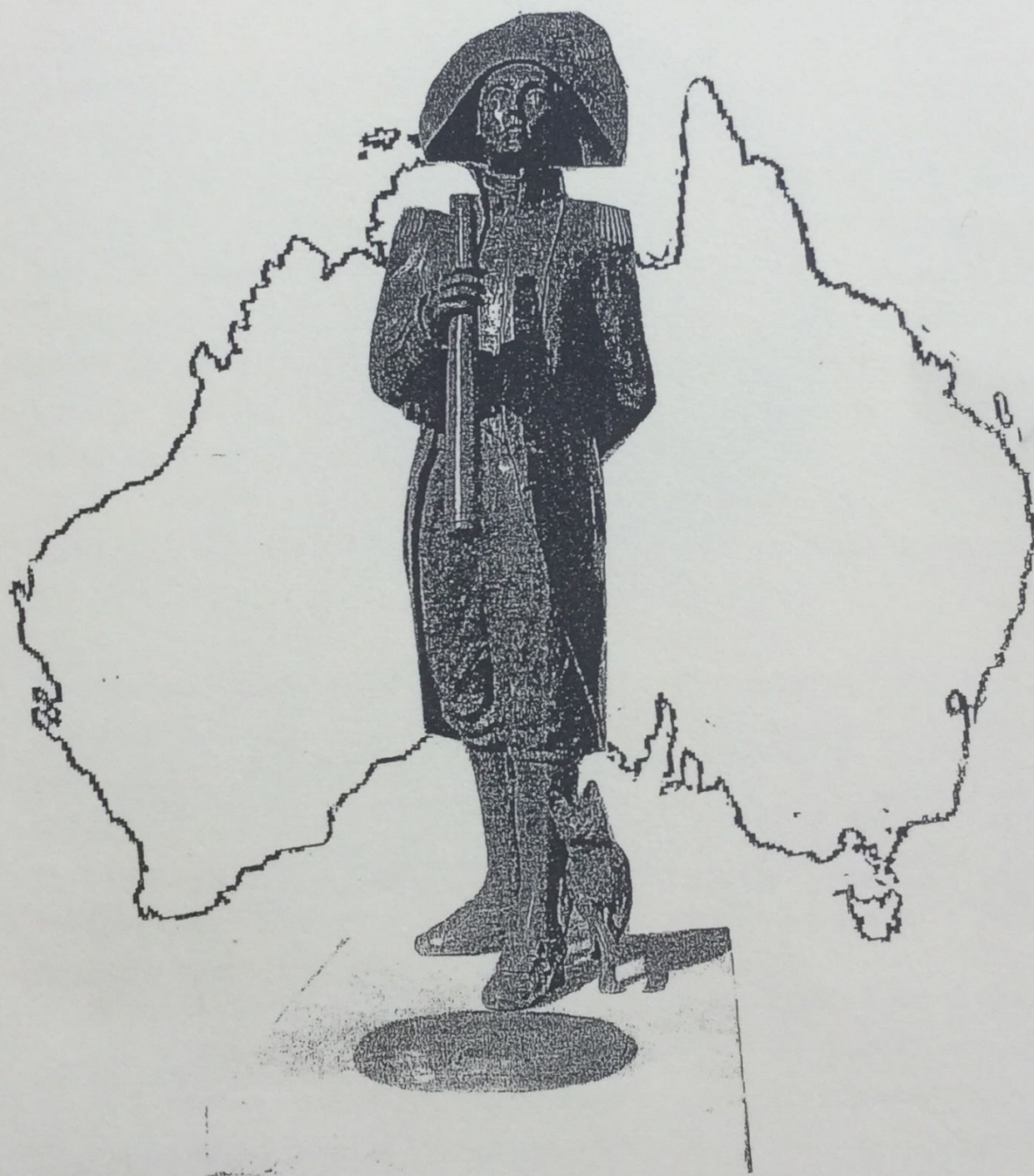


THE LIFE OF
MATTHEW FLINDERS
OF DONINGTON
1774 – 1814



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*If their lordships sentiments continue the same
whatever may be my disappointment, I shall give
up the wife for the voyage of discovery."*

Letter from Matthew Flinders to Sir Joseph Banks. 24th May 1801

*"Had I permitted myself any innovation upon the
original term, it would have been to convert it
(Terra Australis) into 'Australia'; as being more
agreeable to the ear, and an assimilation to the
names of the other great portions of the earth."*

Matthew Flinders in the Introduction to 'A Voyage to Terra Australis'.

Matthew Flinders

Introduction

Matthew Flinders will be forever associated with Australia. He established that the land of Terra Australis was an island continent when he was the first commander to circumnavigate it in the early years of the 19th Century. He suggested the name of Australia and called the native people he saw Australians. Previously, he had circumnavigated Van Dieman's Land, present day Tasmania, to establish it as an island and to provide a new route to the infant colony at Port Jackson. As he sailed he surveyed and charted the coastline naming countless coastal features in the process. The completion of his orders was curtailed by the poor state of his vessel *HMS Investigator*, and ended by his imprisonment by the French at Ile de France (Mauritius).

Matthew Flinders had achieved his discoveries and been imprisoned by the time he was 30 years old. His recognition and rewards after his release were small in Britain, but his stature in Australia is great, where monuments and memorials commemorating his efforts are widespread and his name graces many features, both natural and man made.

Early Days

Matthew Flinders was born in Donington, Lincolnshire on 16th March 1774, the son and grandson of a doctor whose forebears had been farmers from Ruddington in



The Flinders' family home, Market Place, Donington. Demolished in 1908.

Nottinghamshire. He started his schooling at Donington Free School, founded in 1719 by Thomas Cowley, a local landowner. At twelve years of age he was sent to Horbling Grammar School, some five miles from Donington, where he studied classics and mathematics. Matthew's father had assumed that he would become a doctor like himself, but perhaps inspired by the stories of a naval cousin he wanted to become a naval officer. At that time influence was needed for acceptance into the Royal Navy and also for promotion. Matthew was probably aided by his step-cousin Henrietta Franklin who was governess for the children of Captain Thomas Pasley in Nottingham. Captain Pasley met Matthew and the outcome was that in 1789, at 15 years of age, Matthew joined the training ship *HMS Alert* at Chatham Dockyard as a 'lieutenant's servant'. He spent 6 months on *HMS Alert* and in May 1790 was transferred, this time as a midshipman, to *HMS Bellerophen*, a two deck

battleship, when Captain Pasley took over that command.

Captain Bligh

In March 1791 the Admiralty authorised a second attempt to take breadfruit plants from Tahiti to the West Indies and Captain William Bligh was to be the commander of the two ships assigned, *HMS Providence* and *HMS Assistant*. The first expedition in 1789 with *HMS Bounty* had failed spectacularly because of its famous mutiny. Bligh had been cleared of the loss of his ship and his experience in the Pacific Ocean with Captain Cook and later on his own were vital for the success of the new venture. Pasley probably advised Matthew to apply for a position and he was appointed as a midshipman on *HMS Providence*.

Providence and *Assistant* sailed on 3rd August 1791 calling at Tenerife and Cape of Good Hope and reached Terra Australis for the first time for Matthew on 9th February 1792 at Adventure Bay, Van Dieman's Land, where water and firewood were obtained. The destination of Tahiti was reached on 10th April 1792 and after a stay of three months the vessels sailed with breadfruit plants for the West Indies, travelling by way of the difficult Torres Straits between Terra Australis and the Dutch possessions further north, to avoid the cold Southern Ocean route which would have killed the plants. The first signed chart of Matthew Flinders is of the Torres Straits area and it is clear that this would have been produced with the guidance and approval of Captain Bligh. *HMS Providence* arrived at St. Vincent on

17th December 1792 and moved later to Jamaica. The whole enterprise proved pointless as the population in the West Indies refused to eat breadfruit. The renewed war with France kept the ships in the West Indies for local defence for six more months and so it was 7th August 1793 before Flinders returned to Britain at Deptford.

Action at sea

A month after his return from the West Indies Flinders had rejoined Captain Pasley on *HMS Bellerophen* and saw action for the first time in a minor skirmish in November. In April 1794 Captain Pasley was promoted to Rear Admiral and chose Matthew as an aide de camp, still on *Bellerophen*. A major sea battle took place off Brest at the end of May 1794 which culminated in the 'Glorious 1st of June' victory over the French fleet. Flinders came through this battle unscathed but the *Bellerophen* was badly damaged and Rear Admiral Pasley was injured, lost a leg, and never sailed again in command. After this Flinders applied for overseas service, rather than remain in the battle fleet without the presence of his patron. He was probably encouraged to do this by Lieutenant Henry Waterhouse of *HMS Bellerophen* who had been chosen to go to Port Jackson with a new governor for the young colony of New South Wales.

HMS Reliance

Within two months Flinders was appointed to *HMS Reliance* as master's mate. The *Reliance* was to be fitted

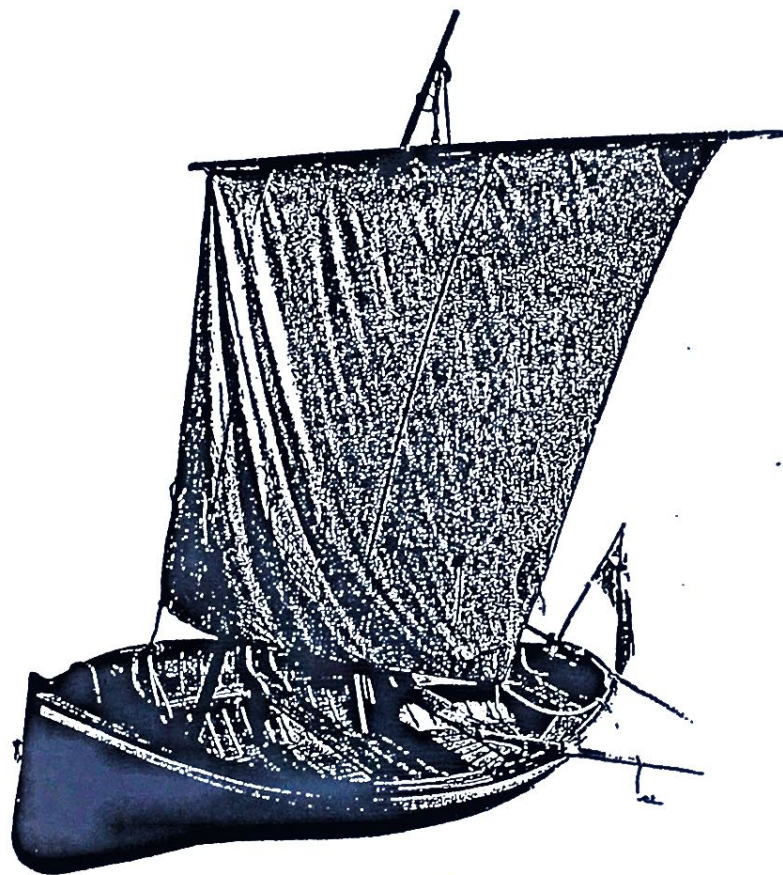
out to go to New South Wales with *HMS Supply*, carrying Captain John Hunter to be the new Governor, while Henry Waterhouse was to be the second captain. The *Reliance* and *Supply* sailed from Plymouth on 15th February 1795. Also on board was George Bass from Aswarby in Lincolnshire as ship's surgeon, and Matthew's brother Samuel Ward Flinders who was only 12 years old. The *Supply* carried as part of its cargo, the principal parts of a large windmill for the settlement at Port Jackson. The two vessels called at Tenerife and Rio de Janeiro where Captain Waterhouse promoted Matthew to acting lieutenant. The *Reliance* arrived at Port Jackson on 7th September 1795.

The settlements at Port Jackson were at Sydney Cove and Parramatta and there were about 3200 people in 1795 of whom about 70% were convicts. A further 800 were on Norfolk Island, a thousand miles eastward. The whole of the east coast of Terra Australis had been claimed for Britain but only a small distance of coastline had been explored. Flinders was able to take part in further exploration when his duties on *HMS Reliance* allowed it.

Exploration

The first expedition was a nine day adventure with George Bass and the boy William Martin in the 8 foot open boat *Tom Thumb* from 26 October 1795. They sailed to Botany Bay and explored George's River and their findings influenced Governor Hunter to establish the settlement of Banks Town later. Flinders then sailed in *Reliance* to Norfolk Island with supplies before the

friends were able to explore further. They next sailed in a slightly larger *Tom Thumb* on 24th March 1796 to survey the coast south of Botany Bay. They examined and charted the coast, naming among other places Port Hacking and Martin's Isles as well as having an encounter with natives.



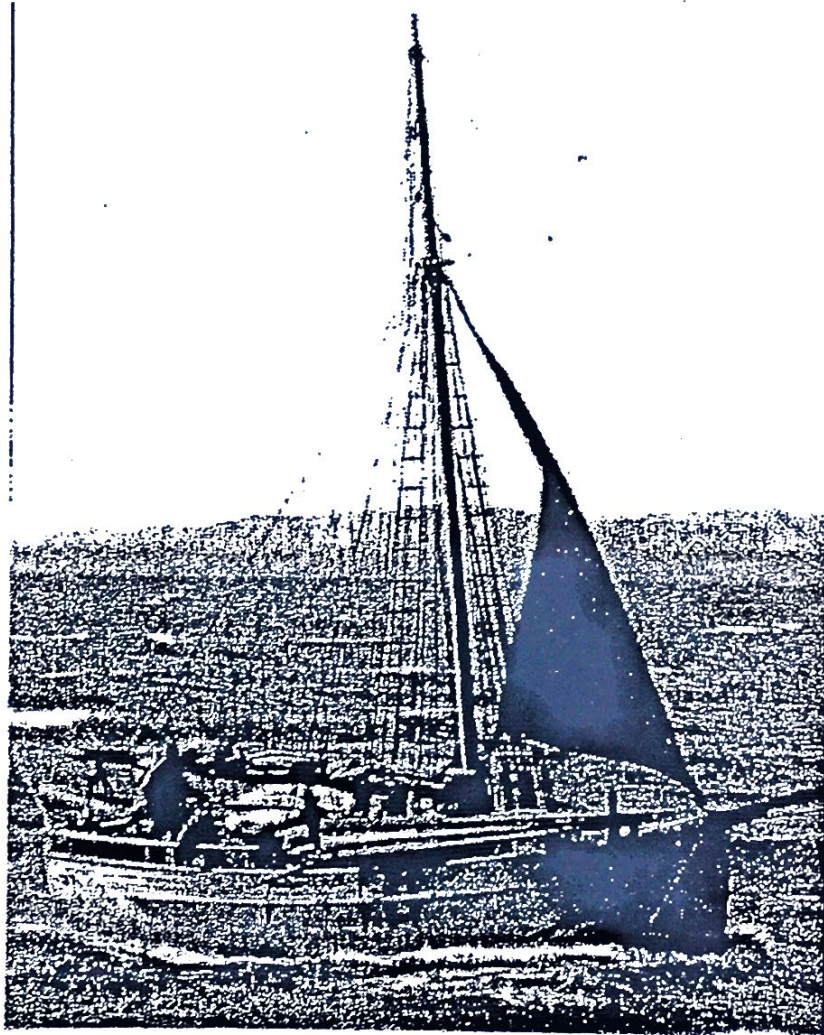
Replica of the second *Tom Thumb*, Sydney Heritage Fleet.

Food was always a problem at Port Jackson and Governor Hunter had to make use of the few ships he had available to remedy the situation. In September 1796 he sent *Reliance* and *Supply* to the Cape of Good Hope to obtain breeding cattle and sheep. The ships sailed via Cape Horn to the Cape of Good Hope and there Matthew Flinders was promoted to Lieutenant, receiving his certificate on 24th January 1797. After a stormy voyage the two vessels returned to Port Jackson

on 26th June 1797 with animals, including significantly for the future some merino sheep, whilst Flinders acquired a kitten Trim. Whilst Flinders was on his duties with *Reliance*, Bass, with 6 seamen in an open whaler, had been sent to investigate the link between New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land. This had been suspected as being incomplete with a strait between the two. Bass sailed south and west, a distance of over a thousand miles, as far as present day Westernport and judged that there was separation, but without complete proof. Meanwhile, Flinders was sent in the schooner *Francis* on 1st February 1798 to the Furneaux Islands to the north of Van Dieman's Land to recover cargo from the wreck of a merchant ship *Sydney Cove*. In May Flinders once more sailed to Norfolk Island in *Reliance* with a cargo of food supplies, officers, soldiers and convicts.

Exploration became possible again on 7th October 1798 when Flinders and Bass sailed in the 35 foot *Norfolk* which had been built on Norfolk Island, to establish beyond doubt the existence of a strait to the north of Van Dieman's Land. The northern coast of Van Dieman's Land was followed and in the process a Mount Chapell and Chapell Islands, were among places named. The Tamar River estuary was charted and a site for a future settlement noted. By 9th December the north west cape was reached and named Cape Grim. The circumnavigation of Van Dieman's Land was completed by 4th January 1799 and the *Norfolk* was back at Port Jackson on 11th January 1799, eleven days longer than the expedition was supposed to last. Flinders suggested that the strait discovered should be named after his

friend Bass, to which Governor Hunter agreed. It was the last voyage that Flinders and Bass were to make together as George Bass left Port Jackson, sailing for England on 29th May 1799.



Replica of the sloop *Norfolk* built for the bi-centennial re-enactment of the Flinders and Bass circumnavigation of Tasmania in 1798-1799.

Flinders sailed in command of the *Norfolk* again on 8th July to examine the coast to the north of Port Jackson which Captain James Cook had briefly visited. Flinders passed Moreton Bay and reached as far north as Hervey Bay, filling in some of the gaps and naming coastal features. Sadly he did not find the important rivers the Clarence and the Brisbane, which would have made his

survey more valuable. The *Norfolk* arrived back in Port Jackson on 20th August 1799. Flinders' brother Samuel had been a midshipman on this voyage. Flinders sailed as lieutenant on two more voyages to Norfolk Island on *HMS Reliance* between August and December 1799 before preparing to return to Britain with the vessel in 1800.

HMS Reliance sailed for Britain on 3rd March 1800 by way of the Pacific Ocean and Cape Horn, calling at St. Helena and reached Plymouth on 27th August 1800, after 5½ years away. Within a few days of his arrival Flinders had written to Sir Joseph Banks giving a short account of his work along the coast of New South Wales with the object of obtaining Banks' support for a further voyage of exploration. Sir Joseph Banks, who had been the botanist on Cook's visit of 1770, was by now the President of the Royal Society and the leading scientist in the country with immense influence. It was also known that the French were planning a similar voyage as they had obtained passports for two vessels, to be given assistance if needed. With the knowledge of the French intention and the help of Sir Joseph Banks a quick decision was made and the Admiralty issued orders on 12th December 1800 to prepare for a voyage of exploration.

Preparation and marriage

On 19th January 1801 Matthew Flinders was appointed lieutenant in command of a sloop of 334 tons, *HMS Investigator*. Formerly the *Zenophon* and originally a collier she was fitted out for the long voyage with the

guidance of Sir Joseph Banks. The ship was old and not very sound but in the absence of any better vessel Flinders was happy. Flinders chose the crew which included Lieutenant Robert Fowler from Horncastle, Samuel Flinders as second lieutenant and his cousin John Franklin from Spilsby as a midshipman. The scientists and artists were chosen by Banks and included Robert Brown as botanist, Ferdinand Bauer, the botanical artist, William Westall, the landscape artist, John Allen, the miner, Peter Good, the gardener and John Crosley, an astronomer. The scientists had their terms of employment and Flinders and his officers had their instructions also.

On 16th February 1801 Flinders was promoted to commander, one of the youngest to reach that rank in the history of the service. The appointment of Flinders to command this new expedition, although he was only 26 years old suggests that Banks and Earl Spencer, the First Sea Lord, were impressed by the discoveries he had already made and on seeing his logs, journals, calculations and final charts were confident of a successful outcome.

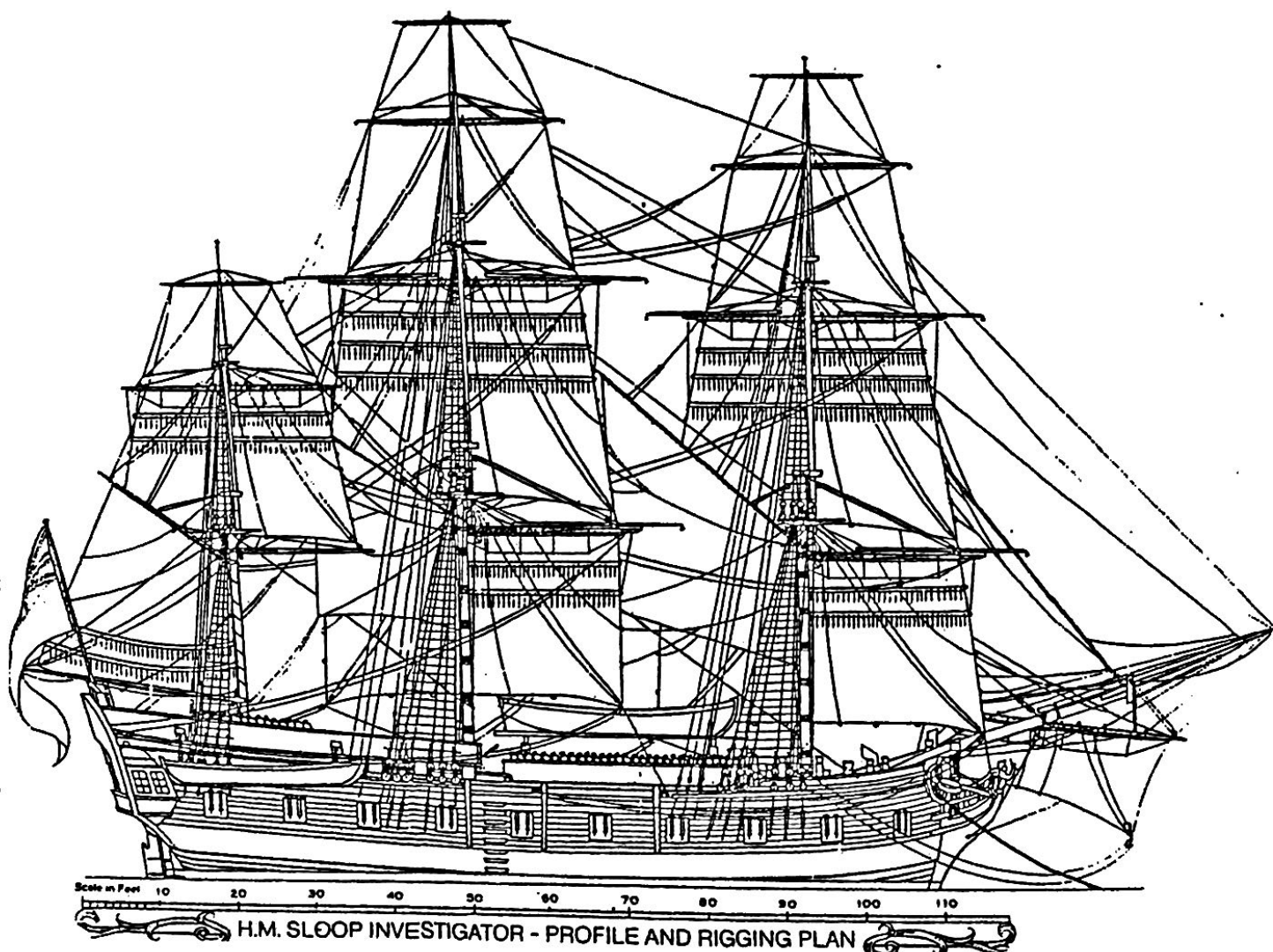
Flinders' instructions were to sail to Port Jackson, refit his ship and then survey and chart the south coast of Terra Australis. He was then to return to Port Jackson and after another refit was to explore, survey and chart the north east coast, Torres Strait, the Gulf of Carpentaria, the north coast and then sail to Timor. After Timor he was to chart a reef near that island, then continue charting the west coast of Terra Australis and after finishing a circumnavigation he was to return

to Britain to await further orders.

The fitting out of the *Investigator* included the provision of cabins for the scientists and extra coppering on the hull. The work of providing the ship with adequate stores took up much of Flinders' time but he was still able to visit Lincolnshire and in April he proposed to Ann Chappelle of Partney. They had known each other for many years and had corresponded and Matthew had given her name to islands and a hill in the Furneaux Group. He asked Ann to share his hardships, intending to take her to Port Jackson, while he did his exploring and charting. He knew his orders were to go to Port Jackson first and it was not unknown for commanders to take wives on such long non-military voyages. He married Ann on 17th April 1801 at Partney Church but did not tell the Admiralty of this or his plans. He took Ann back to London and took her aboard the *Investigator*. When the Admiralty and Sir Joseph Banks found out about the marriage and Ann's domicile aboard it became clear, even after explanations of his intentions by Flinders, that choice would have to be made between leading the voyage of discovery or being with his wife.

Ann returned to Lincolnshire and Matthew sadly continued to equip his ship and seek a master. During May the astronomical and surveying instruments were received from the Navy Board as well as large amounts of tools and trinkets suitable as presents or to barter with the natives. Every chart at the Admiralty which related to Terra Australis and neighbouring islands was copied for the use of Flinders. In June John Thistle

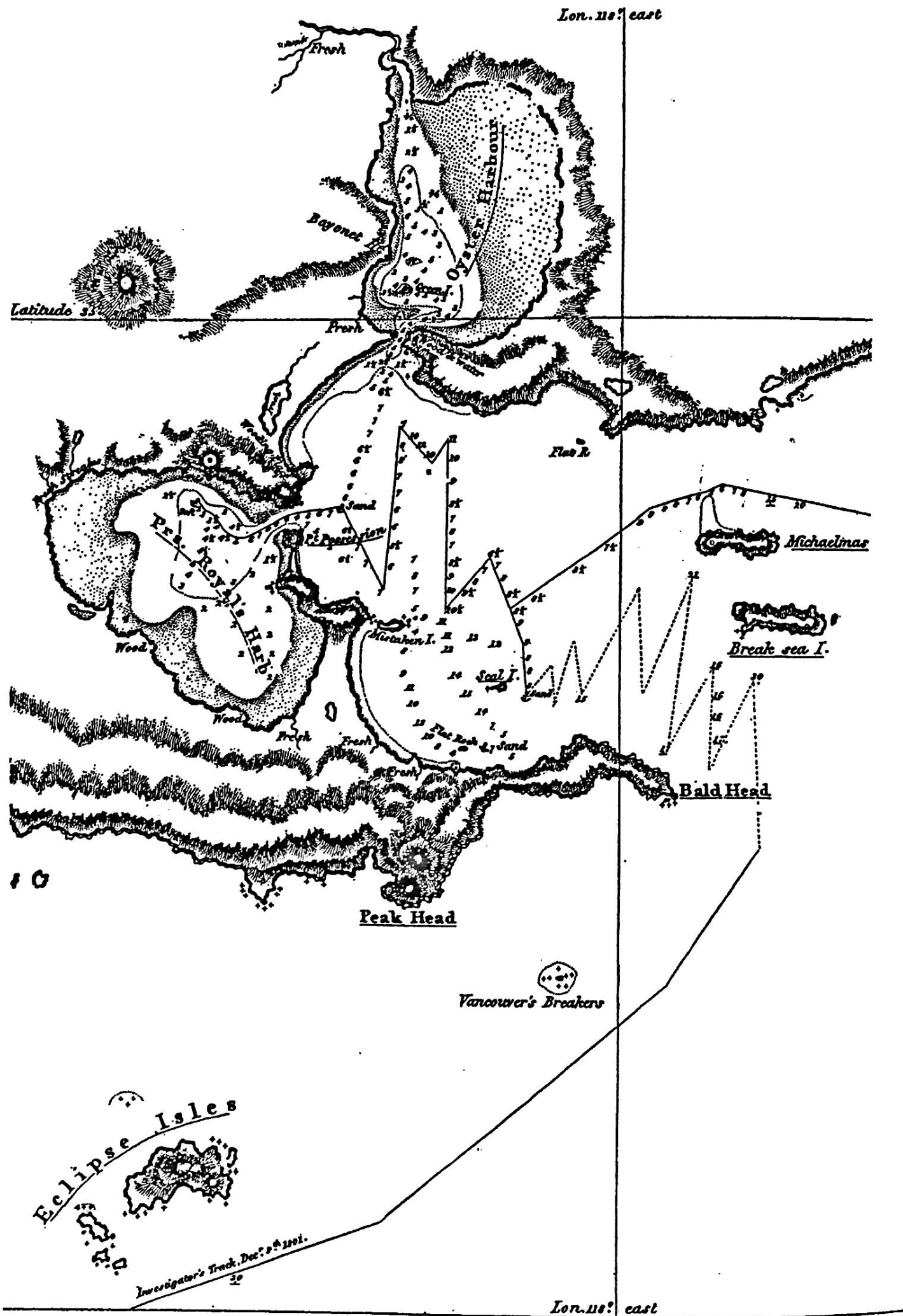
volunteered for the post of master although he had only just arrived back in Britain from Port Jackson after six years away. He had already sailed with Flinders on the *Norfolk* and with Bass in the open whaler. It was not until July that the necessary 'passport' provided by the French Government was received by Flinders and his detailed instructions were read. The instructions were an extensive programme and the Admiralty expected the *Investigator* to be away for several years, using Port Jackson as a base. On 17th July 1801 Flinders received his orders to sail and did so on the following day.



The Voyage of the *Investigator*

The *Investigator* very quickly had problems including a grounding on sand in the English Channel and the ingress of water through the seams. The vessel called at Madeira and reached False Bay at the Cape of Good Hope on 16th October 1801, for repairs and replenishing. Here the expedition lost its astronomer John Crosley who was taken ill. This was a severe loss for the accurate observations that had to be made, and Flinders had to undertake the extra work himself. As well as acting as the purser, with full responsibility for the stocking of the ship Flinders was also conducting experiments to find out about the deviation of the compass needle according to the position of the binnacle, or compass housing, and the heading of the ship.

The *Investigator* sailed from the Cape on 4th November 1801 and reached the landfall on Terra Australis of Cape Leeuwin on 6th December 1801, being the fourth navigator to visit this area. The area had been visited by the Dutchman Nuyts in 1692, by George Vancouver in 1791 and the Frenchman D'Entrecasteaux in 1792, so some charts were available. Flinders came ashore at King George's Sound and entered the harbour at night, putting faith in Vancouver's chart. In spite of orders to go straight to Port Jackson a month was spent at King George's Sound repairing the ship, surveying and giving the naturalists plenty of time for their work. They had friendly encounters with natives also. The late departure from England had made this change of plan necessary to avoid the winter weather conditions of June, July and August.



The Unknown Coast and Disaster

The *Investigator* sailed from King George's Sound on New Years Day 1802 and Flinders surveyed and named the coastal bays, points, capes and islands not already named by Nuyts, Vancouver and D'Entrecasteaux. One example was naming Cape Pasley after the now late Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley. Further eastward the Archipelago of Nuyts was the end of the known area and Flinders moved into the area of 'the unknown coast'. The process continued of surveying and charting and where possible allowing the scientists ashore. Excitement grew on 20th February 1802 when the ship rounded a big cape to reveal the start of a large inlet, which gave hopes for a connection to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Before starting to explore this, tragedy struck the *Investigator* as on that day Flinders sent the master John Thistle, a midshipman and six seamen ashore in a cutter to replenish the supply of water. They were seen to start on their return journey but did not arrive. As darkness fell a search party failed to find them but next day the overturned wreck of the cutter was found with no trace of the men even with further searches. Islands charted in the vicinity were named after the men lost and the cape was named Cape Catastrophe. At Memory Cove, nearby, a copper tablet was placed in memory of the men lost.

Ironically Flinders sailed from the scene of the disaster into the first major harbour he discovered and named Port Lincoln. In that area all the capes, bays, points and islands were named after Lincolnshire places. Flinders then sailed north into the gulf he called Spencer's Gulf,

hoping to find an outlet to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Spencer's Gulf ended in a swampy area near present day Port Augusta. The botanist, Robert Brown, and a party from the ship set out from near there and climbed a distant hill, later named as Mount Brown by Flinders. From this hill the party were the first Europeans to see the mountains to the north which today make up the Flinders Ranges. Flinders retraced his route in Spencer's Gulf and further south discovered the north coast of an island with an abundance of kangaroos, which provided much needed fresh meat and which he named Kangaroo Island. North east of the island Flinders saw a prominent hill on the mainland which he called Mount Lofty. He sailed closer to it charting a gulf (Gulf of St. Vincent) and passed close to the present site of Adelaide, now overlooked by Mount Lofty and the lighthouse like memorial on its summit which was dedicated in 1902 as Flinders' Column.

The French

On 8th April 1802 a sail was spotted as the *Investigator* headed eastwards. This turned out to be the French ship *Le Geographe*, commanded by Captain Nicholas Baudin who was sailing westward. The two captains met and exchanged information. *Le Geographe*, with another vessel *Le Naturaliste*, had been surveying the coast of Van Dieman's Land before moving westward through Bass' Strait, but they had become separated. Flinders gave Baudin an amended chart of Bass' Strait and they parted in the knowledge that they would meet up again in Port Jackson. It is interesting to note that their meeting place, later called Encounter Bay by Flinders,

may have been within sight of the mouth of the largest river in Australia, the Murray, yet neither recognised it. The mouth was not discovered until 1829 from a land approach by Charles Sturt.

Flinders continued eastward now knowing where Baudin had surveyed and concentrated on those areas of the unknown coast that he thought had not been visited. Flinders searched for an island at the western entrance of Bass' Strait which had been reported by a sealing vessel in 1799, but not seen by Baudin. Flinders found and charted the island and then sailed to the north coast of Bass' Strait, to the east of Cape Otway, and entered Port Phillip Bay. At first he thought that it might be the Westernport that Bass had found in 1797 but he quickly realised that this was a new location and surveyed the area thoroughly. With the work of discovery on this coast mostly completed Flinders decided it was time to sail to Port Jackson. The *Investigator* dropped anchor there on 9th May 1802 after a journey of nine months and nine days, with a crew that were healthy and able. On arrival he found that the French ship *Le Naturaliste* was already in port but that ten weeks prior to his visit the discovery of Port Phillip had been achieved by Lieutenant John Murray in the *Lady Nelson*, and that the western island had been surveyed and named King's Island in 1801. The *Lady Nelson*, commanded by Lieutenant James Grant, had sailed from England to Port Jackson via Bass' Strait in 1800 but had not attempted a full survey. Flinders incorporated the information from Grant, Murray and Baudin on his charts of the south coast, retaining any names that they had given.

During the stay in Port Jackson the *Investigator* was refitted for the next part of its voyage. The Governor (now Philip King) and the French officers of the two French ships were entertained aboard the *Investigator*. As well as food and stores, additional crew were needed and John Aken was appointed to be master. The seamen were more difficult to obtain and eight convicts were engaged. In addition, two natives of the Port Jackson settlement were taken aboard to help in contacts with natives. They were Bongaree, who had sailed with Flinders in the *Norfolk*, and Nanbaree. The *Lady Nelson*, a smaller vessel, was to accompany the *Investigator* under the command of Lieutenant John Murray.

To the North

The *Investigator* and *Lady Nelson* sailed out of Port Jackson on 22nd July 1802. They sailed past the most easterly point of Cape Byron but became separated often as the *Investigator* was a much faster vessel. At Sandy Cape the botanists were able to go ashore and contact was made with natives, but Bongaree could not understand their language. Further landings were made at Keppel Bay and Port Bowen was found and named. Flinders was following the route of Captain Cook along the New South Wales coast, filling in information and sailing within the Great Barrier Reef, and searching for passage through it to the ocean. The *Lady Nelson* was damaged after running aground and Flinders reluctantly decided to send her back to Port Jackson and Nanbaree returned with the vessel also. Flinders found a passage through the Great Barrier Reef off present day Townsville and on 20th October 1802 the *Investigator*

was free of the reef and heading for the Torres Strait, a journey of eight days. Flinders found a quick new passage through the Torres Straits which took only three actual sailing days. A previous attempt of Bligh in 1792 had taken 19 days and that of Bampton and Alt in 1793 72 days. The *Investigator* now approached the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The Gulf of Carpentaria

The Dutch explorers of 150 years earlier had produced a simple map of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Flinders' orders were to add detail. The Dutch names were of course retained on his charts but the great number of names that Flinders gave indicate the thoroughness of his work. His charts were to be used for a further 140 years. The low lying coastline of the Gulf of Carpentaria was surveyed with difficulty because of the shallow water extending far off shore. At Sweers Island in the south of the gulf the *Investigator* was beached and careened for caulking and the state of the timbers of the ship alarmed Flinders so much that on 19th November he asked the master Aken and the carpenter to make an official examination of the ship. The report detailed the rotting timbers and gave the opinion that in 12 months there would scarcely be a sound timber but the ship would be safe for six months in fine weather. The clear implication was that a return to Port Jackson was necessary, but a return via the Torres Strait was not possible because of the imminent monsoon. It was decided to complete the survey of the west side of the Gulf of Carpentaria. They continued for another two and a half months until 17th February 1803 when the

ship headed for Kupang on Timor. The *Investigator* arrived in Kupang on 31st March 1803. Flinders had hoped to send Lieutenant Fowler back to Britain with the results of the expedition so far and to plead with the Admiralty for another vessel to complete the instructions, but no Europe bound vessel was there so a return to Port Jackson was the only option. On 8th April 1803 the *Investigator* sailed from Kupang, spending a few days searching for rocks that had been in Flinders' instructions. Sickness appears to have been picked up at Kupang and with dysentery and scurvy present Flinders decided to return to Port Jackson as quickly as possible. One stop was made at the familiar Archipelago of the Recherche and Port Jackson was reached on 9th June 1803 despite the poor state of health of the crew and Flinders himself. Eight men died on the voyage, or shortly after, including Peter Good, the gardener from Kew. On the plus side Flinders achieved the first circumnavigation of Terra Australis, to put beyond doubt that it was a single island continent. Robert Brown had collected a thousand new species, and the Gulf of Carpentaria was surveyed accurately. Bongaree would be acclaimed, two centuries later, as the first native Australian to have circumnavigated the continent.

Flinders ensured his remaining crew were cared for with improved food and then requested an examination of the *Investigator* from Governor King. The report condemned the *Investigator* as being totally unfit to continue the survey and that she 'was not worth repairing in any country'. Flinders believed that he could finish the task he had begun if another vessel

could be found. As none was available at Port Jackson he had little option but to take passage in *HMS Porpoise* to Britain, as a passenger, to plead his case with the Admiralty.

Shipwreck and rescue

HMS Porpoise sailed from Port Jackson on 10th August 1803 with Lieutenant Fowler in command, but under orders to 'follow the route that Captain Flinders indicated'. They were accompanied by two merchant vessels, *Bridgewater* and *Cato* for Batavia, both captains wishing to be shown the way through the Torres Strait. Brown and Bauer remained at Port Jackson but Westall accompanied Flinders.

To avoid the dangers of the Great Barrier Reef the ships sailed north eastwards before swinging north for the entrance of the Torres Straits. On 18th August 1803 the *Porpoise*, followed by the *Cato*, ran aground on an unknown reef, now known as Wreck Reef. The *Porpoise* did not immediately break up but the *Cato* was a total loss and three men were drowned. The *Bridgewater* inexplicably sailed on. The wrecked crews managed to move to a sandbank above the high tide level and in the next few days salvaged provisions, clothing and gear from the *Porpoise*. Tents were erected with a flagpole and guns as Flinders took command. There was food for only about 3 months so it was necessary to organise a rescue. A cutter that was saved was decked with covered hatches by the carpenter, was provided with 3 weeks provisions and named *Hope*. Flinders took charge of the cutter and with Captain Park of the *Cato* and 12

others left Wreck Reef on 26th August to make the 700 mile journey back to Port Jackson. The *Hope* arrived at Sydney Cove in Port Jackson on 8th September and Governor King immediately made arrangements for the crews to be rescued. The merchant ship *Rolla*, about to sail for China, agreed to take part, and the rescue fleet was completed with the Colonial schooner *Francis* and the *Cumberland*, a small vessel of 26 tons. Flinders took command of the *Cumberland* with the intention of sailing on to Britain after calling at the reef. The three ships sailed from Port Jackson on 21st September, reaching Wreck Reef on 7th October, where the marooned sailors gave them a salute of 11 guns.

After the excitement of rescue died down Flinders assembled the survivors to announce his plans. Those that wished to could return to Port Jackson in the *Francis*. Of the remainder all except 10 picked men would sail in the *Rolla* to Canton and there find a ship bound for Britain. The chosen 10 were to sail with Flinders and Aken in the *Cumberland*. On 10th October *Cumberland*, *Rolla*, *Francis* and *Resource* left Wreck Reef. The *Resource* was a small schooner, built during the wait on the bank, in case rescue ships did not arrive.

Imprisonment

The *Cumberland* was tiny for the journey Flinders proposed and it soon became clear that the vessel would have to make more stops than usual for provisioning. The passage through the Torres Strait was uneventful

but by Kupang was reached the ship was in poor condition. Flinders left Kupang the next day, 14th November, as repairs were not possible, intending to go to the Cape of Good Hope. A storm on the 4th and 5th of December gave the *Cumberland* such a battering that Flinders was forced to divert to Ile de France for repairs and provisioning, assuming that his passport would be of help. Ile de France was sighted on 15th December 1803 and on going ashore Flinders was told that he would have to go to Port Louis, which he did with the aid of a pilot. Flinders also found out that Britain and France had been at war again for six months, and that Baudin had died on the island three months earlier. At Port Louis Flinders presented himself but having a passport for the *Investigator* rather than for the *Cumberland* and undertaking such a long voyage in a ship clearly not suited for that the Governor, General Decaen, did not believe his story. Some of the dispatches sent by Governor King to Britain did not help Flinders. General Decaen decided to keep Flinders and his crew until he got some guidance from France.

Flinders and Aken with John Elder, who acted as his servant, were placed under house arrest in Port Louis but were moved in March 1804 to the Garden Prison where other British officers were held. It is probably about this time that his cat Trim went missing after being with Flinders for over six years. In May 1805 John Aken was released with other prisoners and shortly afterwards a sick Flinders was moved to a private residence in the interior where it was cooler and he had comparative freedom of movement. John Elder and a lame seaman accompanied him. Aken was

able to take letters, charts, memoirs and journals with him when he left.

Many representations were made for Flinders' release from such diverse sources as inhabitants on the island, French naval officers, the Admiralty and Sir Joseph Banks and in 1806 Napoleon approved his release to no avail. His two fellow captives were repatriated in 1806. Despite illness Flinders did not waste his time as he is said to have learnt French and Malay, wrote many letters and started writing accounts of his voyage and making charts from the log books and journals that he had available. The document approving his release arrived on Ile de France in July 1807 but Decaen chose to ignore it and it was not until a British naval blockade started in June 1809 that the Governor was forced to reconsider his decision to keep Flinders a prisoner. Decaen finally agreed to release Flinders in March 1810 and on 13th June 1810 Flinders left the island on the *Harriet* before transferring to *HMS Otter* for passage to the Cape of Good Hope. After six weeks at the Cape he obtained passage on *HMS Olympia* and arrived at Spithead on 24th October 1810. Next day he was reunited with Ann, after a separation of 9 years and 3 months, including nearly 6½ years in captivity.

The Final Years

Flinders was promoted to Post Captain, but only from the date of release, and placed on half pay whilst he was preparing his book and charts. He was clearly treated badly financially by the Admiralty and he and his wife had to seek cheap lodgings in London, because

of his need to be close to the publishers. The lack of sympathy from the naval officials may be partly attributed to the their preoccupation with the war against France which had flared up again.

The preparation of the work which eventually was called 'A Voyage to Terra Australis', despite Flinders appeal for the name Australia to be used, became the major task of his remaining life. The job of writing and designing of the work as a whole fell to Flinders, with inputs on flora by Robert Brown and the use of illustrations by Westall and Bauer. The great work of two volumes gave a detailed historical introduction of all previous discoveries in Terra Australis followed by the voyage of the *Investigator* and subsequent vessels up to and including his time on Ile de France. Appendices included his statement on compass deviation and a third volume was an atlas of charts.

His wife, Ann, gave birth to a daughter, Anne, on 1st April 1812, yet eight days later Flinders was at Sheerness for a series of experiments with naval vessels concerning his ideas on compass deviation, followed by similar work at Portsea. The recommendations that Flinders made regarding the position of the compass binnacle and the use of a vertical soft iron bar to the level of the compass needle was adopted by the navy in 1812 and was used in the later refined compass of Lord Kelvin, and the Flinders Bar is still used today in the age of satellite navigation.

In 1813 a major setback to the making of the charts was the discovery that the lunar tables that Flinders

had used during the voyage were erroneous and that all observations made for longitude needed to be corrected. These corrections took up much of the year in which Flinders was in declining health, probably the result of the privations of his voyages and his time in captivity. Visits from his former colleagues, particularly Robert Brown, helped at this time. The early months of 1814 were spent correcting proof copies and a completed copy of the the two volumes of 'A Voyage to Terra Australis' plus the atlas of charts was presented to Sir Joseph Banks on 26th June 1814.

Matthew Flinders died on 19th July 1814 at 14, London Street, Fitzroy Square. He was buried in St. James' Churchyard, Hampstead Road.

Postscript

The great achievements of Captain Flinders were overshadowed by the Napoleonic Wars and he failed to get the recognition that he deserved. Even Sir Joseph Banks did not propose his protege to be a fellow of the Royal Society like James Cook and William Bligh had been. Representations were made to the Government that Mrs Flinders should be provided with similar generosity to that shown to the widow of Captain James Cook. The Government did not respond. Later, the Governments of the Colonial States of New South Wales and Victoria offered an annual grant of £100 each to Mrs Flinders and her daughter Anne in 1852. Ann Flinders died in 1852 not knowing of this recognition but her daughter Anne said she would gladly accept it to help with the education of her infant son. Matthew

Flinders' grandson eventually became Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie, one of the greatest archaeologists of the age and Professor of Egyptology at London University.

With little recognition for Flinders in his own country it was left to the country he had defined and named. His cousin Sir John Franklin, as Governor of Tasmania, erected a memorial on Stamford Hill, South Australia in 1842. The centenary of the discoveries of Flinders was commemorated by the building of a number of memorials such as that to the meeting with Baudin at Encounter Bay and the dedication of the navigation column on the summit of Mount Lofty near Adelaide. In 1922 Sir William Flinders Petrie offered private letters, diaries and logs of his grandfather to the archives of the first Australian state to erect a statue in his honour. New South Wales responded quickest and the Mitchell Library in Sydney benefitted. The other states of South Australia and Victoria followed with statues in Adelaide and Melbourne. With the recent bi-centenaries the memorials have increased in number, especially on the 'unknown coast'.

Of all the names that Flinders gave to the coastal features he never named any after himself. The following generations in Australia have remedied this for there are now three Flinders Islands, a town, a bay, a river, mountain ranges, a university and the Flinders Passage through the Great Barrier Reef. His portrait or depictions of his ship have appeared on bank notes, coins and stamps. Almost every town has a Flinders Street, and worldwide every ship has a Flinders Bar.

P.P.S.

On 16th March 2006 a statue of Captain Matthew Flinders was unveiled in Donington Market Place, near the site of his birth in 1774. This is the first statue to commemorate Matthew Flinders in Britain, following the four already in existence in Australia from the 20th Century, and it also depicts Trim, his faithful cat.

The statue, and the Memorial Stained Glass Window in Donington Parish Church with the permanent Display of his Life are the only comprehensive memorials to Matthew Flinders in the United Kingdom.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

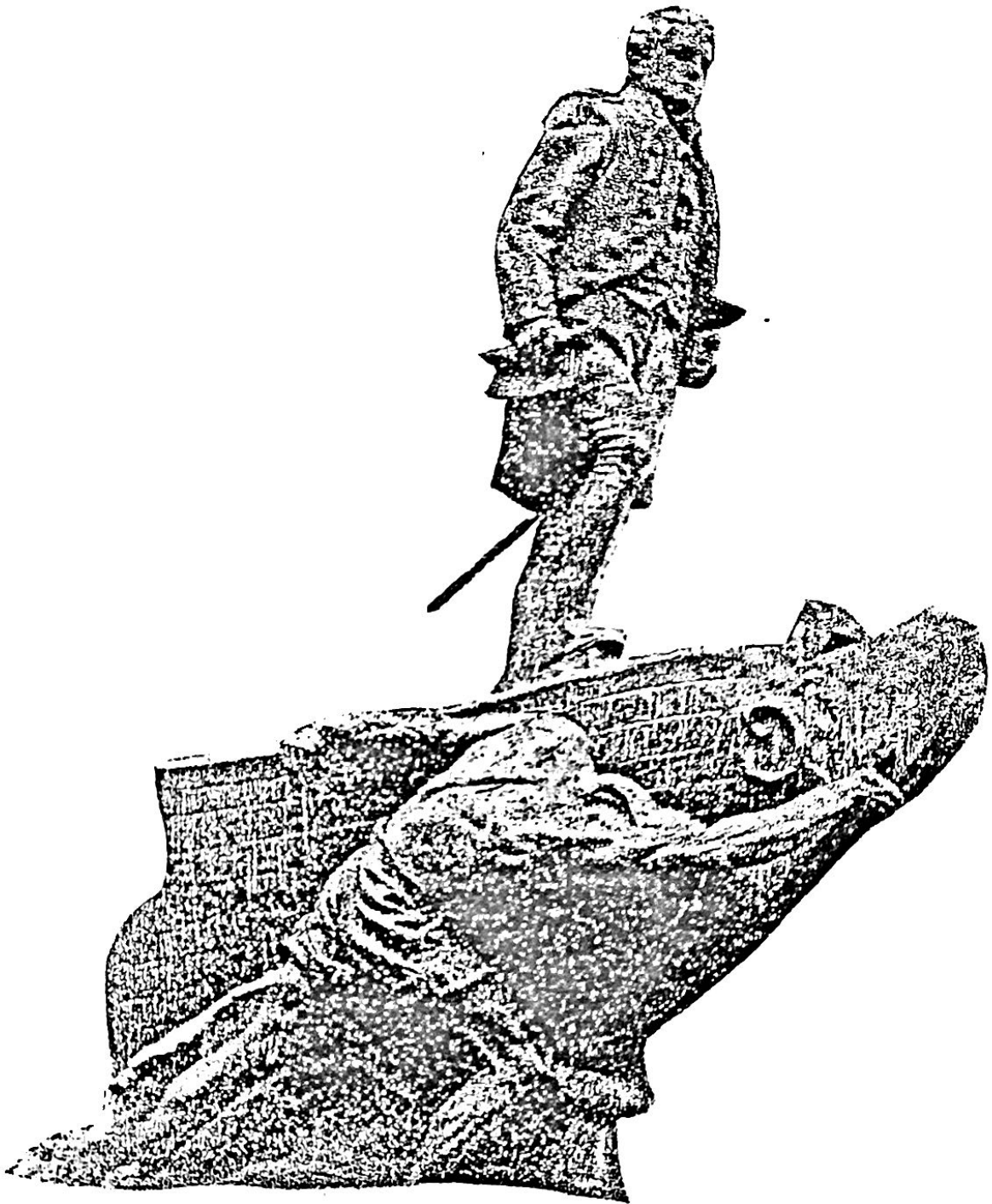
Matthew Flinders	A Voyage to Terra Australis	1814
Ernest Scott	The Life of Captain Matthew Flinders	1914
		£2001
Ernestine Hill	My Love Must Wait	1941
H M Cooper	The Unknown Coast	1953
James D Mack	Matthew Flinders	1963
K A Austin	The Voyage of the Investigator	1964
Thea Stanley Hughes	Matthew Flinders	1984
Matthew Flinders	Trim	1997
Anthony J Brown	111 Starred Captains	2001
Miriam Estenson	The Life of Matthew Flinders	2002

"The amount of discovery and remarkable accuracy of survey has placed him next to Cook among modern navigators."

Letter from Robert Brown to Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort. 12th March 1847

"The geographical and nautical sciences lost one of their most brilliant ornaments."

Conrad Malte-Brun in 'Annals des Voyages'.



Statue of Matthew Flinders outside St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne, Victoria