almost devoid of water, though it was possible to sink wells. Dampier saw no animals, and found the tracks of only one. They suggested the existence of an animal about the size of a mastiff, but were probably the footprints of a dingo. While the men worked on the ship, stripped to the waist, lazy dugongs sunbaked on the beach and slothful turtles dug in the sand.

Dampier regarded the aboriginals of those parts as the most miserable people in the world. They had neither homes nor clothes. They kept no domestic animals and did not even grow vegetables. They had great bottle noses, full lips and wide mouths. Their faces were long, their heads heavy with projecting beetle-brows, and their eye-lids half-closed to exclude the myriad flies that followed them. The natives used boomerangs and spears, but had no boats or rafts, and were seen swimming from island to island. Their food consisted almost entirely of fish. They knew the use of fire and boiled fish and shellfish from the beach. Meals were carefully distributed among the whole tribe. After eating, the natives lay down and slept until it was time to go and find more food.

Dampier and his companions left North-West Australia and sailed to the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean. The islands, strategically important in this air age and now under Australian administration, were later settled by Scotsmen.

Biographers have naïvely remarked that Dampier was always keener to satisfy his curiosity about new lands than to



gain wealth or plunder. But whether the chase was too hot or the calling too lowly, Dampier abandoned the life of cut-throat and freebooter. He escaped from the ship with two companions, and landed at Nicobar Islands, between Sumatra and the Andamans. After reaching Sumatra and surviving a host of adventures, Dampier eventually landed back in England and published a thrilling account of his travels.

The book attracted the attention of members of the Royal Society. They introduced Dampier to the chiefs of the Admiralty who decided to send him back to Australia to re-examine the west coast, and gave him the command of the *Roebuck*.

After touching at Brazil, which was almost obligatory for sailing ships bound for the Cape of Good Hope, Dampier held a direct course from South Africa to the west coast of Australia, which he reached at Shark Bay. From the deck of the *Roebuck* the land appeared low and flat, without trees, shrubs or grass. After anchoring in what is now Dampier Bay, the former freebooter went ashore with his men to find water and cut wood. They found the soil was less sterile than appeared from a distance, and the grass grew in great tufts, waist high. In the coastal lagoons water-fowl, pelicans and cormorants abounded. Inland birds sang in the semi-tropical vegetation and overhead eagles soared in the blue vastness.

The men thrived on a rich menu which included kangaroo, turtle, shark, duck and plover. But their search for fresh water was in vain. So they sailed northwards and found that the great promontory to the west was really an island, Dirk Hartog Island. Spouting whales drew the crew to the rails. Glittering sea-snakes, yellow and brown, some more than 4 feet long and as thick as a woman's waist, fascinated them as they peered down into the wonders of the tropic seas.

About fifty miles east of the Monte Bellos they found themselves entering an amazing archipelago. In the rich fertile climate of the tropics the islands were dry, rocky and barren, as though even before the invention of atomic power they had been blasted by a super-convulsion of nature's forces. Besides the ordinary sea-birds, enormous flocks of white cockatoos took to the air at their approach. Here and there among the



islands, smoke curled skywards, revealing that even primitive man managed to survive in this desolate outpost.

This time Dampier did not contact the aboriginals until he had passed the eighteenth degree of south latitude. As the ship neared the shore, three tall naked blacks fled at their approach. Further efforts at making friends with the natives only resulted in a seaman being wounded. Eventually, like the Dutch, Dampier sailed away disappointed at the barren nature of the land, and the abysmal ignorance of the inhabitants.

Whilst cruising in the vicinity of Timor and New Guinea, Dampier discovered the straits separating the latter island from New Britain. The straits are now known as Dampier Strait and the island New Britain was named by him.

On the return voyage the *Roebuck* foundered near the island of Ascension in the South Atlantic, but the captain and crew escaped. Back in England Dampier was charged with cruelty by his crew, but was finally acquitted. In 1708 this roving adventurer was aboard the vessel which rescued Alexander Selkirk from Juan Fernandez island in the South-East Pacific, where the latter had been marooned four years. Dampier returned to England three years later, wealthy enough to live a life of ease until he died in London in 1715.

The result of Dampier's explorations convinced the British Government that Australia was quite unsuitable for settlement. No one in London thought much about the country until seventy years later, when Captain James Cook returned with a more favourable report.

## CHAPTER III

### *Columbus of the South*

FRESH motives stirred men in their search for new lands. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the greater portion of the world's habitable coastline was roughly known. The Portugese had coasted Africa, the Spanish Central and South America, the Dutch had charted the Indies and the English most of the east of North America. Many islands in the Pacific had been visited, though not accurately surveyed. The north-west coast of America and the north-east coast of Asia remained to be explored. The one unsolved problem of geography was the existence or otherwise of the southern continent, which had been talked about since the days of Ptolemy.

Fate placed the solution of this problem in the hands of one man, an Englishman, James Cook. Cook ushered in the exciting era of scientific exploration, which today is reaching its closing stages with the final plotting of the Antarctic continent, the last portion of the world to be explored.

Cook and those who followed him braved storms and hurricanes, endured months on miserable rations, survived untold hardships, and were long absent from loved ones. Many gave their lives in the cause of exploration. By sea they rounded, plotted and surveyed the long and barren coastline of the sixth continent. By land they marched hundreds of miles over desert and scrub, through jungle forest and steaming swamp, over icy mountain tops and fertile plains. They made the maps, but little grasped the import of the mineral wealth or the life-saving artesian basins that lay beneath the surface.

They named the continental rivers and found they flowed either towards the coast or inland until they gradually lost themselves in the dry sun-scorched plains. They trailed their courses in search of the elusive mirage of an inland sea, or in the hope of finding a huge outlet to the ocean like the Mississippi



or the Amazon. But many of the rivers, now famous for their associations with valorous deeds of explorations, such as Cooper's Creek, the Diamantina and the Thompson were elusive, treacherous and unyielding, varying greatly in volume during the years. For months they were mere chains of water-holes, but in flood their waters spread out over the surrounding plains in a twenty-mile front, forestalling the finest efforts of ill-prepared adventurers.

Cook would have failed to reach the eminence he attained but for two scientific inventions, the sextant and the chronometer. Hadley had invented the sextant by which the sun's elevation could be taken with more ease and accuracy than by the old cross-staff of earlier navigators.

Navigators did not have any difficulty in determining latitude. The length of the day at different times of the year is almost enough to determine this, as the Greeks well knew. To determine longitude was much harder. In those days longitude could only be found by a combination of guesswork and dead reckoning.

John Harrison, a carpenter, won the British Government's prize of £10,000 for his chronometer, which would not lose more than a stated number of minutes during the whole year. From then on a sea-captain with a minimum of astronomical knowledge could calculate his longitude within a few minutes. The sextant and the chronometer were the scientific tools which carried Cook to fame.

Cook was born at Marton-in-Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, on October 27, 1728. His father, a farm labourer, was appointed bailiff to a farmer in Ayton. Young Cook worked on the farm and for a time was the stable boy at Ayton Hall. He was a bright lad, and attended the village school, where he is reputed never to have made a mistake in arithmetic. At the age of 13 he worked with a grocer at Staithes, near Whitby. But the call of the sea flowed in Cook's blood, and eventually his employer took him to Whitby to meet John Walker, a wealthy Quaker ship-owner and master mariner. Walker engaged Cook on a three years' apprenticeship, and this began the career which was to lead to the famous voyages of discovery in 1768-71, 1772-75 and 1776-89.



Today in a dusty attic in Grape Lane, Whitby, is a hammock, slung between two posts supporting the roof, indicating the spot where young James Cook used to sleep thirty years before he discovered eastern Australia.

At Whitby, Cook learned the business of seamanship, and all his ships—the *Endeavour*, the *Resolution*, the *Discovery* and the *Adventure*—were built there. Cook's studious habits and quiet manners won the heart of the old housekeeper in Grape Lane, for she found them in agreeable contrast to those of other apprentices, who were not known for sobriety and deportment. She gave him a table, a chair and candles so that he could study quietly alone at night. Young Cook made his first voyage out of Whitby in the 450-ton collier-brig *Freelove*, and he served the last year of his apprenticeship in the *Three Brothers*, a 600 tonner which he helped rig and fit for sea.

Cook stayed with his firm for nine years, serving in trading ships going to Newcastle upon Tyne, across the North Sea to Norway and into the Baltic.

The custom was for the apprentice to live in the house of his master when ashore. This home life with John Walker played a big part in shaping Cook's future. In the long evenings Cook spent hours pouring over books, constantly helped by his employer. He acquired a grounding in navigation that stood him in good stead all his life.

When war broke out with France, Cook volunteered and joined H.M.S. *Eagle* as an able-seaman. Within thirty-five days he was rated master's mate. There was nothing unusual in this rapid promotion, as men combining first-class seamanship, education and navigation, who were not always drunk, were rare birds.

After serving in two more ships, Cook was transferred to the *Northumberland* in 1759, being mentioned for his skill in the pilotage of the St. Lawrence River in Canada. In 1762 Cook married Miss Elizabeth Batts, of Barking, Essex, and next year he was appointed to the four-year job of surveying the Newfoundland coast and nearby islands, for which he was given his first separate command, the schooner *Grenville*. On this survey Cook made good observations of an eclipse of the

sun, which brought him under the notice of the Royal Society's astronomers.

The main purpose of Cook's first expedition was to study the transit of Venus, which was important for determining the distance of the sun from the earth. The transit could only be seen in the southern hemisphere. It was due in June 1769. Cook was chosen to make observations in Tahiti and given command of H.M.S. *Endeavour*, a 370-ton wooden brig, square-rigged, with an uncoppered bottom. The *Endeavour* left England on August 26, 1768. Cook carried out his observations in Tahiti and laid a southerly course to strike the southern continent that geographers said must be there to balance the land masses in the Northern Hemisphere.

For many days he saw no land and met rough weather. Finally, on October 9th, Cook stepped ashore at Poverty Bay, on the north island of New Zealand. Unfortunately four Maoris were killed before the crew could make friends with the others. Cook sailed on through the big bay which Tasman had found and passed into Cook Strait. In the course of a survey the *Endeavour* sailed along the west coast of the North Island and in the midsummer heat the wondering sailors sighted the snow-capped peak of Mount Egmont. The sudden appearance of the mountain, rising 8,340 feet up from the sea, staggered them with its beauty.

Leaving New Zealand, Cook decided to return by way of the East Indies, along the east coast of New Holland. On April 20, 1770, senior lieutenant Zacchary Hicks stood the early watch on the *Endeavour*. Shortly after daybreak he made out dim shapes of distant land on the horizon. The exact landmark was a 924-foot hill since marked as Point Hicks, near Cape Howe, the south-eastern extremity of Australia. From here Cook worked his way northwards along the New South Wales coast, naming conspicuous features and logging their descriptions. Smoke columns rising from the inland bush were the only signs that the country was inhabited. A camel-like mountain was called Mount Dromedary, and a peaked hill which resembled a square dovecote with a dome at the top was called Pigeonhouse. As the *Endeavour* drew inshore, an attempt to land was beaten by the heavy surf lashing the cliffs. The



appearance of groups of naked natives intrigued the deck watchers.

Nine days after land was sighted, the ship approached the broad heads of Botany Bay, so named because of the variety of plants found there. Fourteen astonished aborigines studied the approach of the pinnacle which Cook sent ahead to sound the passage. The natives were armed with heavy spears and wooden clubs, and brandished their weapons in a threatening manner. But as the pinnacle drew near the beach, the majority of the watchers ran away, or hid among the rocks.

From the deck of the *Endeavour*, the English sailors saw naked men, women and children clustered round huts on either side of the bay. Near one settlement men speared fish from canoes. So intent were they on their task that, although the ship passed within a quarter of a mile, they scarcely raised their eyes to look at what must have seemed a strange wonder from another world. The *Endeavour* anchored about two miles inside the bay and about half a mile from the site of the modern Kurnell refinery.

Accompanied by a strong party, Cook decided to land and headed for the point where the aborigines were gathered. As the Europeans approached the rocks, two natives attempted to dispute their landing. The others vanished into the shelter of thick bush. Cook ordered his men to lie on their oars, and by word and sign parleyed with the aborigines, offering them beads, nails and other trinkets. He made signs that he wanted water and intended to do them no harm, but the two natives made hostile gestures. Finally Cook was forced to fire a musket into the air. The noise frightened the younger native, who dropped his spears, but snatched them up again with great haste on recovering from his surprise. The natives hurled stones and a couple of spears at the boat, so another shot was fired, this time slightly wounding the older native, who ran away.

Ashore, Cook's men peeped at the native women and children hiding behind shields and bark strips in the huts. They threw beads, pieces of cloth and other presents inside, and took possession of about fifty spears. From a hole dug in the sand they replenished their water supply, but during the



nine days the vessel was at Botany Bay all efforts to make friends with the inhabitants proved abortive. Cook named the north head of the bay Cape Banks and the south head Point Solander, after the expedition naturalists.

During their stay the officers and men made short excursions inland. On May 1st they buried a seaman, Forby Sutherland, the first Englishman to lie in the soil of Australia. Cape Sutherland, at the entrance to Port Hacking, was named after him. On May 7th the *Endeavour* weighed anchor and stood out through the heads to resume the northward voyage. Several miles up the coast Cook found a bay in which there appeared to be a good anchorage, and named it Port Jackson, after one of the Admiralty secretaries, Sir George Jackson. This was the famous Sydney harbour, acclaimed as one of the most beautiful inlets of the sea, not only for its area, but also for the number of its deep sheltered anchorages.

As the *Endeavour* sailed northwards, Cook noted Broken Bay, and named points and capes along the coast. The land actually increased in height and became mountainous, with glimpses of pleasant wooded hills and plains. He sighted the large islands off Brisbane, and named one of them Cape Morton, after the Earl of Morton, President of the Royal Society in 1764-68. A biographer later changed the spelling to Moreton and the incorrect form survived.

The wooden brig crept slowly along the unknown coast, lowering boats frequently to sound and explore, and sometimes anchoring for the night in a sheltered cove. Many small islands hove in sight and were by-passed, and on June 4th the *Endeavour* entered the tropic beauty of the Whitsunday Passage. Here Cook found himself entering the eighth wonder of the world, the passage inside the Great Barrier Reef, a coral wall which extends 1,200 miles from the Tropic of Capricorn almost to the coast of Papua. A string of rocky islands and beautiful atolls, flat-surfaced, covered with rich green shrubs and trees, lay ahead. Two days later, when off Townsville, they found their compass disturbed by the nearness of Magnetic Island. Here was a dangerous coast. The sea carefully concealed the jagged shoals projecting suddenly from the shore. Rocks rose like pyramids from the ocean bed to within inches of the

surface. Anxiety changed suddenly into actual misfortune. Near Cape Tribulation, where the mountains rise to nearly 6,000 feet, the water unexpectedly shallowed.

At midnight on June 11th, when twenty-five miles off-shore, the ship struck rocks, the edge of a coral reef north of Weary Bay. In a few moments all hands were on deck, their worried faces revealing the horror of their thoughts. The *Endeavour* did not take much water, but was bumped hard by the rise and fall of the swell. The sails were at once taken in, and it was seen that the ship had been lifted over a rocky ledge by the surge. For hours, using anchors and cables, they tried to warp the vessel off the rocks into deeper water. But the *Endeavour* was immovable and all the time continued to smash violently against the coral pinnacles. The hard sharp underwater obstruction threatened to rip the bottom out of the ship. In the moonlight the crew saw the false keel and bottom boards floating in the surrounding water. Each minute it seemed the water might rush into the ship and all would be over. Cook and his followers would never have been heard of again. There were not even boats to take all of them to the shore in one trip. How long would they have survived among the hostile natives of Cape York? Even if they managed to reach Torres Strait and cross by canoe to New Guinea, a similar fate would have met them at the hands of other cannibals. Fortunately the wind gradually died down and the ship was saved from being pounded to smithereens.

In the morning, Cook jettisoned thirty tons of fresh water, stores, iron and stone ballast, and six guns and their carriages. The ship promptly floated off the rocks, but the leak began to gain on the pumps. In a few hours there was water in the hold to a depth of 4 feet. The position was again desperate, and visions of shipwreck and slow death by starvation ashore ran through the men's minds. While the crew worked the pumps until exhausted, the commander rose to the occasion. In answer to a string of orders from the bridge, seamen dived overboard and passed under the bows a sail into which hair, oakum and wool had been sewn. This helped to seal the leaks, but Cook wisely edged the ship into the mouth of the Endeavour River. After beaching her where Cooktown now stands, they spent



forty-five days repairing the vessel and gathering fresh food and water. During the stay, natives visited the camp but never became friendly. They refused presents, but were anxious to obtain turtle meat. When this was refused, they fired the grass round the camp and had to be driven off with small shot. It was near Cooktown that Cook's party saw the first species of large wallaby, and thus the aboriginal word kangaroo was introduced into the English language.

At sea once more, the sailors saw a magnificent spectacle, a dazzling line of white foam extending from horizon to horizon, where the outer sea broke against the submerged reef. On the outer side of the reef storm-buffed masses of coral projected from the water. At sunset they glowed like obelisks of fire, while flocks of sea birds rose in great numbers from the islands, panicked by the arrival of the strange craft.

The existence of Torres Strait, a secret of the Spaniards, was unknown to Cook on August 22, 1770, when the *Endeavour* sailed serenely through the placid waters between Cape York and New Guinea. Cook wanted to step ashore at Cape York, but the aborigines threatened the sailors in the boats. To avoid bloodshed, Cook landed on Possession Island two miles off the western shore of the most northerly part of the mainland. There, on the island's highest hill, he hoisted the British flag and took possession of the whole of eastern Australia. Small arms' volleys were fired into the air and the men gave three hearty cheers. No hint is given in Cook's journals of his reason for giving the name of New South Wales to the eastern side of the Australian continent, but others claimed the new land bore a great similarity to that part of the old country.

Feeling their way carefully between the sandbanks, shoals and islands, they passed round the northernmost extremity and westward into the open sea. Cook reached Batavia and then sailed to England, where he arrived on July 13, 1771. He had been away from home two years, ten months and seventeen days.

Cook's second voyage was designed to complete the discovery of the Southern Hemisphere. Two sloops—*Resolution*, 462 tons, which he commanded, and *Adventure*, 336 tons, captained by



Tobias Furneaux—were put under his charge. Cook was determined to combat scurvy, which had taken a heavy toll of personnel in the first expedition. He included among his stores such things as malt and a concentrated extract of wort, a kind of cabbage plant, and beer, which when diluted with water made a pleasant drink for the men throughout the voyage.

The expedition which, among other things, was to search for the South Pole left Plymouth on July 13, 1772, two years to the day after Cook had returned home. They called at the Cape of Good Hope, ran down to the southern icefields, crossed the Antarctic Circle and ran east for New Zealand. In the Southern Ocean the ships became separated and Furneaux went on to explore the coast of Tasmania. A year before, this coast had been visited by two French ships, under Captain Marion du Fresne, who said the country was wild and inhospitable, and failing to find water, had sailed for New Zealand. Furneaux left his name behind on the chart, in the Furneaux Islands, Adventure Bay and other places.

Cook's ships met by arrangement in Queen Charlotte Sound and spent the rest of 1773 criss-crossing the southern Pacific until there was no unexplored space left for a continent. Cook made his way past Easter Island and the Marquesas to Tahiti, went to the Fiji group and the New Hebrides, discovered New Caledonia and Norfolk Island. Then he recrossed the Pacific, rounded Cape Horn and reached England on July 29, 1775.

On his third expedition Cook left Plymouth on July 12, 1776, in the *Resolution*, accompanied by the *Discovery*, 300 tons, with orders to sail via the Cape of Good Hope to New Zealand and Tahiti, then to work up the North American coast in the hope of finding a passage round the top of that continent. Towards the end of January 1778 he discovered the Hawaiian group and thence made northwards towards Alaska.

He turned south to winter in the Hawaiian group. Later when he put to sea, gales broke *Resolution's* mast and forced the ship back to the island. Then the natives, who perhaps felt they were being exploited, turned troublesome. They resented the landing of watering parties, stole from the ship and handled the sailors roughly.

On February, 12, 1779, Cook, then aged 51, landed with an armed guard to visit the king and to take hostages for future good conduct. A warrior threatened Cook and stoned him, while another tried to stab his lieutenant. In self-defence Cook fired at his assailant, there was a scuffle and the English party retreated to the beach.

While giving orders to his boat's crew, Cook made the fatal mistake of turning his back. He was at once struck down and killed. His body, together with those of four murdered sailors, was carried off by the islanders. In retaliation Cook's crew fired the native village. The remains of Cook's body were later brought down with solemnity to the beach by a chief, who handed them over to the second-in-command. At sunset they were buried at sea.

George III granted a coat of arms to Cook's family and a generous pension to his widow. None of her six children survived her. Mrs. Cook died at the age of 93 at Clapham on May 13, 1835, and the family became extinct.

At Whitby, on the West Cliff, overlooking the town, there stands a bronze statue—to the lasting memory of this great Yorkshire seaman. In the local museum can be seen many Cook relics, a chart of Placentia Harbour, Newfoundland, drawn by Cook himself; the Davis backstaff, or wooden quadrant, he used when he was learning navigation; his sea-chest; and a letter he wrote to Captain Hammond of Hull, from whom he bought the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* for the Navy.



## CHAPTER IV

### *First Fleet*

AUSTRALIA as a white nation was born as a direct result of the American Declaration of Independence and its consequences for Britain. After Cook's visit to eastern Australia in 1770, the British Government had no plans for colonizing Australia. In fact, the British leaders wished to have nothing more to do with colonies after their American experiences. The British Government would not have established a colony in Australia in 1787 if it could have found a cheaper way of disposing of problems which defeat in North America had left on its hands.

The Government could no longer send convicts to the American colonies, and the gaols and prison hulks were packed with 100,000 men under sentence of transportation. The destitute loyalist refugees from the Revolution, who had gone to England with the British troops, provided another problem.

The British Government considered proposals for settling the American loyalists in Australia and sending convicts with them. But when the Government finally adopted a transportation plan to overcome the crowded state of British gaols, it forgot all about the loyalists and ignored their value and experience in colonization. The convict plan was conceived in London in 1786, when Lord Sydney, then Secretary of State for the Home Department, wrote to the Lords of the Treasury to tell them of King George III's wish that 750 convicts should be transported to Botany Bay. These convicts, male and female, with troops and a handful of officers sent to guard them, were the people who founded Australia. Some of the convicts were hardened criminals, but many had been convicted and sentenced to transportation for what today would be regarded as minor offences.

In 1786 Lord Sydney appointed 49-year-old Captain Arthur Phillip, R.N., a man with a fine naval record, to lead



the First Fleet to Botany Bay. Phillip, who became the first Governor of New South Wales, was the son of a German immigrant from Frankfurt. Born in London on October 11, 1738, he trained for a naval career at Greenwich and was apprenticed aboard a ship trading between England and Greenland until 1755, when he joined the Navy. Phillip served in the Mediterranean and also in the West Indies, taking part in the capture of Havana. When war broke out between Spain and Portugal in 1774, he offered his services to Portugal. The war between England and France in 1778 brought him back to England and he served with various squadrons in British and East Indian waters. The reason for Phillip's appointment to lead the First Fleet was rather obscure, but his able administration soon proved its justification. From the day of his assignment Phillip devoted himself to his task and took meticulous care with the preparation of the expedition.

His flagship was the 520-ton man-of-war *Sirius*. Originally named *Berwick*, she was built in 1781 as a sixth-rate vessel. Her armament included six carronades and four six-pounders. She was 100 feet long and 32 feet in beam—considerably smaller than many present-day Sydney ferries. The other naval vessel was the *Supply*, a brig-rigged sloop of 170 tons, commanded by Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball. She carried eight three-pounder guns and a crew of fifty men.

The six transports carrying the convicts were the *Alexander*, 452 tons, *Lady Penrhyn*, 333 tons, *Charlotte*, 335 tons, *Scarborough*, 430 tons, *Friendship*, 274 tons, and the *Prince of Wales*, 350 tons. Three storeships, the *Fishburn*, the *Golden Grove* and the *Borrowdale*, made a total of eleven vessels. The transports were equipped like troopships of the day with hammocks, mess-tables and stools. In addition thick nail-studded bulkheads, 3 feet high, were run athwartships between decks, and firing loop-holes were arranged in case of mutiny. These fittings prevented communication between the ships' companies, the convicts and their guards.

On May 12, 1787, the embarkation of the prisoners took place from several ports and passed almost unnoticed. An eyewitness in Portsmouth said that all shop-windows were closed and the streets lined with troops while thirty wagons rumbled

to Point Beach with their miserable human cargoes. Here boats were waiting to receive the convicts. The British newspapers, small in size and circulation in those days, hardly noticed the sailing of the fleet. London papers devoted three or four lines to the event which led to the birth of a nation.

The transports *Charlotte* and *Friendship* took convicts aboard at Plymouth, and the other ships at Deptford and Spithead. With the motley company of convicts, marines and sailors around him, Phillip hoisted his flag aboard the *Sirius* next daybreak, and the ships weighed anchor off the Isle of Wight. Even as they sailed a free pardon arrived for two prisoners, who exultantly leapt ashore, instead of sailing across the empty seas to a sterile land of exile. Fears of the hideous land at the ends of the earth, the dread of being eaten by savage cannibals and every other frightful possibility were magnified a thousand times in the thoughts and conversation of the unwilling settlers.

A fresh breeze stirred the Channel chops. The early summer air was cold and bracing. As men hauled up the topsail hal-yards the sails ballooned out, and white foam broke from the bows. The land fell away, and convict eyes turned back for a last look at the country they knew they could never hope to see again. Some of those first settlers did return twenty or more years later to the land of their birth, but very few of them. Others did not survive to reach the land of their banishment.

Below the hatches a seething mass of humanity tossed and rolled with the motion of the ships. The timbers creaked and groaned in a hundred keys while the water thumped the sides. Men and women cursed and moaned in the swinging hammocks, slung only a foot and a half apart. Most of the passengers had never been to sea before. Narrow slits served as port-holes to light and ventilate space occupied by two hundred unfortunates. The breeze grew to a gale, and three days later the ships were on the broad Atlantic. Their escort, the *Hyena*, left them and returned to Portsmouth with the ominous news that mutiny had broken out among the convicts on the *Scarborough*. But it was quickly quelled and the ringleaders punished.

Deck hatches on the transports were secured with crossbars,



bolts and locks, and railed around from deck to deck with oak stanchions. Sentries were posted at each stanchion and alert armed guards paced the quarter-deck to quell further uprisings.

A constant problem during the voyage was the supply of water. But there was no serious shortage, although rations had to be cut for short periods. The official water ration was three quarts daily for each convict. The food scale was two-thirds of the regular naval ration. The weekly issues consisted of 7 lb. of bread, 2 lb. salt pork, 4 lb. salt beef, 2 lb. peas, 3 lb. oatmeal, 6 lb. butter,  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. cheese and  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of vinegar. This ration was often increased and varied by fresh supplies of meat, vegetables and fish. Women and children were on a special diet. The sick were granted a wine and spirits ration. Each convict was given a hammock, some blankets, two jackets, four pairs of woollen drawers, one hat, three pairs of worsted socks, three pairs of trousers or three frocks, three pairs of shoes, and underclothing.

The decks of all ships, except the two naval vessels, were packed with pens containing domestic animals for the future settlement, including sheep, dogs, goats, kids, turkeys, geese, ducks, pigeons and cats.

Four companies of marines sailed with the First Fleet. There were 252 guards and officials, 210 Navy men, and 233 merchant seamen, besides the convicts. Even today authorities disagree on the number of convicts transported. However, the probable total of convicts who left England was 620 men, 200 women and 13 children, a total of 833.

On June 3rd the fleet arrived off Tenerife, Canary Islands, and anchored in Santa Cruz roads about a mile from the town. They remained at the island a week, watering and loading fresh food. Here a convict made a daring dash for freedom, escaping in a small boat. But he was quickly recaptured and received fifty lashes for his trouble. By this time twenty-one convicts and three children had died for unrecorded reasons.

Warm weather and tropical rains added to the discomfort of those below decks. Health regulations were strictly enforced, but the women were continually collapsing. Because of excessive water consumption, the daily ration was cut by half to three

pints on July 6th. Gunpowder explosions between decks and the liberal use of oil of tar and lime sweetened the ships.

The fleet crossed the Equator on the evening of July 14th, and on August 4th anchored in the splendid harbour of Rio de Janeiro. The Viceroy of Brazil, Don Luis de Vaarconcellos, received Phillip and his officers, entertaining them lavishly during their month's stay. Fresh supplies were obtained for all the ships.

The ships weighed anchor once more and made a pleasant and rapid passage to the Cape of Good Hope. They reached Table Bay on October 13th, anchoring a mile and a half from the shore. The Dutch Governor, Mynheer van Graaf, helped them to lay in a supply of provisions and livestock. They set sail on November 1st. In a fortnight they made only 240 miles. Phillip transferred from the frigate *Sirius* to the tender *Supply* so that he could go ahead and make ready for the landing.

Favourable breezes blew them along, and early on the morning of January 7, 1788, the *Lady Penrhyn* signalled land in sight. That afternoon the ships sighted the southern cape of Tasmania, and within a fortnight had anchored within Botany Bay, having lost by death on the long voyage, one marine, a marine's wife and child, thirty-six males and four females, and five children. Within six months an epidemic of dysentery raised the convict death-roll to eighty-one since leaving England, and there were fifty-two others unfit for labour because of old age or sickness.

Soon after the first landing a group of hostile natives appeared on the shore, naked and equipped with primitive weapons. However, Phillip's diplomatic and tactful approach prevented violence, and when he gave signs of friendship the natives laid down their spears.

Phillip soon realized that Botany Bay was too damp and the locality unsuitable for a settlement of a thousand people. On January 22nd he decided to search for another landing-place. Before he weighed anchor in Botany Bay, two strange sails suddenly appeared on the horizon. A minor panic broke out among the settlers, but in the excitement Phillip remained calm, recalling that some time earlier two French ships had set out on a peaceful mission to circle the globe.



The ships proved to be the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe*, the vessels Phillip had heard about, under the command of Captain Jean François Galaup de la Perouse, a noted French explorer. La Perouse was as much surprised at seeing an English fleet in those lonely waters as the English were at seeing him. Even though the two countries were at war, relations between the French and English crews were cordial. The French were there to witness the formal proclamation of the colony on February 7, 1788, and joined in the singing, toasting and firing of volleys. The French ships left Botany Bay on March 10th and were never seen by civilized man again. La Perouse's fate was unknown until Captain Dillon of the *Research* in 1827 discovered traces of the expedition at Manicolo, New Hebrides.

In the meantime Phillip went up the coast a few miles to Port Jackson, which Captain Cook had not had time to examine properly. Through the bluff heads Phillip and his three ships glided into a deep winding harbour of innumerable coves, each capable of sheltering the fleet waiting at Botany Bay. Thick bush ran down to the water's edge, and in one little cove, into which ran a fresh-water stream, Phillip determined to fetch his ships and land his settlers. For two days he wandered round the inner reaches and hidden arms of the harbour, but found no more favoured spot. So he called it Sydney Cove, after the British minister, and told his officers: 'This is one of the finest harbours in the world, in which a thousand sail of the line might ride in perfect safety.'

The disembarkation of convicts and livestock proceeded without mishap. The voyage of 15,063 miles had taken eight weary months and one day. Except by design, the ships had not lost sight of each other for an hour, although nine were small merchantmen and the greater part of the voyage was in unknown waters. The death-rate was very low, having regard to the overcrowded state of the ships. The people on board belonged to the most difficult and unhealthy section of the community, and the success of the voyage was a tribute to the skill of the commander.

To a few desperate convicts the appearance of the French vessels at Botany Bay was a chance to escape. A few made their way from Sydney Cove to Botany Bay in the hope of getting

aboard one of the French ships, but their plan failed and all were returned to Port Jackson.

Within the first week of settlement Captain John Hunter had sailed up Sydney harbour into the Parramatta River, and within a few months the Governor himself examined the country and established a second settlement fourteen miles from Sydney at a place which he named Rosehill, but which in 1791 was given its aboriginal name Parramatta, the place where the eels stay. Governor Phillip went overland to Broken Bay and up the Hawkesbury River.

Captain Watkin Tench and Lieutenant William Dawes travelled west, north-west and south-west, and reached the Nepean and Hawkesbury Rivers at different points. But they were soon satisfied that the two streams were different parts of the one river. Other settlements were established on the Hawkesbury, where Richmond and Windsor now stand.

From the beginning Governor Phillip faced desperate food shortages. The convict labourers were indolent and inefficient. The meagre food production threatened the colony with famine. Phillip cut down the rations of salt pork, flour and rice, and sent the *Sirius* to the Cape of Good Hope for new provisions.

In June 1790 a major disaster was only averted by the timely arrival of the *Lady Juliana* from London with a cargo of flour. A fortnight later *Justinian* arrived with a full cargo of provisions and the famine was over.

To lessen the strain a number of convicts were sent to Norfolk Island, 930 miles across the Pacific from Sydney. They were wrecked, but their lives were saved and most of their stores were lost. Then floods and a hurricane hit the island, and a transport carrying precious supplies hit an iceberg in the Roaring Forties. To save the ship, the supplies were jettisoned. To add to this misfortune, a fresh batch of convicts arrived in Sydney Cove.

At first Phillip lived in a canvas house which he had brought with him. Later a stone house was built near Circular Quay, Sydney. The officers lived in brick houses, the convicts in plastered log huts and the soldiers in barracks.

When the Hawkesbury River was crossed, the explorers



were rudely stopped from further progress by abrupt and precipitous mountains. For a quarter of a century the mountains defied all attempts to scale them and penetrate the secret land beyond. Time after time tough venturesome men set out, determined to win through, but returned, beaten and baffled. In 1793 Dawes, Tench and Paterson were all beaten back by the fearful gorges; Hacking, after climbing over several ridges into the gullies beyond, returned after covering only twenty miles.

From the beginning Phillip had a definite policy towards the aborigines, semi-nomadic bands of chocolate-brown natives who wore no clothes, erected only temporary dwellings, knew nothing of cultivation and had no domestic animals except the dingo, and whose only weapons and implements were made of stone and wood. Phillip's plan was to gain their confidence and secure a firm working friendship.

His personal efforts to achieve amity led to him being speared in the shoulder. When he recovered, he refused to punish the native responsible. Phillip took a native named Arabanco into his house and tried to train him as an interpreter, but within a few months the aborigine died of smallpox. Phillip's wish for friendly relations proved impossible, mainly because of the natives' suspicious nature. The aboriginal view of private property, especially food supplies, was not understood by the colonists, who trespassed repeatedly on native food preserves. On the other hand, the natives looked on sheep and cattle as free food and saw no harm in helping themselves. Finally, Phillip was forced to send out punitive parties to safeguard lives and property, but strictly forbade his men to shoot at natives except in self-defence. Anthropologists estimate that the native population numbered about 400,000 at the time of white settlement.

Phillip divided the township of Sydney into four sections, established a night-watch, courts of civil and criminal jurisdiction, and made regulations for the maintenance of public order. He established farms in outlying areas and introduced the system of assigning working prisoners to land-holders.

Nearly five years after the founding of the colony, on November 1, 1792, the first Yankee trader slipped past Sydney Heads. She was the *Philadelphia*, under Captain Thomas Patrickson, and he carried a letter of recommendation to Governor Phillip from Phineas Bond, British Minister to the United States.

The *Philadelphia* was very welcome in the colony. She had an assorted cargo, including beef, pitch, tar, tobacco, gin and rum, and the speculative skipper sold the lot at a high price. He joined in the transport of stores between Sydney and Norfolk Island, where the convict settlement had been increased.

The links between North America and the colony at Sydney Cove were surprisingly extensive. Even from the beginning, Phillip was ordered to co-operate with the expeditions which the British Government sent to the north-west coast of America. Captain Vancouver's expedition to the American coast in 1791 obtained stores at Sydney.

The succour and trade which the new colony received from Yankee traders, whalers and sealers in its first twenty years not only aided its survival, but also placed Americans in a venerated place in the affections of the settlers, which they occupy to this day. In its first two decades the colony needed more sustenance than it received from an unsympathetic London Government.

Governor Phillip wanted to return to England. He pleaded ill-health, his resignation was accepted and he left Australia aboard the *Atlantic* on December 11, 1792. On his arrival in London he was awarded a pension of £500 in recognition of his services. He secured the lease of a house at 19 Bennett Street, Bath.

Captain Philip Gidley King, who visited him in 1808, found Phillip was paralysed down the whole of his right side, but his high spirit and intellect were unbroken. Phillip lived in Bath until his death on August 31, 1814, after a lingering illness. He was 76 years of age. Rumours of mysterious circumstances surrounding his death were quickly bruited abroad, but these were later discounted.



His funeral on September 7, 1814, was attended by a few friends. His widow, Isabella, survived him for nine years, and then Australia's first Governor, his residence and burial were completely forgotten for eighty-three years.

In 1897 James Bonwick, the noted Australian historian, visited England to obtain precise information for the historical records of New South Wales. He inquired about Phillip's burial-place, and was assisted by Alderman Cotterell, a prominent Bath citizen. They visited the city cemeteries and churches and eight other churches in Somersetshire. Tucked away in a quiet corner of the village of Bathampton, two miles from Bath, they found the ancient church of St. Nicholas. The first day's search proved futile, but on the second day, after the cleaner had lifted the matting, they discovered two horizontal gravestones in the church floor. Another stone nearby bore the inscription: 'Underneath lie the remains of Arthur Phillip, Esq., Admiral of the Blue, who died August 31, 1814, in his 76th year. Also of Isabella, relict of the above Admiral Phillip, who died March 4, 1823, in the 71st year of her age.' Before this there had been no public memorial to Phillip in England, but two years after the discovery of the grave, the Corporation of Bath attached a metal mural tablet to his residence, worded simply: 'Here lived Admiral Phillip, 1806-1814.'

Bonwick's discovery brought about the historical resurrection of Phillip. Other reminders now within St. Nicholas' Church, Bathampton, are a painting of Phillip's hoisting the flag at Sydney Cove on January 26, 1788, his portrait (copied from the original in the National Portrait Gallery), and a tablet to his memory at the rear of the church.

The tablet on the Bennett Street house was the first of a series of public memorials to Phillip. On June 3, 1937, Viscount Wakefield unveiled a plaque within Bath Abbey, which was provided by contributions from 150 citizens. The tablet said: 'In memory of Admiral Arthur Phillip, R.N., Founder and First Governor of Australia. Born in London, October 11, 1738. Entered the Royal Navy, 1755. Died at 19 Bennett Street, Bath, August 31, 1814. To his indomitable courage, prophetic vision, faith, inspiration, and wisdom was due the

success of the first settlement in Australia at Sydney, January 25, 1788.'

The wording on the tablet was taken, with slight modification, from the more pretentious Wakefield memorial unveiled at St. Mildred's Church, Bread Street, London, on December 7, 1932, by Prince George, Duke of Kent. St. Mildred's Church and the Phillip memorial were destroyed by a German bomb in April 1941, but the bust of Phillip was undamaged and is now in the Royal Empire Society building, London.



## CHAPTER V

### *Coastal Epic*

**B**EFORE the end of 1792 the second American vessel, the *Hope*, commanded by Benjamin Page, of Rhode Island, had brought valuable supplies to the colony. On the departure of Phillip, Major F. Grose, commander of the N.S.W. Corps, had become Lieutenant-Governor, and he was followed two years later by Colonel W. Paterson. These men swept away the last traces of civil rule, dismissed magistrates and set up military government. Their officers and soldiers engaged in black-market operations, buying goods from the Government stores and selling them at exorbitant profits to the public. Rum was the principal commodity of these transactions. The military bought the rum at four shillings a gallon and sold it for anything up to eight pounds to the unfortunates, who could not resist a drink. The traffic grew to such proportions that wages were paid in rum when money was short. The black market operators used so much grain for making spirits that even in good seasons there was a flour shortage.

Lieutenant-Governor Grose doled out free land to his friends and assigned convicts to their farms. When Governor Hunter arrived in 1795, the pernicious system was in full swing. So many convicts were tilling the officer's land that the new Governor was unable to raise twenty men for public works.

Two young men whose names were to be immortalized in Australian exploration arrived with Governor Hunter. They were Matthew Flinders and George Bass, both being born within a few miles of one another in Lincolnshire. Flinders, born on March 16, 1774, was the son of a surveyor. He joined the Navy and at the age of 17 accompanied Captain William Bligh on his second voyage to Tahiti for bread-fruit.

On his return to England, Flinders joined the *Reliance* as midshipman, bound for Sydney town, and found a friend in

George Bass, the ship's surgeon. Both were tall, handsome and courageous, keen to embark on expeditions of adventure and discovery. They had scarcely reached Sydney before they set out, with a boy named Martin, in an 8-foot rowing boat, named *Tom Thumb*, which Bass had brought out from England. They sailed several miles up the George's River, south of Botany Bay. On their return they decided to complete the exploration of the eastern coast of New South Wales at the first opportunity.

A few months later, in January 1796, they set out southwards, but the weather prevented them from making a landing the first night. They kept out at sea, and in the morning Bass swam ashore with a cask for fresh water. When they beached the boat, they were quickly surrounded by twenty natives. To keep them amused and harmless while their ammunition was drying, Flinders cut their beards and hair with a pair of scissors. When they launched the boat, another storm blew up and their position was critical. With Bass holding the sail, Flinders steering with an oar, and young Martin bailing as fast as he could, they dodged disaster. Returning north, they reached a beach which the natives called Wattamolla, and a little farther on they explored Port Hacking.

Bass next tried inland exploration. The mountain barrier which cut off Sydney and the coast district from the unknown inland drew him like a magnet. Bass hoped to cross the range by following the Grose River, but after a strenuous fifteen days, scaling cliffs with iron hooks attached to his boots and being lowered by ropes into vast chasms, he returned to Sydney convinced that the mountains were impassable.

Shipwrecked sailors who had made their way up the New South Wales coast to Sydney reported that they had seen coal seams on the cliffs. Bass sailed south in 1797 to check this story, and found good marketable coal was available in seams that sloped away below sea-level. The place was named Coal-cliff. On another land excursion he crossed the Nepean River and traced it for some distance, after which he made direct for the coast, coming out near Wattamolla.

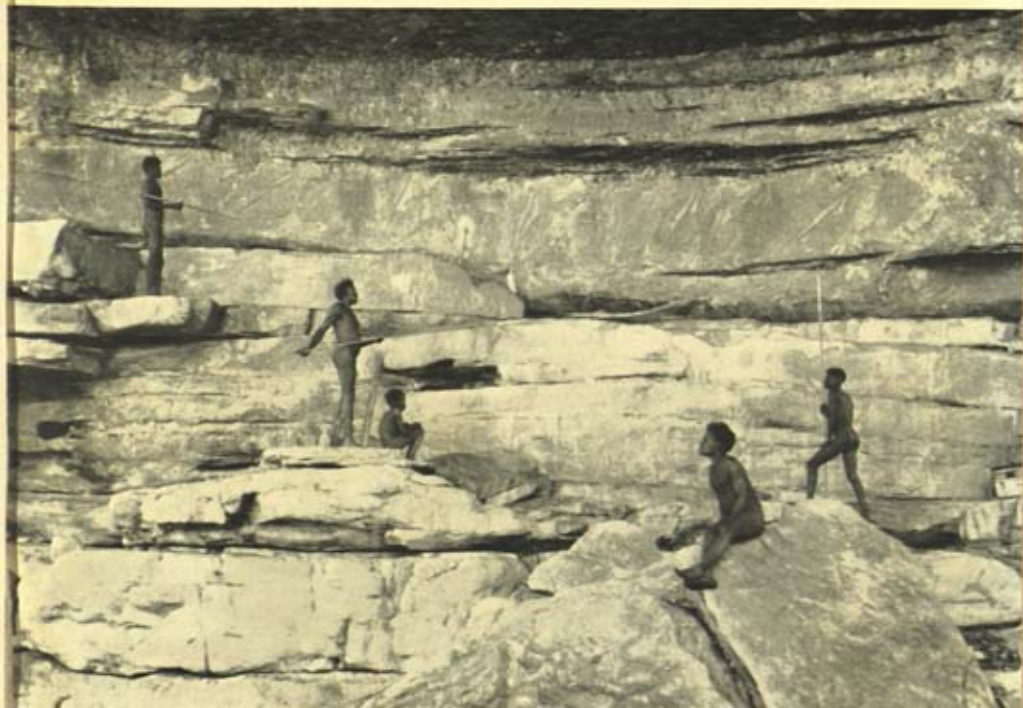
Bass is best remembered for his remarkable 600-mile open whale-boat journey. The boat was 28 feet long; he had a crew





4. Albany Passage, about ten miles south of Cape York. It was near here that Kennedy died.

Aborigines at one of their 'art galleries' in a Northern Territory rock cave. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





5. George Bass.



Captain Arthur  
Phillip, R.N.



of six volunteers, and provisions for six weeks. His object was to find out whether Tasmania was joined to the mainland or was a separate island. Setting out southwards, on December 3 1797, he discovered and named the Shoalhaven River and Two-fold Bay. When he had rounded Cape Howe, he had reached the unexplored coast. He skirted the Ninety Mile Beach, and came across the rocky face of Wilson's Promontory, which he described as the corner-stone of the island continent.

Bass discovered a shipwrecked party of seven convicts who had escaped from Sydney. He relieved their privations as much as he could, and directed them to find their way back to the settlement. He had to push on, and the farthest west he reached was Westernport, Victoria, which he examined for several days. Lack of provisions forced him to turn back. On the way he picked up two of the seven shipwrecked convicts; the other five were never seen alive again. Bass arrived in Sydney after an absence of eleven weeks.

If Bass had continued a few miles westward, he would have discovered the fine expanse of Port Phillip. But as a result of his journey he felt sure Tasmania was an island. At Westernport he had noticed the rapid tide and swell from the west. He reasoned that this could not happen if land stretched across to Tasmania. Convinced in his mind that a strait cut Tasmania from the mainland, Bass said he would not be satisfied until he had circumnavigated that island.

While Bass was at Westernport, Flinders had sailed south in the colonial ship *Francis*, to recover the cargo and crew of the *Sydney Cove*, which had been wrecked on the Furneaux Islands, off North-East Tasmania. Flinders discovered a group of islands, which he named after William Kent, a naval commander.

Soon afterwards, to his delight, Flinders joined Bass in a southern expedition. They set out in October 1798 in the *Norfolk*, a twenty-five tonner, made from Norfolk Island pine, in an attempt to sail round Tasmania. They approached the north coast of the island, and discovered the River Tamar. They sailed on down the west coast. Rounding the southern end, they examined the River Derwent, and then, having circumnavigated the island, made for Sydney. The strait to the north of Tasmania, was, on Flinders' suggestion, named

Bass Strait. The discovery of the strait cut a week off the voyage from England to Sydney, and led to the establishment of two settlements in Tasmania.

Bass and Flinders now parted, never to meet again. Bass returned to England and secured the command of a trading vessel, which he brought to New South Wales to carry salt pork from Tahiti to Sydney. He sailed to Chile in 1803 on board an armed merchantman. At Valparaiso the town governor refused to permit the vessel to trade. Bass, who was then in command, threatened to bombard the town if the refusal was not withdrawn. The order was rescinded, but watching their chance, the authorities seized Bass when he was off his guard. It was reported that he was sent to work in the slave-labour silver mines in the interior, where he died.

Flinders, fired with dreams of further discovery, continued where Bass had left off. In 1799 he probed the Queensland coast in the Moreton Bay area. Then he sailed for England and secured another vessel, the 334-ton *Investigator*, which was fit for little more than the scrap-heap. Flinders' ambition was to circumnavigate the continent. John Franklin, later to win fame and lose his life in the Arctic, went along as midshipman.

Britain and France were again at war, and British ships blockaded the French ports as the *Investigator* struggled down the Channel. Though a naval officer, 26-year-old Matthew Flinders was not worried about Napoleon Bonaparte, who was then threatening to invade England. Flinders carried a passport from the French giving him immunity. Even in the Channel, the *Investigator* was leaking like a sieve and the men worked the pumps continuously. Flinders somehow managed to reach the Cape and recaulked the vessel, both inside and out.

Arriving off Cape Leeuwin in 1802, Flinders made a long survey of the Great Australian Bight. Vancouver had surveyed from Cape Leeuwin to King George's Sound in 1792. In his search for traces of the missing La Perouse, D'Entrecasteaux had gone as far into the Bight as the border between West Australia and South Australia. Flinders was puzzled as much



as D'Entrecasteaux by the great extent of level cliffs along which he sailed. He little thought that years later a lonely white man would tramp round those barren cliffs, eagerly peering at Flinders' charts for any break in their iron uniformity. But, east of Fowler's Bay, Flinders was in unknown waters. The *Investigator* had just rounded Cape Wiles into Spencer Gulf when the first tragedy occurred.

Busy taking observations from the ship, Flinders sent the sailing master, Thistle, to the mainland in a cutter to search for an anchoring-place. Lying at dusk off Cape Catastrophe, the cutter was seen returning to the ship, but suddenly it disappeared from view, and was never sighted again. A strong tide was running seaward at the time. Only two of the eight men in the boat could swim, and numerous sharks were observed in the area. The only traces of the boat ever recovered were broken pieces of the hull and a cask which they had taken to fill with fresh water. Flinders named Thistle Island in memory of the master, another island after Taylor, a midshipman, and six small islets after the seamen who perished.

The loss was a bad blow to crew morale. Thistle had been with Bass when he discovered Westernport and the Bass Strait. He had sailed with Bass and Flinders round Tasmania and had accompanied Flinders to Moreton Bay. Before leaving Spithead Thistle had visited a fortune-teller, called Pine, who warned him that the ship in which he was sailing would be joined by another vessel, and that before leaving her, Thistle would lose his life.

Other crew members, hearing this story, went to consult the old seer. They would be shipwrecked, he said, but not in the ship in which they left England. Both prophecies came true.

After the disaster to the boat's crew, Flinders sailed to the northward limits of Spencer Gulf and St. Vincent Gulf. There was a chance they might connect with the Gulf of Carpentaria and bisect the continent, but Flinders soon found they did nothing of the kind. He then discovered Kangaroo Island where the crew had a pleasant time ashore, among the numerous and tame marsupials. Many kangaroos were killed for eating, either by shooting or knocking them on the head with sticks.

Flinders named Investigator Strait between the island and the mainland after his vessel.

After sailing through Backstairs Passage, another dramatic incident occurred. At four in the afternoon the lookout aloft reported a white rock ahead. Drawing nearer, Flinders was amazed to find it was no rock but another ship; it was almost incredible that there could be another ship so many thousands of miles away from civilization. While excitement ran round the decks, Flinders decided to take no chances. 'Clear decks for action!' he roared. As the white-winged vessels raced towards each other at breakneck speed, tension mounted. The English sailors grabbed cutlasses and stood grimly by their grappling irons, ready for any emergency, or if need be to take the unknown stranger by storm.

Anxiously Flinders studied the heavy-looking vessel. She carried no topgallants, but when her colours were hoisted, the French ensign fluttered from the mast-head. An enemy ship! A thrill of alarm spread among those at the rails. Would the French respect the immunity granted to Flinders' scientific expedition? The English captain, alert for treachery, kept his broadsides trained on the other vessel. Then, as the French ship passed she raised a truce flag forward and a sigh of relief went up from all hands.

The vessel was *Le Geographe*, one of two vessels under Captain Nicholas Baudin, which had sailed from Europe nine months before Flinders under the special orders of Napoleon. The French expedition, well equipped with all the facilities of the French Navy at its disposal, carried twenty-three scientists and was bent on exploring the coast of New Holland.

At Encounter Bay, when Baudin met Flinders, the two captains exchanged passports and information, but Flinders later found out that all his discoveries were altered to French names and his work completely ignored.

Continuing his voyage, Flinders next sailed into Port Phillip, of which he thought he was the discoverer. But Lieutenant Grant, who had brought out the *Lady Nelson* in 1800, was the first to sail easterly through Bass Strait. Grant had named Cape Banks, Cape Northumberland, Cape Bridgewater, Cape Nelson, Portland Bay, and Cape Otway, the various



headlands on his course. In the same vessel Lieutenant John Murray entered Port Phillip, ten weeks before Flinders.

Flinders reached Sydney without a single sick sailor aboard. In Port Jackson he found *Le Naturaliste*, the companion vessel of *Le Geographe*. A boat crew from *Le Geographe*, which had been lost in Bass Strait, had been rescued by an English vessel and was now on board *Le Naturaliste*. But there was hardly a healthy man on either of the French ships. Scurvy had struck half the crew, and several had died at sea. The requirements of the two vessels were willingly supplied by the Sydney people and the crews were free to go ashore as they pleased. While Baudin was highly esteemed, two other Frenchmen, Peron and Freycinet, spied out the colony and prepared a future plan of attack. Fortunately Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, three years later, doomed the plan to an early death. The cordial treatment given to the French by the people of Sydney was in striking contrast to the treatment awaiting Captain Flinders at their hands.

As soon as possible the *Investigator*, now accompanied by the brig *Lady Nelson*, set out to finish the survey of the Australian coast. The *Lady Nelson* proved an encumbrance and was returned to Port Jackson while still east of Torres Strait.

The *Investigator*, too, was still leaking, but Flinders was determined to finish his task. In three days he weaved his way dexterously through the dreaded coral pinnacles and low-lying reefs of Torres Strait. He then coasted around the Gulf of Carpentaria, named Wellesley Island and the Pellew Group and honoured the old Dutch explorers by naming Arnhem Land after one of their ships. Flinders lost a man from sun-stroke, after whom he named Morgan Island.

The crew badly needed fresh food, so Flinders headed for Timor. Here he shipped fresh supplies, but infectious dysentery stole on board. Hastily Flinders completed his voyage to Cape Leeuwin, and then, after losing several of his crew from the sickness, coasted round to Port Jackson, which he reached in June 1803, in a vessel so rotten that a severe gale would have sent her to the bottom.

Flinders with the officers and men of the *Investigator* left Port Jackson for England in the *Porpoise* to obtain a better

ship to continue the surveys. Two ships, the *Bridgewater*, an East Indiaman of 740 tons, and the *Cato* of 450 tons, of London, accompanied the *Porpoise*. They were to try the passage through Torres Strait, which was the quickest route to Batavia and India.

The three vessels slipped out through Sydney Heads and for a week experienced favourable weather. In the afternoon of August 16, 1803, the *Cato* signalled 'land ahead.' A gleaming surf-thrashed sandbank, covered with birds, lay on their course. On the map this is now shown as Cato Bank. There was deep water all round, but as a precaution the skippers ordered the topsails to be double-reefed after dark. Extra lookouts were posted. At eight that night the cry of 'Breakers Ahead' brought Flinders and other officers racing to the deck from the dining saloon. The *Porpoise* was approaching a mid-ocean reef, broadside to wind and waves. With a crash that shattered the ship from stem to stern, the *Porpoise* landed on the rocks and stayed fast, 740 miles north of Sydney.

The dim shapes of the *Cato* and *Bridgewater* emerged in brief moonlight, approaching each other at a fast rate. Each vessel was on a different tack, the men trying feverishly to avoid the reef. A head-on collision seemed inevitable. The safety of the *Porpoise* men depended on the two ships. As they neared one another, a horrified silence fell on those aboard the wrecked *Porpoise*. Every second they expected to hear the splintering crash of rending timbers and the cries of injured men.

Suddenly, to the intense relief of the watchers the two ships began to open out, missing each other by the narrowest of margins. The silent prayers of thankfulness were barely spoken when the *Cato* with a rending smash hit another part of the reef. Masts, fittings, and spars were flung overboard and all lights extinguished. It seemed the vessel was a total loss.

In the darkness the lights of the *Bridgewater*, the surviving vessel, were barely visible. They dipped and bobbed, and finally to the horror of the miserable survivors gradually vanished. All night those on the wrecked ships waited in vain for the *Bridgewater's* lights to reappear. Flinders swam over to a small boat floating in the lee of the rocks. He determined with the help of others to follow the *Bridgewater* and bring her



back. But the strength of the wind and waves defeated them. In the harsh light of tropical daybreak the *Cato* seamen lay huddled together, half-naked in the bows of the wreck. There was no sign of the *Bridgewater*. A sandbank about half a mile away was above high-water mark, so the men of the *Porpoise* were landed there. The crew of the *Cato* jumped into the sea and all except three were picked up by the *Porpoise* boats and taken to the bank.

Flinders wasted no time bemoaning his fate. Within two days the ninety-four men on the sandbank had salvaged some of the stores. A flagstaff was erected and the Union Jack hoisted upside down as a distress signal. A week later Flinders was ready to leave in the largest boat.

They named the cutter *Hope*, and all the fourteen aboard her were in high spirits when a seaman scrambled up the flagstaff and reversed the Union Jack. His action aroused three spontaneous cheers from the crew, and the cutter cleared the bank on the long voyage to Sydney for assistance. On September 8th, after a trying passage in the small craft, they glimpsed the rugged outline of Sydney Heads. A stiff nor'easter bore the *Hope* past the sentinel cliffs.

Thin as a skeleton, bearded, and almost exhausted, Flinders without ceremony burst in on Governor King at his dinner table. King imagined Flinders thousands of miles away, but he quickly recovered from his surprise and organized rescue operations. By September 21st the China-bound *Rolla*, the colonial schooner *Francis* and the 29-ton schooner *Cumberland* were on their way to Wreck Reef. Exactly six weeks after the day on which the *Hope* had left, the marooned survivors on the sandbank glimpsed the relief craft. In their absence the seamen had built another boat in case anything had happened to the *Hope*.

Amid much rejoicing Flinders men boarded the *Cumberland* and once more set out to pass through the reef-strewn Torres Strait. They sailed across the north of Australia and then south-west for the Cape of Good Hope.

Meanwhile, the *Bridgewater*, under Captain Palmer, which had left the shipwrecked men to their fate, reached Bombay in safety and reported the total loss of the *Cato* and *Porpoise*.

with all hands. Palmer set out for London and was never heard of again.

Flinders found that his little ship leaked worse than ever and on December 6, 1803, he saw that the only prudent course was to make for Mauritius in the western Indian Ocean. The island was then occupied by the French. On arrival Flinders discovered that war continued between England and France, but as he possessed a passport which had been signed by Napoleon, he hoped he would be all right. Unfortunately the French Governor, General de Caen, was suspicious and put Flinders under armed guard and closely interrogated him. Flinders felt insulted and unwisely declined an invitation to dine with the Governor and his wife. Had he accepted the invitation, and talked the matter over with the Governor, his detention might have been short. Instead, all his priceless papers and log books were seized and never returned. For three months he was kept in solitary confinement, being branded a spy. Then he was incarcerated for twenty months with the other English sailors before being permitted outside parole. Finally, in October 1810, after six-and-a-half years' captivity, he was released and landed in England after an absence of ten years.

Flinders' first act on his return was typical of this man's great character. He immediately obtained the freedom of five young men, prisoners of war in England, and saw that they were sent back to their families in Mauritius.

During his captivity Flinders' health had suffered badly, and he never properly recovered. While he prepared a book on his explorations, Peron and Freycinet published their account of Baudin's expedition. They took credit for much of Flinders' work, a poor return for the hospitality they had enjoyed in Port Jackson!

Tragically, Flinders did not live to see his own work in print. It was published on July 17, 1814, while he lay dying. His wife put the book into his hand, but he did not regain consciousness. Flinders did not even know the book was there. On the following day he sat up, called for his papers, and collapsed. He was only 40 years of age at his death, but the hardships of his voyages and the anxieties of his captivity had made an



old man of him. He was buried in the churchyard of St. James, Hampstead Road, London, but the location of his grave has been lost.

Flinders took great care of his men and their health and immortalized many of his friends by giving their names to geographical features around the coast, which he was the first to survey. It was Flinders who conferred the name Australia on the sixth continent. After the publication of his book the name was gradually adopted, and New Holland fell out of use before the middle of the last century. Flinders was a great seaman who brought home ships that were completely unseaworthy. He was one of the greatest cartographers and discoverers of the world.

An application for a pension for his wife and daughter was rejected. Mrs. Flinders received no more than the miserable pittance of a captain's widow of those days. In 1853, a year after her death, the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria each voted a pension of £100 to her daughter.

Flinders' fame will never fade in Australia. His name is commemorated in streets, towns, rivers and islands. Cool, courageous, self-reliant, square-shouldered, Flinders takes his place among the immortals of exploration.

## CHAPTER VI

### *More Settlements*

SOME credit for the coastal exploration of Australia must go to the international brotherhood of colourful rogues, miscreants and hard-bitten scrapings of the Seven Seas who manned the seal-ships and whalers of those days. They sailed into the bays, up the coastal rivers and inlets along the coast-line, in several instances years ahead of the accredited discoverers. They knew the rugged shores of Tasmania and the white-beached coast of West Australia. They established their colonies and black harems on the windswept rocky islands of the Bass Strait. Many of these unknown pioneers knew the lonely surf-swept outposts of Australasia better than they are known today. They named and mapped in rough seamanlike fashion the off-shore islands. They went south to Macquarie Island in the sub-Antarctic regions, and north to the tropics in search of whales, loot, sandalwood and slaves. Bloodshed, treachery and nightmare adventures followed their path through the territories of the South-West Pacific.

British, American, French and Dutch whalers and sealers who entered Australian waters at the beginning of the nineteenth century ushered in an era of lawlessness in deserved keeping with the colony's penal birth and oppressive military government.

Government officials in Sydney complained to London that the failure to send out sufficient supplies forced the colonists to buy food and equipment from any speculators or traders who dropped anchor in Port Jackson. Some traders held the colonists to ransom, demanding prices five times those at which the goods could be shipped from England. Many of these trading vessels came from the United States, but the Governors of New South Wales were forbidden to trade with foreigners, not for political reasons, but to preserve the trade monopoly



of the East India Company. The Governors had to plead necessity as an excuse for their purchases from American ships.

The Yankee traders and sealers had many clashes with the early colonial seamen, who comprised a motley crew of escaped convicts, deserters from the Royal Navy and freed slaves, as picturesque a set of rogues as ever trod the main deck of a sail-ship. But their story lies buried in the wrecks around the coast and in unknown graves on a hundred islands.

No sooner had Bass and Flinders circumnavigated Tasmania than it was feared that the French might seize the island. In 1802 the French captain Baudin had carefully surveyed a section of the south coast before visiting Sydney.

When Baudin left Sydney, Governor King sent Lieutenant Robins after him to tell him that Tasmania was a British possession. Robins found the French captain on King Island in the Bass Strait and handed him a letter from the Governor. In full view of the French, Robins landed his party on the island, and, with the flag flying, took formal possession. Baudin was offended and called the lieutenant's action 'a childish ceremony.'

To separate the more troublesome convicts from the rest, and also to thwart the French, Governor King decided to establish penal settlements in Tasmania. In September 1803, Lieutenant Bowen was sent with a small party of convicts and marines to Risdon Cove on the Derwent River. A few months later Colonel Paterson went with more convicts to the River Tamar. In the same year Colonel Collins was sent with four-hundred convicts and marines to found a settlement at Port Phillip. He landed at Sorrento, but after complaining of the poor soil and unfriendly natives, obtained permission to shift the whole of his party to the River Derwent, where he founded the town of Hobart.

Flinders had proved to the few thousand settlers in New South Wales that they were sitting on the edge of a vast continent. Half of it lay within the tropical regions, and the whole area totalled nearly 3,000,000 square miles. It had rich coastal lands and possibly vast pastoral country in the

interior. Mountain ranges ran parallel to the eastern coastline, and there were frequent stretches of low sandy shore on the north, west and south. Strange to relate, for some time the colonists showed little interest in exploration. They knew the coast very well, and this was all they cared about, as the interior seemed inaccessible. The Blue Mountains reared their precipitous sandstone battlements close to Sydney and their dark chasms and ravines defied all attempts at penetration.

In 1799 a man named Wilson had almost succeeded. Accompanied by an alert youth named Barracks, Wilson made two attempts to get across the mountains. On their first venture they reached new country in the region of Mittagong and Bowral, and went west to the Wollondilly River; on their second trip they reached Mount Towrang, about six miles east of Goulburn. From there they could have reached the Murrumbidgee River, but lack of provisions forced them back when, all unknown, success lay within their grasp.

Three years later another attempt to cross the mountains was made by Ensign Louis Barrallier, who had explored Tasmania and charted Westernport. In November 1802 he moved south-west to Picton, and then west across the Wollondilly. When he was thirty miles due west from Picton, he came to a river which he named Kowmung. He followed the river down and met the most rugged and inaccessible part of the Blue Mountains. His provisions were finished, his men exhausted and dispirited, so he returned to Sydney. Had he gone up instead of down the River Kowmung, he would have easily crossed the ranges to the coveted western land beyond.

Thus two explorers had just missed the prize. Another, Cayley, made a futile effort in 1804, being beaten by towering cliffs and heart-breaking chasms. Meanwhile the settlement was growing. The cry was for more land for the expanding flocks and herds. The sheep and cattle, increasing by thousands, would have to be exported if the mountains were not conquered.

When other attempts to cross the mountains had failed, the colonists became tired of the subject, until in 1813 a drought hit the coastal territory and roused them from their apathy. Their flocks and herds died in great numbers. The position was desperate when Gregory Blaxland, William Charles



Wentworth (a young man of 20), and Lieutenant William Lawson joined forces. Blaxland had already made two vain attempts along the Warragamba, but the three now hoped to win through by keeping to the precipitous ridge between the Grose and Cox Valleys.

They set out on May 11, 1813, and crossed the Neapean River at Emu Plains. For three weeks they pushed on steadily, at times hacking a track through the thick bush, returning for their horses, and then hacking through the bush again. Sometimes they covered the same ground three times; some days they only made two miles. At one camp they had to carry all the water up a precipitous 600-foot cliff. After climbing the first range of mountains, they became trapped in a tangle of deep gulleys and began to think they would have to return to the settlement with another story of failure. Finally, they located a spur of the Great Dividing Range, which runs for 1,500 miles down the eastern side of the continent. Here the mountains rose to 4,000 feet, stark black peaks against the setting sun. They followed the ridge westward. Below, on either side, a stream wound in and out of the tree-filled ravines. That ridge was the key which unlocked the mountains. At times it was only 15 yards wide and never more than a mile across. But they climbed steadily higher and higher, up the pass, losing the friendly stream in the thick scrub below. After scrambling over razor-sharp rocks up the side of a ridge, and hacking through thick scrub, they finally reached the summit.

From the top they gazed down into a rich valley, green-grassed and well-watered. But their hearts sank with despair, and fears of failure froze their minds, for the stream below ran eastward, back towards the coast! They were not yet across the watershed. For all they knew, the path ahead might be even more difficult than that which they had just overcome.

With doubt in their hearts they descended the slopes of Mount York into the valley and then trekked towards the west. The country improved as they pushed on, and their fears about the Great Dividing Range ahead seemed groundless. Ten miles down the valley they knew that the worst difficulties were over. The explorers rightly believed that they had

conquered the most formidable barrier, and that those who followed them would have a comparatively easy task. Their food supply was almost exhausted, so they turned for home and reached Sydney fatigued and in poor health. The Blue Mountains had been crossed but not the Great Dividing Range.

Immediate steps were taken to exploit the discovery. Deputy Surveyor-General G. W. Evans was sent by Governor Macquarie to follow the track and push on westward. He crossed the Neapean on November 20, 1813, and less than a week later reached the explorers' farthest point. Proceeding westward, he penetrated the mountainous broken country of the Great Dividing Range. At the end of the month he was at the point between the eastward and westward flowing streams. When the party reached a stream flowing westwards, Evans knew they were over the worst. The stream flowed down gentle slopes into a rich valley. It abounded with fish, so they called it the Fish River.

The stream soon gave way to a large river, from the south, which at times apparently carried a great body of water. This was called the Macquarie, and Evans continued to follow the river until December 18th, passing over rich tracts whose only drawback was a shortage of timber. Emus, kangaroo and other game bounded over the wide level plain, but with all this they saw only six natives during the whole journey, though smoke signals heralded their progress. On January 8, 1814, Evans returned with his party to Emu Plains, having travelled 100 miles due west from the Nepean River. The three explorers, Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson were given grants of land in the newly discovered country, and mountains were named after them.

The effect of their expedition was incalculable. The principal industries of New South Wales, wool-growing and wheat-growing, both of which have brought wealth to the nation, are now carried on west of the mountains. The newly discovered land surpassed in beauty and fertility anything so far seen in the colonies, and offered enough pasturage and tillage for a century.

Lieutenant William Cox now set to work with a gang of



convicts, and in a remarkably short period of time—just over six months—a road was made across the range. In April 1815 the Governor drove along the road in triumphal procession, and at the end of the tour he laid out a new township on the banks of the Macquarie, which he named Bathurst.

The mountains had yielded the hidden key that opened up the treasury of the west. The narrow pass across the range was quickly traversed by farmers and pastoralists in search of more land. The discovery of the boundless range of fertile land in Bathurst plains opened up a new era of expansion for the colony.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Perilous Passages*

WHILE the land explorers were moving out to the west, some of the most adventurous voyages afloat were being experienced by Phillip Parker King, who in a mere cockle-shell of a ship completed a close-patterned survey of the northern, western and eastern coasts. He was the first Australian to achieve the rank of admiral. Son of the third Governor of New South Wales, King was born at Norfolk Island on December 13, 1791. He was educated in England and joined the Royal Navy in 1807, displaying bravery in action in the next two years. He served on various vessels in the Mediterranean. Then, in February 1817, Lieutenant King was given command of an expedition to complete the work of Flinders.

King was 26 years of age, the same age as Flinders when he set out on his epic voyage. Leaving Sydney on December 22, 1817, in the *Mermaid*, a tiny cutter of 85 tons, King's company of seventeen included Bedwell and Roe as mates, and Allan Cunningham as botanist. Boongaree, a Port Jackson aboriginal who had accompanied Captain Flinders in the *Investigator*, went along as interpreter. Provisions for nine months and water for twelve weeks were taken.

Course was set through Bass Strait, and Cape Leeuwin was rounded on February 1, 1818. Sickness attacked the crews, so little attempt was made to investigate the west coast, and a straight course was steered to North-West Cape, goal of so many early navigators. On February 10, 1818, while at anchor off the Cape, the cable parted and they lost one of their anchors, an accident which considerably endangered the remainder of the voyage. Two days later the fluke of a second anchor broke when the wind freshened during the night. Three days afterwards they reached a secure anchorage, which King named the Bay of Rest, the crew being almost exhausted





6. Captain John  
Hunter.



Captain  
Matthew Flinders.



7. The junction of the rivers Murray and Darling, where Sturt faced hostile aborigines. (*Australian National Travel Association.*)

The winding Murray River which Sturt followed for 1,500 miles to the sea. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





when they found it. A landing was made, and Cunningham measured one of the giant ant-hills of that coast. It was 8 feet high and 26 feet in girth, which was not really large compared with others found in that region. All examination of the country gave King and his companions a poor opinion of the place; they left the inlet in which they had found shelter, and the large bay in which it was situated was named Exmouth Gulf. In this area the first flow oil in Australia was drilled in 1953.

Following a course to the north-east, King arrived at Rosemary Island, which was supposed to mask the entrance to a strait. He began a closer examination of the coast line. Here the active botanist planted peach-stones, and the party saw natives paddling from island to island on logs, their only means of navigation. A regular chase took place before one native was caught and taken on board the cutter by a boat's crew. Later the native was restored to his log and around his neck a bag was suspended containing a little of everything he had appeared to fancy during his stay on the *Mermaid*.

Steering towards Cape Arnhem, they passed through seas swarming with turtles, snakes, sharks and dolphins. They named Macquarie Strait and anchored off Goulburn Island, making a complete survey of the bay and the islands. Here they found traces of the Malay trepang fishermen, who had been mentioned by Flinders. The crew of the *Mermaid* could tell from the audacity and cunning of the natives that they were well used to visitors; they even swam out after dark and cut the whale-boat adrift. Fortunately the theft was detected before the boat drifted out of sight.

The hostile attitude of the natives caused trouble for the boat parties collecting wood and water. It was lucky for King and his men that they were not obliged to use their muskets in self-defence, as the majority of the twelve weapons taken aboard in Port Jackson were found unserviceable.

Ashore the seamen complained that the copper-coloured air was filled with venomous insects, while Cunningham added a lot to his collection and took advantage of a good patch of soil to sow every sort of seed he had brought along with him.

On this part of the coast they encountered a fleet of fifteen Malay proas, but King, in his little unarmed cutter, did not care to risk communication with these doubtful characters.

On April 16th Raffles Bay was found and named, and the next day they entered Port Essington, which was christened after Vice-Admiral Sir William Essington. At Knocker's Bay, immediately to the west, the natives made a surprise attack on the boat while it was hemmed in amongst the mangroves. Fortunately the blacks were beaten off without doing any damage. King next entered and examined Van Diemen's Gulf, which had been named by Dutch vessels from Timor in 1705.

In Van Diemen's Gulf, King found some of the Malay fleet at anchor, and feeling strong enough to deal with a few of them at a time, he anchored and allowed them to come on board. He showed them his rough chart, from which they instantly understood the cutter's business. They showed a great liking for port wine, and upon his mentioning the natives of the coast, and showing them a stone-headed spear, the Malays displayed contempt and disgust.

King, during his survey of Van Diemen's Gulf, found and named two Alligator Rivers, which were later traversed by Leichhardt on his trip to Port Essington. King and his followers little dreamt of the rich plains in the back country. From the Gulf they sailed to Melville Island, which was named after the First Lord of the Admiralty. Here once more they had trouble with the natives, whose experience with the Malays had made them adroit and treacherous pilferers.

Whilst on shore taking bearings, the party from the *Mermaid* was suddenly surprised, and in beating a hasty retreat left behind the theodolite stand and Cunningham's insect net, which were promptly appropriated by the natives. Although they were offered tomahawks and other tempting presents the natives obstinately refused to part with the theodolite stand. Once, after a long discussion, they brought it down to the beach and minutely examined it, but the brass mountings took their fancy too much to allow them to part with it. King could not take it by force without bloodshed, so he sailed away. On May 19th Apsley Strait was discovered, and the second



island received the name of Bathurst. King next surveyed and named the Vernon Islands and Clarence Strait.

At Timor, where he called for supplies and re-fit, King learnt that a perpetual warfare raged between the natives and Malays. This was unfortunate, as it made difficulties in establishing friendly communication with the native people. After a short stay King sailed for Sydney by way of the west coast, and anchored in Port Jackson on July 29, 1818.

The re-equipment of the vessel and the compilation of his charts occupied Captain King until December, when he left Port Jackson to survey the entrance to Macquarie Harbour, which had just been discovered on the western coast of Tasmania. In February 1819 he returned to Sydney.

King now decided to make his way along the east coast and through Torres Straits. After leaving Sydney on May 8th, and surveying Port Macquarie on the way, King landed from the *Mermaid* at the Endeavour River to assemble a boat which had been shipped on board in Sydney.

Using the same spot where Captain Cook had landed forty-nine years earlier, King this time took the precaution of burning the grass, so that the natives could not attempt the same trick that they had played on Cook. During the time the boat was building, the inevitable thieving of the natives occurred, and the white men had to fire over their heads in warning.

Leaving the Endeavour River, they sighted the wreck of a vessel which was found to be the *Frederick*, but no signs of the fate of her crew were available. They narrowly escaped being wrecked themselves on a bank at the mouth of a river running into Newcastle Bay, which King christened Escape River, and which was destined to come into fatal prominence at a later date as the scene of Kennedy's death.

Eleven weeks out from Port Jackson, King had plotted the coastal projections and the track within the Barrier Reef between the Percy Islands and Cape York; he had surveyed Port Macquarie, examined Rodd's Bay, and assembled the boat at the Endeavour River.

Frequent rain between Cape Grafton and Torres Strait increased the danger of navigation, and perpetuated the

dampness of the dingy cabins, leading to inevitable sickness; but from the straits to Cape Arnhem at the western head of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the drier air and finer weather restored the invalids to perfect health.

King sailed across the Gulf, and sighted land again at Cape Wessel, and on July 30th anchored off the Crocodile Islands of the old charts. Here King discovered a river which he named the Liverpool. Accompanied by Bedwell and Cunningham, King made a long voyage up the river, but the surrounding country was too flat to provide any information about the interior.

At Goulburn Island, where they landed at their old watering-place, they were again attacked by the natives.

Continuing the survey southwards, King sailed the little *Mermaid* into the sheltered waters of Cambridge Gulf. On Adolphus Island he buried one of his seamen, William Nicholls, and named the north-west point of the island after him. King was anxious to make a meticulous examination of the coast at this point, as the French ships under Baudin had seen little of it. But the long voyage had taken its toll of the men. Three were sick in their bunks, and all the crew suffered from ophthalmia caused by the cruel glare of the sun off the glassy sea. Fresh water supplies were low and they had been unable to replenish them.

Under these unfavourable circumstances King was obliged to make for Timor, where he heard that some of the crew of the wrecked *Frederick* had arrived. However, of the greater number of the crew who had taken to the longboat nothing had been heard.

On January 12, 1820, the *Mermaid* returned to Port Jackson. King had surveyed the 500 miles of coast, in addition to the 540 miles surveyed on the previous voyage. Beside this a running survey of 900 miles of the east coast to Torres Strait had been made and a much safer route for ships discovered.

King now prepared for his third voyage, and on June 14, 1820, left Port Jackson to dare again the perils of the north coast in his little cutter. This time a surgeon, James Hunter, went with him to look after the health of the men.



The start was unfortunate, for in heavy weather the cutter lost her bowsprit and they had to put back to port. After repairs had been made they were on their way up the coast once more, but the little craft struck a sandbank and damaged her shell. King was determined to continue this time and ignored the leaky hull.

On August 19th they reached their former anchorage off Goulburn Island and took in fresh water, meanwhile keeping a sharp look-out for attacking natives. This time the blacks did not appear near the ship, but they cut off Lieutenant Roe when he had wandered off by himself. He survived a shower of spears, and was only rescued by the timely arrival of the boat's crew.

King proceeded to examine that part of the north-west coast which Baudin had visited. On September 14th a party was sent ashore for fresh water and found a magnificent shelter in York Sound, which they called Prince Frederick Harbour.

The leak in the *Mermaid* increased alarmingly and it was necessary to careen her and repair the damage. A suitable place was found nearby and named Careening Bay. Leaving here, they passed between Cape Brewster and the Coronation Islands, and entered another spacious stretch of water, Brunswick Sound. Here they found and named the Prince Regent River, which was later the scene of Grey's trials and tribulations. By now it was apparent that the cutter leaked so much that it was no longer safe. King reluctantly was forced to return to Sydney, and when off Botany Bay he narrowly escaped total wreck during a dark and stormy night.

The historic craft that had carried King so far and so safely was laid up for repairs, and a brig of 150 tons was bought and christened *Bathurst*. King set sail on his fourth and last voyage to the north coast, accompanied by two Batavia-bound merchantmen, the *Dick* and the *San Antonio*, who desired pilotage through the reef-strewn Torres Strait.

Meantime the *Mermaid* was thoroughly repaired and re-fitted, leaving Port Jackson with the first convict cargo to Port Macquarie, on which service she was later wrecked.

On board the *Bathurst* King thought he had a crew of thirty-three hands, but three days after leaving port he made a

discovery. When the hold was opened, a fourteen-year-old girl was found hidden among the casks. She was in love with the boatswain and had secreted herself aboard the ship to be near him. It was inconvenient to return her to the shore, but when the boatswain consented to share his rations with her, King allowed her to stay.

They followed their old route of the previous year, steering across the Gulf to Cape Wessel, which they sighted on June 3, 1821. The survey of the north-west coast was continued to Cape Latouche Treville. When laying down his survey upon the chart, King found Cape Leveque to be the point where Dampier anchored in 1688. In commemoration, the name of Buccaneer Archipelago was given to the islands fronting Cygnet Bay. On August 26th Roebuck Bay received its name after the ship Dampier commanded when he visited the coast in 1699.

King found that the wind was continually adverse, so he sailed for Mauritius, where repairs were made and stores taken in. He then steered for the south-west coast of Australia and surveyed it from Rottneest Island north to Cygnet Bay.

The astonishing rise and fall of the tides round the Buccaneers Archipelago had been noticed earlier by King. While among these islands, he was caught during a dead calm in one of those treacherous tides for which the coast has become famous. King was at his usual position at the mast-head, conning the ship, when the vessel was suddenly seized and carried off at incredible speed towards the rocky shore. The stream of the tide swept them past dangerous rocks, but half a mile farther on it changed direction to the south-east and bore them swiftly towards a narrow strait running between rock-girt islands. To their horror they saw the centre of the strait was filled by another rock obstruction. In a desperate effort to save the vessel, a boat was lowered and an attempt was made to bring the ship's head round. As they were carried closer to the strait, they passed within spear-throw of natives on shore who shouted and waved at them.

'By this time we were flying past the shore with such velocity it made us quite giddy. We were entering the narrowest part of the strait and the next moment were close to the rock,



which appeared almost impossible to avoid,' wrote the commander in a dramatic passage in his exciting diary. The current was carrying them swiftly towards inevitable destruction, but once again providence came to King's rescue. At the moment when all seemed lost and they were on the point of being dashed to pieces against the central obstruction, a sudden breeze sprang up and, filling the sails, drove the vessel forward for a few yards. It was enough, but only just, for the rudder was less than six yards from the rock! Another second and disaster would have overwhelmed them. Instead they managed to steer past the obstacle, and no sooner had they done so than the breeze died again to a dead calm.

The tidal waters round the northern ports of West Australia rise and fall as much as 40 feet and it is a common sight today to see a ship left high and dry in the space of a few hours alongside a wharf or jetty. As quickly as the sea goes out, it returns to float the ship once more.

King had dared his last on the north-west coast: after further examination of the dangerous Buccaneer Archipelago, thick weather and easterly winds compelled him to abandon the survey and sail for Sydney. King left impressed with the idea that somewhere behind Buccaneer Archipelago there was, if anywhere on that long coast, a river opening into the interior of the continent. The constant loss of anchors prevented him from pursuing the idea. In these days of well-found survey ships, with radar and electronic devices for depth-sounding, it is as well to recall the work that King performed in the *Mermaid* among the dangers of unknown seas and the constant battle to obtain vital supplies of timber and water in the face of hostile savages.

King ranks high among the trail-blazers of Australian exploration, and his work completed the coastal part of its discovery. As a young man he married Miss Harriet Lethbridge, of Launceston, Cornwall, who survived him with their children. King became prominent in government and agricultural circles in New South Wales and died on February 26, 1856.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Myth of the Inland Sea*

**A**CTING Surveyor-General Evans, the first man to cross the Great Dividing Range, forged the link between two groups of explorers, those who tackled the mountains and those who later probed the western rivers of New South Wales. Evans discovered the rivers west of the range and opened up a question which puzzled the colonists for years. What happened to these rivers? Where did they flow? Some thought they went to the sea near the Gulf of Carpentaria. A more popular idea was that the rivers emptied themselves into a vast inland sea. Those who saw the floods of 1955, when one-fifth of the State of New South Wales was under water, could understand how easily the hopes of the settlers might have been fulfilled.

Evans was born at Warwick, England, in 1778. He received £130 and a grant of land in Tasmania for his discovery of the Bathurst Plains. He set out again for the west in 1815 with a small party and one month's provisions. They headed south-west into a valley down which a stream poured into the Macquarie. On reaching the top, stony ridges and scrubby country confronted them. They came across two mountains, with a wide stream flowing to the north-west, which they assumed to be a tributary of the Macquarie.

Two days' journey to the west of this last stream they met a fine river to which they gave the Governor's Christian name, Lachlan. Evans found himself running short of provisions and returned to Bathurst on June 12th. Another valuable stretch of country fit for settlement had been discovered.

The river problem was now more difficult than before. Two rivers, the Lachlan and the Macquarie, flowed into the interior within a short distance of each other. Every mile they diverged farther and farther apart, and the question in the minds of all the colonists was—where did they flow?



Evans had finished his work as an independent explorer when John Oxley, the Surveyor-General, was sent to explore the country between Bathurst and the Lachlan, eighty miles to the West. Accompanied by Allan Cunningham, the botanist on King's voyages, and with Evans as his lieutenant, Oxley set out on April 20, 1817, from a depot constructed on the Lachlan at the farthest point reached by Evans. Oxley's career as an explorer was marred by ill-luck. His party descended the river in boats through uninteresting country. The land to the north and north-west was inundated, and the Lachlan degenerated into little more than a stagnant canal, finally losing itself in wide marshland. In despair Oxley changed his plan and struck out for the south. Losing horses through fatigue and lack of proper feed, baffled by useless miles of mallee scrub, sandy wastes and stony ridges, Oxley was forced to go northward to a range of low hills. At the time he was only twenty miles from the 800 miles-long Murrumbidgee. This would have led him to the Murray, Australia's longest river, that cuts through 1,250 miles of the south-east of the continent and flows into Lake Alexandrina, South Australia.

After covering 1,200 arduous miles, Oxley returned by a north-east route and joined the Macquarie near the present town of Wellington, fifty miles from the settled areas.

In May 1818 Oxley led a second expedition, with Evans again as his lieutenant. This time they followed the course of the Macquarie. For several days they trekked up the Wellington valley through magnificent country. A large stream tumbling into the Macquarie from the east augured well for ultimate success. After travelling 125 miles, the hills vanished and the country became perfectly flat. But the soil was excellent and far above the reach of any flood. Two men were sent back to tell the Governor of the good progress the expedition was making.

Another seventy miles to the north-west, in level country, the river spread out into a maze of swamps. Oxley went on another thirty miles in a boat, for ten of which he saw no land. Floods had made the surrounding country a perfect sea.

Convinced that the western rivers emptied into a great inland sea, Oxley turned to the east. In his march back to the Blue Mountains, he crossed no less than twelve fine rivers, running

generally parallel to the Macquarie. He crossed the Castlereagh, reached the Warrumbungle mountains, and then came across some of the finest pastoral country in New South Wales, the Liverpool plains. He crossed the park-like land, full of magnificent trees and fertile soil. Belts and ridges of low bushy hills covered a country rich with cypress, gum and acacia trees in full flower. They toiled up Mount Tetley and Loadstone Hill, which spun the needle of their magnetic compass in whirligig fashion.

Oxley discovered more rivers and travelled over more grazing land. When the party reached the summit of the mountains, they did not know how to descend towards the east. High forest surrounded them. Deep impassable chasms stretched from north to south. But they pushed on until they came to a tremendous ravine, 3,000 feet deep and several miles wide. Here they twisted south, hoping for an easier path.

Oxley and party tramped on for days through wild broken country. Waterfalls cascaded hundreds of feet down the mountain sides into rich valleys. On September 23rd, from a high peak which he named Mount Seaview, Oxley glimpsed the Pacific Ocean in the distance. The descent down the mountains was treacherous, and was made possible only by the immense number of vines and creeping plants to which the men clung for support. In the valley they followed a river which they named the Hastings. It entered the sea at Port Macquarie, which Oxley considered suitable for settlement.

Oxley had covered nearly 300 miles in a straight line, and for the greater part of the distance his route lay through a well-watered and fertile country. He had failed to find any communication between the inland waters and the sea, but in compensation he had discovered an indefinite extent of agricultural land near the coast.

The party still had to plod down the coast, plagued by hostile blacks who laid ambush after ambush for them until they reached the settled districts. They were lucky enough to find a boat stranded on a beach, and, carrying it with them, had no difficulty in crossing the coastal streams. At length they arrived at Port Stephens and sailed back to the new settlement at Newcastle on the mouth of the Hunter River.



Oxley's expedition forced a change of policy on the British Government. Once regarded purely as a penal settlement, the discovery of new land opened the minds of men to the possibilities of the country. Free settlers were encouraged to emigrate, and in a few years more emigrants than convicts sailed for Sydney.

Evans was highly commended by Oxley for his work on the two expeditions, and carried on his survey work in Tasmania. In 1824 Evans applied to be allowed to retire on a pension, but in the following year was accused of receiving bribes from people doing business with his department. He went to England for six years, but it appeared that the charges against him only concerned fees to which he claimed title. He was finally granted a pension of £200 a year and opened up a business as a book-seller and stationer in Sydney. He spent his last ten years in Hobart, where he died on October 16, 1852.

To rid Sydney of its unruly element and to save free settlers from contamination, the authorities decided to remove the worst of the convicts from the Port Jackson district. Oxley set off in 1823 along the northern coast to find new sites for penal settlements. Passing through Port Macquarie, he found it a thriving settlement and continued up the coast for about 450 miles to discover the Tweed River.

Oxley did not examine Port Bowen as the season was too hot. He returned to Moreton Bay, which had been surveyed by Flinders. On the shore he noticed a group of natives, with a fair-skinned man standing among them. To Oxley's surprise, this man proved to be an Englishman, Pamphlet by name, one of a party of four cedar hunters who had left Sydney by boat and had been blown off course. After days of dreadful privation, through lack of water, a member of the party had died. The others finally landed, and thought they were many miles south of Sydney, but in reality were on Moreton Island. They then started to walk northwards, hoping to reach Sydney. Pamphlet soon turned back and was joined a few days later by Finnegan. The third man, Parsons, was not heard of again. The two survivors had lived with the blacks for seven months when Oxley's ship appeared. Both Pamphlet and Finnegan were surprised to learn they were nearly 500 miles north of Sydney.

They reported that a navigable river flowed into Moreton Bay. Oxley examined it for fifty miles and named it Brisbane after the Governor. On his return he reported so favourably that it was decided to establish a convict settlement at Moreton Bay instead of farther north. The new settlement came into being in 1824. Convicts found guilty of further crimes while serving their original sentences were sent there.

Oxley, obsessed with his theory of a vast inland sea, thought the Brisbane River was its outlet to the ocean. He was not afraid to take risks and never lost a man. His health suffered as a result of his explorations and he died at his country house near Sydney on May 26, 1828.

The early explorers were Government surveyors and members of the armed services, and it is unusual to find a naturalist among these pioneers, but such a man was Allan Cunningham.

Cunningham, born in Wimbledon, Surrey, in 1791, developed a bent for botanical studies. In 1816 he was appointed Government Botanist in Australia, his duty being to supply specimens of Australian plants to Kew Gardens. Much of his work in New South Wales was done while accompanying explorers on their expeditions. In 1817 he was with Oxley when he tried to follow the Lachlan River and shared in the privations of that long journey. He accompanied Captain King on his five different coastal voyages, during one of which he added 300 specimens to his collection.

In 1823 he was in charge of an expedition whose object was to find a route between Bathurst and the Liverpool Plains. Leaving Bathurst on the last day of March, he reached the Warrumbungle Mountains, where he was baffled for many days by towering cliffs and dead-end chasms. On June 5th he came to a gap in the range which he named Pandora's Pass, because it made him hopeful of success. The gap proved to be the passage he wanted.

Having accompanied Oxley to Moreton Bay and a little way up the Brisbane River, Cunningham set out two years later on a second land expedition through Pandora's Pass, but he just missed being the discoverer of the Darling River. In 1827 he again pushed northwards from the Liverpool Plains, crossed



the Namoi River and found level and well-wooded country beyond. He then crossed the Dumaresq River into present-day Queensland and came to sterile land. He moved on to make his most valuable discovery, the rich plains which he named the Darling Downs.

Climbing a peak, his party looked eastward to the vicinity of Moreton Bay and felt convinced that a passage to the coast would be found. Returning southwards, Cunningham crossed the Gwydir River and reached the Liverpool Plains, after having travelled 800 miles in three months. The following year found him voyaging north again to Moreton Bay from where he pushed confidently westward to find the route to the Darling Downs. His expectations were realized on August 25, 1828, when he came to a pass, which has been named after him, Cunningham's Gap.

After a visit to England, Cunningham returned as Government Botanist in charge of the Botanic Gardens, Sydney, but he soon resigned when he found that his main duty was growing vegetables for Government officials. He died on June 27, 1839, and, as an obelisk now shows, was buried in the Botanic Gardens, Sydney, which he loved so much.

Cunningham was a modest individual of fine character. Indefatigable as a botanist, he found time between his expeditions to write scientific papers. His huge collection of specimens mostly went to Kew Gardens and eventually to the British Museum. Though Cunningham went with parties which were small in number and comparatively poorly equipped, he managed to do what he had planned, and his journeys opened up much country for settlement.

High among the romantic figures who played feature roles in the drama of early discovery stands Hamilton Hume, born at Parramatta, N.S.W., in 1797, one of the first Australian-born explorers. From his early days Hume and his brothers were bushmen. There were few opportunities for education in Australia during the first ten years of the nineteenth century, and Hume received most of his education from his mother. When only 17 he explored the country as far to the south-west as Berrima in the southern highlands. Three years later he examined the area round Lake Bathurst and the

Goulburn plains. He went with Oxley to Jervis Bay and in 1822 was with a party that sailed along the east coast exploring the rivers.

Sir Thomas Brisbane, the Governor, ignored Oxley's pessimistic views about the chances of colonizing the country in the south-western part of the State and started Hume on an expedition from Lake George, near Lake Bathurst, to Westernport in the south of Victoria. A retired sea-captain, William Hilton Hovell, offered to supply horses and cattle, provided he was made joint leader with Hume. Hovell's ability as a navigator was considered useful, so the offer was accepted. Unfortunately their partnership was marred by constant quarrelling. Each leader provided three men, so the party totalled eight, and between them they had five bullocks, three horses and two carts.

Spurred on by an urge for distinction and to extend the known stock runs, the two adventurers set forth in October 1824. The heat of summer had not yet come. The days were bright and warm, the nights clear and cool. Rain-showers freshened the grass. Dew-drops sparkled like jewels on morning greenery. As they travelled towards Yass, the bush sang with the voice of birds. Gay-coloured parrots gazed down in curiosity before shrieking off into the shade at the approach of man and beast.

The men passed beneath tall gum trees and shady pines, through open spaces and into swamps. Violet, mauve and pink-tinged herbage glowed in the freshness of spring. Overhead the sky gleamed in glorious blue. Thin woolly clouds sailed aloft casting restful shade. Multitudes of water-birds took to the air as man and livestock splashed through swamp and stream. Wild-duck, white and blue crane, spoonbill and plover rose in clouds, setting the air a-quiver with their cries. Long-winged stilts rose gracefully, trailing pink lanky legs.

In magnificent country furtive kangaroos studied them curiously from the shelter of shady pines. As the men drew near, the animals hopped off, their thick tails thrashing the ground. When the explorers reached the banks of the Murrumbidgee, the river was swollen 40 yards wide by recent rains, and appeared utterly impassable. The current ran at six miles an



hour. The party waited three days, hoping the flood waters would subside. When they realized there was no chance of this, they determined to cross. By ingeniously covering the body of a wagon with a tarpaulin, they converted it into a boat. Then, by stretching lines across the river, they hauled their supplies to the other side. Farther south they passed the Tumut River, and on November 8th, atop a range of hills, they beheld a wonderful panorama of snow-capped mountains glistening in the sun.

Ahead were the white-topped monarchs of the Australian Alps, their peaks piercing the sky. Where they stood, the summit trees had been blasted by a whirlwind. While gazing at this awe-inspiring spectacle, the explorers nearly came to blows. Hume wanted to go south-west to avoid the Alps, and Hovell differed. So wide was the breach before them that Hovell determined to go his own way with his three men. Amid much wrangling, they divided the property till at length there was only a frying-pan left. Each leader seized hold of this utensil simultaneously, and the victim of their quarrel was soon in pieces. Next day each man went his own way; but before many hours had passed, Hovell knew it was a hopeless proposition. He lost his way, and was ultimately glad to rejoin Hume.

To escape the mountainous country, they swerved south-west, and within a few days came to a river nearly 100 yards wide. It was the head of the mighty Murray. Some of the men were exhausted and discontented. They wanted to go back. Hovell encouraged them. But Hume was made of a sterner fibre. "If you don't do what I tell you, I'll throw you in," he threatened, indicating the wide river. The men continued to grumble but reluctantly followed the young leader.

Tourists to Albury, on the New South Wales-Victorian border, visit the spot where the two explorers found this river. They also see, beside the river, a succession of lagoons. In the days of Hume and Hovell the area was thickly timbered with blue gums and overgrown with vine, fern, peppermint, flax and Kurrajong. The river was full of cod; bream and carp swarmed in the lagoons. The actual place where the explorers crossed the Murray is some miles away and is now covered by the deep water of the Hume dam.

After Hume and Hovell had crossed the Murray, their track

led over rough and hilly country. They crossed the Ovens and later the Goulburn Rivers. Farther on, they sighted a mountain, and climbed to the top hoping to see the sea. Failing in this, they named the peak Mount Disappointment. Despite their efforts, which included scrambling on their hands and knees over rocks and through scrub, this section of the Great Dividing Range proved too strong for them. Grumbling among the men once more rose to mutiny. They had had enough of exploring and wanted to go home. It required all Hume's physical and moral strength to urge them on. Hume promised the men that they would start back for Sydney if, in two days' time, the mountains did not slope towards the sea.

Though he had been hurt in a fall some days before, Hume walked ahead of the others. On the afternoon of the second day he climbed the highest point. Far away in front the country sloped downwards to a great plain, dotted here and there with extinct volcanic craters. But in the distance was the clear sparkle of the sea!

They travelled twenty miles to the south over level country, interspersed with conical hills. On December 16th, after a journey of eleven weeks, they came to the shores of a large sheet of water named Geelong by the natives. Hume and Hovell thought they were looking at the waters of Westernport, but in reality they were standing on the shores of Port Phillip. Years afterwards, it was claimed that the two explorers had disagreed on the position they had reached, and a quarrel developed which continued for many years. Due to Hume's superb bushcraft, they were able to take short cuts on the return journey. Their provisions were finished and the whole party was near exhaustion. For days they lived on fish and the kangaroo they were able to shoot. They reached Lake George on January 18, 1825. Hume and Hovell each received grants of 1,200 acres of land, small reward for the important discoveries of an expedition which had paid its own expenses.

Hume went with Sturt on his first expedition into the interior and was able to speak with the natives they met early in the journey. He spent his remaining days as a successful pastoralist. He married a Miss Dight, who survived him without children, and died in 1873. His work was not adequately appreciated at



the time, but he had a knowledge of the natives second to none and was always able to avoid conflicts with them.

Hovell, a native of Yarmouth, England, was a master of vessels trading along the coast and to New Zealand before he joined forces with Hume. In 1819 he settled on the land near Sydney, and did some exploring in the southern parts of the state. He discovered the Burragorang Valley in 1823, explored Westernport in 1826 and discovered coal near the coast at Cape Paterson. Hovell did no more exploring but prospered on his run at Goulburn. He died in November 1875, at the age of 89.

It was not realized that Hume and Hovell had reached the west coast of Port Phillip, and not the east. An expedition sent by Governor Darling to settle at Westernport before the French could get there, reported that the land was very inferior to what they had been led to expect. The settlement was soon withdrawn and no further effort was made to establish a community there until John Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner made separate and independent attempts in 1835. These moves resulted in the permanent settlement of Port Phillip, or Melbourne, as it was called after the Prime Minister of England.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Dangerous Rivers and Rich Pastures*

IF Hume was a born bushman, Captain Charles Sturt was a born leader of men. He went to Australia from England in May 1827, at the age of 32. In the twenty-six years he spent in Australia he explored much of the inland, solved the riddle of the Darling-Lachlan-Murrumbidgee-Murray River system and probed the centre. Born in India, son of a judge and one of a family of eight boys, Sturt became a professional soldier. He had two years' active service in France and more on garrison duty. Then he was on his way to Australia in charge of convicts.

Sturt was not happy about going to Australia. But the first year in the new country altered his whole life. The change from the rigid Army discipline to the exciting freedom of an unknown continent bred in his active mind a feverish desire for exploration.

Only a narrow fringe of the country had been penetrated. There were persistent rumours of mystery and treasure in the vast interior. Blaxland and party had crossed the Blue Mountains, and since then the only advance had been Oxley's journey out west as far as he could follow the Macquarie. Cunningham had reached the Darling to the north, and Hume and Hovell had made Port Phillip Bay.

Sturt undertook three main expeditions. The first was along the Macquarie River to its junction with the Darling, a river which he followed along its upper course. The second, and most important, was down the Murrumbidgee, past the Lachlan junction, into the Murray, past the inflow of the Darling and thence to the sea at Lake Alexandrina, South Australia. The third expedition was to the centre of Australia, a journey he undertook in a final attempt to solve the riddle of the vast inland sea.



Oxley had been baffled by the Macquarie and Lachlan rivers. Both of them seemed to fade out, the Lachlan into the soil and the Macquarie into marshes. Oxley, and later Sturt, believed these marshes were on the edge of the inland sea.

During a period of great drought, in 1828, when business was bad in the colony, Governor Darling determined to push out again into the unknown. He chose Sturt as his leader, and Sturt asked Hume to join him as second-in-command. There was no nonsense about Sturt, for all his benevolent face and kindly ways. If he ordered anything done, it was done instantly and without grumbling. He possessed that curious power of leadership which compels other men to suffer willingly and work mightily.

A week before Sturt set out, Oxley died. The task of exploration was handed over to the young Army officer. The first expedition was to determine the fate of the Macquarie River. The party consisting of Sturt, his servant John Harris, two soldiers and eight convicts, eleven horses and ten bullocks, reached Bathurst on November 22, 1828, twelve days after leaving Sydney. They took a light boat, carried on a four-wheeled carriage drawn by bullocks.

At Bathurst, Hume joined the party and an outpost was established in Wellington Valley, where they broke in the oxen and the horses. Ten days later they passed the site of the town of Warren and at Mount Harris found the remains of Oxley's camp. When the attack on the marshes was due to begin, they found they had been dried up in a prolonged drought.

The party split into two, and while one section, commanded by Hume, steered south, the other, under Sturt, struck out to the north. But they each endured much hardship from lack of water without finding anything more important than the Bogan River. Reuniting their forces, they steered due west again, heedless of the Macquarie. The drought was intense, the heat terrific. The men groaned from thirst. Gum-trees withered, and emus, running with outstretched necks, gasped for water. Thin, scraggy dingoes scarcely crawled. How the few natives whom they saw were able to survive in that torrid country puzzled the white men.

After crossing endless, lightly timbered plains, their water

was exhausted. Where the next drink for themselves and their cattle would come from was a frightening thought. Suddenly and without warning, like a great canal the watercourse of the Darling opened out before them. Through long ages its sluggish stream had cut a deep channel across the plains. The water lay 45 feet below the travellers at the foot of a steep bank. Sturt and his men did not know the stream, 80 yards wide, was there until they reached the very brink.

Licking their parched lips, they ran down the slope. Each man fell down to drink his fill. Sturt stayed at the top, enjoying the scene, watching thousands of water-fowl rise from the gleaming reaches. Then a cry of dismay rose from the men. 'It's salt water,' they shouted, and they could not drink a drop. Even the cattle would not touch the water, but men and beasts waded into the stream cooling themselves. Then Hume, the most experienced of the party, found a pool of fresh water not far from the banks, and they were all happy.

They followed the river for sixty miles and found it was not salty because of any communication with the sea. The saltiness was due to salt springs bubbling into the bed.

The expedition now returned to the Wellington valley for fresh provisions. They explored the Castlereagh and again struck the Darling, and then they returned home, weary and footsore, but without the loss of a man.

On this expedition Sturt showed that the Macquarie marshes were nothing more than a fanning out of the river which reappeared to run into the Darling. He also established the course of the other rivers in the vicinity, the Namoi, Gwydir, Dumaresq, Castlereagh and Bogan, all tributaries of the Darling.

The idea of the second expedition was to solve the riddle of the southern rivers by following the Murrumbidgee by land as far as possible, then launching a boat and going as far as they could. Despite nine months' hard work on his first expedition, Sturt needed little recuperation. He left Sydney again on November 3, 1829, and followed the track Hume had taken five years earlier on his overland journey to Port Phillip. He passed through Liverpool, Mittagong, Goulburn and Yass. An



aboriginal guided him to the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, near where Jugiong now lies.

The swift-flowing waters of the Murrumbidgee were a pleasure to Sturt after his journeys on the Macquarie, the Lachlan, the Castlereagh and the Darling. The stream widened as their ox-drawn drays toiled along the banks. Vehicles and animals sank deep into soft soil. Progress was slow, but the natives said there was a big river farther on. Then, at the same latitude in which the Lachlan had lost itself in swamps, the Murrumbidgee, too, wandered into vast swampy reedbeds. The country was dreary, but they found a creek running into the river, which Sturt believed was the long-lost Lachlan.

After reconnoitring, Sturt learnt that the much wider river was only four days' march to the south, and that the Darling River was ahead. He knew that the Darling to the north flowed south-west, and the Murray to the south flowed west. He stood beside a river flowing strongly to the west. There must be only one answer. All three rivers must eventually converge.

It was no longer possible to follow the course of the Murrumbidgee in the drays so Sturt decided on a bold plan. He hazarded the whole future of his expedition, the lives of his men and himself on a calculated risk. It is easy to look at the map today and see that Sturt did the right thing when he assembled his whale-boat, took to the water and sent bullock drays and stores back to Jugiong. But Sturt had no map of the country. In the shelter of his tent, he penned the words, but the die was cast. 'The Murrumbidgee is a magnificent stream,' he wrote. 'I do not know its fate, but I am obliged to abandon my cattle and have taken to the boats. Where I shall wander to God only knows. I have little doubt, however, that I shall ultimately make the coast.'

They felled trees and built a second boat to carry the heavy baggage and the condenser to distil fresh water. On January 7, 1830, with a crew of eight, the two boats shot out into the open stream and were off down the unknown waterway. The river was full of snags, fallen trees whose branches protruded above the water or were hidden inches below the surface. Into a hidden snag on the second day crashed the new boat with the baggage, tearing a huge hole in her side. She sank, baggage and

all, in 12 feet of water. The boat itself was soon retrieved but a portion of the condenser had fallen overboard, with the valuable provisions. Sturt dared not proceed without the condenser. Such a fright had the salt springs of the Darling given him. So the men dived for the lost goods.

Twelve feet is a long way down in flowing water, but they succeeded in their task. First they sounded with a long oar. When the oar struck an object, two men would hold the oar tight to the bottom of the river, while a third climbed down and groped on the river bed. By this means everything was finally recovered. After patching the boat they resumed their easy descent down the broad river, passing wide reed-beds and broad flats.

Suddenly one day the boats passed beneath high narrow banks. The current quickened dangerously. Snags threatened any moment to pierce the boats' sides and sink them. The river began to twist in every direction. They raced along between gloomy, narrow banks, and it seemed to the men that they were approaching some new climax on their journey. At three in the afternoon the bow lookout warned they were nearing a junction. Next minute the boats shot out into a broad and mighty river. It was the stream which Hume and Hovell had crossed in its upper reaches and Sturt named it the Murray, after the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Murray had been joined by the Ovens, the Goulburn and the Murrumbidgee, and now made a magnificent waterway 100 yards wide and between 12 and 20 feet deep. Clear water flowed at two and a half knots over sandy bottom. The banks were tall and high up were flood-marks. By hospitality and gifts they made friends with a party of natives. A week after entering the Murray, speeding along under sail, they saw 700 armed and painted natives gathered far ahead under a clump of fine trees. As the boats drew near they heard the chanting of a war song.

The river shoaled rapidly. Ahead a sand-bank filled a third of the channel. To this point ran the whole crowd of spear-carrying natives, bent upon intercepting and destroying the white men. There seemed little hope of the boats breaching the narrow gap of deep water without the crew being massacred.



Sturt sized up the hopelessness of their position. Realizing their only hope of survival lay in their fire-arms, he aimed his rifle carefully at the chief of the hostile forces. He told the others to hold their fire until he gave the word. Only a few yards separated them from the enemy. Sturt glanced along the barrel; his finger curled round the trigger. Another moment and the wild man would be dead, and possibly the white men too!

Suddenly one of Sturt's men yelled out that another party of blacks was approaching from the other side of the river. Their leader, shouting aloud, dived from the high bank, swam across and, on landing, stamped his foot and shot his fist at the threatening natives. As the boats glided safely past, the men saw that another river joined the Murray. On the farther bank of this new stream were other natives, the friendly tribe whose leader had swum to their rescue. Sturt dexterously allowed the boats to float over to these people, and landed confidently amongst them.

In a moment the whole scene changed. The entire hostile army, with friendly cries, jumped into the stream like a herd of seals and swam across to join the others. Soon they were jabbering in friendly fashion, a handful of white men among a thousand armed natives. The friendly native who had prevented the massacre was one whom Sturt had hospitably entertained days before and the new river at whose junction with the Murray they had so nearly met disaster was the long-sought Darling.

Sturt's voyage now became a grim battle of hard work with signs of privation ahead. For several days they continued down the Murray. The natives, though friendly enough, were a poor lot, diseased and ignorant. The country was monotonous. Provisions were running short. On January 29th the river bent southward, and on February 4th they saw seagulls. Camped on a cliff, Sturt at the termination of the Murray wrote: 'Immediately below me was a beautiful lake which appeared to be a fitting reservoir for such a noble stream.'

Two days later they reached a spot where the Goolwa barrage now excludes the sea, and keeps the waters of Lake

Alexandrina fresh. It was thirty-three days since they had left the depot on the Murrumbidgee.

They sailed into the lake expecting to enter the sea in St. Vincent Gulf where a ship was waiting. But the lake shoaled so rapidly they could find no passage through to Encounter Bay. After a dreadful day dragging a boat over treacherous mud shoals, they walked across the sandhills to the sea. It was then they discovered the bar across the mouth of the lake.

The land journey to St. Vincent Gulf was long and hard in their reduced and weakened condition. Sturt, his men weakening and food supplies failing, reluctantly decided he could not rely on reaching the relief ship. Instead he chose to return by the way they had come, nearly 1,000 miles up the river. The current was strong and Sturt was certain that they would take much longer to pull up than to glide down.

The story of their struggle makes heartrending reading. At first the party had favourable winds, but they soon had to resort to oars. They were in a dreadful plight. Day after day they sat, pulling at the oars, with none of the life and energy with which they had shot out that day from the Murrumbidgee on to the broad Murray. They were harassed by the blacks. Once, when trapped in dangerous rapids, the party was saved once again by the interference of the friendly chief. They rowed from daylight to dusk, with an hour off for lunch for a total of fifty-three days with the men becoming weaker all the time. Lunch consisted of bread and water and an occasional wild-duck. The men lost the proper pull on the oars. Their arms were nerveless, their faces haggard, and their spirits sank to zero. Frequently they fell asleep at the oars from sheer weakness. In their darkest hour, Sturt lay awake in his tent and heard the men talking. They groaned and all at one time or another said: 'I'm finished. I'll tell the Captain tomorrow that I can pull no more.' But the day never came when the complaint was made. Only one man who had lost his mind was relieved.

Back at their old camp on March 23, 1830, on the Murrumbidgee, near the present site of Narrandera, they halted, seventy-seven days after leaving the depot. Perseverance and pluck had won the day, and without a death amongst them. Exhaustion and lack of food had reduced them to skeletons.



But their troubles were far from over. There was nobody at the depot. Sturt had left instructions to the party to fall back to Pondebadgery, eighty miles higher up the river. To make matters worse a heavy flood was sweeping downstream. So, after many days of useless battling against the current, the leader sent two of the strongest men, a soldier and a convict, overland to bring help. They were due back on the eighth day, and by this time the very last ounce of provisions had been distributed. Those that had the strength started to crawl off into the bush to shoot a bird, when a loud shout stopped them. It was Mulholland and Hopkinson, the messengers. They were in a state of complete exhaustion after travelling 180 miles on foot. But they returned with supplies and help. On May 25th, the whole party was back in Sydney. The great waterway of the continent had been discovered.

Sturt resumed duty with his regiment. He was sent to Norfolk Island in August 1829, and did valuable work where mutiny was brewing among the convicts. He returned eighteen months later to find that he had not been granted the expected promotion. His eyesight was affected by the privations of his expeditions and for a time he went quite blind. His book was written by dictation and he was led about by a servant. He was offered a pension of £100 a year and retired from the army in July 1833.

Sturt was given a grant of land at Queanbeyan, near Canberra, and returned to England, where he married. But he was not finished with exploration. As his strength recovered, his thoughts turned once more to the unknown interior, and he returned to Australia, determined to solve the mystery of the centre.

Scarcely had Sturt returned from the Murray than Major Thomas Livingstone Mitchell ventured out on the first of his four expeditions. Born in Scotland in 1792, Mitchell served in the Peninsular War under the Duke of Wellington, and had a hand in laying the famous defence line at Torres Vedras. He became a major in 1826, and in the following year, on the

death of John Oxley, was appointed Surveyor-General for New South Wales.

The colonists were still talking of rich unknown land lying beyond the confines of settlement, 300 miles north-west of Sydney. After Sturt had opened up a tremendous tract of country watered by the Murray, Murrumbidgee and the Darling, men were ready to swallow any tale of a similar waterway northward to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Mitchell's first expedition proved to be a wild-goose chase, but nevertheless an interesting one. A convict, George Clerk, known as 'George the Barber,' had been arrested on a charge of cattle-duffing and condemned to be hanged. But being a sharp individual, he gave such a lurid account of the bush through which he had travelled and of its river that his life was spared, provided his account proved correct. George said the natives called this river the 'Kindur.' It flowed north-west to the sea, where copper-coloured men brought their canoes to load them with scented wood. In 1831 Major Mitchell was sent to investigate, but took so long that in the meantime George, the convict, managed to saw off his irons and escape.

Before many days George was recaptured and was about to have the noose put around his neck when news arrived from Mitchell giving partial confirmation of the condemned man's story. The expedition had crossed the Namoi, which had been mentioned by George in his story. But this was the nearest any party ever attained to the fabled river of 'Kindur.'

Mitchell then rounded the Nandewar range and found that the Gwydir, already discovered by Cunningham, was another tributary of the Darling. Farther to the north he met a stream which the natives called Karaula, but which was really the Upper Darling or Barwon. None of these rivers corresponded to those described by George the Barber, and Mitchell was disappointed to find the streams he crossed did not take him north. To add to his difficulties, two of his teamsters were murdered by natives. Mitchell returned to Sydney, having achieved little beyond adding to the knowledge of the Darling system, and revealing the pastoral opportunities of the country.

Mitchell's journeys, unlike Sturt's, which were often through



inhospitable land, seemed to lead him through rich pasture-lands, where rivers flowed and glorious scenery cheered the eye.

In 1835 Mitchell set forth to find out if the Darling was a tributary of the Murray, as Sturt had claimed. Many accounts have been written of the rivalry between Sturt and Mitchell, but such controversies have no place in this volume. Both men, through dogged courage and fierce determination, overcame the harsh and unimaginable privations of trail-blazing in the unknown bush.

Sturt had discovered the Darling River at places 300 miles apart, in the northern areas, when it was drought-stricken and merely a succession of brackish streams, and over a year later at its confluence with the Murray. Was it the same river? Sturt said it was. Mitchell, who had visited the Upper Darling, strongly disagreed.

Mitchell's party for his second expedition consisted of twenty-four men, including Richard Cunningham, botanist brother of Allan Cunningham. When they reached the Bogan, about 250 miles north-west of Sydney, in his enthusiasm for collecting Cunningham wandered away from the main party. Two weeks were spent in a fruitless search of the surrounding country for the missing scientist. Cunningham had met a tribe of natives who treated him kindly, but when several times he tried to escape their suspicions were aroused and they murdered him with their nullah-nullahs.

Advancing to the Darling, where Sturt had found salt springs, Mitchell found fresh water. Mitchell followed the river down to Menindee to within reasonable distance of its junction with the Murray. Here a brush with the natives resulted in bloodshed and the expedition retreated northwards, where the Darling and the Bogan meet. Mitchell built a stockade of rough logs as a defence against further attacks by the natives. He called the place Fort Bourke after the Governor.

Mitchell had covered 300 miles of the Darling, and he was almost convinced that Sturt's view was correct, and that the river finally joined the Murray. Mitchell returned to Sydney with a fuller report than Oxley or Sturt, and recommended the country for pastoral settlement.

The next year Mitchell had his chance to ascertain once and for all if the Darling was really the big river Sturt had found flowing into the Murray, and then to survey the country south of the Murray.

New country and good rivers especially were needed by the colonists. The land-squatting boom of the 1820s had petered out in a three-year drought. In his third expedition Mitchell's equipment of bullock-drays, horses and twenty-seven men cost more than £1,000, whereas Sturt's voyage down the Murray cost less than £265.

In March 1836 Mitchell followed the Lachlan past the farthest west reached by Oxley in 1817. In the hot dry summer of that year he found grassy flats where swamps had barred his predecessor. He began to wonder whether the Lachlan might go so far west that Sturt might have mistaken its junction with the Murray for the Murray-Darling junction. But he soon abandoned the idea when he found the Lachlan and the Murrumbidgee joined the Murray. With a picked band of men, he forged on westwards till he came to the Darling, being finally convinced of the accuracy of Sturt's judgment.

While he was at the confluence of the Darling and Murray, Mitchell's party was threatened by large numbers of natives, who had gathered from more than 200 miles around. Sturt had also met hostility in these parts. On several occasions only Sturt's iron nerve had prevented bloodshed. Alarmed for the safety of his men, Mitchell retreated 100 miles to the base camp on the Murrumbidgee. In a running fight, seven of the aborigines were slain and the tribe vanished into the bush to worry him no more.

The decision to retreat from the Darling junction was the high-water mark of Mitchell's career. It sent him on the road to fame and knighthood, and to the discovery of a pastoral paradise in the state of Victoria. Mitchell was facing south towards the unknown country beyond the Murray when he decided to retreat. If he had proceeded south as intended, he would have become lost in the interminable scrub of the desolate Mallee. Dodging this desert, Mitchell marched on to discover some of the richest agricultural country in Australia, from the Glenelg to the Goulburn.



After the affray with the aborigines, Mitchell's party entered Victoria at Swan Hill. They were soon stopped by a large tributary which was named the Loddon. The country was so rich and beautiful that Mitchell abandoned the Murray and steered ahead to an interesting pinnacle which he named Pyramid Hill. From here and from the top of Mount Hope magnificent views lay before them. As far as the eye could see the plains were covered with kangaroo grass, waving in the breeze like a thousand cornfields. Mobs of kangaroos roamed the pastures. The wheels of the bullock drays sank deep into the moist earth.

Soon Mitchell approached long granite-clad ranges, suggestive of his native Scotland. He named them the Grampians. Anxious for a sight of the southern ocean, Mitchell made a difficult ascent up the ice-clad boulders of Mount William, the highest peak, only to be baffled by thick mist at the top. He refused to be beaten and decided to stay on the summit and hope for better luck in the morning. After a bitterly cold winter night, which forced his two companions to withdraw, Mitchell was again disappointed. Through occasional rifts in the clouds, he saw and named Lake Lonsdale.

Moving on westward, Mitchell came to a likely-looking peak which, from its resemblance to an artillery strongpoint at Salamanca, he named Mount Arapiles. That very day was the anniversary of Wellington's Battle of Salamanca in the Peninsular War. Here, at last, the soldier-explorer had his first wide-open view of the rich western district of Victoria. Beneath him lay a vast panorama of lightly-timbered downs, spotted clumps of banksia and she-oak, and glistening lakes.

From here they found two rivers, the Wimmera and the Wannon, and passed twenty-seven lakes. Later on they met the Glenelg, upon which they launched their boats and so gained the sea. Mitchell was amazed that such an inviting country should be uninhabited.

Instead of returning home on the same track, Mitchell followed the coast as far as Portland, and here he was in for a bigger surprise—a broken tobacco pipe and a bottle were

picked up on the beach by a native follower! What they had thought were grey rocks ahead were found, on closer inspection through the telescope, to be a small group of huts. A brig lay at anchor off-shore.

Approaching stealthily for fear they might be running into a hideout of escaped convicts, Mitchell, with a warning shot and a blast from his bugle, charged the huts at the head of his men. Some of the men round the settlement mistook the explorers for bushrangers and seized their guns, preparing to shoot it out. Fortunately, before the situation developed that far, Mitchell was recognized and cordially welcomed.

The settlers were the Henty brothers and family, who had been crowded out of Tasmania and had shipped their flocks and herds across to Victoria. They had established a station at Portland Bay and had made it the centre of their whaling and pastoral activities. Mitchell found himself in the midst of fruit trees, vines, vegetables, poultry, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. The visit of a humpback whale gave the explorer the opportunity to join in a whale hunt.

In return for the hospitality and replenishment of their stores, Mitchell told the Hentys of the lush pastures he had discovered behind the coastal forests. The Henty brothers took his advice and were soon in occupation of several stations, including the famous Merino Downs.

After leaving the Hentys, Mitchell made a bee-line for Sydney, crossing the Dividing Range not far from Ballarat. While his gear was being repaired, he explored Mount Macedon. From this high hill he saw, gleaming far below, the waters of Port Phillip Bay, unvisited until a month or two previously, since Hume and Hovell had camped near Geelong. Mitchell thought he saw sails or tents flashing in the sun. Had he investigated he would have found that they were tents, belonging to John Pasco Fawcner, a Tasmanian, who, like Edward Henty, had sought room for further expansion on the other side of the Bass Strait. Fawcner pitched his camp where the city of Melbourne now stands.

From this point Mitchell was parallel and slightly to the north of the tracks of Hume and Hovell. He discovered the Campaspe River, which reaches the Murray at Echuca, and



rediscovered the Goulburn, crossing the Murray and Murrumbidgee to the settled districts of New South Wales. Mitchell had completed a journey of 2,500 miles, finding some of the finest country in Australia. It was quickly settled by graziers and farmers.

## CHAPTER X

### *Pioneers of the West*

THE 'thirties and the 'forties were the Homeric age of Australian exploration. Hume, Sturt and Mitchell had rolled back the frontier until the whole south-east corner of the continent was bared for settlement. Four-fifths of the huge continental land-mass still awaited the stubborn heel of the white man. About 2,400 miles westward from Sydney, men were following up the Dutch discoveries of two centuries earlier. South-West Australia was nearer to London, but sailing-ship skippers on the long passage to Sydney swung south of Cape Leeuwin without a thought of the coast to the north.

The reports from Dampier and the Dutch had been so discouraging that the coast of West Australia was neglected for forty years after the settlement of Sydney. Finally, as in the case of other outposts along the long coastline, the fear of French occupation led to the decision to claim the west of the continent as well as the east. In 1825 the western boundary of New South Wales was pushed westward from the 135th to 129th east meridian. A year later Major Edward Lockyer was sent to King George's Sound to establish a military station on the present site of Albany.

Whalers from Europe and the United States already knew the bays and inlets along the West Australian coast and were early visitors to the new settlement. Soon afterwards Captain James Stirling, R.N., in the warship *Success*, re-discovered the Swan River, which had been found and named by the Dutch captain Vlaming. Stirling reported that the Swan River area was suitable for settlement. The presence of other craft in the area forced the British captain to take quick action.

According to his journal, Stirling feared American as well as French attempts to settle the West, for he logged: 'At a time when we have one French vessel of war in these seas





8. Governor Edward John Eyre.



Sir George Grey.



9. The salt bed of Lake Eyre. (*Australian Geographical Society.*)

Lake Eyre contained water for the first time in living memory during recent floods.  
(*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





with objects not clearly understood, and when we hear of an American vessel of war being also in the neighbourhood seeking a place for a settlement, it becomes important to prevent them occupying a position of such value.'

Accordingly, Captain Fremantle was sent ahead with a small party of settlers, but found sandy loam and thick scrub where he expected rich soil. On June 1, 1829, Stirling landed as Governor of the new colony with the main body of settlers. Until a site for the capital could be found, the settlers disembarked on Garden Island, a little north of the Swan River. The title was a misnomer, for the island was a sandy waste, blasted by bleak winter winds. Stirling finally chose the present site of Perth for the capital, with the port at Fremantle at the mouth of the Swan River, nine miles away.

The infant colony was formed by an investment company under Thomas Peel, cousin of the English statesman Sir Robert Peel. Of every eleven migrants, five were to be women. Settlers had to provide money to buy government land or bring the equivalent in stock, farming equipment and building materials. Peel himself brought out 300 men and invested £50,000, receiving 250,000 acres from the Government. Stirling received 100,000 acres instead of a gubernatorial salary. However, serious errors occurred. Some settlers misunderstood the scheme and brought out articles of little or no value in a new country. One man found he could not exchange his grand piano for a block of land, and left it on the beach to rot. The richer settlers purchased land nearest the capital and some obtained as much as 100,000 acres. Smaller settlers were forced to move far out into the bush, where they lived lonely lives in constant fear of mass attacks from the natives, who were fiercer and more hostile than in New South Wales.

Within two years the settlement faced a major crisis which proved almost fatal. The workers gradually left to better themselves in Tasmania and New South Wales, and the greater part of the land remained untilled. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or carry water, and he abandoned the settlement. The wealthier settlers who had brought tools and equipment were left completely helpless. The population dropped quickly from 4,000 to 1,500. Investors

preferred to buy land in New South Wales and, to make matters worse, the British Government ruled that land in West Australia could not be sold for less than £1 an acre. However, Captain Stirling helped the colony get on its feet and persuaded settlers to take up mixed farming and grazing.

Tall, slight of frame and wiry, George Grey, a British Army lieutenant, was the first land explorer of the west. His father, an English aristocrat, had been killed in action in the Peninsular War a week before his birth.

Despite the excellent survey made by Captain King, overseas authorities in London believed that a great river entered the Indian Ocean from the north-west of Australia. They thought that the country it drained might be suitable for colonization. Grey, then aged 26, offered to explore this country with Lieutenant Lushington, and on July 5, 1837, they sailed from Plymouth with three others. At Cape Town their strength was increased, and early in December they landed at Hanover Bay in the north-west. Grey was ignorant of the country, its climate and inhabitants, and with all these disadvantages it is not surprising that his two expeditions did not make much progress. The courage and endurance of Grey and his followers established the tradition for all Australian explorers. Journeys were made into the interior, and the Glenelg and the Prince Regent Rivers were followed. The men were attacked by natives and Grey was badly speared in the leg. He went to Mauritius to recuperate and later sailed for Perth to see Governor Stirling.

In February 1840 Grey led a second expedition to examine the Shark Bay area. The party sailed aboard an American whaler, and eight days later landed on a group of barren islands, with three whale-boats and five months' provisions. Unfortunately one of the boats was swamped during the landing and misfortune dogged the party from then on.

The only achievement of importance was the discovery of the Gascoyne River, which with one exception was found to be the longest river in West Australia. They returned to their base on Bernier Island, but to their consternation found a hurricane had washed heavy seas over the island, destroying



the provisions which they had buried in a seemingly secure position in the sand.

Two of the party went berserk, abandoned all restraint and groped like madmen for any food-scrap they could grab. Grey promptly suppressed the outbreak, but already the whole party was half-exhausted. He saw their only chance of survival lay in their immediate return to the settlement. The boats were leaky and the Swan River was 425 miles to the south. They set sail down the coast, but further disaster lay in wait for them; for on reaching Gantheaume Bay, 100 miles nearer the Swan River, both boats were wrecked in a tremendous surf.

Though still suffering from the effects of recent hardships, Grey decided to start at once on the 325-mile march down the unknown coast. There were twelve of them, including Grey and Kaiber, a native. After dividing the provisions, each man receiving 20 lb. of sour flour and 1 lb. of salt.

Before setting out on April 2, 1840, some of the men loaded themselves with goods salvaged from the wrecked boats, which they hoped to sell in Perth. Grey planned they should rest for ten minutes each hour. In these halts he took notes and entered the bearings of their route in his journal. Thick scrub ahead, and numerous deviations caused by hills and other obstacles, made Grey realize the enormity of the task. But despite their exhausted state the men could not be induced to dump their heavy bundles.

On April 4th they covered only twelve miles, yet the country was well watered. Grey almost wore himself out trying to make the men exert themselves and realize the danger they faced. They demanded rest for a day or so, but Grey angrily told them that unless they pushed on while they had their strength, they would leave their bones behind. However, majority rule prevailed. The men voted for rest and ease in face of future hardships, and Grey had to submit.

On the move once more they penetrated the high mountains, brooding over the sea, and caught glimpses of rich plains inland. Hostile natives tracked them through the bush. Grey tried to scare them off by firing a warning shot over their heads, but at the critical moment his rifle misfired. The natives,

derisively imitating the useless click of the faulty weapon, hurled insults at the whites and moved in, their crude weapons poised ready to strike. Grey let go with the second barrel over the blacks' heads, but the natives were not impressed. Quickly snatching another weapon from a companion, Grey blasted away with both barrels at a clump of closely matted bushes at the feet of the advancing foe. As the dry boughs cracked and flew in all directions, the blacks took to their heels and vanished into the bush.

Now the overburdened laggards delayed the others. Their obstinate determination to move by short marches and long halts caused Grey to abandon hope of getting the party safely to the settled district. Next day, atop an elevated coastal range, Grey looked down on one of the finest districts in West Australia, a large area of fertile land, well-watered with rich valleys, swelling hills and pretty wooded peaks. A lofty chain of mountains twenty-five miles to the east was named the Victoria Range.

That night, one of the men, Stiles, disappeared. Though he had purposely lagged far behind, a search was immediately instigated, but without success. In the morning Stiles was found. His behaviour had endangered the others; but this fact made little impression, because some of the men refused to get to their feet.

Another man, Woods, who advocated a maximum of eight or nine miles a day, caused more delay by sitting down to rest every half-hour. With great difficulty Grey got the men through a thick belt of trees. He wished to reach a point about five miles away to replenish their water supplies. During the afternoon the men advanced a mile and a half, but they refused to go any farther or abandon their bundles. In desperation, Grey induced several of the best walkers to help him find water, which they did after tramping seven miles.

Woods fell ill and Grey offered to carry his heavy bundle. Under a torrent of abuse from Woods, Grey opened the bundle and threw the contents on the ground—yards of useless canvas, thread, a thick jacket which Grey himself had thrown away, and old pieces of rope and clothing. For these paltry possessions Woods had risked his own life and those of the whole party.



They had been more than a week on the march and had covered only seventy miles, about a fifth of the way. The men were in a shocking state. Some had eaten all their provisions. Grey's own stock consisted of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of flour and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of arrow-root, and Kaiber, the native, was dependent on him.

Grey decided to push ahead with the strongest and best walkers, promising to send provisions for the others to a point fifty-five miles north of Perth. He took the native and four others, leaving six behind.

After toiling over small hills covered with prickly scrub, they came to almost impenetrable bush. Desperate for water, they finally struggled down to the bed of a river 300 yards wide and 50 feet deep. But instead of water, they found a dry dazzling channel of white sand glaring cruelly in the hot sun. Scraping a hole in the sand, Grey recovered a little moisture and used his last pound of flour to make a damper. In the night a rat gnawed through the canvas bag and ate half his precious food. Next day he shared the damper with Kaiber, who was weak and dispirited.

Grey finished the last of his provisions almost with relief. Tormented by hunger pangs for the last few days, he had spent much time worrying whether he should eat them all or save some for the future. 'Having completed this last morsel, I read a few chapters in the New Testament. I felt myself as contented and cheerful as I had ever been in the most fortunate moments of my life,' Grey wrote in his journal. They walked thirty-one miles next day and camped without finding water. When the camp-fires were blazing, Hackney, a young American off the whaler, proposed to a companion that they should offer Grey some of their scanty rations, as he had shared his with the native. 'No,' said the other, 'everyone for himself under these circumstances. Let Mr. Grey do as well as he can, and I will do the same.' Hackney disregarded this advice and offered Grey a morsel of damper. After several refusals, the hungry Grey finally accepted. He knew he could repay the kindness with his gun, if they ever saw any game.

After a gruelling fourteen-mile walk, the six men reached a small river, where Kaiber found a native store of by-yu nuts.

Hunger-pangs were tugging at their stomachs, but Grey hesitated to pilfer the natives' food. Kaiber solved the difficulty, saying: 'If we take all, this people will be greatly angered. They will say "what thief has stolen here?" They will track his footsteps and spear him through the heart. But if we take what is buried in one hole, they will say "Hungry people have been here. They were very empty and now their bellies are full."'

Grey shared the contents of one of the holes among the men, and they started off again. One man fired at a dingo and missed. Grey killed a hawk; after giving the head and entrails to Kaiber, he divided the rest equally with Hackney. They tramped on under the blistering sun, toiling over arid country covered with prickly scrub, bereft of water or animal life. They camped that night, silent and distressed, as though afraid to voice the awesome thoughts which filled their minds.

Sixteen days after leaving Gantheaume Bay, their tongues were hideously swollen. They searched the parched bed of a wide stream and looked feverishly in holes 14 feet deep, and in native wells half that depth, but found no water. The relentless sun burned them black. Their faces, taut and bearded, were those of desperate men. Their eyes, protruding from their sockets, were like those of madmen.

Clothes clinging to them in rags, they stumbled weakly over the sun-scorched earth. Faint, almost to the point of collapse, they saw another minute water-hole ahead. Anxiously they hurried their flagging steps, a dreadful look of anxiety on their emaciated features. The hole was reached, the bottom found, but again no water! And so it went on, from one dried-up water-hole to the next. Grey realized that while they stayed on the banks of the river, a glimmer of hope remained, but from the arid rocky nature of the surrounding scrub, this hope seemed pretty thin. The men were reluctant to leave the parched watercourse, until Grey convinced them they were deluding themselves and led them back on a direct course through the country.

Before night they camped in the midst of dried-up swamps, but no water could be found. Grey knew their time was running out. There was six spoonfuls of flour left among them, but this could not be eaten without water.



Hunger and thirst had so weakened the men they were only able to go a few hundred yards at one effort. The flaming sun shrivelled the ground. The men groaned with every step. Grey decided to stake all on a last effort. While the men rested, he set out with Kaiber to find water. The native soon began to stumble and finally collapsed, saying he had lost his way. At first Grey believed him and fired his gun, listening in vain for a repetition of the signal. Kaiber then tried to persuade the lieutenant that they should go ahead and leave the others.

In a flash Grey realized that the native wished him to abandon the party. Angrily, he warned Kaiber that unless they had found the others by sunset, he would shoot him. Kaiber was not impressed and only rose to his feet when Grey levelled his rifle. Scared by the determined look in Grey's face, Kaiber then started to run. If he had escaped, Grey would never have found the others. The lieutenant threatened to fire if Kaiber ran another yard. The native promptly surrendered, and within an hour they had found the others.

Their plight was now so perilous that Grey took the only course left to save their lives. He told them he would go on southward, slowly and steadily, without stopping until he found water or dropped in his tracks. He warned that anyone who lingered would be on his own. All gear was dumped.

Grey's mouth burned like fire. He could scarcely see or hear, and had to rouse himself as if he was in a deep sleep. He knew when he set out that their fate would be decided in a few hours. At this zenith of their suffering, Grey found a hole filled with moist mud. The liquid was too thick to swallow, but by straining a little through a handkerchief, they secured a few mouthfuls. The hole was soon empty, but the mud served in a small measure to satisfy the cravings of their stomachs. They scraped the hole clean and more water trickled in. At night numerous birds came to the hole, making Grey think they had found the only spring in that area.

When he tried to shoot a bird, Grey's hand was so shaky he could not pull the trigger. Afterwards he followed a bird to its roosting-place and killed it. They slept little that night, rising continually to visit the precious spring. Next day they

struggled on, reaching a river, and found fresh-water mussels. Grey lost the power of his legs, and the pain from the old spear-wound in his thigh added to his suffering. When at last they staggered to their feet, they met a party of friendly natives. The wretched wanderers were now regaled with frogs and roasted by-yu nuts. Grey was treated to fresh-water tortoise.

Assisted by the natives, Grey reached the cottage of a colonist named Williams, the farthest north from Perth. Williams at first took the unkempt haggard Grey for a crazy Malay roaming the district, but when matters were explained the leader was soon enjoying a choice meal. Soon afterwards the rest of the party arrived.

When Grey reached Perth twenty-two days after leaving Gantheaume Bay, his friends failed to recognize him. Not an instant was lost in sending a search-party for the men back on the trail. Eventually the whole party reached the settlement except a lad of 18 years named Smith.

Near Smith's body the relief party found all the articles of his journey, his wooden canteen, his brown felt hat, the haversack containing his journal, his shoes, tinder, steel, gun-screw, a few small canvas bags for carrying shell-fish, and a small bag with thread, needles and buttons. They dug a grave with their hands, and buried Smith deep in a sand-hill near the shore, seventy-six miles north of the Swan River. Grey named the nearby river after the boy who died there.

The expedition had found ten rivers, many smaller streams and two mountain chains, the Victoria Range and Gairdner's Range. Extensive districts of good land were discovered, one watered by the Gascoyne, in the centre of the coast, and another nearer Perth. In June 1839 Captain Grey was appointed resident magistrate at King George's Sound. He rose to distinction and knighthood in the colonial service and was Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1877 to 1879. He died in London in 1898 and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.



## CHAPTER XI

### *Eyre Dares the Desert*

IN the eastern half of the continent important developments had followed Sturt's voyage down the Murray. In 1831 a settlement was suggested in the region which Sturt had discovered, and the Colony of South Australia came into being in 1836. Expeditions from Adelaide, the capital, pushed westward across the arid sun-parched country of the Great Australian Bight, and northward through the region of the great salt-pan lakes towards the centre of the continent.

Lakes scattered across inland Australia on many maps were a bitter disappointment to the early explorers. The lakes were found to be little more than salt-pans or clay-pans and carried water only after rain. The biggest, Lake Eyre, normally 3,700 square miles of salt-encrusted mud, 40 to 60 feet below sea-level, held water in 1950 for the first time since the white settlement of Australia.

The lake was named after Edward John Eyre, the son of a Yorkshire clergyman, who was born in the year of the Battle of Waterloo, 1815.

Eyre's father hoped that he would take a commission in the Army, but faint echoes of great adventure in far-off Australia reached the boy while he was at Louth Grammar School. His chest was delicate, and it was decided that instead of buying the Army commission he should go to Australia. His father put £400 in the lad's pocket.

In 1833 the slender Yorkshire lad arrived in rough bustling Sydney. He could find no work, but quickly realized that the trouble was his own lack of experience. He boarded with a settler to gain the necessary experience on the land. A year later the pale youth had become lean, tanned and hardy. When he was 19 he rode around his own 850-acre station and bossed a score of convict labourers.

The squatters with their herds, flocks and covered wagons

were fanning out from the region round Sydney. Their wagons rolled south and westwards in the footsteps of Oxley, Hume, Hovell, Sturt and Mitchell. Their oxen followed the rivers and streams to fertile unfenced pastures.

These were the rough-and-tumble days of colonial expansion, when the hard fist and the long-barrelled rifle won the campside argument. This was the era of the escaped convict, the disgraced outcast banished to the colonies, the day when lawless bands of ruffians roamed the bush pestering the squatter and his herdsmen. They stole cattle and faked brands, these fore-runners of the bushrangers, who raided the stations, looting, murdering and waging bitter war against society.

This was the stirring era of the overlanders, who took stock from Sydney to Port Phillip. Mobs, 500 and 1,000 strong, were driven along the trail, followed by the riders, covered wagons and long bullock trains hauling freight and supplies. For thirteen weeks Eyre led a drive of 78 cattle and 414 sheep from Sydney across little-known country, peopled by marauding blacks. In Melbourne he sold the animals at a great profit. The young Yorkshireman played a full part in this colourful era of Australian expansion, during which men drove immense herds of livestock cross-country instead of moving them by the costly coastal ships.

Eyre was one of the first overlanders to take stock to Adelaide. He had a race with Joe Hawdon, a pioneer of the Port Phillip route, to be the first to reach the new market. Hawdon, following the Murray, took native tracks to cut off river bends and had food and water all the way to Lake Alexandrina. Eyre, crossing the Goulburn to go over the Wimmera plains, would have had a shorter route, if the season had been a good one. But the country was too dry and he had to turn back and follow Hawdon's track. Hawdon arrived in Adelaide two weeks before Eyre, but the latter made a good profit on his 1,000 sheep and 600 cattle.

In these long rides Eyre became interested in exploration. He often left his station to his workmen and, alone or with a single companion, explored the eastern edge of the great inland desert, looking for practical routes of travel or hidden wells.



Adelaide was linked with the settlement in the east. The problem was to find what lay to the north, or if there was any practical stock-route to West Australia. Eyre made a number of short excursions. Four hundred miles to the north he found miserable country and reached Mount Arden, from which he viewed the hideous dry bed of Lake Torrens, named after Colonel Robert Torrens, one of the founders of South Australia. Eyre looked at a dead world, a land of salt mud and shifting sand, where human life seemed impossible.

Colonists had made short forays into the desert and never returned. Others came back parched and haggard, vowing there were neither waterholes nor vegetation to take man or horse inland more than a few days. By 1840, communities ranged throughout South Australia and squatters had claimed the best of the grazing land. Grazing was highly profitable, so the discovery of good new land meant wealth. Rich pastures might lie hidden in the desert. An overland route to the fertile unclaimed west might lead to a fortune.

In 1839 Eyre set out from Port Lincoln and reached Streaky Bay, 300 miles round the Bight, without meeting a single stream, seeing no grass except mallee and ti-tree scrub. The barren waterless country around the Bight made him think that penetration farther westward would be useless. Instead he decided to strike northward once more in search of more fertile land.

But first he visited Western Australia by ship and drove stock from Albany to Perth, about 275 miles. Returning to Adelaide, he prepared for his northern expedition. He chose his weapons and ammunition, medical supplies, staple foods like flour and salt pork, tools and instruments, blankets, buckets, oilskins and other requirements. He hired native boys as interpreters and for their endurance and knowledge of desert animals and plants. A dozen pack-horses carried provisions and heavy water-casks, while a small herd of sheep was his walking meat supply.

A big crowd saw the expedition off on January 18, 1840, and Sturt gave Eyre a Union Jack to hoist at the centre of the continent. Lake Torrens was found to be salty and boggy, so Eyre decided to explore the country to the east. He followed the Flinders Range, but could see nothing but mud and salt,

bare desert plains and stark gaunt rocks. Mount Deception and Mount Hopeless, names given to two peaks, epitomized his feelings.

As the expedition probed northward into the interior, every advance was checked by arid vastness. When their water-casks ran dry, Eyre saw ahead an unbroken sheet of pure white, glittering in the sun like highly-polished silver. It was the vast dry bed of a salt-rimmed lake.

Sheets of treacherous salty mud barred their passage. So Eyre turned back, convinced that the inland desert was totally impassable to horses and men. Camels might have done better, but he could not afford them.

Ashamed to return to the capital a failure, Eyre changed his plans and determined to go west until he reached King George Sound. He forced his way out of the horrid, barren region, and crossed the great peninsula which now bears his name. After many difficulties, he formed a depot at Streaky Bay, a thousand miles from King George Sound. Weary months went by in desperate, fruitless efforts to find better country to the westward or northward. They could only get water by digging, and then it was often brackish or salty. It was a land of limestone and sand, desolate and devoid of trees. Great oolite cliffs walled the ocean for hundreds of miles ahead.

The heat was so great that the white men lay down, and some said they could go no farther. But Eyre got them to their feet again and down to the shore, where they found the shadow of a great rock. They swam in the sea all afternoon. Eyre succeeded in rounding the head of the Bight by carting a dray full of water, but after 138 miles the country did not improve, and seven months later he was back at his depot at Fowler's Bay.

The expedition consisted of Eyre, five whites and two natives. A small ship at their disposal communicated with Adelaide. Eyre's plan was to take his party overland, and keep in touch with the ship from the coast, but unfortunately the Adelaide authorities said the vessel must not leave the limits of the colony. It could not go farther west than longitude 130° East, but they had already gone that far.

Eyre came to a desperate decision—to dismiss the whole of the expedition except one man and the natives. Ignoring the



pleas of the others, Eyre chose his overseer, John Baxter, warning him of the near hopelessness of their task and the horror of the country ahead, the danger from thirst, the blacks and the enormous distance to King George Sound.

Today those who fly in daylight from Adelaide to Perth gaze down on pitiless miles of burning solitude. Passengers on the Trans-Australian Railway stare from the windows and shudder at the possibility of a breakdown in the dread Nullarbor. They are under no misapprehension about the task which Eyre faced. He knew death was more likely than success as from his camp at Fowler's Bay he watched the main part of his expedition disappear slowly round the coast towards Adelaide. Baxter, a handsome soft-spoken man of about 30, and the three native boys who had stayed to handle the ten pack-horses and nine sheep were all that remained of the fine cavalcade which had left Adelaide so optimistically eight months earlier.

They faced 900 miles of sea-rimmed sun-scorched hell on the overland route to Albany. Eyre knew there was fresh water all the way, if he could find it. Flinders, King and others had reported finding water in the sand. They said that the southern shore of the continent consisted of sheer cliffs, hemming a stony table-land, with white sandhills spilling into sea. The natives told Eyre that by digging at the foot of these sandhills good water could be found a few feet underground, even during the dry season.

The risk lay in covering the 100- or 200-mile gaps between the sandhills. To travel the greater distance with the horse-borne water-casks seemed almost impossible. Eyre knew it was risky, but he also knew that a small fast-travelling party was his only hope of success.

Large quantities of bran and oats for the horses had arrived by schooner to give them sufficient strength to face the hardships ahead. Eyre stayed at Fowler's Bay for six weeks, until the bran and oats were consumed. Meanwhile Baxter, a jack-of-all-trades, checked pack-saddles, horse-shoes and did a hundred other jobs.

The horses and men were fit and ready to go. They were burying stores they could not take with them when a shot rang

out across the bay. Thinking a whaler had arrived, they hurriedly hid their stores and ran to the beach. But it was no whaler at anchor, it was their own schooner from Adelaide.

The captain brought an official message and innumerable letters, appealing to Eyre to abandon his expedition. 'I decline to return home without result, and so will go westward, thank you, to such fate as God shall send. I will leave my bones in the desert sooner than return an unsuccessful man!' he replied.

For eight long days they plodded over the sandy, rocky plain, stumbling over pebbles and rough outcrops. The fierce wind scorched them, the hot sun cooked them, barren sand-dunes blared the monotony of the white limestone plain which stretched to eternity beyond the horizon. By March 3rd they had gained the farthest point reached in the preliminary reconnaissances. It was only a heap of sandhill, but water was available for the digging.

Now the terrible part of the journey began. From the grunts and gestures of the natives, whom they had met earlier, they knew they had to cross 130 miles to the next sandhills. They had to toil over the summit of great unbroken cliffs, the southern buttress of the continent. These fantastic cliffs ran for 150 miles and then, after a small break, for another 150 miles. They varied between 300 and 600 feet high, like the white cliffs of the English Channel. The upper half, hard limestone, leaned over the lower portion, weakened and weathered by timeless sea and wind, giving the line of cliffs the appearance of an endless two-layer cake.

In many places the upper half had crashed down in avalanches, a million tons at a time. Into a coast scenery more weird and wild than any in the world, Eyre started off with two horses, Wylie the native and the sheep. Baxter and the two other blacks followed with the rest of the horses. They went on for four days, with just enough water to keep them alive, but none for the horses or the creeping sheep. The cool morning air was invigorating, but each day grew intensely hot as the sun rose higher. Horseflies tormented them as they clattered over the flat desert pebbles. Rain threatened but none fell. Eyes screwed up against the glare, lips burnt dry by the furnace



wind, they marched onward. Flying sand filled their eyes, ears and food.

The sheep began to collapse, so Eyre made a make-shift yard of stones and stores and left them for Baxter to pick up. When they had toiled 120 weary miles, the cliffs broke for the first time, but in the night Eyre missed the ravine which led to the sea. At daybreak he found he was far beyond it and he paused, wondering whether he should go back. The blacks had told him of water near here, but their idea of distance was unreliable. Miles ahead, the cliff again receded from the seas, so he decided to go on. The blazing sun formed mirages on sand and rock. Eyre thought he saw timber to the north, but knew it was only an illusory mirage formed by the sun blazing down on sand and rock.

Ahead the flat rocky plain stretched in dull monotony towards the heart of the continent. The two men walked on the edge of an arid, dead world. The glaring whiteness of the plain eventually gave way to a darker background. Eyre entered a region of knee-high scrub, which tripped the feet of men and beast. Finally they came to the break in the cliffs where the sandhills sprawled down to the sea. Nearby were a few holes which the natives had dug for water. Using shells left by the natives, they scraped away 5 feet of sand that night and watered the horses, now five days without drink and unable to feed on such miserable grass. Next day they backtracked with full casks for Baxter and the two natives who were toiling behind along that weary track. At nightfall the whole expedition assembled at the sandhills, alive and in good health.

For six days men and beasts lay around, eating and drinking. But this time, when they set out again, the horses and sheep soon lost strength. After forty miles without water, Eyre had to send Baxter back for a supply. Eyre calculated by his charts that he was still nearly 750 miles from help, and with luck might do it in twelve weeks.

Choked by flying sand, irritated by the blood-sucking insects which stung their limbs, the men trudged on. At camp they opened up their packs and threw away surplus gear, including clothing, horse-shoes and a bucket. Through a wilderness

where only lizards, snakes and insects survived, the party travelled slowly but more easily under lighter loads.

When they were seventy miles from the last water, their way was baulked by dense scrub. They took to the shore, but found their weary journey nearly doubled by a strange new enemy. Vast lines of dry seaweed as high as hay-stacks barred the beach. Finally the tide rose and drove them back into the scrub; copying the blacks, they quenched their thirst from tree-roots.

After five days of waterless misery, the horses, on which everything depended, began to fail. The animals had to be beaten and driven. Then came the day when the men emptied the last foul-smelling drops from the water-kegs.

A cheerless morning found them among the remains of an ancient wreck, washed there years before the white man had heard of this land. To ease the pain of their swollen tongues, they collected the dew on the leaves of the scrub plants.

The grey sand slowly turned to white and they hoped the sub-continental water lay beneath. After 160 miles from the last water, Eyre and the overseer started digging in the first likely spot. They found the sand moist and fresh, and soon came across excellent water.

They stayed twenty-eight days among these sand-hills. They slaughtered the sheep one by one and ate a sting ray which they had speared. It was now mid-April, with winter approaching. The weather became cold, but despite heavy thunderstorms no rain fell. They killed one of their horses, and the natives feasted all day. At this stage the natives became truculent, saying they would shift for themselves, and marched off. Even Wylie, who had left King George Sound with Eyre a year before, joined the revolt. The younger of the two South Australian blacks came back.

Eyre and Baxter lingered there, unwilling to face the next 150 miles along the cliffs, where they knew there could be no water without rain. But the rain did not come. Having killed their last sheep, they prepared to set out. Then the two native deserters, beaten back by hunger and thirst, returned.

Eyre intended to travel the next night, but Baxter urged him to stay where they were. Rain threatened and water could be collected from the near-by rock pools. If they advanced into





10. The arid ranges of Western Australia, where the temperature reaches  $120^{\circ}$ . This country was first explored by Grey. (*West Australian Government Tourist Bureau.*)

Spinifex country in Western Australia. Pioneers explored this track in their search for the overland route. (*Anta photo.*)





11. Today diesel trains cross the Nullarbor Plain where Eyre blazed the trail.  
(*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)

Stuart Highway connecting Alice Springs with Darwin. Stuart was the first to cross the continent from south to north. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





sandy country, the rain would be no use to them. So they camped on a desolate treeless plateau 400 feet above the Southern Ocean. Eyre took the first watch, guarding the horses, and Baxter and the natives went to sleep.

The night was cold and wild. Scud raced across the moon. A rushing wind threw desert shrubs and sand against the tent. The restless horses moved around in search of feed. Eyre followed them until at half-past ten he lost sight of the camp-fire. Suddenly the crash of a rifle-shot rent the night. Eyre ran back towards the camp, whence the noise had come. Wylie met him crying 'Come here! Come here!' Eyre ran to the fire. Baxter lay face down. The bright moonlight revealed a dark patch staining the ground.

Eyre lifted his companion up and saw that he was shot through the chest; even while he held him Baxter went limp. Anguish struck him as he laid the body on the ground. But it did not dull his senses. The murderers were still around. The supplies were scattered; much food and both usable shotguns were missing. The two natives must have been looting the supplies when Baxter awoke and they had shot him.

Five hundred miles from help, in the world's worst desert, and with little food, Eyre stood that night alone save for one terrified native and the corpse of his companion.

The dull horror of utter loneliness and despair struck Eyre like a hammer-blow. The thought of the enormous distance to the nearest outpost froze his heart. 'The frightful, appalling truth now burst upon me, that I was alone in the desert,' wrote the explorer. 'He who had faithfully served me for many years was now no more. For an instant I was almost tempted to wish that it had been my fate instead of his. . . . At the dead hour of night in the wildest and most inhospitable wastes of Australia, I was left with a single native whose fidelity I could not rely upon. . . .'

At times Eyre prayed and wept, and then impatiently he paced up and down, planning revenge. The chill wind blew over the stony plain, sparks from the dying camp-fire flew inland, and on the ground the breeze softly rustled the dead man's hair.

Eyre had always treated the natives kindly. Now they had murdered his friend and companion! But in his despair, strength came to him; he tore open the packs and grabbed the remainder of the firearms, a brace of pistols without cartridges and an unserviceable rifle, a bullet jammed in its barrel. Yelling to his native, he ran out into the night. Eyre had suddenly realized that while the horses were there, there was still a chance of survival. Without the horses they would have no chance of getting from one water-hole to the next. He breathed a sigh of grateful relief when he saw them.

The cold of the open plain and the dread of the lurking murderers gave them no time to relax. Long before the first pink rays crimsoned the eastern sky, Eyre had completed his plans. Cautiously he made his way back to camp. His companion's body lay where he had left it. Searching among the wide-strewn rations he retrieved four gallons of water, 40 lb. of flour and a little tea and sugar. Now his prime need was a weapon. The disabled rifle was his only hope, and his one chance of getting it to work was to melt the bullet blocking the barrel. Eyre poked the barrel into the fire, but did not realize there might be enough powder left to explode the charge. A split second later the bullet tore out of the barrel, missing his ear by less than an inch.

Eyre wrapped Baxter's body in a blanket. It was the only tribute he could give his dead friend. The bare limestone rock made burial impossible. Then he and his native pushed on westward on their 500-mile trek to safety.

Their horses, without water for several days, were in a frightful condition. They could not push them too fast, even though the murderers were in the vicinity. Eyre knew they would murder Wylie if they caught him, so he counted on the native's loyalty for this reason.

Hours later Eyre looked back over the stony plain and shielded his eyes against the glare. He could see, quite distinctly, two small dots that followed them, drawing slowly nearer. Eyre realized the blacks would follow him until their food ran out. Then they would advance and try to shoot. He determined to have a show-down; leaving Wylie with the horses, he turned to face the murderers. The blacks raised their guns, but dis-



regarding the pointing barrels, Eyre advanced towards them. As he walked slowly over the narrowing distance, the blacks panicked and scurried off, calling to Wylie to join them.

That night Eyre marched by moonlight, and shook off the murderers completely. Their fate is unknown, but there is little doubt that they perished miserably from hunger and thirst.

The next day was the beginning of May and the start of the Australian winter. They pushed the horses along twenty-eight miles. But it was evident they could not continue the pace much longer. They plodded on over the dreary cream-coloured limestone, devoid of all vegetation save scrub.

Then, after seven days and 150 miles from the last water, they led their horses through a gorge in the cliffs to the shore. A long line of sandhills stretched ahead. Here they soon found a native well, and after watering the horses lay down to sleep. They camped away from the well for fear that the murderers might follow their tracks and surprise them by night. They had now rounded the worst of the desert, had passed the head of the Bight and were on the south-west coast.

Next morning the two men staggered and shuffled across the endless plain. They were forced to kill one of the horses because of its exhausted condition. That night they ate cooked meat, and the strange food made them violently sick. Then, as if in answer to their prayers, rain began to fall, and soon there were plenty of pools in the rock hollows along the route. Scant vegetation broke the sterility of the plain. Another sign of better country ahead was the appearance of black cockatoos and ducks on the beach. Wylie took the rifle and shot a small kangaroo. They feasted on fresh meat. Wylie ate an enormous meal, including the tail and two hind legs. Finally, he singed the hair off the 'roo's hide and ate that as well.

In flimsy cotton shirts and trousers, they suffered in the cold night air. Eyre's health failed and it became an effort for him to get on his feet. But though they had still 400 miles to go, new signs of hope were visible. After passing over desolate tableland for mile after mile, the country changed. Sheets of granite appeared at low water, and rose until they gradually

displaced the porous oolite of the coastal cliffs. Then Eyre spied water trickling over a granite rock, the first since Streaky Bay.

The cold grew worse and as they trudged on and on, a new fear gripped their pain-wracked stomachs. Their food was gone. Cold, starvation and scurvy were their companions. They caught a few fish with a hand-line and found some wild yams. The horses fed on good grass. Against this better picture the first day of June passed, and they commenced their journey without breakfast. Only a miracle could save them from starvation. And it did.

Tension between England and France had almost reached the point of war. In Australian waters at that time there cruised the French whaler *Mississipi*, commanded by Captain Rossiter. Alarmed at the deterioration of the international situation, Rossiter had sought sanctuary in Thistle Bay, behind an island east of Esperance. The crew felt safe off the unknown and uninhabited coast. They looked out every day at the bare, yellow, treeless shore. As they scrubbed decks and cleaned cables, they stopped to gaze on the mysterious mountains looming in the hot distance.

One day a young sailor on the deck suddenly disturbed the quiet, shouting to his mates and pointing towards the shoreline. To their incredulous eyes a man appeared, staggering along the beach. Their glasses confirmed that he was a white man! As they watched, he knelt on the ground to make fire signals.

Without hesitation the sailors tumbled into a whale-boat and rowed rapidly towards the shore. As they approached the rocks, their wonder turned to amazement. The figure was a living scarecrow, thin as a skeleton, bearded, ragged and wild. His eyes burned with fever. His face was ashen under his tan as though he had returned from the dead. He stood there on the rocks unable to move, thin hands held out eagerly towards them.

Before they allowed Eyre to tell his story, they took him on board and gave him plenty to eat and drink. Eyre and Wylie lived in luxury for a fortnight aboard the ship. Captain Rossiter equipped them with warm clothing and a supply of food.



His blacksmith re-shod their horses, for Eyre was determined not to abandon the expedition. Before leaving, Eyre handed Rossiter bills on his agent at Albany for the goods he had received, but they were never presented for payment. Eyre never saw or heard from his benefactor again.

Eyre had been a year on his expedition. His original party had been reduced to one solitary aboriginal. There were still another 250 miles to go, but the country grew more interesting as they progressed.

One morning Eyre told his companion that he would see the mountains beyond the Sound before nightfall. Wylie did not believe him, in fact he did not believe they would reach the Sound at all. But late in the afternoon the rugged grandeur of his native hills filled the horizon ahead. Wylie could not contain his joy. His own brothers and relatives were waiting.

Four days later they abandoned their horses and pushed on as fast as they could. Over the last fifty miles they were deluged by winter downpours, and delayed by bogs and swamps. The first creature they met was a native who knew Wylie. He told them they had been given up months before. Soon afterwards Wylie was in the bosom of his tribe.

Eyre completed his journey on July 7, 1841, and was fêted by the sixty inhabitants of the frontier town. It was four months and ten days since he had left Fowler's Bay with Baxter, and he travelled on foot about 1,000 miles over the worst part of the earth's crust. Since Baxter was murdered he had been two months and five days with Wylie, and had travelled between 500 and 600 miles. No valuable land was discovered in the desert, but someone had to pioneer the route to the west.

Within a few weeks Eyre was back in Adelaide. The governor rewarded him with a civil post as protector of the Murray River aborigines. A few years later Eyre married an English girl, and he became successively Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, Lieutenant-Governor of St. Vincent in the West Indies, and Governor of Jamaica. His desert ordeal had not harmed his health. He died in 1901 at the age of 86.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Sturt's Last Bid*

EYRE had scarcely returned from his ordeal round the Bight, when Sturt, in good health with eye-sight restored, organized an expedition to the heart of the continent. Sturt had become interested in the development of South Australia. He had taken a mob of three hundred cattle down the Murray Valley and had explored the shores of Encounter Bay and St. Vincent Gulf. He was so impressed with South Australia that he sold his New South Wales properties and moved his wife and family to Adelaide, where he became Surveyor-General.

There was still an alluring uncertainty about the heart of the continent. Sturt's hopes still dwelt on a great inland lake or sea, with miles of fertile country. This time his party consisted of sixteen men, including his principal assistant, James Poole, and a young draughtsman, McDouall Stuart, who was destined to win fame as an explorer. The party, with 11 horses, 30 bullocks and drays and 200 sheep, left Adelaide on August 10, 1844. Sturt little knew he would be away eighteen months. After pleasant days with Eyre at his Murindi cattle station, Sturt followed the Murray, turned up the Darling and reached the lakes near Menindee.

From here Sturt struck north-west for the unknown. He crossed the ranges where Broken Hill now stands, spending two months in the area and little dreaming of the silver and metalliferous fortune under his feet. They had been out only four months, but already water was a problem.

Through desert-like country in the blistering summer, Sturt and his band struggled on. Finally, after men and animals had suffered much privation, they pitched their tents at a minute oasis between Mount Brown and Mount Poole on January 27, 1845. They called this haven Rocky Glen. There was a lagoon and some pasture, but the expedition had come



to a complete standstill. There was no prospect of finding water ahead in the drought-stricken land. The sky blazed, a hard unrelenting canopy of heat. No relief could be expected from the searing blasts. The waters shrivelled up and disappeared behind them, leaving surfaces of glazed mud. They were trapped. Advance and retreat were cut off, isolated by miles of waterless wastes. 'We were locked up in this desolate and heated region,' wrote Sturt, 'as effectively as if we were ice-bound at the Pole.' Slowly the thermometer rose. It reached 110 degrees and stayed there. Once it climbed up to 132 degrees in the shade.

Today this country is well known and it is easy to forget Sturt and his fellow-sufferers. With electric light, air-conditioning and refrigeration, it seems hard to imagine the discomforts which dogged the explorers. To them the country blazed like a furnace. They were marooned in a horribly parched desert, with a small supply of salt, tea, sugar and flour, and not much water. In the unaccustomed heat their fingernails became brittle, and split. Some men lost their hair. All bolts and screws in the wagons and boxes fell out. The men dug a shelter under the ground to save themselves from sun-stroke.

They suffered in this dread place for six long months during one of the hottest and driest summers ever recorded. When the water in their pool started to shrink, their position became perilous. The well almost dried up. In this desperate situation, the first raindrops fell. It was July, mid-winter. The ripple of the waters in the gully was the sweetest sound the men had ever heard. But the rain came too late to save one of them.

Scurvy had hit the camp and Poole was seriously ill. Sturt determined to send him home at all costs, but Poole died on the second day out from the oasis. They brought his body back to the camp and he was buried there with Mount Poole for a headstone, about 170 miles north of Broken Hill.

The rain gave Sturt a second chance of reaching the centre. He set up another depot at Fort Grey, and they crossed westward into South Australian territory. Once over the Strzlecki Creek, they came to the edge of inhospitable Lake Blanche.

On further forays into the desert, they dug wells at intervals, so that they would have water on the way back.

Sturt tried the Strzlecki Creek higher up. He met Cooper's Creek and when it seemed that at last the expedition was on the route to the centre, Sturt met an insuperable obstacle. A long series of sandy ridges stretched out into the distance as far as the eye could see. The ground was so hard and barren. The horses left no hoof-marks.

The stony desert was the death-blow to the expedition's hopes. Water and fodder for the horses were failing. Sturt reluctantly turned back 150 miles from his goal. He had penetrated far beyond Lake Eyre, and many miles farther north than present-day Birdsville. But it was the edge of the great Simpson desert which prevented him from being the first to stand at the centre. The whole expedition was smitten with scurvy. Only the wells they had dug on the outward journey saved them from a horrible fate. The horses collapsed from thirst and exhaustion, but revived when water was taken back to them from the wells.

Against the panting void of the limitless sky Sturt saw a lone bird dip for a moment in flight to wet its beak. Burning with hope, they followed its course, and there before their very eyes was a desert spring. The bird saved their lives, and after drinking their fill and replenishing their water-bottles they were able to continue their homeward march. Sturt collapsed with scurvy and their position became desperate once more.

At Fort Grey the water was green and undrinkable. Summer was round again, and they staggered on to the oasis at Rocky Glen, beating thirst and starvation by hours. Here again the water supply was much reduced, but they filled their bullock skins and made a 118-mile dash to Flood Creek. Sturt was too weak to ride and had to be carried on a bullock dray. A final effort brought them back to the Darling River. They arrived in Adelaide on January 19, 1845, their faces gaunt, their bodies emaciated, hair unkempt and their skins burnt the aboriginal colour.

Sturt's wife scarcely recognized him. His appearance gave her such a shock that her hair turned grey overnight. As a result of his ordeal Sturt's health was shattered and his sight



impaired. He had done a remarkable job, having travelled more than 3,000 miles, mostly through new country.

Sturt became one of the imperishable heroes of Australian youth. He was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society and accepted the post of Colonial Treasurer in South Australia. But the job did not last, and he sailed for England with his wife and family on March 19, 1853. He died there on June 16, 1869.

His treatment of the aborigines was an example to others. He always succeeded in pacifying them and never in his whole career shed native blood. His name is remembered in towns and cities throughout Australia. Unfortunately the picture of the interior brought back by Sturt popularized the idea that the centre was a desolate wilderness. Sturt travelled inland in a period of severe drought. It is only within living memory that a different opinion has been formed. Given means of conserving the water, outback cattle-men say that even the outskirts of the stony desert could be used to fatten beasts for market.

Settlers were not slow to follow the tracks of the explorers. The Darling River and Darling Downs were soon dotted with the tents, wagons and livestock of the newcomers.

Major Thomas Mitchell, who had been knighted for his discovery of the rich farming lands of Western Victoria, was restless and dissatisfied while these momentous deeds of exploration continued. Mitchell dreamed of what lay north and north-west of where he had penetrated. The possibility of another Murray flowing into the Gulf of Carpentaria filled his mind. He determined to go north to the Gulf and prove his theory.

Starting in December 1845, with E. B. Kennedy as second in command, Mitchell crossed the Darling River well above Bourke, and followed up the Narran and Balonne Rivers into Queensland. He pushed north and crossed the Cogoon, the Maranoa and the Belyando, hoping that the last-named would reach to the Gulf. His disappointment was profound when he found it trended eastwards and joined a river running to the coast. He then turned back and found a fine stream which the natives called the Barcoo. His hopes were revived when

he saw the Barcoo trending northwards. Kennedy subsequently found the river changed its direction from north and north-west and to west and south-west and was none other than the upper channel of the river Sturt had come across in the heart of Australia and named Cooper's Creek.

This was Mitchell's last venture in the field of exploration. He became interested in business, and on a visit to England in 1851 he took home the first specimens of payable gold and diamonds discovered in Australia. He returned to Sydney and died there four years later.



## CHAPTER XIII

### *A Black Year*

**A**MONG those who paid in sweat, toil and tribulation to push the path of progress through the Australian inland, none cuts a more romantic or controversial figure than Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig Leichhardt, born at Trebatsch, Prussia, on October 23, 1813. Seeking freedom from Prussian military conscription, Leichhardt arrived in Sydney on February 14, 1842, with £200 in his pocket given him by English friends. He had a letter of introduction to the Surveyor-General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, but when the young German presented his credentials the latter gave him the cold shoulder.

Leichhardt had studied botany and geology. He possessed not only a scientific outlook, but a do-or-die determination to make a name for himself despite his chilly welcome. Though handicapped by lack of knowledge of English ways, the bush and of livestock, Leichhardt made many friends. After spending some time in the country, he made an amazing 600-mile solo journey from Glendon in northern New South Wales to Moreton Bay, Queensland, with practically no equipment. Leichhardt did not know the meaning of fear.

When he reached Moreton Bay, Leichhardt visited a German mission to the aborigenes. It was an opportunity for him to learn about the natives of the country he had vowed to explore.

Local settlers were not satisfied with their holdings. There was talk of a government expedition to Port Essington, Northern Territory, but it was vetoed on the question of cost. Leichhardt determined to organize a private expedition, to find the richer and roomier pastures which the settlers desired.

The Northern Territory, covering 523,000 square miles, ten times the size of England and two and a half times the size of Texas, was in those days completely cut off from the settled regions round the eastern and southern seaboard. The settlement at Moreton Bay was about 1,750 miles away.

Matthew Flinders had charted the northern coast in 1803. King had mapped Port Essington, Raffles Bay, the Alligator and Liverpool rivers, Bynoe Harbour and the inlet leading to the harbour on which Darwin now stands. A settlement on Melville Island, at the mouth of Van Diemen's Gulf, had been founded by Captain Bremer in H.M.S. *Tamar* on November 1, 1824. It consisted of 126 people, who erected a stockade at Fort Dundas, but was abandoned in 1829.

Leichhardt wanted to march overland to Port Essington where a settlement had been re-established in 1831. The young German led a party of nine, including two natives. They set out from Jimbour station on the Darling Downs on October 1, 1844, and followed a course parallel with the eastern seaboard, naming a succession of rivers and mountain ranges, the chief among them being Dawson and Expedition ranges. They crossed the Mackenzie River, followed down the Isaacs and finally reached the Burdekin River. Leichhardt then advanced in a north-north-westerly direction about 100 miles inland from the sea. On the same latitude as the head of Gulf of Carpentaria, he turned westward to cross the ranges and found the Lynd and Mitchell rivers flowing into the Gulf.

After nine months' march some of the men were losing confidence in their leader. But the sight of the salt waters of the Gulf removed their lingering doubts. They had long been unmolested by blacks and did not bother to send scouts on ahead, or to keep their weapons handy. On the evening of May 28th, when entering thick bush, they ran straight into a native ambush.

Resenting this trespass on the tribal hunting-grounds, the natives showered the whites with spears. Gilbert, the expedition naturalist, was transfixed and died immediately. Two others, Roper and Calvert, were dangerously wounded. Next day they buried Gilbert beside the river which bears his name. The serious condition of the wounded men was a severe handicap and slowed their progress round the southern edge of the Gulf.

On August 6th they reached a river which was subsequently called the Leichhardt. They entered rich plains, and named half a dozen rivers until they came to the Macarthur. Their



provisions were nearly exhausted when they encountered a rocky tableland bisected by precipitous gorges. They reached the Roper River at the end of the month. In attempting to ferry their supplies, they lost four horses in the fast-flowing river, which was then 500 yards wide. Leichhardt was forced to abandon his precious botanical collection.

They plodded on over the tableland, suffering dreadfully from a shortage of food. Finally, they descended into the valley of the Alligator River. They were ragged and starved, with no animals left but the horses on which they rode. They reached Port Essington on December 17, 1845, completing a zigzag journey of 3,000 miles in fifteen months.

The townsfolk could hardly believe their eyes when the weary travellers staggered into the settlement. Months before they had been given up as lost. The journey had taken twice as long as anticipated. They returned to Sydney by ship and they were hailed as heroes. They had discovered a huge area of valuable pastoral country, and were generously rewarded by public and private subscriptions. The settlement at Port Essington was later abandoned, but cattle and other stock soon grazed along the trail which Leichhardt blazed.

An everlasting halo hangs over the memory of this tall, thin-featured German. He was 33 years old when he organized his second expedition. His aim was to cross the continent from Brisbane to Perth. Everything was carefully planned. Despite subsequent attempts to belittle Leichhardt, the young explorer's slight and active figure has not been overshadowed by the passage of the years.

The necessary equipment, including 100 sheep, 270 goats, 40 bullocks, 15 horses and 13 mules, was assembled for the expedition. Leichhardt, like all early explorers in Australia, took a travelling meat supply, enough to last two years. Eight men started off in the highest spirits from Jimbour station on December 7, 1846.

The course followed that of the previous expedition, but soon everything went wrong. Heavy rain poured down. They all contracted malarial fever. Then, on June 22, 1847, when they had at last reached the point at which they expected to

strike westward, many horses had been lost, wagons floundered in bogs, and amid wrangling and semi-starvation the expedition was abandoned.

Leichhardt returned to Sydney with a tarnished reputation, but he had been awarded gold medals by the geographical societies of London and Paris, and had been pardoned by the German Government for evasion of military service.

He started on his last journey in February 1848, with a party consisting of six men and two blacks. Still bent on crossing the continent to Perth, Leichhardt left from the Darling Downs and reached the Cogoon, fifty-four miles west of the Horsetrack River. He sent his last despatch from Fitzroy Downs, and it contained nothing but good news. Till then the loss of a spade was their only misfortune.

Not another word was heard from them. It was as if the earth had opened up and swallowed them. Their cattle, horses, drays and equipment vanished. Not a single trace of them has ever been found. Expeditions have gone in search of them, natives have told many stories about them, but nothing is known of their fate. Trees have been found at old camps marked with the letter L, which might have meant Leichhardt. But they are most likely to have been cut by a man called Luff, who traversed this country a little later, and who had a mania for carving his initials on trees.

It seems incredible that an old rifle, a wagon wheel or a grisly skeleton were never found to give a clue to Leichhardt's fate. But nothing has turned up in more than a century of silence. Queensland bushmen decided years ago that the whole party must have been swallowed up by a flash-flood that tore suddenly down a river-bed.

There are many outback watercourses, bone dry in the hot summer, but deep in flood as soon as the heavy rain of the wet season has fallen. Leichhardt might have camped in one of these watercourses. Possibly at dead of night the floods came down and drowned him and his men. Then when the waters dried, the wind gently covered their bodies with a mantle of dust. Subsequent floods piled the silt over their graves and they were sealed off for ever from man's curiosity. Even that watercourse may have disappeared by now, but somewhere out



there in the wide country, the summer sun beats down on their unknown graves.

Leichhardt holds pride of place among the European explorers, such as Strzlecki, who first discovered gold in Australia, and Von Mueller, who took part in many expeditions and became a fellow of the Royal Society at the age of 36. Leichhardt made a notable contribution to the exploration of his adopted country. The mystery of his fate has become an Australian legend.

The year 1848 was a black one in the annals of Australian exploration. Apart from the disappearance of Leichhardt and his party, in tropical Cape York peninsula the most tragic expedition in Australian history met its doom. Edmund Besley Court Kennedy, Assistant Surveyor of Government Lands in Sydney, had been second in command of Mitchell's last expedition. On their return from Queensland at the end of 1846, Kennedy explored the course of the Barcoo.

His third and fatal journey began in April 1848, when he led an expedition to explore the east coast of Queensland from Rockingham Bay to the tip of Cape York Peninsula. The party consisted of thirteen men, twenty-eight horses and a flock of sheep as the travelling meat supply. Their object was to find a more suitable site for an outpost than Port Essington.

They sailed north in a barque escorted by the warship *Rattlesnake*. Another ship was to meet them about half-way at Princess Charlotte Bay, replenish their supplies and pick them up at the end of the journey at Port Albany, a bay on the extreme north coast of the Peninsula.

From the outset the expedition met a series of unparalleled disasters. They did not reach Rockingham Bay until May 21st. They lost a horse in the amphibious operations, but all the equipment was finally ashore on May 30th. They then spent weeks trying to find a route through the steaming swamps, across crocodile-infested coastal rivers and the massive jungle thickets that barred the way. They hacked for days with axes at giant creepers and tangling vines that caught their clothes and clung to their sweating bodies. The horses and drays floundered in the mud; a myriad insects attacked them. But the

jungle swamps and palisades of luxuriant tree and entangling creeper proved impenetrable .

They tried other tracks but two miles away they were baulked by a salt-water river 150 yards wide, skirted by mangroves. They finally crossed the river in a boat which had been sent up from the *Rattlesnake*. After days of wandering about and going short of fresh water, they were again surrounded by swamps. They crossed one river by lashing empty kegs to a dray and using it as a raft.

Kennedy despaired of finding a way out of the trap. The only untried inland route led southward and his expedition was meant to be going north. But even this way was almost as bad as crossing the swamps. Salt-water streams, boggy-flats and mangrove-lined marshes impeded their progress. Natives stalked them through the thick bush. Daubed from head to foot with red earth, they carried spears and jeered at the struggling party.

At times the natives seemed peaceful enough, but even though Kennedy frequently gave them small presents, they were always stealing from the camp.

When the expedition finally moved off westward, the country was higher and drier, but again they met thick walls of the dreaded calamus vine. Two men fell prostrate with ague, contracted in the thick rain-forest. While they were recovering, Kennedy went ahead and reported they could advance forty miles without much difficulty. Kennedy started with three companions, but he only went a short distance. The blacks persistently trailed them. In exasperation, Kennedy decided to give them a sharp lesson, and ordered his men to load their weapons. Where a warning shot fired over their heads might have sufficed, Kennedy ordered a volley.

Four natives fell, one being killed instantly. The wounded were carried off into the scrub by their companions. That volley sealed Kennedy's fate, for the blacks held on tenaciously, dodging him along the trail until the moment for retribution arrived.

On July 6th the sick men were able to travel, and the party started off again. They crossed creeks with 20 foot high banks



by lowering the drays on pulleys. On the other side more delays occurred as the rank grass grew high and the scrub thicker. They hacked a road through the vine-covered thicket walls, became bogged in the swamps and were lucky to cover five miles a day. Both carts finally collapsed and were abandoned.

They took what they could on the pack-saddles but many valuable articles were left behind to save overloading the horses. Already their route began to look more like a headlong retreat than the advance of an exploring party. Every day another article was thrown aside to lighten their labours. Anticipations grew gloomy as the endurance of the horses sagged under the loads and they saw razorback mountains stretching across their path right to the seaboard.

They stumbled down rough gulleys, through thick scrub, over winding creeks, along precipitous ridges. At one high camp they lost another horse when it fell over the cliff while feeding. Blood-sucking leeches attacked them. Another horse was abandoned, and the sheep died like flies.

The westward-flowing creeks and watercourses told Kennedy they had crossed the Great Dividing Range. The going was easier and they travelled for eight days over undulating downs. Two more horses died. Farther on they caught some river fish to supplement their rations. This was the only additional food they were able to get. Although they still had a long way to go, they were miserable through hunger and exhaustion.

While they were camped by a river, the blacks showed fight. Previously they had been easily driven off by the discharge of fire-arms, but now they formed a cordon round the camp and fired the long grass surrounding their tents, shoving spears in after the flames. In retaliation, Kennedy's men opened up and drove off the attack.

Such victories did not elate them but only added to their dismal forebodings. They sensed the blacks would follow their trail, waiting for the right moment to attack.

Each delay heightened the danger of starvation. They plodded weary mile after weary mile, over small streams and sandy plains until they reached the sea. Only the hostility of the natives and the death of exhausted animals broke the agony of

the tropical trail. So slow was their progress, it proved almost fatal. They clung desperately to the hope of finding the supply ship at Princess Charlotte Bay, but they did not reach there until October, two months too late for the rendezvous.

Their hearts sank with despair when they saw the blue waters of the bay were empty of sail. There was nothing left to do but to trudge desperately and almost hopelessly forward to Port Albany, through the thick scrub and along rocky precipices of the Great Dividing Range.

When another horse was killed in an accident, they cut it up for eating. Prowling blacks attacked them again, but they beat them off. The other horses were now too weak to carry much more than their saddles. The whole of their flour was reduced to less than 200 lb. The men grew weaker with the smaller rations. Ahead of them stretched dreadful country. Each step took them into mountainous gulleys. They pushed on between deep ridges, until November 2nd, when one of the men became too weak to walk and another horse had to be killed. After another harrowing week of struggle through the ravines, Kennedy realized that the majority of the men would perish if they tried to go any farther.

The distance from Rockingham Bay to Cape York had been estimated at about 700 miles, but the way they had travelled down gullies, over the ridges and through the swamps might double that distance.

Kennedy realized it was impossible for them all to reach Cape York before provisions ran out. Their only chance of survival was to form an advance party and try to get help for those left behind. Kennedy selected three men, and Jackey Jackey, a native. They formed a depot at Weymouth Bay. Kennedy decided to take seven of the nine surviving horses and to try to get help from the vessel at Port Albany.

The whole party rested for two days before separating. The last sheep was killed and every precaution taken to provide for the safety of the camp.

Kennedy told the men he would send round for them by sea. He calculated that it would take him ten or fifteen days to reach the ship. The men were directed to keep a sharp look-out



for a vessel, to hoist a flag on a nearby-hill and fire rockets. The party at Weymouth Bay numbered eight and was left in the charge of Carron the botanist. The provisions were two weak horses, 28 lb. of flour and 75 lb. of horseflesh. Their lives depended upon this food, which was to last six weeks in case of emergency. Kennedy took only 18 lb. of flour and 75 lb. of horseflesh.

Full of hope, the heroic band started out on November 13th, though only one of them would see white faces again. Within a week, one man was lame and another accidentally shot himself. These two were left behind in the care of a third man on a tableland near Cape Grenville. Their names were Luff, Dunn and Costigan. Kennedy decided to push on with all haste to the ship, accompanied by the faithful Jackey Jackey.

They waved a pathetic farewell to the three left by themselves, and with two pack-horses and two saddle-horses went northwards. One horse was soon bogged in a swamp and despite all efforts to get it out, had to be left there. The hostile blacks remorselessly dogged their trail, determined to avenge their slaughtered tribesmen. Lurking behind every rock or tree, they waited their opportunity.

A second horse fell and was too weak to rise. Next day the aboriginal climbed a tree and saw a sandy hill which Kennedy knew was very near Port Albany. They camped beside the Escape River, a day's journey from where the ship lay. At sundown the blacks approached and pestered them for food and gifts.

In the middle of the night Jackey Jackey woke Kennedy and told him the blacks were about to attack. Both men grabbed their guns, and stole into the nearby bush. They sat there for hours on the alert, not daring to light a fire. In the first light of dawn the aboriginal fetched the two horses, saddled them and they were off, just as the natives ransacked their abandoned camp.

During a heavy rainstorm, Kennedy turned round to find to his horror that the blacks had followed their tracks. One of them saw Kennedy and ran back for the main party. Jackey Jackey urged his leader to abandon the horses and take to the bush, as their hooves left tell-tale imprints in the slushy ground.

The aboriginal saw their only chance of escape lay in retreat into the bush, where they might rest and eventually find their way to Port Albany. But Kennedy was too weak from exhaustion and starvation to leave the horses. The delay was fatal. The blood-thirsty myalls cut them off and surrounded them. A shower of spears fell on the two fugitives. Kennedy was struck three times. 'Shoot 'em, shoot 'em,' he urged his companion. The aboriginal pulled the trigger and fired a load of buckshot in the face of the leading savage. He fell back, hands covering his dreadful wounds and was hauled off by his tribesmen.

Kennedy looked bad and was bleeding profusely, when the native helped him to the ground.

Jackey Jackey said: 'Are you going to leave me, Mr. Kennedy?' There was a pause while the wounded man gathered his strength.

'Yes, my boy, I am going to leave you, I am very bad, Jackey.'

Kennedy then told the faithful native to take the books and expedition papers to the ship's captain. He asked him for a paper and pencil, tried to write a message, but fell back dead.

Jackey Jackey caught him, held him close, and wept for a long time. About an hour later he dug a grave with a tomahawk, and laid the body to rest, covering it with grass. He proceeded on his lonely journey, dodging hostile spears and avoiding ambushes on the trail ahead. Thirteen days later the lookout on the schooner *Ariel* at Port Albany saw his urgent signals. He was not safe until the boat had picked him up.

As he was being rowed back to the ship, Jackey Jackey whispered that Kennedy was dead, and the rest of the party, if they survived, would be found near Cape Grenville and Weymouth Bay.

The crew of the *Ariel* readied the vessel for immediate departure. Next day, as she sailed cautiously along the coast looking for any sign of the three men left at Cape Grenville, they came suddenly upon a canoe with eight natives aboard. One of the myalls was wearing Kennedy's trousers. The murderer was taken prisoner, while the others made for shore as quickly as they could paddle their canoe under fire from the



ship's crew. While the crew was firing at the other natives, the captive jumped overboard and swam ashore.

A search party from the schooner failed to find any trace of survivors at Cape Grenville. It was assumed they must have been murdered by the aboriginals. At Weymouth Bay, where the party of nine had been left, the ship's party found only two survivors, Carron and Goddard. Starvation and native attacks had claimed the others.

As the last two were rescued, the blacks had their spears poised ready for the final assault. Thus ten of the thirteen men who made up this expedition perished. Other explorers, who later met the Cape York blacks, met with the same hostility.

Today, along the 700-mile coast down which Kennedy struggled, there are few towns and little settlement. Airfields, hastily built in World War II, have been recaptured by the jungle. An enormous area of rich country lies waiting the bulldozers and mechanical equipment of modern science. The sacrifice of Kennedy and his followers stands as a challenge to the development and population of this vital territory.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *From Sea to Sea*

FOR a time the disasters of Leichhardt and Kennedy quelled the flames of adventure burning in the hearts of settlers, but every expedition, whether successful or not, gradually laid bare the continent. Even when major exploration was at a standstill, the squatters pushed farther and farther into the back country, moving their flocks, herds and families. The hands of civilization stretched out from the coastal settlements towards the inland.

In 1829 Augustus Charles Gregory had been taken by his parents from Nottingham, England, to West Australia. He was one of three brothers who achieved much in exploration. His journeys covered both sides of the continent. In 1848 he examined the rivers north of Perth, West Australia, the lower parts of which had been traversed by Grey in his desperate march for life. In spite of water shortages, Gregory covered 1,500 miles in ten weeks.

There were many adventurers like Gregory, but time does not permit us to accompany all of them on their great journeys. B. Herschell Babbage wandered the northern wastes of South Australia; Assistant-Surveyor Austin trekked inland over mountain and plain from Northam to Shark Bay in West Australia, and William Richard Randell, boat-builder, sailed the first steamer up 2,400 miles of twists and turns to Brewarinna on the Darling.

Strangely, however, the first man to cross the continent from south to north is probably the least known of the leading Australian explorers. He was John McDouall Stuart, born in Fifeshire, Scotland, in 1815, the son of an army captain. He arrived in Australia at the age of 23 and entered the Government survey department. In 1844 he joined Sturt's expedition as a draughtsman and failed to reach the centre. However the experience was invaluable for young Stuart. He made several



minor expeditions into the unknown region around Lake Eyre, and then, in May 1858, with a companion and six horses, explored the country west of the Torrens Basin, north of Port Augusta. In training sorties as far north as Lake Eyre, Stuart fitted himself for the future. The dreary spinifex desert and the glaring salt-pans, shining like silver mirrors, took toll of his health. Once he was three days without food and then staggered into Streaky Bay with his companion Forster in such a state that it took them nine days to recover.

Stuart's major success was unique for the fact that in the whole journey he did not lose a single man. Stuart, like Peary in his quest of the North Pole, was one of those who believed in trying so many times that he must finally achieve his end. In the year 1860 he set out on the first step of the five journeys that eventually lead to his great success. The colonial government had offered a reward of £2,000 to the first man to lead a party across the continent from south to north.

With two men and thirteen horses, Stuart left for the interior from Chambers Creek, South Australia, at the beginning of March. Heavy rain flooded them out. The whole country became soft and boggy, and the creeks were so full of water that they had great difficulty in crossing them. It rained until March 20th, by which time they had reached Hanson Range.

On April 4th, Stuart climbed a flat-topped hill, which he named Mount Humphries. They passed over a fine plain of beautiful red soil, covered with grass a foot high, as good as any Stuart had seen. From fifteen miles away they saw sand-hills, but the feed was still abundant. Higher up, a full creek, lined with gum-trees, ran through the plain and they named it the Finke.

Two days later they sighted a remarkable hill, which from a distance looked like an engine with an immense funnel. On closer examination the hill was found to be composed of sand-stone, 100 feet high; the unique pillar that sprang from its centre stood perpendicular for 105 feet. This desert monument was named Chambers's Pillar, after Stuart's friend and patron, James Chambers of North Adelaide. To the north and north-east fantastic groups of strange hills reared above the sky-line,

reminding the explorers of mediaeval castles or old forts crumbling in ruins.

For six days they travelled over difficult country of sandstone and dense scrub. Farther on they saw the rugged but well-grassed MacDonnell Range, named in honour of the Governor of the colony.

From the MacDonnell Range to Mount Hugh, about forty miles, the country was devoid of water. But beyond the mountain, plenty of water was found in a gum creek. At this camp Stuart carved his initials on a tree and erected a cairn of stones. Ten miles away in a branch creek they found more water; and in a ledge of rocks a splendid natural reservoir.

On Sunday, April 22nd, Stuart had reached the centre of Australia. Next morning, two and a half miles to the north-north-east on a high red sandstone mount, covered with scrub and spinifex, Stuart built a stone cone, planted the British flag and named it Central Mount Stuart.

Beside the flag-pole with his two companions Stuart looked north over a large plain of gum, mulga and spinifex, broken only by intermittent creeks. The large gum creeks they had crossed wound round the hill to the north-east, and finally became lost in the purple haze of distance. On the top of the stone cone Stuart placed a small bottle, containing a slip of paper, recording the event. The men stood back and gave three cheers for the flag.

About two miles to the north-west a remarkable bottle-shaped hill was named Mount Esther, and from this point Stuart found progress difficult for lack of water. His horses were suffering badly and were scarcely able to move. After several ineffective attempts to push forward, and after an accident which nearly proved fatal, he was compelled to fall back upon Central Mount Stuart.

The leader suffered dreadfully from scurvy. His hands became a mass of sores, and his mouth and gums were so bad that it became impossible for him to eat. 'For the last three weeks,' he wrote in his journal, 'I have been suffering dreadful pains in the muscles, caused by the scurvy; but the last two nights they have been most excruciating—so much so, that I



almost wished that death would come and release me from my torture.'

Stuart thought that if he could only get across the dry country for 120 miles, he would meet water. He aimed to find the source of the Victoria River, which Gregory had explored, and trace its course to the Indian Ocean. But he did not get that far, because of the urgent necessity to find water. Finally, on June 26th, almost on the point of collapse, they reached a large gum creek full of water. Unfortunately they met a hostile reception from a large tribe of natives living in the area. The blacks gathered in a body and tried to rush their camp. They were only driven off at the last minute by Stuart's men firing shots over their heads.

The party was worn out, short of supplies, and the horses lame and famished. Stuart realized that in these circumstances, coupled with the hostility of the blacks, it would have been suicidal to advance farther northward. Here, where he reluctantly turned back, but beat off the assault, Stuart named Attack Creek. He vowed he would return one day and achieve his ambition. After suffering untold agony from heat, hunger and thirst, they staggered back to civilization.

Stuart reported his discoveries to the Government and the public. His news excited widespread interest. At last it seemed that a well-equipped party could reach the Indian Ocean to the north. The South Australian Government granted £2,500 to fit Stuart with another expedition to attempt the crossing from sea to sea. Several weeks of rest were enough for this most persistent of explorers. His second-in-command was W. Kekwich, who had accompanied him to the centre, and F. Thring was the third officer. Nine others went along. On December 12, 1861, they were at Chambers's Creek, drying meat, mending pack-saddles, and weighing rations.

The discoveries Stuart had already made had led to the squatters setting up stations farther north than Chambers's Creek. The farthest then was near Mount Margaret. When the expedition arrived there, Stuart thought he would be more mobile with a smaller party and sent two of the men back to Adelaide.

Farther along the trail Stuart fell ill, but after a pause of two days he was able to proceed. On April 25th they arrived at Attack Creek, where they saw innumerable native tracks, but no natives. One of the party saw what appeared to be a piece of wood on a tree-stump,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet long, sharp at both ends, and shaped like a canoe. Pulling it down, he found it to be hollow; on top were pieces of bark, and the whole was bound firmly round with grass cord. Inside was found the skull and bones of a child. Stuart thought this native coffin was the finest piece of aboriginal workmanship he had ever seen.

A month later they reached a splendid stretch of water 150 yards wide, extending farther than they could see. Stuart named this Newcastle Waters, after the Duke of Newcastle, who was then Secretary of State for the Colonies. Here was fine country, rich alluvial land extending over a large area. They named it Stuart Plains. From May 24th until July 11th they remained at Newcastle Waters, making desperate but fruitless attempts to reach the coast.

Stuart wrote in his journal that day: 'It certainly is a great disappointment to me in not being able to get through; but I believe that I have left nothing untried that it has been in my power to do.'

Stuart was compelled to return, beaten by the country, the dreadful condition of his horses and the scarcity of supplies.

Stuart's final expedition followed his old track, until on April 14, 1862, he was camped again at the upper end of Newcastle Waters in another attempt to force a passage through the scrub forest. Twice he tried hard to reach some tributary of the Victoria River, but failed, and had to spend many long days in fruitlessly riding through dense mulga and hedgewood scrub.

At length, after much disappointment, being misled by a few scanty waterholes in various directions, he succeeded in striking the head of a chain of ponds running to the north. These led him to the head of Daly Creek, and finally on



May 25th to the large waterhole bearing that name. Overhead the sun beat down unrelentingly, so Stuart decided to rest for a few days. He was feeling the strain much more than a year earlier.

Beyond this point the creek was lost in a swamp and Stuart was unable to find the channel where it re-formed at the Birdum. Missing this watercourse, Stuart worked his way to the eastward, to a creek he called the Strangways, which led him down to the Roper River. The worst difficulties now seemed over and they were approaching the north coast. At the Roper they cut across Gregory's tracks from the Victoria River to the westward. Stuart was so pleased to see the Roper and the rich surrounding country that he called for a special feast. They killed and cut up one of the horses and all enjoyed the change from bullock meat.

They crossed the Roper and followed up a northern tributary named the Chambers.

His worries about water were now over, but his horses began to fall lame. Stocks of spare shoes were being carefully guarded for the return journey back to Adelaide. From the Chambers, Stuart came to the Katherine, and the lower course of the Flying Fox Creek. Then he struck across the tableland and descended to the head-waters of the river he christened the Adelaide, although at first he thought that he was on the Alligator River. Following the Adelaide, Stuart soon found himself travelling through rich tropical scenery. He knew he was at last approaching the long-sought coast. On July 24th he went to the north-east, intending to make the shore and travel along the beach to the mouth of the Adelaide River. As he neared the sea, Stuart did not tell his followers of the eventful moment awaiting them. As they rode on, Thring, who was ahead, called out excitedly 'The sea! The sea!' He had to repeat himself before his companions fully understood his meaning. Then, one after the other, the men struggled up, and as their eyes filled with wonder they burst into three hearty cheers. On the shores of Van Diemen's Gulf, east of Darwin, Stuart washed his hands and feet in the Indian Ocean. He cut his initials on the largest tree he could find. A space was cleared where they stood, and using a tall

sapling stripped of its boughs for a flagstaff, they hoisted the Union Jack.

They had left the city of Adelaide on October 26, 1861, and reached the northern coast on July 21, 1862, a journey of 2,000 miles in nine months.

On July 29th Stuart started his return journey. His health was failing and his horses were sadly weakened. After leaving Newcastle Waters, they found many of the short creeks were at their last gasp. The horses commenced to fail rapidly, and one after another they were abandoned. By August 22nd Stuart was so feeble that he began to think he would never live to reach the settled districts. Scurvy had reduced him to a terrible state. His sight was so bad that he was unable to take observations. His right hand was nearly useless and after sunset he was blind. He could not stand the pain caused by riding and a stretcher had to be made to carry him. Stuart lay there like a skeleton, as slowly and painfully they crept along the trail to the first station, Mount Margaret. Here the leader, who was more dead than alive, was able to get a little relief and finally recovered sufficiently to ride to Adelaide.

The South Australian Government awarded him the bonus of £2,000 offered for the first successful trip across the continent, plus an additional £1,000 by a vote of the Legislature. In 1869 he was granted a lease of 1,000 square miles of pastoral country in the north, free of rent for a period of seven years. Although still a comparatively young man, Stuart returned to England, his constitution ruined, and like his former leader, Captain Sturt, he was nearly blind. Eight full years of his life had been spent in exploring Australia and neither his means nor resources had been great. But he always brought his party back safely, through every difficulty. He died in London on June 5, 1866, at the age of 41.

Stuart showed there was plenty of good country in Central Australia, and he dispelled the notion that the heart of the continent was another Sahara. His last expedition led to the Northern Territory being handed over to the South Australian Government in 1863. Within nine years' the overland telegraph stretched from Adelaide to Darwin along Stuart's



route. At Darwin the line was connected with the cable that went under the sea to Java, Asia and Europe. The Northern Territory remained in the hands of the South Australian Government until the Federal Government took control in 1911.

## CHAPTER XV

### *Death March to the Gulf*

**B**y mid-century the greater part of Southern Australia had been explored, and the energetic settlers were keen to uncover the remoter parts of the continent. While Stuart was northward bound, the Victorians, with unlimited financial resources, were preparing a similar attack in a straight line from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The Victorian expedition proved to be a spectacular series of colossal blunders. The return journey was an overwhelming catastrophe. Selected as leader was Robert O'Hara Burke, a handsome Victorian police inspector; second-in-command was C. J. Landels, in charge of camels, and the third officer was William John Wills, a Ballarat surgeon with a scientific bent. The rest of the party consisted of Hermann Beckler, medical officer and botanist; Ludwig Becker, artist, naturalist and geologist; and ten other Europeans.

A big-name committee was formed to outfit the expedition. The first blunder was the choice of a leader without experience of the bush. A century ago the test of an explorer's metal was his ability to survive in the unknown inland with only a swag on his back. The swag would hold only a blanket, a billycan, tea, sugar, flour and a change of socks.

Burke, a native of Ireland, the chosen leader of this disastrous venture, flashes across the Australian scene like a brilliant meteor. Good looking, fiery, full of courage, Burke cuts a romantic figure in the parade of exploration heroes. But Burke was no bushman. He had arrived in Australia in 1853, and became a police inspector in Victoria.

Wills, whose name has been irrevocably linked with Burke, was an Englishman from Totnes, Devonshire. He was 28 years old, happy-go-lucky and loyal, and soon rose to become second-in-command. He was clever as a surveyor and astronomer, but he, too, was no bushman.



The expedition organizers imported twenty-four camels from India, at a cost of £3,000. The animals were to overcome the dread shortage of water which had taken such toll of the horses in the outback. Government contributions and private subscriptions swelled the exploration fund to £12,400. Stores were prepared, wagons, horses and camels readied and then, after much premature feasting and speech-making, the expedition left Melbourne on August 20, 1860, followed by a crowd of cheering enthusiasts.

From the start bad management and incompetence accompanied the expedition. When they reached the lower part of the Murrumbidgee, Burke sacked Ferguson, the foreman, for insubordination. Then an argument flared up between the leader and Landels over the management of the camels, and Landels resigned on the spot; he returned to Melbourne voicing bitter complaints about Burke's conduct and forecasting that the expedition was doomed.

Wills stepped into the number two position. At Menindee, on the Darling, Burke picked a up new member for the expedition, named Wright, a station manager. He was appointed third-in-command, in charge of camels, horses and stores. Upon the efficient discharge of these duties lay the success and safety of the expedition. However, Wright repeatedly failed to carry out Burke's instructions and his neglect accelerated the tragedy.

The leader was impatient and would not wait for the scientists and others trailing in the rear. With seven men and camels he pushed ahead of the main party and reached Cooper's Creek three and a half weeks later.

At Cooper's Creek a depot was formed, but Burke, headstrong and determined, refused to wait for the others to catch up. Impetuously he subdivided his party and left most of his expensive equipment behind with four men at Cooper's Creek, under Brahe. He instructed Brahe's party to stay at the depot three months. On December 16, with Wills and two others, John King and Charles Gray, six camels and a couple of horses, Burke energetically advanced through the heart of the continent.

Burke's scanty notes tell little of the monotonous journey.

Heading for Eyre's Creek in the far west of Queensland, the four men arrived at a stream which is now called the Diamantina. They followed this river northward for a considerable distance, and then had to leave it when it veered off to the east. Farther north they came upon the Cloncurry River and traced it down to the Flinders River. They followed this till they came to salt-water on February 11, 1861, but they did not catch sight of the open sea in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Two-thirds of the three months that Burke had said would be the maximum time of the journey had elapsed, but their hearts were full of hope when they started on the way back.

By the middle of June no word had been received in Melbourne from the expedition and fears were entertained for their safety. Finally, the exploration committee decided to send out a relief expedition to search for Burke. William Alfred Howitt, a well-known bushman, was appointed leader. He left Melbourne without delay, planning to collect his horses and stores on the Murray. Near Swan Hill on the Loddon, however, he met Brahe with dispatches from Wright. The messages said that the depot party from Cooper's Creek had returned to Wright's camp at Menindee, that Burke had left for the Gulf on December 16th, and had not been heard of, and that four men in the support party—Becker, Purcell, Stone and Paton—had died of scurvy and exhaustion.

Howitt imagined Burke's plan was to fall back on the Cooper's Creek depot if they failed to cross the continent. Burke had given instructions that Brahe should follow his tracks as soon as Wright came up from Menindee to take charge of the Cooper's Creek depot. If Wright did not turn up, Brahe was to stay three months at the depot or as long as the provisions would allow. After a wait of eighteen weeks, Wright had not arrived at Cooper's Creek, and because of the serious illness of Paton and others in the party Brahe had been compelled to fall back to Menindee. Before leaving, Brahe put 50 lb. of flour, 50 lb. of sugar and 30 lb. of rice in a cache with a note of explanation in case Burke returned. He took 150 lb. of flour, a bag and a half of sugar, and a bag of rice for himself and his three companions. Brahe met Wright half-way back to





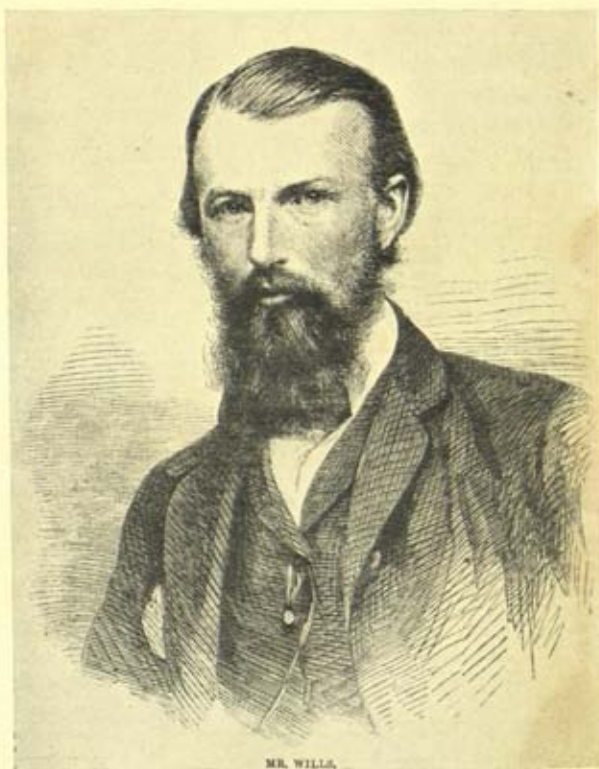
12. Ayers Rock, looking north. On the horizon is Lake Amadeus, discovered by Ernest Giles. (*Anta photo.*)

The MacDonnell Ranges, which stretch 400 miles across Central Australia, a grim barrier which thwarted Giles. (*Anta photo.*)





13. Burke and Wills.





Menindee, and the two rode back to Cooper's Creek to see if Burke had returned and to make sure the provisions were safe.

Wright and Brahe later said they saw no signs of Burke's return to the Cooper's Creek depot, but had they looked properly they would have found the food cache had been disturbed.

Burke's position at the estuary of the Flinders River did not call for undue optimism. They had less than a month's provisions. The few camels and horses that had survived the northward rush were almost exhausted. But, disregarding any advice, Burke decided to press on with all despatch.

Camel after camel perished or was abandoned, and then the last two horses collapsed. When their food was nearly finished, Gray fell ill. His companions accused him of malingering. Burke thought Gray was helping himself to the slender rations and horse-whipped him. Two days later the luckless Gray was dead and Burke knew that he had been no malingerer. Finally, on April 21st, a month overdue, they reached the neighbourhood of the Cooper's Creek depot, in the last stage of exhaustion.

Expecting to surprise the men they had left there with ample provisions, Burke and his companions yelled their coo-es until the gum trees resounded with their noise. They stood still, waiting for the answer. None came. The age-old bush was silent and impenetrable. With despair in their hearts, the three men staggered silently into the empty camp.

Obedying the instructions cut on a tree, they dug up a note. It said that Brahe had broken camp that very morning and the men were returning to the Darling. A small amount of food was buried beneath the tree. But there were no blankets or clothing and the three survivors were half-dead with cold as much as from lack of food.

Instead of immediately following Brahe who had left the depot only seven hours earlier, Burke decided the best way to find help was to follow Gregory's tracks down the long run of the Cooper through to Mount Hopeless, in South Australia. Burke thought they might run into a homestead, for the settle-

ments were slowly extending northward. Wills objected to the plan, urging that they should follow Brahe to Menindee, but out of loyalty he finally agreed with the leader.

Wills's loyalty was his virtue and his downfall. Against his will he followed his leader. King, the subordinate, had no choice. After a rest of five days they set out without even marking a tree or leaving any indication of where they were going. The omission was disastrous, for when Brahe returned to the depot with Wright, a few days later, he did not know that Burke had been there and never bothered to see if the stores had been used. Brahe, too, never left a message to say he had called back at the depot.

The three men struggling down the arid track to Mount Hopeless were right out of luck. They had two very weak camels left, but in the first few days one of them died. The creek they were following finally lost itself in the sand dunes and their plight was hopeless. They lost valuable days cutting up the camel meat and drying it in the sun. The last camel perished. After they had eaten that, their supplies were completely exhausted. They were now so weak they were scarcely able to walk. In desperation, the three human scarecrows struggled back to the depot. They knew the natives made meals from a powdered grass seed called nardoo, so they expended their last energy in finding the plant on which it grew. But the nardoo contained little that was nourishing for white men.

In the beginning the natives were kind to them, supplying fish and other things to eat, but they suddenly decided the white men had become a burden. In the end the natives disappeared into the bush and left them alone. By June 22nd Wills was so weak he was unable to stand on his feet.

Two days later Burke and King started out to see if they could find the natives. Wills urged them on, saying it was the only way of saving their lives. They left Wills with eight days' supply of nardoo, wood and water. They buried their diaries and maps near where he lay. Wills gave Burke a letter and a watch, and told King to give them to his father if he should survive them both.

Burke was soon too weak to walk and had to throw everything away in order to move at all. On the second day he



collapsed and told King, 'I hope you will remain with me till I am quite dead. It is a comfort to know that someone is by.' The last tragic jotting in Burke's pocket-book was dated Cooper's Creek, June 28th. 'I hope we shall be done justice to. We have fulfilled our task. We have not been followed up as we expected, and the depot party abandoned their post. . . .'

He asked King to leave his pistol in his right hand and leave him unburied. He died about eight o'clock the next morning.

King continued alone in search of the natives and returned to Wills's camp after a week's absence, only to find his other companion had been dead for some days. The sole survivor then read the tragedy which stalks through the final page of Wills's diary: 'Friday, Jun 29th—Clear, cold night, slight breeze from the east. Day beautifully warm and pleasant. Burke suffers greatly from the cold and is getting extremely weak. He and King start tomorrow up the creek to look for the Blacks. It's the only chance we have of being saved from starvation. . . . Nothing now but the greatest of good luck can save us. . . . I may live four or five days.'

Wills, ever the scientist, noted his pulse was 48, and that his legs and arms were skin and bone. He remarked that fat and sugar would have been a far more substantial diet than the farinaceous food he had been forced to eat. Little more than a skeleton, he had died from exhaustion and starvation. King was left to face the ordeal alone.

Brahe failed to discover that the stores which he had buried beneath the tree at Cooper's Creek had been disturbed. He then returned to Menindee, not knowing that the unfortunate Wills was crawling on the ground back there in a desperate effort to gather a handful of scraps, so that he might survive.

In reading the diaries of these men who struggled, conquered and died after more than 2,000 miles of blistering heat, over freezing highlands, barren desert and streaming jungle, one pauses in wonder and a surge of pride flows through the veins. Wills's death, so hopeless when help was near at hand, was similar in many ways to the pattern of events that led up to the tragic end of Captain Robert Falcon Scott on his return from the South Pole sixty-three years later. There, as in the Burke—

Wills expedition, was ignorance, incompetence and mismanagement. Scott, like Wills, perished when help, unknown to him, was near at hand.

On September 13, 1861, Howitt's search-party reached the Cooper's Creek depot. Welch, a member of the relief party, saw several blacks beckoning him. He followed them and they all scattered except one man, who was dressed in filthy rags and half a hat. It was King. He had been living with the natives for two and a half months near the graves of Burke and Wills.

After the death of his friends, King had staved off starvation by a hard-won diet of nardoo seed and an occasional crow. Finally, he had joined up with a party of natives. They had tried to lose him, but King had hung on grimly, for he knew they were his only chance of survival. He was brought back to Melbourne and given a hero's welcome. A few days later the bodies of Burke and Wills were given a public funeral. People in the crowd called out, 'Where's poor Gray?'

Discussion over the tragedy raged for many years. Each leading player in the drama was singled out for abuse or flattery from the critics. Today the country is different. He would be an unfortunate individual who starved to death in the land which Burke, Wills and Gray died to discover.

In addition to the statue of Burke and Wills near Parliament House, Melbourne, there is a monument to Wills at his birth-place in Devonshire.

While Howitt was searching a vast territory for Burke and Wills, other expeditions with the same objective were uncovering the last unknown regions of Eastern Australia.

Among the leaders was a man of outstanding physique, 6 feet 3½ inches tall, with a modest and unassuming manner. John McKinlay had migrated from his native Clydeside at the age of 17 to begin life with a squatter uncle. Some time later, young McKinlay moved to near the South Australian border, where he took up land between there and the Darling. He developed a great interest in the local aborigines and this knowledge proved of immense value when he became an explorer.

McKinlay left Adelaide, scene of many historic departures in



those stirring days, on August 16, 1861, with nine men, seventy sheep, two pack-horses and four camels to search for Burke and Wills. On September 27th he crossed Lake Torrens, a feat which would have excited great interest a few years before, and then made for Lake Hope. He went north, crossing the dry country where Cooper's Creek loses itself in a maze of water-courses. From the natives McKinlay heard about a party of whites who had travelled in that region with camels.

Passing through a country of small shallow lakes, they came again to Lake Massacre, and found camel and horse tracks and a white man's grave. They picked up a canteen, an exploded cartridge and a battered pint pot. Next morning they opened the grave. The body was that of a European. It was enveloped in a flannel jacket with short sleeves and was that of the unfortunate Gray. Here McKinlay clashed with the natives, having, as he thought, found traces of the murder of Burke's party.

McKinlay sent news of his discovery back to Adelaide and learnt soon afterwards that the bodies of Burke and Wills had also been found. McKinlay therefore decided to explore the centre towards Mount Stuart, but was forced back by unusual heavy rains and floods. Next he thought of going through to the Gulf of Carpentaria, hoping to find the ship which was to have met Burke's party.

Towards the end of May 1862, McKinlay realized his attempts to reach the sea would be fruitless. Time after time he had been turned back by deep mangrove creeks and boggy flats. With rations running perilously low, the party turned for Bowen, the nearest settlement. They were now in the country already traversed by Leichhardt and Gregory. McKinlay missed the Flinders and crossed to the head of the Burdekin, which he followed, hoping to meet the advancing flocks and herds of settlers pushing forward into new country. After crossing the formidable Leichhardt range, through which the Burdekin forces its way down to the coastal lands, they came across a new station. In their weak condition the relief was very welcome.

His trip across the continent at this time proved of great value. He crossed country that had been termed desert and regarded as useless for grazing purposes. McKinlay's subse-

quent report dealt a final blow to this theory which Stuart had partly demolished.

In the far north of Australia, settlement on a new scale was once more attempted, this time under purely colonial auspices. The territory had long been considered a No Man's Land. The arrival of the ships *Astrolabe* and *Zelie* in Raffles Bay in 1839 gave colour to the belief that the French intended to secure part of this territory, since the first British attempt at colonization had failed. Fortunately, Sir Gordon Bremer was in time to found the second settlement at Port Essington, a few weeks before the arrival of M. Dumont D'Urville, just as Governor Phillip had forestalled La Perouse.

The territory annexed by South Australia on July 8, 1863, comprised all the country to the northward of the 26th parallel south latitude, and between the 129th and 138th degrees of east longitude. The country was known only from the descriptions of Stuart, Gregory and Leichhardt.

In 1864 an expedition left Adelaide to go by sea to Adam Bay, and search for a suitable site for a township. Colonel B. T. Finnis was placed in charge of the colony, and three vessels, the *Henry Ellis*, the *Yatala* and the *Beatrice* carried the settlers there in August of that year. Finnis was instructed to examine the Adelaide River and the neighbouring coastline. He was given discretionary power over the choice of a suitable position. Port Essington and Raffles Bay were excepted, in view of the former failures at these places.

A site was chosen at Escape Cliffs in Adam Bay, so called because of the narrow escape of two officers of the *Beagle* when pursued by natives in 1829. Dissension broke out in the settlement at Adam Bay and John McKinlay was sent north to select a more favourable position. He organized a reconnaissance party and left the camp at Escape Cliffs with the intention of making a long journey eastward; but he only reached the East Alligator River, where he was cut off and hemmed in by flash floods and narrowly escaped losing all his men and equipment. Everything had to be abandoned and the explorers only escaped from a critical position by killing their horses, building coracles of horse hide and floating downstream to the coast. On



his return, McKinlay examined the mouth of the Daly River in Anson Bay and recommended it in preference to the site at Escape Cliffs, but the suggestion was not adopted. This was McKinlay's last expedition. He settled near the town of Gawler in South Australia and died there on December 31, 1872.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *West of Centre*

**N**o record of Australian exploration would be complete without the story of Ernest Giles, whose persistence and fortitude were unsurpassed.

Each of Giles' five expeditions was a daily battle against thirst, starvation, hostile blacks and back-breaking toil, with death itself always in ambush near by. Flies, ants, burning sand and disease were minor torments. Giles endured these hardships by the unconquerable spirit which burnt like a fever in his brain. By bitter experience Giles learnt how to survive in the inhospitable country west of the Centre.

Ernest Giles, born at Bristol, England, in 1835, was educated in London and at the age of 15 joined his parents in South Australia. Two years later he tried his luck on the Victorian goldfields and worked for a time at the Melbourne G.P.O. But tiring of the close confines of city life, he went to the back country and teamed up with William H. Tietkens, who had also come out from England when he was 15.

Together they explored the Darling, looking for pastoral country. They crossed the flooded Murrumbidgee when the river was seven miles wide, and a few days later travelled through a hundred-mile waterless waste with only a piece of flannel dipped in water to assuage their thirst. The discovery of good grazing land was their reward.

In 1872, with the Adelaide-Darwin overland telegraph completed, Giles equipped an expedition at his own expense. His aim was to cross the heart of the continent westward from the Telegraph Line. Three others, Carmichael, a young man from Peake Station, Alex Robinson, and a black boy, Dick, with fifteen riding-and pack-horses, made up the party.

Going north from Adelaide, the party reached Charlotte Waters on the South Australian border, about 160 miles south of Alice Springs. They pushed up the Finke River in August



(spring time in the Centre), with brilliant sunlit days and the thermometer soaring to 110°F. in the sun. At night the temperature nose-dived to 20°F., throwing a white mantle of frost over their blankets.

The country fascinated Giles, as it does all who venture there. Barren and empty, it flamed in rosy hues at sun-up and sun-down. Distant hills, glittering with mica, shimmered in an aura of blue and gold. Weird sandstone columns rose red-capped out of nowhere in the middle of the plain, age-old monuments of loneliness and grandeur. The beckoning finger of untracked country called.

They followed the bed of the Finke up through the bare defiles of the Krichuff Ranges. At the water-holes hundreds of pelicans flew off at their approach. Fish were plentiful in the river. Places of incredible beauty appeared in the barren mountain groups, palm-shrouded oases with deep pools of water, and miles of wild flowers in blazing colours.

Giles hugged the higher country until he came to the foothills of the Macdonnell Range. Here in the rough and stony country were the life-saving springs, the rock-holes and soaks from scanty rains. Rock-wallabies, parrots, hawks, native figs and edible roots supplemented their rations.

Watched by unseen eyes Giles and his men were the first whites ever to penetrate this country. Beyond the horizon smoke-signals curled skywards relaying the news of their approach from one group of blacks to another. At night, when the camp-fires had burnt to embers, the dog raised the alarm and the men leaped to their feet with their rifles ready.

Day after day they made their way westward over the red mulga-spotted sandhills into the dreadful spinifex, which pricked their horses, making them jump with pain. At night Giles read his latitude from the stars.

Their hopes ran high when they saw the strange red and white rock crags of the western Macdonnells, green bloodwood climbing the lower slopes. But the vital water-holes became smaller and farther apart. The great parallel ranges that ran east and west for 300 miles finally sank to the plains, save for a few sentinel peaks alone in the north and north-west.

Mulga bush ripped clothing, saddle-bags and horses. Un-

known peaks, appearing over the horizon, fascinated Giles and lured him onwards. In the north-west a battery of grotesque bluffs reared skyward; a giant stairway, red and curved, cut in regular notches, pointed to the infinite.

Natives, resenting the use of their precious water-holes, attacked in small armed bands. Painted and feathered, the warriors carried long spears and narrow shields. They ran like emus, stooping close to the ground. As they stopped to hurl their spears, Giles ordered his men to empty their six-shooters into the ground at their feet.

Giles was forced to go on alone to find water before bringing up his party. Any direction might have taken him beyond the point of no return. But Giles possessed that peculiar instinct of knowing when to turn back. Finally, eighty miles out from last water, on the top of a hill under the dipping sun, Giles for the first time lost hope. Ragged sterile ranges, dark and foreboding in the fading light, froze his spirit. Dry red sand led to endless horizons and jagged mountains. Should he go on towards the distant peaks in the hope of finding water, or should he turn back before the summer heat dried out the water-holes behind him?

Time and again this dilemma faced Giles. He had covered 200 miles of dreadful dry-as-dust country, totally devoid of water, and only the water-bags on his pack-horse had saved him. He called the ranges the Ehrenbergs, and turned reluctantly back south-east, saving the lives of his party.

Instead of finding the fresh-water lakes of which every inland explorer dreamed, Giles met the salty, sterile Lake Amadeus, its weird, white expanse glistening across the southern horizon. Giles drove his horses hard in an effort to circle a fantastic cluster of thirty rounded domes, 1,500 feet high, covering nearly twenty-five square miles. Divided by deep ravines, packed with dense tropical scrub, these bizarre monuments arose out of nowhere in the middle of a desert plain of 10,000 square miles. Giles named this isolated massif Mount Olga. Stores were low, so the party rode silently back towards the lifeline of the Overland Telegraph.

Nine months later, Giles was off again, striking west from the



Telegraph, south of his old route. This time his companions were Tietkens, Alfred Gibson, and a lad named Andrews, with his twenty-four horses. This year (1874) was one of exploration in the Centre, with two other parties in the field; a Government expedition led by a young man Gosse, and, to the north, another expedition led by the veteran Colonel Warburton.

Striking north-west at the Alberga River to the bare red rock-heaps of the Musgrave Ranges, Giles was soon worried by scarcity of water. Hostile natives continuously attacked the expedition. Giles saw many such areas in the desert that could be made to bloom if underground wells were tapped, distant creeks dammed and diverted, and the powers of science harnessed for irrigation projects.

They trekked north from the Musgraves to Mount Olga, and came across dray-tracks. Gosse and his expedition had passed that way. It was a bitter blow to Giles, who believed Gosse was miles away, north in the Macdonnells. Why follow the tracks of another explorer? But Giles had travelled 400 miles through unknown country, and he was determined to move on. Then, to his surprise, a few miles westward, they found the dray-tracks going back again! Gosse had found it impossible to go on and had turned back. The two explorers never met.

Traversing the Mann Ranges, they made their way along the Tompkinsons. The dry blistering heat attacked in earnest, cutting off their water-holes of retreat. Conditions became desperate. Horses died from thirst. Then, forming a depot camp and leaving the main party there, Giles rode due west ninety miles over undulating barren gravel until arid country forced him to return.

In November, with the height of summer approaching, Giles retraced his steps, moving back to permanent water, planning to wait until rain fell before going on again. The camp at the western edge of the Tompkinson Ranges became a moving mass of ants.

In vain they waited for rain. Then Giles, impatient, packed water fifty miles towards the distant mountains and reached them alone. Shimmering in the heat, he found the white corrugated treeless mountains guarded secret water-holes in their rocky crannies. Giles named this 3,000-foot range the Rawlin-

sons, then rode back to move his party across the intervening desert to a permanent water-hole which he called Fort McKellar.

They set forth again, looking for the evasive route to the west. But in that direction the ranges sank to sandhills, with no high land beyond. Giles swung north-west to a distant peak, only to find it starkly barren and devoid of water. On return they travelled too fast, pushing the exhausted horses. Tietkins described the dreadful ninety-mile journey.

'At dawn next day, three horses lay dead. We collected the rest with all speed, and started for the water. It was a day that threatened to destroy every living thing. Four horses dropped before we reached our destination. When we arrived at Fort McKellar, we drank as only thirsty horses and men will drink. We hurried back with kegs of water to try and save the poor beasts that had dropped. We were only away two hours, but they were all dead. That terrible journey lost us eight of our best horses and was a very near thing for ourselves.' Giles named the place Mount Destruction. It destroyed his horses and his hopes.

Giles and Tietkens, leaving the camp in charge of Gibson and Andrews, were suddenly brought face to face with a large party of natives who attacked with spears. Tietken's pack-horse was wounded and tore off. If the natives speared all the horses retreat would have been impossible. Tietkens chased the animal and caught it. Returning, he found Giles locked in a desperate hand-to-hand struggle with a young warrior. His gun had misfired, and the native stood, spear poised, ready to transfix the white leader. Tietkens dropped the native with his six-shooter. The two explorers spurred their mounts and made off with all speed.

Week after week they waited for rain at Fort McKellar, while a lone eagle watched them from the high rocks. The weakest horses were killed for food. April came, but no rain. Giles knew that if he was to reach the west coast, it must be now or never. He decided on a desperate effort to penetrate the western sandhills for one hundred miles to see what lay beyond.

Gibson volunteered, so they took four horses, a week's supply



of smoked horse-flesh and thirty gallons of water. Like most of the Centre, the country was covered with stunted trees and bushes, but devoid of grass. It looked deceptively fertile, but was as cruel as the Sahara.

Twenty-two miles out came the first indication that this would be the worst trip of all. Giles found his companion had left half the supplies of horse-flesh behind. Sixty miles from camp they cached half the water and released some of the pack-horses to find their own way back to Fort McKellar. Then, examining the precious water-bags, Giles found one of them had leaked and was almost empty.

They pushed on into undulating stony land. From each ridge they beheld country that looked like open grassy downs, but in reality was rocky, spinifex-spotted wasteland. One of the horses, mad with thirst, bit through a water-bag, spilling the contents. But still Giles pressed onwards. When he was 120 miles from the last water, he believed the country was changing, but his horse collapsed from thirst. Ranges rose above the western horizon, twenty-five miles away, possibly hiding still higher mountains. Giles would have given a fortune for a camel. After naming distant ranges the Alfred and Maries in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, he turned back.

Now disaster followed disaster. Gibson's horse died and the two men took turns in riding Giles's good mare. But with food and water nearly at an end, progress was painfully slow. Giles told Gibson to ride ahead, water at the cache and hasten back to Fort McKellar.

Manfully Giles slogged back alone on foot through the cruel wastes. On reaching the cache, he found Gibson had left only two and a half gallons of water and one pound of meat to see him sixty miles to safety. No relief party could be expected for five days at the earliest. He struggled on and finally to his dismay came to a point where the loose pack-horses, instead of returning to Fort McKellar, had swung away to the south-east into the empty desert. He studied the tracks and to his horror saw that Gibson's horse had followed them. Giles was alone. His only hope of survival lay in the strength in his own limbs.

Light-headed from thirst, Giles travelled at night to avoid the burning sun. Almost insensible, he reached the waterhole at

the western end of the Rawlinsons and crept slowly along the ranges to the camp at Fort McKellar. As he feared, Gibson had not returned. Of the six living creatures that had set out on the ill-fated expedition, Giles was the sole survivor.

Giles and Tietkens went back into the desert to search for Gibson. They followed the horse tracks for several days, but the mare had carried Gibson too far and to his death. They, in their turn, nearly perished. So exhausted was Tietkens that he begged Giles to leave him to his fate. 'I was so weak,' Tietkens wrote later, 'that I did not wish to live. Death would have come to me as a welcome visitor. . . .'

Giles called this desert within a desert after his young companion whose life it had claimed. He was forced to abandon his plan of crossing to the west.

His most important discoveries were the permanent water-holes in the Rawlinsons, 450 miles from the Murchison River, nearest known water in the west. Of that distance Giles had penetrated 120 miles and seen distant ranges. There was only one way to bridge the 350-mile gap to the Murchison—by using camels.

In March 1875 Sir Thomas Elder, wealthy pastoralist, financed Giles to explore unmapped country at the head of the Australian Bight. The expedition started from Fowler's Bay, and crossed Eyre's tracks thirty-five years earlier. On one stretch Giles went 220 miles without water. All his horses died. But the trip proved the value of camels, two of which he had with him. Camels ate vegetation rejected by horses and could travel eight days without water.

Then Elder gave Giles what he had always wanted—a team of twenty-four camels. With Tietkens as his lieutenant again, Giles led a caravan out of Port Augusta on May 23rd, bound for the west coast. Passing through good pastoral country north of Warburton range, they encountered desert until Ooldea was reached.

Tietkens and one of the party found water at Oaldabinna, 200 miles to the north. Ahead, native sky-writing rose into the air. Then they discovered the claypans where the natives built dams to secure their scanty water. At the border of South



Australia and West Australia, the next known water was at Mount Watchman, 600 miles to the west.

Giles called his officers and told them he was determined to push westwards. 'It's a matter of life or death,' he said. 'We must push on or die. If more than one of you wants to go back, I'll provide them with rations and camels to return. . . .' For a moment no one spoke. Then each in turn said he would live or die with his leader.

Only a great leader can inspire such implicit faith in his men. So they loaded the camels with stores and water and plodded slowly across the country shunned alike by man and beast. Each man felt he was riding to certain death in the central Nullarbor. A stillness lay heavily over them. The camels swung on in funereal gait, indifferent to the lack of water or the spines of the dreaded spinifex. Then fate showed her hand.

A sailor, familiar with the compass, was leading the caravan, but Giles sensed they were off course. He took the compass and changed direction slightly to the south. Then, sixteen days out from last water, in the middle of the desert they came across a fresh spring. They would have missed the spring and perished had Giles not taken the lead. He named the oasis Victoria Spring. When they resumed their journey nine days later, they were attacked by the best organized force of natives ever encountered in the inland. The white men fired in self-defence and broke up the attack. They travelled on through salt-lake depressions and scrub to the out-stations of the settled area.

They rode their camels into Perth like Eastern potentates, while enthusiastic crowds waved flags and cheered. Giles had not lost a camel, but in 2,500 miles of tortuous travel he had found no suitable area for settlement.

The faint blue line of the Albert and Maries beckoned Giles back to the Centre. After two months' rest he left for Geraldton with two white men of his party, an Afghan camel-driver and a native boy. They followed the Murchison to its headwaters.

The track led through granite country. Water-holes were scarce, the hills a labyrinth of rough and broken creek-beds. They passed north-east to the Gascoyne River and found it lying between lines of stately gums, a river of sand. It was May

and there was practically no water in the whole region. In the rainy season the rivers run in flood and days later become bone-dry.

The few natives were hostile. Coloured smoke-signals rose high from their bark fires. Flies pestered the whites. Giles, almost blind with ophthalmia, swung his party eastward at the Fortescue.

Slowly the hills sank into the level plain and they camped at a waterhole on the edge of a vast plateau, 2,000 feet above sea-level. The next water lay in the Rawlinson Ranges, 450 miles away. The intervening country was unknown. Giles knew it was the moment he had been waiting for. He would cross to the east or perish in the attempt. 'Fill all water-bags and containers,' he ordered.

On May 31st they set out due east, crossing low ridges and spinifex-covered hills of ironstone gravel. Endless waves of the dreaded sandhills loomed ahead. The solitary caravan was launched upon the desert, with nothing but Providence and the compass to aid them. Some of the camels fell sick from eating a poison herb and looked as if they would die. Fortunately they recovered sufficiently to move forwards.

By digging down 15 feet at a dry native well, they secured a little water. But the surrounding country was smothered under the poison herb. More camels were afflicted. Hot burning days changed into frosty nights when the temperature fell from above 100° F. to 18° F. Two hundred and thirty miles out in the desert they found a slight soakage but one of the camels died. Giles called the place Buzoe's grave.

Predatory eagles wheeled high in the hard azure sky. Thin sun-bleached wallabies scampered behind rocks. Native smokes rose from the horizon. They were in the centre of solitude and silence.

Then, like a mirage in the nightmare land, Giles glimpsed above the desert rim the distant line of the Albert and Maries! But, like all Giles' dreams of the Centre, they proved an illusion. The hills were so low and uninteresting he only looked at them briefly through glasses. There were no signs of likely watering-places among their barren ridges. A few days later Giles could see the outline of the Rawlinsons and reached the





14. The King Leopold Ranges in the Kimberleys of Western Australia, still as wild and unexplored as when the first emigrants reached the continent.\* (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)

In the Kimberleys of North-West Australia. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





15. The town of Alice Springs in the centre of Australia. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)

A watering-point 120 miles north of Alice Springs. Drovers still overland their cattle by the routes pioneered by the first settlers. (*Australian News and Information Bureau.*)





water-hole from which he and Gibson had struck west into the desert the previous year. Once more he searched in vain for the remains of his lost companion.

Above the old camp at Fort McKellar the same eagle sat immobile, watching them from the rocks. All was undisturbed. A day, a year, a century was nothing in that timeless land.

Giles passed eastward to the Overland Telegraph and civilization. He died unmarried at Coolgardie in November 1897. For fifty years only an occasional gold fossicker wandered through that country, but lately it has been surveyed from the air, and geologists have examined the outskirts.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *The Future*

OTHER explorers, such as Sir John Forrest, helped to solve the mystery of the interior, but their stories would fill another volume. Attempts to reach the Queensland border from the Overland Telegraph had failed. In 1878 two surveyors, Barkly and Weinnecke, went from Alice Springs to the north-east.

Ernest Favenc traced the heads of the rivers running into the Gulf of Carpentaria, near the Queensland border, and then undertook a longer expedition from the tableland across the coast range to the mouth of the Macarthur River. The party left the Queensland border and crossed to the Overland Telegraph Line, traversing mostly open downs country. From the northern end of Newcastle Waters they reached a creek, which was christened Relief Creek, and which proved to be one of the headwaters of the Macarthur. A large extent of valuable pastoral country was found in the basin drained by this river, and many fine springs discovered.

The whole of the territory east of the Overland Telegraph Line was now rapidly settled. In 1883 the South Australian Government determined to complete the exploration of Arnhem Land, and David Lindsay, a Government surveyor, was despatched on mission. He proceeded by way of the Katherine to the country north of the Roper River. From there his party proceeded to Blue Mud Bay, and on the way had a narrow escape from being massacred by the natives, who speared four horses in a surprise attack on the camp.

Lindsay got entangled in the broken tableland that caused such trouble to Leichhardt, and after one misfortune and another lost a great number of his horses. At one time he thought he would have to abandon them all and make his way to the Telegraph Line on foot. However, the country examined was favourable for settlement and the flats were considered first-class sugar country.



Gold was discovered at Kalgoorlie and in the Kimberley district of North-West Australia. Prospecting parties searched every creek and watercourse in the area.

The map of Australia, with the hundreds of names given to capes, rivers, towns, bays and gulfs, tells the story of courage, tragedy and triumph. The names spring from a dozen races, and the men are those who moulded the continent. There are still gaps in the map, in the vast empty region of Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and reports still trickle through of desert oases where tribes of aborigines live untouched by civilization. The desert has never been explored as minutely as others examined and finally settled eastern Australia. Tourists now travel in comparative comfort where the pioneers died and conquered.

It is not in geographical exploration but in the field of geological survey that the future of the continent lies. Discoveries of oil, uranium and precious minerals have been made by land and airborne parties in the last decade in country that once was condemned as useless.

Even while this has been written a big scheme involving the spending of hundreds of millions of pounds is being drawn up to exploit the mineral resources of North Australia. Some of the world's richest bauxite, uranium, iron ore and metalliferous deposits have been found in Cape York peninsula, North Queensland and Northern Territory. Air-borne geologists and mineralogists are involved in these investigations. These modern explorers use every aid of science to help in their tasks.

The interior holds a strange fascination for all explorers. Sturt, reduced to semi-blindness, found himself compelled to struggle on; Eyre, alone, after the murder of his companion at the head of the Bight, still longed to venture again; Leichhardt and Kennedy died in the struggle; and Giles lived to conquer, but was denied the fame of his colleagues. The sterility of the great solitude dragged these men back time after time to fight its vastness. The same compelling force is dragging others back to uncover the hidden treasure of its mineral resources.

## APPENDIX A

### *Australian Chronology*

- 1503 French claimed de Gonville sighted Australia.
- 1520 Magellan, first circumnavigator, claimed discovery of Australia. (Doubtful)
- 1540 Portuguese claimed discovery of Australia. (Doubtful)
- 1542 Guillaume le Testu claimed by his chart to have visited Australia.
- 1601 Manoel Godinho de Eredia, a Spaniard, claimed to have sighted Queensland. (Doubtful)
- 1605 The *Duyfhen* sailed into Gulf of Carpentaria as far as Cape Keer-Weer.
- 1606 Torres, with de Quiros, discovered Torres Straits.
- 1616 Dirk Hartog in the *Endracht* visited Shark Bay and other parts of West Coast.
- 1618 Zeachern in the *Mauritius* discovered land in the north.
- 1619 John Van Edels on west coast.
- 1619 Frederick Houtman discovered Abrolhos Island, West Australia.
- 1622 The *Leeuwin*, south-west cape of Australia, named after ship *Leeuwin*.
- 1623 Jan Carstens with the yachts *Pera* and *Arnhem* visited New Guinea and Gulf of Carpentaria.
- 1627 Pieter Nuyts, in the *Gulde Zeevaart*, visited western and southern coasts, as far east as Streaky Bay.
- 1629 Francis Pelsart in the *Batavia* lost on Houtman's Abrolhos.
- 1642 Tasman with the *Hemskirk* and *Zeehan* discovered Tasmania and New Zealand.
- 1644 Tasman sailed along west coast of Gulf of Carpentaria.
- 1656 The *Vergulde Draeck* lost on Houtman's Abrolhos.
- 1688 William Dampier in *Cygnets* landed at Buccaneer Archipelago on north-west coast.



- 1695 William de Vlaming named the Swan River.
- 1699 William Dampier in the *Roebuck* visited north-west coast.
- 1768 De Bougainville discovered Louisiade Archipelago.
- 1770 Captain James Cook in the *Endeavour* landed at Botany Bay, explored the east coast and took possession under the name of New South Wales.
- 1772 Captain Marion de Fresne and Captain Crozet in the *Mascarin* and *Castres* visited Tasmania.
- 1788 Lieutenant Shortland, with three ships from Sydney to England, passed through Bougainville Strait, north-west coast.  
Governor Phillip arrived in Botany Bay with the first fleet. Norfolk Island settled. La Perouse at Botany Bay.
- 1789 Tench discovered the Nepean.
- 1791 Captain George Vancouver in the *Discovery* and *Chatham* explored the south-west coast and discovered King George's Sound.  
Captain William Bligh passed Cape York in the *Bounty's* launch.
- 1792 Admiral Bruni D'Entrecasteaux visited southern Australia in search of La Perouse.
- 1793 Don Alexandro Malaspina with the *Descobierta* and *Atrevida*, Spanish discovery ships, arrived at Sydney.
- 1793 First free settlers arrive in New South Wales.
- 1795 Bass and Flinders explored George's River.
- 1797 Coal found at Illawarra. Hunter River discovered.
- 1798 Bass discovered Westernport, and with Flinders circumnavigated Tasmania.
- 1801 Ensign Barraillier attempted exploration of the Blue Mountains.
- 1801-2 Captains Baudin and Hamelin with the French ships *Naturaliste* and *Geographe* explored Australian coast.
- 1802 Murray discovered Port Phillip.
- 1810 Hasselborough discovered Macquarie and Campbell Islands.
- 1813 Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains. Evans crossed the Great Dividing Range and discovered Macquarie River, first inland river.

- 1814 Hamilton Hume and his brother explored the country round Berrima.
- 1817-20 Captain Phillip P. King with Allan Cunningham, botanist, in the cutter *Mermaid* surveyed Australian coast.
- 1817-19 Surveyor-General John Oxley visited Lachlan and Macquarie Rivers.
- 1821-22 King continued his coastal survey in the Bathurst.
- 1823 Cunningham found Pandora's Pass, stock route to the Liverpool Plains.
- 1823 Oxley investigated Port Curtis, Port Bowen and Moreton Bay. Discovered Brisbane River.
- 1824 Hume and W. H. Hovell went overland to Port Phillip.
- 1827 Cunningham discovered the Darling Downs, Damaresque, Gwydir and Condamine Rivers.
- 1828 Captain James Stirling in H.M.S. *Success* surveyed the coast of West Australia from Albany to the Swan River.
- 1828-29 Captain Charles Sturt's first expedition discovered the Bogan and the Darling.
- 1829 Captain Fremantle hoisted the British flag at Fremantle. Cunningham explored the source of the Brisbane River.
- 1829-30 Sturt sailed down the Murray to Lake Alexandrina.
- 1833 Sir Thomas Mitchell on the Namoi.
- 1833 Richard Cunningham, botanist, brother to Allan Cunningham, murdered by the blacks while with Mitchell's expedition.
- 1835 E. Henty and brother formed a settlement in Portland Bay. John Batman landed at Port Phillip and founded Melbourne. Colonel Light surveyed the shores of St. Vincent's Gulf and selected site of Adelaide.
- 1836 Mitchell's expedition through South-East Australia.
- 1837 George Grey with Lieutenant Lushington on north-west coast.
- 1838 Eyre went from Port Phillip to Adelaide, discovered Lake Hindmarsh.  
Grey discovered Glenelg River, W.A.
- 1839 Eyre visited head of Spencer's Gulf, Lake Torrens, Port Lincoln and Streaky Bay, S.A.
- 1840-41 Eyre travelled round the Great Australian Bight to King George's Sound, W.A.



- 1844-45 Sturt failed to reach the centre of the continent.
- 1844-45 Leichhardt travelled from Jimbour Station, Darling Downs, to Port Essington; Gilbert, naturalist, killed by natives.
- 1845-46 Mitchell's expedition to Cooper's Creek.
- 1846 Leichhardt's second expedition.  
A. C. Gregory and brothers' first expedition in West Australia.
- 1847 Kennedy followed the final course of the Thomson River.
- 1848 Leichhardt lost in the interior.  
Kennedy murdered near Cape York.  
Gregory explored the Gascoyne.
- 1851 Gold discovered in New South Wales and Victoria.
- 1854 Assistant Surveyor-General R. Austin examined the interior of West Australia for mineral deposits.
- 1860 McDouall Stuart at the centre of the continent.
- 1860-61 Burke and Wills' expedition. Death of Burke, Wills and Gray.
- 1862 McDouall Stuart crossed continent from Adelaide to north coast.
- 1863 Jardine settled at Somerset, Cape York.
- 1864 Colonel Finnis formed a settlement at Escape Cliffs.  
J. McKinlay, on the Alligator River, searched for suitable site for a township.
- 1865 Settlement at Escape Cliffs removed to Port Darwin.
- 1869 John Forrest on first expedition to Lake Barlee.
- 1870 Forrest travelled the Great Australian Bight from Perth to Adelaide.
- 1872 Overland Telegraph Line completed from Darwin to Adelaide.  
Ernest Giles discovered Lake Amadeus.
- 1873 Ernest Giles's second expedition and death of Gibson.  
Gibson Desert named.  
Major Warburton crossed from Alice Springs, on Overland Telegraph Line, to the Oakover River, West Australia.  
W. C. Gosse led Central Western expedition from Alice Springs.
- 1874 Forrest crossed from the Murchison to the Overland Telegraph Line.

- 1875-76 Ernest Giles's third and successful effort to reach Western Australia; returned to Peake Station.
- 1878 Ernest Favenc led Transcontinental Expedition from Blackall to Powell's Creek Station, Overland Telegraph Line.
- 1879 Alexander Forrest went from the De Grey River, West Australia, to the Overland Telegraph Line; discovered the Ord and Margaret Rivers.
- 1882-83 Favenc explored coast rivers of the Gulf, including the Macarthur, then crossed to the Overland Telegraph Line.
- 1884 Protectorate over south-eastern New Guinea proclaimed.
- 1913-14 Australian expedition to Antarctica.
- 1919 Ross and Keith Smith flew from England to Australia.
- 1921 Australia took over German New Guinea as mandate under League of Nations.
- 1933 Australian sovereignty proclaimed over  $2\frac{1}{4}$  million square miles of Antarctica.
- 1947 Heard Island, 2,500 miles south-west of Fremantle, occupied as sub-Antarctic weather station.
- 1954 Weather station established at Mawson, MacRobertsonland, Antarctica.
- 1955 Australia took over administration of Cocos Islands, Indian Ocean.
- 1957 Weather Station established at Davies, Vestford Hills, Princess Elizabeth Land, Antarctica.
- 1958 Australia took over Christmas Island, Indian Ocean, from Singapore administration.



## APPENDIX B

### *Explorers of Australia*

- ALOUARN, M. DE ST. Anchored near Cape Leeuwin 1777.
- AUSTIN, ROBERT Assistant Surveyor-General, West Australia; searched for pastoral country and gold deposits in interior, 1854.
- BABBAGE, SURVEYOR Explored country between Lake Torrens and Lake Gairdner, 1856.
- BANKS, SIR JOSEPH With Captain Cook on voyage of discovery to Australia as botanist, 1770.
- BARRAILLIER, ENSIGN Exploration of Blue Mountains, 1802.
- BASS, DR. GEORGE With Flinders in the *Tom Thumb* along New South Wales coast, 1795. Port Hacking, 1796. Exploration of Blue Mountains, 1796-97. Explored 600 miles of coast and Western-port, 1797. Discovered Bass Strait with Flinders, 1798.
- BATMAN, JOHN Founded Port Phillip, 1836.
- BAUDIN, CAPTAIN N. Commanded French ships *Geographe* and *Naturaliste*, 1801-2.
- BLAXLAND, GREGORY With Lieutenant W. Lawson and W. C. Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains, 1813.
- BLIGH, CAPTAIN W. Passed Cape York on way to Koepang in the *Bounty's* launch, 1791.
- BOUGAINVILLE, DE Discovered Louisade Archipelago, 1768.
- BREMER, SIR GORDON In the *Tamar* to Port Essington, 1824. Re-settled Port Essington, 1838.
- BURKE, ROBERT O'HARA and WILLIAM JOHN WILLS Crossed continent from Melbourne to Gulf of Carpentaria. Died on return journey, 1861.
- CARR-BOYD, W. J. H. With O'Donnell from the Katherine Station, Overland Telegraph Line, to West Australia, 1882.
- CARSTENS, CAPTAIN JAN With yachts *Pera* and *Arnhem* landed on the coast of New Guinea and was murdered with eight of his crew. Vessels touched on the coast of Arnhem Land, 1623.
- CAYLEY, GEORGE Botanist, explored Blue Mountains, 1803.

- COOK, CAPTAIN JAMES In the *Endeavour* landed at Botany Bay, surveyed east coast to Cape York. At Possession Island formally took possession of the continent under the name of New South Wales, 1770.
- CUNNINGHAM, RICHARD Botanist (brother to Allan Cunningham) accompanied Sir Thomas Mitchell's second expedition. Murdered by blacks, 1833.
- DAMPIER, CAPTAIN W. First Englishman to land in Australia. Visited north-west coast in the *Cygnet*, 1688.
- DAWES, LIEUTENANT Crossed the Nepean, 1789.
- DELFT, MARTIN VAN With ships *Vossenbach*, *Wayer* and *Nova Hollandia*, investigated west coast. Last voyage of exploration by Dutch, 1705.
- D'ENTRECASTEAUX, ADMIRAL BRUNI With the ships *Recherche* and *l'Esperance*, to seek La Perouse, explored south coast of Australia, 1792.
- DIRK HARTOG, CAPTAIN In *Endracht* discovered the west coast of Australia, 1616.
- EDELS, JOHN VAN On the west coast, 1619.
- EVANS, G. W., DEPUTY-SURVEYOR Discovered the Macquarie, first Australian inland river, 1815.
- EYRE, E. J. Port Phillip to Adelaide; discovered Lake Hindmarsh, 1838. Discovered Streaky Bay and Lake Torrens, 1839. March round the Great Australian Bight, 1840-41.
- FAVENC, ERNEST Blackall, then most western settlement in Queensland, to Powell's Creek on the Overland Telegraph Line. Discovered the Corella Lagoon, Cresswell Creek, Sylvester and De Burgh Creeks, 1878-79. Traced the heads of rivers running into the Gulf of Carpentaria near the Queensland border. Returned via Daly Waters, 1882-83.
- FINNIS, COLONEL B. T. Formed settlement at Escape Cliffs, Northern Territory, 1864.
- FLINDERS, MATTHEW With Bass in the *Tom Thumb* traced the coast from Sydney, 1795, Port Hacking, 1796. With Bass in the *Norfolk* discovered Bass Straits, 1799. In the *Norfolk* explored the east coast to Hervey Bay, 1799. Circumnavigated Australia, 1801-3.
- FORREST, JOHN First expedition: Lake Barlee. From Perth to Adelaide by way of the Bight, 1870. From the Murchison crossed desert to Peak Station on the Overland Telegraph Line, 1874.



- FREMANTLE, CAPTAIN Hoisted British Flag at Fremantle, 1829.
- FRESNE, CAPTAIN MARION DU With Captain Crozet in the *Mascarin* and *Castres* to Tasmania, 1772.
- FREYCINET, L. DE In *l'Uranie* saw Edel's Land, Shark Bay, 1817.
- FURNEAUX, CAPTAIN TOBIAS With the *Adventure* accompanied Cook on his second voyage, 1772.
- GIBSON Died in Gibson Desert with Ernest Giles' second expedition, 1873.
- GILBERT The naturalist accompanying Leichhardt's first expedition. Killed by blacks at Gulf of Carpentaria, 1845.
- GILES, ERNEST Discovered Lake Amadeus, Central Australia, 1872. Made many attempts to cross spinifex desert but returned unsuccessful, 1873. Crossed from the Ashburton to Overland Telegraph Line, 1875-76.
- GOSSE, W. C. Attempted crossing from Alice Springs to Perth, 1873.
- GRAY, CHARLES Member of Burke and Wills' expedition, 1860-61. Perished on return journey.
- GREGORY, FRANK Reached the long-sought Gascoyne, and followed it to Shark Bay. Followed the Murchison down to the Geraldine mine, 1858. Discovered the Fortesque, the Hammersley Range, and the Ashburton. Named the De Gray and Oakover Rivers, 1861.
- GREGORY, A. C. Accompanied by his two brothers. Their first expedition in Western Australia, 1846. With party to explore the Gascoyne, 1848. With Baron Von Mueller, the celebrated botanist, and his brother, H. C. Gregory, North Australian expedition in search of Leichhardt, 1855. Cooper's Creek expedition to trace the course of Leichhardt's party, 1858.
- GREY, LIEUTENANT GEORGE Explored west coast, 1837. With Lushington found the Glenelg River in West Australia, 1838. Discovered Gascoyne, Murchison, Hutt, Bower, Buller, Chapman, Greenough, Irwin, Arrowsmith and Smith Rivers, 1839.
- HENTY, BROTHERS Formed settlement in Portland Bay, 1835.
- HOVELL, W. H. With H. Hume across to Port Phillip. First white men to see the Australian Alps, 1824.
- HOWITT, A. W. In charge of relief party for Burke and Wills. King, the only survivor, found 1861.

- HUME, HAMILTON** With his brother, John Kennedy Hume, explored the country round Berrima. The first Australian-born explorer, 1814. Discovered Lake George, Lake Bathurst and Goulburn Plains, 1817. With Oxley and Meehan to Jervis Bay, 1819. With Hovell, across to Port Phillip, 1824. Accompanied Charles Sturt on first expedition to trace the source of the Macquarie, 1828-29.
- KENNEDY, E. B.** Found final course of Mitchell's Barcoo. Named Thompson River, 1847. Fatal expedition to Cape York, 1848.
- KING, CAPTAIN PHILLIP P.** Surveyed north and west coasts of Australia and Tasmania in five voyages, 1817-21.
- KING, JOHN** Only survivor of Burke-Wills expedition. Rescued 1861.
- LA PEROUSE, COUNT JEAN FRANCOIS DE GALAUP** Voyage round world in 1788. Sailed from Botany Bay and his two ships were wrecked north of the New Hebrides.
- LANDSBOROUGH, WILLIAM** Leader of Queensland search party for Burke and Wills, 1861-62.
- LAWSON, LIEUTENANT WILLIAM** With Wentworth and Blaxland crossed the Blue Mountains, 1813. Attempted to reach Liverpool Plains. Discovered the Goulburn River, 1822.
- LEICHHARDT, LUDWIG** Left Jimbour Station, on the Darling Downs, in charge of an expedition to Port Essington in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Gilbert, naturalist accompanying the party, killed by the blacks, 1844-45. Vanished on expedition crossing the continent from Mitchell's Barcoo River to Perth, 1848.
- MCKINLAY, J.** Started from Adelaide with a relief party in search of Burke and Wills, 1861. On the Alligator River searching for suitable site for township, 1864.
- MAGELLAN** Portuguese navigator, claims to have touched Great South Land, 1520.
- MALASPINA, DON ALEXANDRO** In the *Descobierta* and *Atrevida*, Spanish discovery ships, arrived at Sydney, 1793.
- MEEHAN, SURVEYOR.** With Hume discovered Lake George, Lake Bathurst and Goulburn Plains, 1817. With Oxley and Hume to Jervis Bay, 1819.
- MITCHELL, MAJOR THOMAS** Took charge of an expedition to trace the supposed Kindur, 1831-32. Accompanied by Richard Cunningham, second expedition, 1833. Explored western Victoria, 1836. Barcoo Expedition, 1845-46.



- MUELLER, BARON VON Engaged in exploring some of the still unknown portions of the south, 1847. With A. C. Gregory's North Australian expedition. Discovery of Sturt Creek, 1855-56.
- NARES, SIR GEORGE STRONG Commander of H.M.S. *Salamander*. Surveyed east and north-eastern part of Australia and Torres Straits, 1866-67.
- OVENS, MAJOR. With Captain Curry, discovered Murrumbidgee River and Monaro Plains, 1823.
- OXLEY, JOHN With Lieutenant Charles Robins, in the cutter *Integrity*, examined Westernport, 1804-5. Discovered Castlereagh River, Liverpool Plains, Apsley River and the Goulburn Valley. River Hastings. Named Port Macquarie, 1817-18. Accompanied by Meehan and Hume to Jervis Bay, 1819. Discovered Boyne and Brisbane Rivers, 1823.
- PELSART, FRANCIS In the *Batavia*. Wrecked on Houtman's Abrolhos, 1629.
- PHILLIP, GOVERNOR Arrived at Botany Bay with the first fleet, 1788.
- QUIROS, PEDRO FERNANDEZ DE At Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, 1606.
- SCOTT and LIEUTENANT LAWSON Attempted to reach the Liverpool Plains. Discovered the Goulburn River, 1822.
- SHORTLAND, LIEUTENANT With three ships from Sydney to England, passed through Bougainville Strait, north-west coast, 1788. Discovered Hunter River, 1797.
- SOLANDER, DR. Swedish botanist. Accompanied Captain Cook in the *Endeavour*, 1770.
- STIRLING, CAPTAIN JAMES In H.M.S. *Success* surveyed coast from King George's Sound to the Swan River, 1828.
- STRZLECKI, COUNT Followed McMillan's tracks into Gipps Land. Named Mount Kosciusko, 1840.
- STUART, J. MCDOUALL First expedition west of Lake Torrens, 1858. Discovered Hergott Springs and the Neale, 1859. Reached the centre of Australia and named Central Mount Stuart. Named Murchison Range and Tennant's Creek, 1861. Crossed the continent from south coast to the north, 1861-62.
- STURT, CAPTAIN CHARLES First expedition to find the course of the Macquarie. Discovered the Darling and Bogan, 1828-29. Murrumbidgee expedition. Sailed down the Murray, 1829-30. Central Desert expedition, 1844-45.

- TENCH, CAPTAIN Crossed the Nepean, 1789. With Dawes and Morgan explored Rose Hill, 1790.
- TESTU, GUILLAUME LE Claimed discovery of Australia, 1542.
- TORRES, LUIS VAEZ DE Sailed round Cape York and discovered Torres Straits, 1606.
- VANCOUVER, CAPTAIN GEORGE In the *Discovery* and *Chatham* explored the south-west coast and discovered King George Sound, 1791.
- WARBURTON, COLONEL West of Lake Torrens, 1857. Superseded Babbage. Mapped Lake Torrens. Crossed from the Overland Telegraph Line to Perth, 1873.
- WENTWORTH, CHARLES With Lawson and Blaxland crossed the Blue Mountains, 1813.
- WILLS, WILLIAM JOHN Surveyor and astronomer on Burke and Wills expedition, 1860-61. Died on return journey.
- ZEACHERN, CAPTAIN In the *Mauritius*, visited North Australia, 1618.



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