

Barrie Jamieson

**John Clements Wickham
Charles Darwin's Glorious Fellow**

Three voyages of HMS Beagle in 1826 to 1841, exploration of the coasts of South America, the second with Charles Darwin, voyages around the world, life in Moreton Bay and Brisbane as Police Magistrate and Government Resident, marriages to Anna Macarthur and Ellen Deering, charting the coast of Australia, death in Biarritz

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John Clements Wickham, Charles Darwin's Glorious Fellow

Wickham is a glorious fine fellow
Charles Darwin, letter to his father

By Barrie GM Jamieson

Preface

John Clements Wickham RN, played an essential navigational role in three voyages of HMS *Beagle*, the ship on which Charles Darwin, in the second voyage, was naturalist. On the third voyage Wickham was the Commander, from 1837 until he left, ostensibly owing to ill health, in 1841. From 1842 to 1858, he played a prominent role in Brisbane affairs, as Police Magistrate and, later, Government Resident, living at Newstead House. In 1842 he married Anna, daughter of Hannibal Macarthur, who died in 1852, and he married Ellen Deering in 1857 both of whom bore children. Darwin described Wickham as *a glorious fine fellow*. But despite such praise, and Wickham's great contributions to the founding of Australia, as a navigator, charting and naming its coastline, and as an administrator, no biography of him has appeared apart from some valuable essays, chapters and booklets. The present work attempts to track Wickham's activities throughout his life, until his death at Biarritz in 1864. The text has been kept close to that of the chroniclers of the voyages, Phillip Parker King, Robert Fitz-Roy, Charles Darwin and John Lort Stokes, his companions on board. For those parts of the voyages where Wickham is not specifically mentioned, though so important to navigation and maintenance, particularly the return via the Galapagos Islands and ensuing evolutionary writings, little is here written. Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* and his diary have amply been covered elsewhere.

Acknowledgments

The author has relied on the primary sources mentioned above; on contemporary newspaper articles available on the invaluable Trove site of the National library of Australia; the excellent Darwin-Online site with kind agreement of John van Wyhe; the records of the Mitchell Library of the State Library of New South Wales; the State Library of Queensland, particularly the John Oxley Library; Wikipedia; the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; and more than one hundred references which are listed in the bibliography. Special thanks are due to Professor Danièle Guinot whose researches have finally determined the name and location of the church where Captain John Clements Wickham was interred, which have been obscure for more than one hundred years. Illustrations have been obtained chiefly from Public Domain sites and those persons responsible for their dissemination are gratefully acknowledged. The Wellcome Library has been particularly generous in freely supplying and allowing reproduction of images. Mrs Kim Davis, Manager of Newstead House, is thanked for warmly welcoming me to the House Museum. Dr. Ian Hadwen, of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, has given this project constant support which is greatly appreciated. Dr. Barry Shaw and members of the Brisbane History Society kindly read the ms and provided valuable comments.

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1. Beginnings

John Clements Wickham was born on 21 November 1798 at Leith, south of Edinburgh, in Scotland. The origins of the Wickham family were in Rowley, a Yorkshire village that later became almost depopulated. In 1638, two brothers, Richard and Thomas Wickham, emigrated to America with the Reverend Ezekiel Rogers after he was dismissed as Rector of the parish church in 1638 for his non-conformist, puritan beliefs. Rogers took twenty families to the American colonies, joining the ranks of the Pilgrim Fathers. They sailed from Hull in the *John of London* and landed at Salem. He then founded the town of Rowley, Massachusetts, in memory of their home. Thomas Wickham married Sarah Goodrich (sometimes erroneously recorded as Sarah Churchill) and settled in Wethersfield, Connecticut, in about 1648. He was a wool merchant and Sarah ran a school for girls. Their fifth son, Samuel Wickham, was born in 1664; he later settled in Rhode Island and became a Freeman of that Colony and a Deputy. Samuel Wickham married Barbara Holken in 1691 and their fifth son, Benjamin Wickham, was born 17 November 1701 at Rhode Island. Benjamin was chosen by the Rhode Island colonial Assembly in 1756 to be Lieutenant-Colonel of a Regiment raised for the second expedition against the French at Crown Point. In 1757, as a deputy for Newport, he became Speaker of the House of Deputies. Benjamin married Mary, daughter of Colonel John Gardner in 1743. Samuel Wickham, their sixth and youngest son, was born at Newport, Rhode Island in 1758. Samuel, the father of John Wickham, rose to the rank of Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. While he was attached to the Portuguese Navy as an instructor he was given the rank of Captain-Lieutenant. He fought on the British side in the War of Independence after which he left America and settled in Scotland. On 16 June 1795 he married Ellen Susan Naylor at Gibraltar, who bore his son, John Clements.^{1 2 3}

Early voyages

Wickham entered the Royal Naval College in February 1812. His age was given as sixteen but he was fourteen-and-a-half years at this time. In 1815 he became an Admiralty Midshipman and was posted to HMS *Nightingale* and in 1818 to HMS *Hyperion*. He was then paid off because of the lull after the end of the Napoleonic wars but in 1819 he passed his Lieutenant's examination.⁴



Lieutenant John Clements Wickham in the 1820s. State Library of Queensland

2. The First *Beagle* Voyage 1826-1830

In 1825, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty directed two ships to be prepared for a survey of the southern coasts of South America. In May of the following year HMS *Adventure* and the *Beagle* were lying in Plymouth Sound, ready to carry out the orders of their Lordships. The *Adventure* was a roomy ship of 330 tons with no guns, considerably larger

than the *Beagle* at 235 tons which was rigged as a barque and carried six guns (reduced from 10). The *Adventure* was commanded by Phillip Parker King, the leader of the expedition, from 1826 to 1830, and one of the five mates on it was J.C. Wickham. The first lieutenant, J. Cooke, was invalided out in 1827 and on 6 October Wickham was promoted to First Lieutenant R.N. on the *Adventure*.^{5 6} Wickham played a vital role in navigation of this vessel, and sometimes other vessels, throughout the expedition but the account of this will here be largely confined to passages where he is specifically mentioned. Consequently there may be some gaps in the itineraries.

A tribute by Phillip Parker King gives the measure of Wickham:

There is not a more deserving person in the service nor a better sailor nor a more correct, gentlemanly, high-minded man.⁷

The *Beagle* belonged to the much-abused Cherokee class, the 10-gun brigs, 'coffins', as they were not infrequently designated in the service despite which she proved herself, under every possible variety of trial, in all kinds of weather, an excellent sea boat. She was built at Woolwich in 1819 and her first exploit was the novel and unprecedented one of passing under old London bridge (the first rigged man-of-war that had ever floated so high upon the waters of the Thames) in order to salute at the coronation of ' the Fourth.'⁸

Jointly, the *Beagle* and *Adventure* would survey part of Eastern Patagonia, the greater portion of the Strait of Magellan, and a considerable extent of the western (Chilean) shores of Patagonia. During 1829 and 1830 the two vessels continued the survey, assisted by a tender, the *Adelaide*, whose commander was Lieutenant Thomas Graves. In the latter part of 1830 they returned to England, having added charts of the south-western and southern shores of Tierra del Fuego, besides those of a multitude of interior sounds and passages.⁹

The *Beagle* was commanded by Pringle Stokes. Among its crew was midshipman John Lort Stokes, unrelated, who became a long term friend of Wickham and later an Admiral. It is sometimes erroneously stated that Owen Stanley accompanied them on this voyage. The complement of the *Adventure* numbered some 83 souls of which, in addition to the officers, about 50 were men and boys. On the *Beagle* were 63 souls of which 40 were men and boys. Accommodation must have been somewhat crowded, though for the superior individuals:

these vessels were well provided with every necessary, and every comfort.

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Phillip Parker King. Mitchell Library. State Library of New South Wales.

Phillip Parker King was born on Norfolk Island in 1793 and was named after Governor Arthur Phillip who had been a mentor of Phillip's father, Philip [*sic*] Gidley King, third Governor of New South Wales. Phillip was the first native born explorer of Australia and would be the first Australian to become a British admiral. He entered the navy in 1807 and fought the French with distinction, becoming a lieutenant in 1814. At war's end in the following year he turned his attention to hydrography and in 1817 was commissioned by the Admiralty to take up the survey of the northern and western coasts of Australia from the point where Flinders had left it 14 years earlier.¹⁰ After the voyage he returned to manage the Australian Agricultural Company.¹¹

Phillip Gidley King, his son, was born at Parramatta in 1817 and in 1826, when only nine years of age, joined his father in the *Adventure*. The friendship between Wickham and P. G. King was lifelong. They married sisters, daughters of Hannibal Macarthur of the Vineyard (Subiaco), Parramatta River and kept up a correspondence until the death of Wickham at Biarritz, France, on 6 January 1864. In a letter written by Mrs. King, wife of Post-Captain Phillip Parker King, she told how glad she was of the friendship of Lieutenant Wickham for her little lad whom:

she had led, so sadly, when little more than a baby, from their home to Parramatta River Wharf, where a pulling boat, manned by marines, awaited the boy's arrival to convey him by river to Sydney, there to join his father and go on a voyage with him, when he would learn to be a sailor, and a soldier for his Sovereign.¹¹

The following Instructions were given to Phillip Parker King as Senior Officer of the Expedition.

By the Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

Whereas we think fit that an accurate Survey should be made of the Southern Coasts of the Peninsula of South America, from the southern entrance of the River Plata, round to Chiloé; and of Tierra del Fuego; and whereas we have been induced to repose confidence in you, from your conduct of the Surveys in New Holland; we have placed you in the command of His Majesty's Surveying Vessel the *Adventure*; and we have directed Captain Stokes, of His Majesty's Surveying Vessel the *Beagle*, to follow your orders.

Both these vessels are provided with all the means which are necessary for the complete execution of the object above-mentioned, and for the health and comfort of their Ships' Companies. You are also furnished with all the information, we at present possess, of the ports which you are to survey; and nine Government Chronometers have been embarked in the *Adventure*, and three in the *Beagle*, for the better determination of the Longitudes.

You are therefore hereby required and directed, as soon as both vessels shall be in all respects ready, to put to sea with them; and on your way to your ulterior destination, you are to make, or call at, the following places, successively; namely; Madeira: Teneriffe [sic]: the northern point of St. Antonio, and the anchorage at St. Jago; both in the Cape Verd Islands: the Island of Trinidad, in the Southern Atlantic: and Rio de Janeiro: for the purpose of ascertaining the differences of the longitudes of those several places.

At Rio de Janeiro, you will receive any supplies you may require; and make with the Commander-in-chief, on that Station, such arrangements as may tend to facilitate your receiving further supplies, in the course of your Expedition.

After which, you are to proceed to the entrance of the River Plata, to ascertain the longitudes of the Cape Santa Maria, and Monte Video: you are then to proceed to survey the Coasts, Islands, and Straits; from Cape St. Antonio, at the south side of the River Plata, to Chiloé; on the west coast of America; in such manner and order, as the state of the season, the information you may have received, or other circumstances, may induce you to adopt.

You are to continue on this service until it shall be completed; taking every opportunity to communicate to our Secretary, and the Commander-in-Chief, your proceedings: and also, whenever you may be able to form any judgment of it, where the Commander-in-Chief, or our Secretary, may be able to communicate with you.

In addition to any arrangements made with the Admiral, for recruiting your stores, and provisions; you are, of course, at liberty to take all other means, which may be within your reach, for that essential purpose.

You are to avail yourself of every opportunity of collecting and preserving Specimens of such objects of Natural History as may be new, rare, or interesting; and you are to instruct Captain Stokes, and all the other Officers, to use their best diligence in increasing the Collections in each ship: the whole of which must be understood to belong to the Public.

In the event of any irreparable accident happening to either of the two vessels, you are to cause the officers and crew of the disabled vessel to be removed into the other, and with her, singly, to proceed in prosecution of the service, or return to England, according as circumstances shall appear to require; understanding that the officers and crews of both vessels are hereby authorized, and required, to continue to perform their duties, according to their respective ranks and stations, on board either vessel to which they may be so removed. Should, unfortunately, your own vessel be the one disabled, you are in that case to take the command of the Beagle: and, in the event of any fatal accident happening to yourself; Captain Stokes is hereby authorized to take the command of the Expedition; either on board the Adventure, or Beagle, as he may prefer; placing the officer of the Expedition who may then be next in seniority to him, in command of the second vessel: also, in the event of your inability, by sickness or otherwise, at any period of this service, to continue to carry the Instructions into execution, you are to transfer them to Captain Stokes, or to the surviving officer then next in

command to you, who is hereby required to execute them, in the best manner he can, for the attainment of the object in view.

When you shall have completed the service, or shall, from any cause, be induced to give it up; you will return to Spithead with all convenient expedition; and report your arrival, and proceedings, to our Secretary, for our information.

Whilst on the South American Station, you are to consider yourself under the command of the Admiral of that Station; to whom we have expressed our desire that he should not interfere with these orders, except under peculiar necessity.

Given under our hands the 16th of May 1826.

(Signed) MELVILLE.

G. COCKBURN.

To Phillip P. King, Esq., Commander of His Majesty's Surveying Vessel Adventure, at Plymouth.

By command of their Lordships.

(Signed) J. W. CROKER.⁶



Captain John Lort Stokes, c.1841 by an unknown artist. Collection of the National Portrait Gallery of Australia

John Lort Stokes (1812-1885), shown here at the age of approximately 29, explorer and hydrographer, was the son of Henry Stokes. He entered the navy in HMS *Prince Regent* in 1824 and was soon transferred to the brig *Beagle*, in which he served for eighteen years, becoming midshipman in 1825, mate and assistant surveyor in 1831, lieutenant in 1837, commander in 1841, Rear Admiral in 1864, Vice Admiral (on the retired list) in 1871 and Admiral in 1877. He died where he had been born, at his estate, Scotchwell, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, on 11 June 1885.^{10 12 13, 14}

Montevideo. The *Beagle* and *Adventure* sailed from England and crossed the Atlantic via Madeira, Tenerife, the Cape Verde islands, Trinidad in the South Atlantic, and Rio de Janeiro. As required by the Admiralty, they then reached Montevideo which lies on the north-eastern bank of the Rio de la Plata (River Plate or Plata, the River of Silver). This is the capital city of modern Uruguay. The country had become independent from Brazil in 1828.

Strait of Magellan. On 15 January 1827, the *Beagle* sailed from Montevideo to survey the western entrance of the Strait of Magalhaens [Magellan], with orders to return to Port Famine by the end of March. Meanwhile a decked boat, the *Hope*, was got ready and Wickham, who was in every way qualified for the trust, was given its command. They were much mortified, however, to find that it leaked so considerably as to oblige them to haul her on shore. When ready for sea, she sailed under the direction of King's assistant-surveyor, Mr. Graves, to examine the St. Sebastian channel and the deep opening to the south-east of Cape Valentyne. Her crew consisted of seven men besides Wickham and Rowlett, the purser. The *Adventure* was then free to survey the vicinity of Port Famine and to make a plan of the port. ⁶

Wickham is mentioned again when he went ashore, in February 1827, with Mr. Tarn to a beach in the Magdalen Channel in order to meet some native Fuegians, fourteen or fifteen people and seven or eight dogs. There were only three men with women and children. To overcome their timidity, Wickham gave each man a red cap and other trifles. An active trade ensued for otter skins, shell-necklaces, spears and other items in exchange for beads, buttons and medals. ⁶ None of the men reached the gigantic stature often reported for Patagonians, of which a detailed account is given by King.

Purchase of the *Adelaide*. Captain King received permission when at Montevideo in 1827 from the Lord High Admiral to acquire a tender for the *Adventure*. The little fleet was thus augmented by the purchase of a small schooner which he named the *Adelaide*. He appointed Lieutenant Graves as its commander. Five months' additional provisions for it and the *Adventure* were purchased; and on 23 December 1827, after running up the River Plata (Plate) to obtain fresh water, they sailed out by the southern entrance, passing to the westward of the Archimedes Shoal, and proceeded without farther delay to the south and further hydrographic surveys. The *Adelaide* being ready for sea, her first service was an examination of the supposed St. Sebastian Channel, communicating with the Strait of Magellan and penetrating through the large eastern island of Tierra del Fuego. ⁶

Mount Aymond. On 17 January 1828 Lieutenant Wickham and Mr. Tarn, the surgeon from the *Adventure*, made an excursion to the summit of the Tableland which extended from the low land behind the Second Narrow to the N.E., in the direction of Mount Aymond. They were amply repaid for a fatiguing walk, with the thermometer at 81° Fahrenheit (27.2° Celsius), by a magnificent view: Cape Possession to the eastward, and to the south the mountains near Mount Tarn, eighty miles distant, were plainly

distinguished. The view to the westward, stretching over a large extent of grassy plains, was bounded by lofty ranges of snow-capped mountains but to the north it was intercepted by another summit of the mountain upon which they stood. The country they passed over was covered with short grass, through which a mass of granite occasionally protruded. Neither trees nor shrubs were observed, excepting a few herbaceous plants, and the berberis [barberry]. A goose, some ducks, snipe, and plovers were shot; and guanacoes were seen at a distance, but no 'ostriches' [rheas], nor did they meet any Indians. Large fires were, however, seen on both shores of the Strait, which the Indians made for cooking. In consequence of those on the Patagonian coast appearing so close to the ship, they expected a visit before night, but none made their appearance.^{6 15}

Cape Negro. Later in January when the *Adventure* was at anchorage before Cape Negro, Wickham and Mr. Tarn visited the lake at the back of Laredo Bay, and saw two swans, which, from the colour of their plumage, seemed to be the black-necked swan of the River Plata and of the Falkland Islands. They brought on board with them a new species of duck, which was later described in the proceedings of the Zoological Society as *Anas specularis* (Nob.), and a small burrowing animal, of the rat tribe, that, from the character of its teeth, was probably of a genus not hitherto noted, approaching nearest to Cuvier's *Helamys*. They next anchored in Port Famine, where the tents, &c. were replaced in their former positions, the *Adventure* was unrigged and secured for the winter, and all hands set to work, preparing the *Adelaide* for service. Many records of the natural history of the places visited are given by King, including a reference to humming birds sporting about in snow showers at Port San Antonio in April 1828. There are also abundant references to the 'Indians'.

In spring, on March 1828, Mr. Graves took the *Adelaide* to Bougainville Harbour with letters from King to Wickham. He brought back an account of all being well at Port Famine and the *Beagle* having sailed on 17 March. On 16 April, the *Adventure* left Dighton, anchored in St. Nicholas Bay, and the day after arrived at Port Famine. Indians had discovered and visited the *Adelaide* while King was away, but Wickham, usually courteous to natives, did not encourage them to remain; and two or three attempts to pilfer being detected, finding their company not desired, they went across the Strait to Lomas Bay, where for several days afterwards the smoke of their fires was seen. They were the same Indians whom they had met at Port San Antonio.

^{6 15}

Beagle to Chile. On 29 June 1828, the *Beagle* had steered along the coast with easterly winds and fine weather which enabled Lieutenant Skyring to add much to the survey of the coast of Madre de Dios.

Some changes in the crew of the *Adventure* and *Beagle* later occurred owing to illness, death or promotion. King gave Captain Stokes orders to proceed in the *Beagle* to survey the western coasts of Patagonia, Chile, between the Strait of Magellan and latitude 47° south, or as much of those dangerous and exposed shores as he could examine with the means at his disposal, while King sailed in the *Adelaide* to explore the St. Sebastian Channel. Stokes had strict orders from King to return to Port Famine by 24 July 1828, when King hoped to move the *Adventure* to some other part of the Strait, and to recommence operations with the earliest days of spring if the winter should be unsuitable for their work. ⁶ Port Famine (Puerto del Hambre), named for its depressing appearance, lies at the geographical centre of Chile on the north shore of the Strait of Magellan.

Sick list. In July 1828, at Port Famine, the sick list, particularly of scurvy, increased so much during the damp, trying weather, that King sent the *Adelaide* northward to procure a supply of fresh meat from the Patagonians and at the same time to survey that part of the Strait lying between Cape Negro and the Second Narrow. Lieutenants Wickham and Graves, and the surgeon, Tarn, went on this service, the surgeon being most anxious to obtain some change of diet for the sick under his care, for some of whom he was much alarmed. The appearance and severity of this disease, although every precaution had been used, and subsequent attention paid to their diet, were not easy to account for. Fresh provisions, bread baked on board, pickles, cranberries, large quantities of wild celery, preserved meats and soups, had been abundantly supplied; the decks were kept well-aired, dry and warm, but all to no purpose; these precautions, perhaps, checked the disease for a time but did not prevent it.

The *Adelaide* sailed on the 16 July, with every prospect of fine weather. The same evening, an American sealing schooner anchored near the *Adventure*, on her way to Staten Land. She had entered the Straits by Cutler and Smyth Channels, and in forty-eight hours arrived at Port Famine. After obtaining some trifling assistance from their forge, she sailed.

On the 25th, three new cases of scurvy appeared, one being the assistant-surgeon, which increased their sick list to fourteen. Feeling the need to do something, King ordered the hands to be turned up, '*Prepare ship for sea!*' No sooner had the words escaped the boatswain's lips, than all was life, energy, and delight. The preliminary preparations were made, and every one looked forward with pleasure to the change, except King, who had hoped to

pass the twelve months at Port Famine, with the intention of completing a meteorological journal, for which this place afforded peculiar advantages.



A Patagonian man. From King

The return of the *Beagle* cheered the ship's company and on the 30 July the *Adelaide* came back with a large quantity of guanaco meat which had been procured from the Patagonian Indians at Peckett's Harbour. When the *Adelaide* anchored there, about thirty Indians appeared on the shore. Mr Tarn landed, and communicated his needs, saying that he would give tobacco and knives for as much guanaco meat as they could procure. With them was the Fuegian who seemed to be a leading man and to have become one of the most active of the party. He was the principal spokesman, and upon commencing the hunt he pointed to the snow upon the ground, and

called it 'bueno' (good), because it would show the traces of the animals, and the direction they had taken. Wickham described the manner in which they hunted: two men ascended a hill, placed themselves one at each end of its summit, and stood motionless for some time, on the look-out. As soon as guanacoës were seen, their position and movements were communicated by signs to the men in the valley, who were thus enabled to approach their game unawares. The guanacoës were taken with the bolas, which entangled their legs and threw them down. As soon as they were killed, they were skinned and cut up. The first night seven hundred pounds of meat were brought, and two thousand and forty-six pounds were obtained in a few days.

All hands were allowed fresh meat for a week, and the residue was placed at the disposal of the surgeon, for the use of the sick, but all was ineffectual against scurvy. It is curious that King did not recall Captain Cook's remedy of citrus for scurvy, though there had been considerable attempts to provide fresh vegetables, whereas Covington (Darwin's assistant) specifically referred to 'various antiscorbutics' on board for the later, second *Beagle* voyage.

In this context, Fitz-Roy on the second voyage of the *Beagle* proudly stated that among their provisions were various antiscorbutics, such as pickles, dried apples, and lemon juice, of the best quality, and in as great abundance as they could stow away. They had also on board a very large quantity of Kilner and Moorsom's preserved meat, vegetables, and soup: and from the Medical Department they received an ample supply of antiseptics and articles useful for preserving specimens of natural history.¹⁶

The sick list still increased, and Wickham, with a violent cold, and Mr. Rowlett, with scurvy, were added to it. Ironically, the assistant-surgeon became the worst case of scurvy on board. The crew, finding that the preparations for quitting the place were not going ahead, became despondent again. Captain Pringle Stokes was anxious to prepare the *Beagle* for another cruise, being very averse to giving up plans and returning to Montevideo. He thought the crews, from utter disgust at the privations and hardships they had endured, would not be persuaded to go on another voyage but that if they were to go to Chiloé or Valparaiso, to refresh, they might recover their strength and spirits, and be willing to renew the survey. This, however, he himself seemed to dread, for he never mentioned the subject without a shudder. Suspicions arose in King's mind that all was not quite right with him.

Suicide of Pringle Stokes. Then, on 1 August, a boat came from the *Beagle*, with the dreadful news that Captain Stokes, in a momentary fit of despondency, had shot himself. He had begun to show symptoms of a

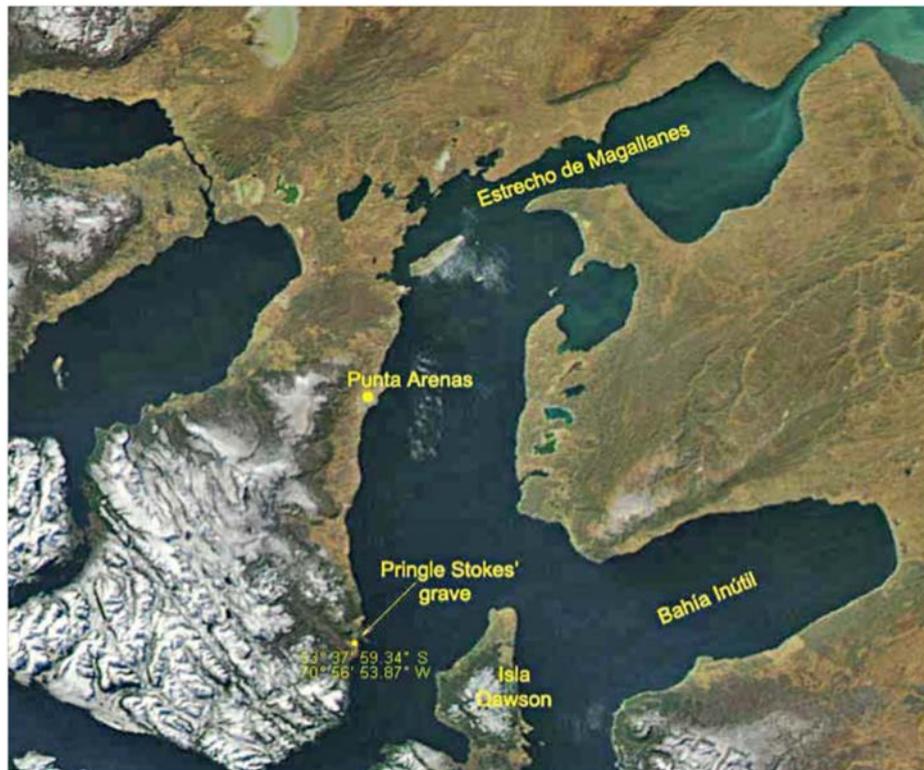
malady that had evidently been brought on by the state of anxiety he had gone through during the survey of the Chilean Gulf of Peñas. He shut himself up in his cabin, becoming quite listless and inattentive to what was going on; and after entering the Strait of Magellan, on his return to Port Famine, he delayed at several places without any apparent reason. At last, want of provisions obliged him to hasten in August 1828 to Port Famine; and the day on which he arrived every article of food had been expended. Stokes locked himself in his cabin for days and finally shot himself, lingering for a few days. Because of the fatal event they decided to leave the Strait. Thus ended the life of a good man who had, as First Lieutenant on the *Owen Glendower*, participated in antislavery investigations off the coast of Nigeria where he sustained serious wounds. His simple grave prepared by his colleagues on the *Beagle* can still be seen.



The Grave of Pringle Stokes at Punta Alto in 2010. By Pato Novoa.



Replica of the cross at the grave of Pringle Stokes from the original now in the Museo Salesiano



The location of Captain Pringle Stokes grave near the Strait of Megellan (Estrecho de Magallanes)

Skyring as commander. In August 1828, following Stokes' suicide, Captain King appointed Lieutenant Skyring to act as commander of the *Beagle*; Mr. Flinn as master of the *Adventure* under King's captaincy and

Mr. Millar, second master of the *Adventure*, to act as master of the *Beagle* under Skyring's captaincy. Both ships were immediately prepared, and sailed on 16 August. The day they sailed, however, Flinn was taken ill; and, Wickham being on the sick list, King was the only commissioned officer on the *Adventure* able to keep on deck. On 22 August King despatched the *Beagle* to Peckett's Harbour to recall the *Adelaide*, in which Lieutenant Graves had been sent to procure guanaco meat. The *Beagle* worked through, between Elizabeth Island and Cape Negro and anchored off Peckett's Harbour before the *Adventure* entered the Second Narrow of the Strait. Skyring later had a tragic fate, and deserves further mention here. He continued on the *Beagle* until paid off on 25 February 1830, in which year he was made a Commander. In the charts of the *Beagle's* voyage, Skyring Water, in the neighbourhood of Magellan Strait, was named after him, a name which the Chilean Government generously continues to recognize. He appears to have remained unemployed as a Commander until October 1833, when he was appointed to the command of the *Etna* (with the *Raven* as tender), in succession to Commander Belcher, for the continuation of the survey of the west coast of Africa. He was murdered by the Africans at the Caches River, near Cape Roxo, on 22 December 1833, while executing his arduous duties as a nautical surveyor.⁵

Fitz-Roy takes command. On the 13 October 1828, the *Adventure* sailed for Rio de Janeiro to procure some stores, and to be caulked and refitted. The *Beagle* remained at Montevideo to prepare for its next sailing. Before the *Adventure* was ready to leave Rio de Janeiro, the Commander-in-chief, Sir Robert Otway, arrived from Bahia in his flagship, the *Ganges*. He considered it necessary for the *Beagle* to be hove down and repaired and said that he intended to supersede Lieutenant Skyring and had sent the requisite orders to Montevideo. When the *Beagle* arrived in Rio, Lieutenant Robert Fitz-Roy, flag lieutenant of the *Ganges*, was appointed as the *Beagle's* commander; Mr. J. Kempe, mate, as lieutenant; and Mr. M. Murray, second master of the *Ganges*, as master. Skyring uncomplainingly accepted becoming its Lieutenant and Surveyor.⁶ This was the first time Fitz-Roy, an eminently qualified navigator, was to command the *Beagle*.



Robert Fitz-Roy in 1865. Royal Naval College, Greenwich

River Plata. The *Adventure* sailed from Rio de Janeiro on 27 December 1828, leaving the *Beagle* to complete her repairs and follow to the River Plata. The day before arrival at Maldonado, the *Adventure* was overtaken by

the Commander-in-chief, in HMS *Ganges*, and they entered the river in company. The *Ganges* proceeded to Montevideo but King, with Wickham, on the *Adventure*, went into Maldonado Bay [on the North side of the River Plata], to wait for the *Beagle*.⁶

Port Desire. On 23 March 1829, in Sea Bear Bay, a week having passed since the *Adventure* had been at Port Desire, King's anxiety for the *Adelaide's* safety was much increased; especially as both wind and weather had been favourable for her approach to this rendezvous. He therefore despatched Lieutenant Wickham overland to Port Desire to order the *Beagle* to join them, and proceed with them to the other points of rendezvous, Port San Julian and Cape Fairweather. Wickham reached Port Desire after a fatiguing walk, and early next morning the *Beagle* was beating into Sea Bear Bay against a very strong wind that increased, and detained them. King seized this opportunity of completing the *Beagle's* provisions to five months. Captain Fitz-Roy informed him that he had taken advantage of his stay at Port Desire to ascend the inlet to the head. It extended for thirty miles, and the water was salt to its very extremity; but, from the height of the banks on each side, it appeared likely that at times there might be considerable freshwater.⁶ Port Desire (Puerto Deseado), is a fishing port in Patagonia in Santa Cruz Province of Argentina, on the estuary of the Deseado River.

Tierra del Fuego. The next morning they left Sea Bear Bay and proceeded to San Julian, off which they anchored for a few hours, while Captain Fitz-Roy entered the port to look for the *Adelaide*, or for some vestige of Lieutenant Graves's visit. Finding nothing in the port, nor any tracks upon the shore, they went on towards Cape Fairweather to the north of Tierra del Fuego, and on the way met the *Adelaide*. After parting from them during the gale in which all her sails were split, she had gone to Port Desire, where she arrived first, and, not seeing them, had proceeded to the two other places of rendezvous, and had been lying at anchor for eight days off Cape Fairweather. Finding that the *Beagle* was not there, she was returning to Port San Julian, when they met. *Adelaide* was then given supplies for six months.

On 1 April 1829, *Adventure* was off Cape Virgins and parted from the *Beagle* and *Adelaide*; Captain Fitz-Roy having previously received orders from King to proceed through the Strait of Magalhaens (Strait of Magellan), and despatch the *Adelaide* to survey the Magdalen and Barbara channels, while Fitz-Roy was to survey part of the south shore of the Strait and the Jerome Channel, and then proceed, in company with the *Adelaide*, to Chiloé on the west coast.

Valparaiso. The *Adventure* then continued along the coast of Tierra del Fuego and reached Valparaiso Bay on 22 June 1829. While remaining there

chronometers were cleaned, and some of them repaired. The *Adventure* was refitted and provisioned, with a full supply for the *Beagle* and *Adelaide* as well as herself. It was King's intention to remain in port (San Carlos in Chiloé) until the *Beagle* and *Adelaide* were equipped. The *Adventure* was made snug, and, by way of relaxation, such of the officers as could be spared from the duties of the ship resided in turns at the town, where also the ship's company were frequently given permission to amuse themselves.

The Hoxsley schooner arrived from Valparaiso and brought King letters from the Admiralty, acquiescing in his request to return to England direct, instead of proceeding by way of New South Wales and the Cape of Good Hope, as was originally intended. He therefore determined to return to Valparaiso as soon as the two consort vessels had taken their departure, proceed thence to Port Famine, to be joined by the *Adelaide*, and afterwards repair to Rio de Janeiro to await the *Beagle's* arrival, when all would sail for England. ⁶

Memorials. The camaraderie which existed between the mariners of the three vessels is nicely exemplified by a message in a bottle which they had left, enclosed in a strong outer case, at the summit of Mount Skyring on Magill Island (Tierra del Fuego ¹⁷) in May 1829:

This Memorial was left by the officers of H.M. Schooner *Adelaide*, while employed on a survey of the Magdalen, Cockburn, and Barbara Channels; and any person finding it is requested to leave the original document, and build the pile, under which it is placed, at least six feet higher.

Signed this 16th day of May 1829, by

W. G. Skyring, Lieut. and assist. surveyor of H.M.S. *Beagle*.

Thomas Graves, Lieut. of H.M. Schooner *Adelaide*.

James Kirke, Midshipman H.M.S. *Beagle*.

Alex. Millar, Master assist. H.M.S. *Adelaide*.

Benj. Bynoe, Assist. surgeon H.M.S. *Beagle*.

Jno. Park, Assist. surgeon H.M.S. *Adventure*.

God save the King ⁶

On another, earlier occasion, in January 1827, Mr. Bowen, the surgeon on the *Beagle*, ascended the Mountain de la Cruz, at the southernmost point of America, to deposit a pewter plate on which was cut the names of the ships and officers. At the summit they found a pile of stones made previously by Captain Fitz-Roy, which they left undisturbed. They made another in which a bottle was placed. In this they placed a little coin of Carlos III that they had found there and copies on vellum of the memorials they had formerly

taken from the artifacts of Bougainville and of Cordova, also several English coins and some medals. The bottle was corked, covered with resin and enveloped in sheet lead. The party returned to the ships in the evening, having been seven hours in ascending and descending. ⁶

Santiago. Towards the end of July 1829, Wickham accompanied King overland to Santiago, then the capital of Chile, ninety miles from the port, for the purpose of waiting upon General Pinto, the Director, and communicating to him the purpose of their voyage, so as to prevent exciting suspicion, or receiving any interruption on the part of the authorities of places they might visit, particularly Chiloé; for false rumours had already spread that the English were about to take that island. These rumours were perhaps fired by the fact that British officers had been instrumental, with Chilean forces, in recently procuring the independence of Chiloé from Spain. The island had been the last remaining Spanish possession in South America.

Chiloé. The *Adventure*, with Wickham, returned to Valparaiso on 26 July 1829 and made preparations to sail but was delayed for many days by a strong northerly gale, in which they were able to render assistance to a large Indian trader that would otherwise have been wrecked. On 10 August they sailed for Chiloé but on the way were greatly delayed by southerly winds, which carried them in sight of the island of Juan Fernandez. They reached Chiloé on 26 August and found the *Beagle*, to their great delight, arrived, and all well. Fitz-Roy came on board before they anchored and gave King an outline of his proceedings, and those of the *Adelaide*, which had yet to return.

Fuegians taken on board. The well-meaning paternalism of Fitz-Roy is revealed in his account of the acquisition of four Fuegians. His benevolence towards them is shown by his promise to return them to Patagonia after educating them in England, a promise that he kept on the second voyage of the *Beagle*, aided by Wickham, after 1831. On the morning of 3 March 1830, some Fuegians in a canoe approached the *Beagle*, seeming anxious to come on board. Fitz-Roy wished to deter them from paying another visit as much serious pilfering, even of boats, had occurred. He reflected, however, that by getting one of the aborigines on board, there would be a chance of his learning enough English to be an interpreter. By this means the *Beagle* might recover its lost boat. He therefore resolved to take the youngest man on board, as he, in all probability, had fewer ties to bind him to his people than others who were older and might have families. With these ideas he went after them, and hauling their canoe alongside his boat, told a young man to come into it. He did so, quite unconcernedly, and sat down,

apparently contented and at his ease. The others said nothing but paddled out of the harbour as fast as they could. They named the Fuegian York Minster because of the proximity to the cape of that name. They also took a young man, whom they named Boat-Memory, and a young woman, called Fuegia Basket. ¹⁶

Next afternoon the boat's keel was laid down and her moulds were set up. Fuegia Basket told York Minster all her story, at some parts of which he laughed heartily. Fuegia, cleaned and dressed, was much improved in appearance: she was already a pet on the lower deck, and appeared to be quite contented. York Minster was sullen at first, yet his appetite did not fail; and whatever he received more than he could eat, he stowed it away in a corner; but as soon as he was well cleaned and clothed, and allowed to go about where he liked in the vessel, he became much more cheerful.

The bodily strength of these Fuegians was very great (York Minster was as strong as any two of the *Beagle's* stoutest men), which, with their agility, both on shore and in the water, and their quickness in attack and defence with stones and sticks, made them difficult to deal with when out of their canoes. Fitz-Roy considered them a brave, hardy race, who would fight to the last struggle, as he had witnessed.

'Boat Memory', seemed frightened, but not low-spirited. He ate enormously, and soon fell fast asleep. The meeting between him and York Minster was very tame, for, at first, they would not appear to recognize or speak to each other. 'Boat' was the best-featured Fuegian they had seen, and being young and well made, was a very favourable specimen of the race: York was one of the stoutest men Fitz-Roy had observed among them; but little Fuegia was almost as broad as she was high: she seemed to be so merry and happy that he did not think she would willingly have quitted the ship. Three natives of Tierra del Fuego, better suited for the purpose of instruction, and for giving, as well as receiving information, could not, he thought, have been found.

Next morning, 10 March, having been well cleaned and dressed, 'Boat' appeared contented. Being together kept York and him in better spirits than they would probably otherwise have been, for they laughed, and tried to talk, by imitating whatever was said. Fuegia soon began to learn English, and to say several things very well. She laughed and talked with her countrymen incessantly.

Next day they landed, for dinner and rest, near the Murray Narrow and close to a wigwam. Its inmates ran away; but soon returned, on seeing them seated quietly by their fire. They bought fish from the Fuegians for beads, buttons, &c., and gave a knife for a very fine dog, which they were

extremely reluctant to part with; but the knife was too great a temptation to be resisted, though dogs seemed very scarce and proportionally valuable. It was soon lost to the bush. Later, when in sight of the Narrow, they were stopped by three canoes full of natives, anxious for barter. They gave them a few beads and buttons, for some fish and, without any previous intention, Fitz-Roy told one of the boys in a canoe to come into the boat, and gave the man who was with him a large shining mother-of-pearl button. The boy got into the boat directly, and sat down. Seeing that he and his friends seemed quite contented, Fitz-Roy pulled onwards and made sail in a light breeze. Thinking that this accidental occurrence might prove useful to the natives, as well as to themselves, he determined to take advantage of it. The freshening breeze and a strong tide, soon carried them through the Narrow, and half an hour after dark they stopped in a cove, where they had passed the second night of this excursion. 'Jemmy Button,' as the boat's crew called him, on account of his price, seemed to be pleased at his change and fancied he was going to kill guanaco, or wānākāye, as he called them as they were to be found near that place. On the 12th they continued their course with a fresh and favouring breeze from the N.E., passed Windhond Bay, and at sunset hauled the boat up, though a surf on the stony beach made it a difficult task. Several guanacoes were seen near the shore as they passed along. On the 13th they returned to the *Beagle*.¹⁸

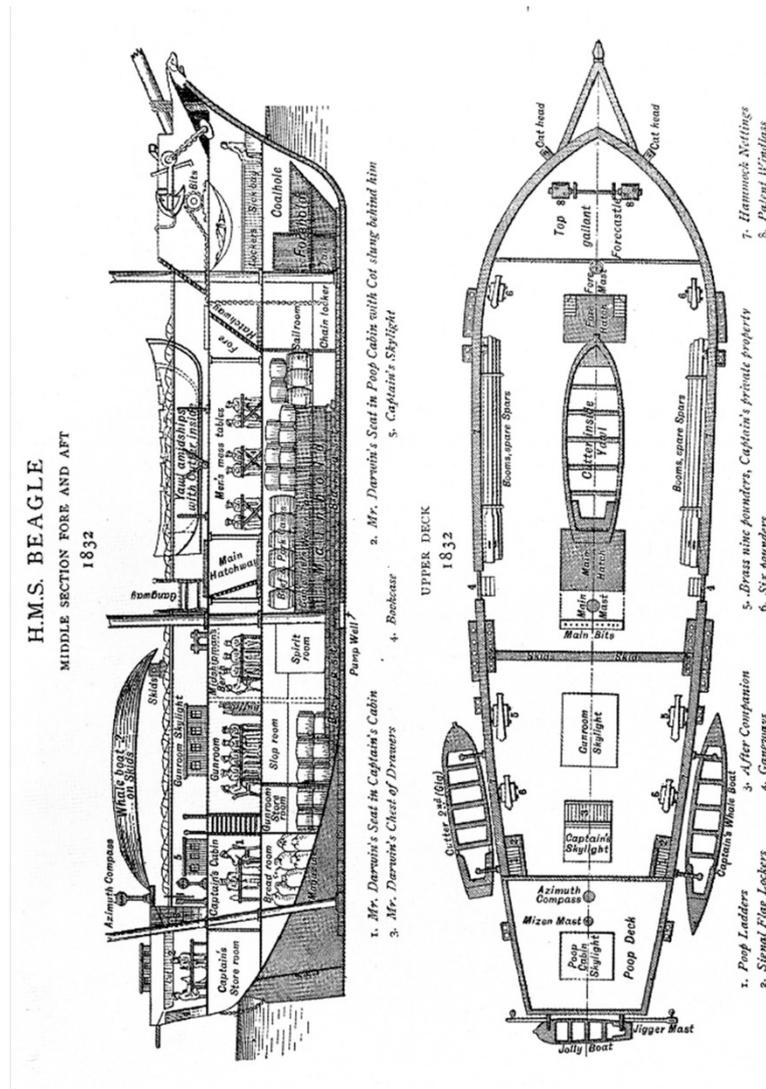
Fitz-Roy, on the *Beagle* in June 1830, was reluctant to leave any part of the coast of Tierra del Fuego unexplored while he had so effective a vessel and all the men were in good health but he was distant from the appointed rendezvous, Rio de Janeiro, to which he was ordered to be by 20 June 1830 and there were only three weeks provisions left on board. He therefore decided to hasten to Port Desire for the sake of the chronometer measurements and thence proceed to Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro. He had previously made up his mind to carry the Fuegians to England; trusting that the ultimate benefits arising from their acquaintance with English habits and language would make up for the temporary separation from their own country. But this decision had not been contemplated when he first took them on board; he then thought only of detaining them while the vessel was on their coasts yet afterwards, finding that they were happy and in good health, he began to think of the various advantages which might result to them and their countrymen, as well as their hosts, by taking them to England, educating them there as far as might be practicable, and then bringing them back to Tierra del Fuego. These ideas were confirmed by finding that the tribes of Fuegians, eastward of Christmas Sound, were hostile to York Minster's tribe, and that therefore Fitz-Roy could not, in

common humanity, land them in Nassau Bay or near the Strait of Le Maire. Nor could he put the boy ashore again, when once to the eastward of Nassau Bay, without risking his life. Fitz-Roy therefore had only the alternative of beating to the westward to land them in their own districts, which circumstances rendered impracticable, or of taking them to England. In adopting the latter course he incurred a deep responsibility, but was fully aware of what he was undertaking. ^{6, 15}

Return to England. After further surveying much of the coast, the *Adventure* and the *Beagle* sailed together from Rio de Janeiro on 6 August 1830. They left the *Adelaide* as a tender to the flagship but re-embarked her officers and crew. After a most tedious passage, they anchored in Plymouth Sound on 14 October. Both vessels were soon afterwards paid off, the *Beagle* at Plymouth, and the *Adventure* at Woolwich. It is a testimony to the navigational abilities of all concerned that a passage across the Atlantic was merely 'tedious'.

Achievements of the surveys. To summarize their response to the Admiralty's instructions, the *Beagle* and *Adventure* jointly surveyed part of Eastern Patagonia, the greater portion of the Strait of Magellan and a considerable extent of the western (Chilean) shores of Patagonia. During 1829 and 1830 the two vessels continued the survey, assisted by the tender *Adelaide*, commanded by Lieutenant Thomas Graves. In the latter part of 1830 the two chief vessels returned to England, having added charts of the south-western and southern shores of Tierra del Fuego, besides those of a multitude of interior sounds and passages. ⁹

3. The Second *Beagle* Voyage 1831-1836



Plans of the *Beagle* HMS *Beagle* as recalled by Phillip Gidley King. The poop cabin he shared with Darwin is top left. Darwin's seat at the table in the captain's cabin is second from the left on the level below.

Objectives. The object of the second *Beagle* expedition in 1831 to 1836 was to complete the survey of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, previously commenced under Captain King, in 1826 to 1830, to survey the shores of

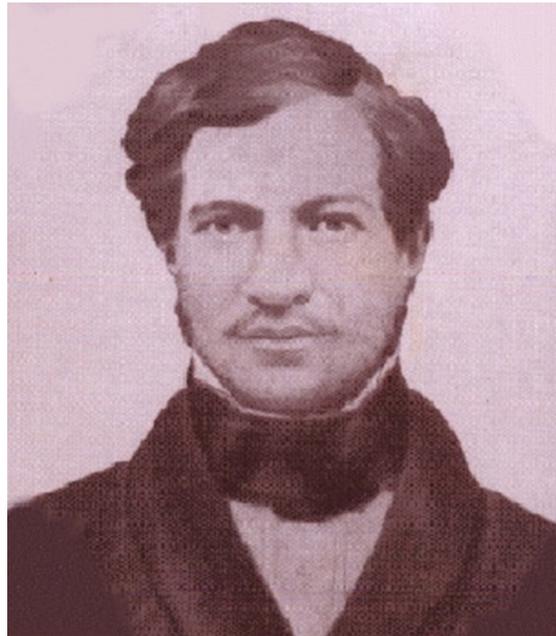
Chile, Peru and of some islands in the Pacific, and to carry out a chain of chronometrical measurements round the world. ^{19 20}

Complement of the Beagle. On leaving Devonport, the complement of the *Beagle* consisted of seventy-four persons ¹⁶, namely:

Robert Fitz-Roy, Commander and Surveyor; John Clements Wickham, Lieutenant; Bartholomew James Sullivan, Lieutenant; Edward Main Chaffers, Master; Robert Mac-Cormick [sic], Surgeon; George Rowlett, Purser; Alexander Derbishire, Mate; Peter Benson Stewart, Mate; John Lort Stokes, Mate and Assistant Surveyor; Benjamin Bynoe, Assistant Surgeon; Arthur Mellersh, Midshipman; Philip Gidley King, Midshipman, aged 8, son of King, Phillip Parker and the youngest midshipman in the service; Alexander Burns Osborne, Master's Assistant; Charles Musters, Volunteer 1st Class; Jonathan May, Carpenter; Edward H. Hellyer, Clerk; Acting boatswain: Sergeant of marines and seven privates: thirty-four seamen and six boys.

On the List of supernumeraries were:

Charles Darwin, Naturalist; Augustus Earle, Draughtsman; George James Stebbing, Instrument Maker; Richard Matthews and three Fuegians: Fitz-Roy's own steward: and Mr. Darwinn's servant [Syms Covington].



Syms Covington. Darwin's 'servant'

To anticipate, some changes occurred in the course of the five years voyage:

In April 1832, Mac-Cormick [sic] and Derbyshire returned to England. Bynoe was appointed to act as Surgeon. Mellersh was promoted to Mate; and Mr. Johnson joined the *Beagle* as Midshipman. In May Musters fell a victim to fever, caught in the harbour of Rio de Janeiro: Mr. Forsyth took his place. Augustus Earle invalided out in August 1832 but Conrad Martens joined at Montevideo, as draughtsman.¹⁸

In March 1833, the Clerk, Mr Hellyer, was drowned at the Falkland Islands, in attempting to get a bird he had shot. In September 1833, Mr. Kent joined as Assistant Surgeon. In June 1834, the purser, Rowlett died at sea, of a complaint under which he had laboured for years: and the vacancy caused by his lamented decease was filled by Mr Dring.¹⁶

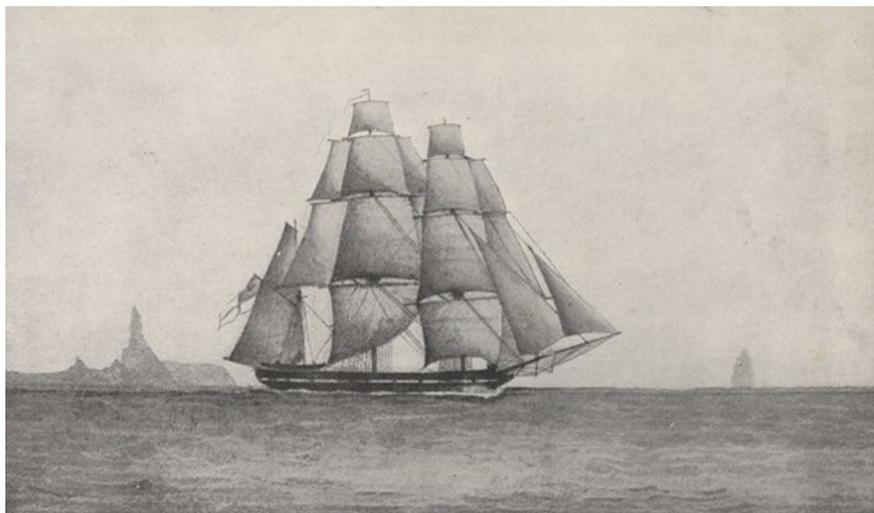
Conrad Martens left the ship at Valparaiso in 1834; and Phillip Gidley King remained with his father, at Sydney, in Australia, in February 1836. The complement on return to England is listed at the end of this account of the second voyage.



Route of the second voyage of the *Beagle*

An inauspicious beginning. The morning of 21 December 1831 in Devonport was very calm and the sun shone red through the mist. Everything gave them hope of a steady NE wind and a prosperous voyage but SW gales at first prevented their sailing. At 11 o'clock they were underway with a light breeze from NW but when tacking round Drakes Island the *Beagle's* ill luck commenced. It was spring tide at its lowest ebb and she steered straight onto a rock that lay off the corner. Although the vessel stuck fast for about half an hour, she was not injured and was refloated by every person on board running to different parts of the deck,

thus giving the vessel a swinging motion. At last they got clear and sailed out of harbour undamaged.²¹



HMS *Beagle* under sail, drawn by Wickham

Darwin shared the poop cabin with two of the survey officers, John Lort Stokes and Phillip Gidley King. He found the corner of the cabin which was his private property most woefully small, having just room to turn around. His height was a great inconvenience and Wickham asked him just how many more cubic inches he planned to cram in.²² However, Captain Fitz-Roy allowed him to eat with him and to share his cabin at times.

Charles Darwin on Board. When they were on the open sea Darwin soon became sick and at 4 o'clock went down to the Captain's cabin and slept till 8 o'clock. After that he retreated to his hammock in the poop cabin and enjoyed a most comfortable sleep till morning.²¹ For an excellent, comprehensive coverage of Darwin's notebooks, the reader is referred to Chancellor and Wyhe²⁰

As soon as it was light, Wickham put his head into the cabin and told them that they should be in Plymouth Sound in an hour. When they were only 4 miles from the Lizard, it blew a gale from SW. Upon this the Captain returned the ship to Devonport at the rate of eleven knots an hour.²¹

Next day, Darwin, who had not felt at all comfortable all day, took a long walk with Stokes and Bynoe, in torrents of rain. By some mischance in dropping the anchor it got twisted with the chain and the crew were hard at work for eight hours in getting all clear. In the evening double allowance was served out to the men.²¹ When one considers the hazards which they

later overcame in circumnavigating the world it is surprising that the beginning of the voyage was marked by such navigational mishaps.

After having been twice driven back by these mishaps and the heavy south-western gales, the *Beagle* sailed from Devonport on 27 December 1831.

Tenerife. On 6 January 1832 the *Beagle* reached Tenerife in the Canary Islands but they were prevented from landing, for fear of cholera. The next morning they saw the sun rise behind the rugged outline of the Grand Canary island, and suddenly illuminate the Peak of Tenerife, whilst the lower parts were veiled in fleecy clouds. This was the first of many delightful days never to be forgotten by Darwin.¹⁹



Tenerife in a postcard from Victorian times but unvisited by Wickham in 1832 because of the cholera quarantine

Cape Verde Islands. On 16 January 1832, the *Beagle* anchored at Porto Praya, in St. Jago [now Santiago], the chief island of the Cape de Verd [Cape Verde] archipelago. The neighbourhood of Porto Praya, viewed from the sea, wore a desolate aspect. The volcanic fires of a past age, and the scorching heat of a tropical sun, had in most places rendered the soil unfit for vegetation. The country rose in successive steps of tableland, interspersed with some truncate conical hills, and the horizon was bounded by an irregular chain of more lofty mountains. The scene, as beheld through the hazy atmosphere of this climate, was one of great interest to Darwin, who walked for the first time in a grove of coconut trees.¹⁹

The 18 January was spent geologizing on Quail Island. In the morning, a very pretty schooner, suspected of being a slaver, came into the harbor.²¹

The Baobab. On 20 January 1832 Darwin took a long walk with the ship's Surgeon-Naturalist McCormick into the interior. They followed one of the broad watercourses, which served as a road for the country people, and it led them to a celebrated Baobab tree which the surgeon had first visited on 18 January. ²³ It was supposed to be one of longest-lived trees that existed. Adanson (after whom the genus *Adansonia* of the tree was named) supposed that some reached the age of 6000 years. This one bore on its bark the signs of its notoriety. According to Darwin it was as completely covered with initials and dates as any in Kensington Gardens. ²¹



Robert McCormick. Lithograph after Skinner, 1884. Wellcome collection.

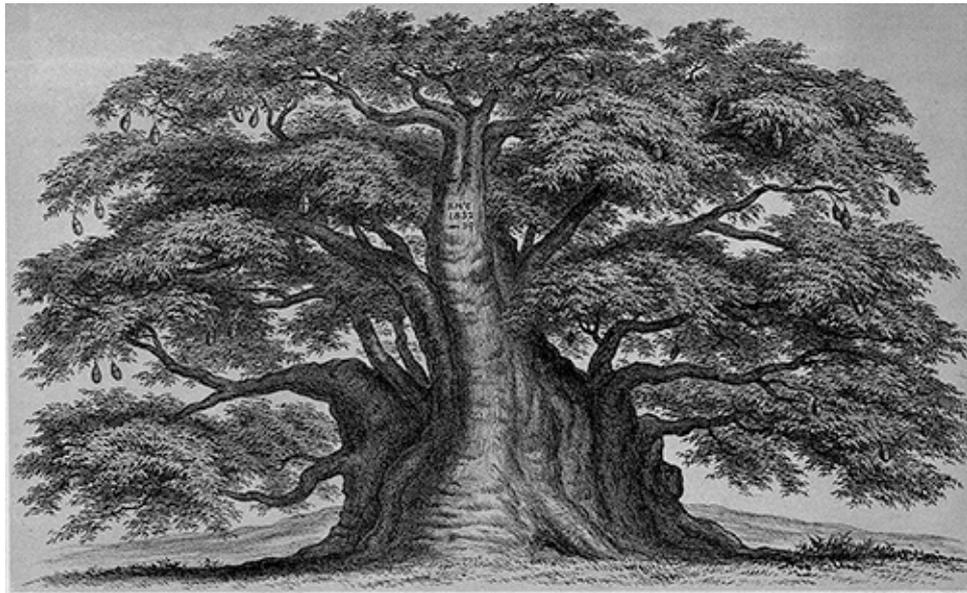


Robert McCormick. By Stephen Pearce

After their one o'clock dinner, on 24 January, the tree was visited again, this time by Wickham, the Captain and Darwin who took its measurements. Fitz-Roy took an angle by pocket sextant and afterwards climbed the tree and let down a string. Both ways gave the same result: 45 feet in height. The circumference two feet from the ground measured 35 feet. Its form was oval and the greatest visible diameter was 13 feet, so that in an accurate drawing its height would be 3.4 of its breadth. This contrasted with 2.4 in a drawing by Fitz-Roy, proving, Darwin noted, the inaccuracy of drawings.

They returned to the ship after a merry and pleasant walk just as it was dark. Darwin found the town a miserable place but made several excursions and geological and biological observations in the vicinity, many observations on the local people and '*never saw anything more intelligent than the Negro or Mulatto children*'.²¹

The baobab was also drawn by McCormick, who represented it in his memoirs of 1884 as a lithograph²³, showing his carved initials but omitting those of other persons. This was but one of the disagreements between Darwin and McCormick. Their mutual animosity was compounded by the fact that Darwin attributed to himself the collection of a certain kingfisher by McCormick. The surgeon returned to measure the tree later, in February 1832, and made his own sketch of the tree. He made another sketch on a return to the tree in 1839 which was featured in his 1884 memoirs. His memoirs recall that in 1839, on reaching the baobab-tree, he ascended it and looked for the initials which he had cut in 1832 and added 39 below them.²⁴ The same tree was photographed in 1873 on the voyage of HMS *Challenger*.



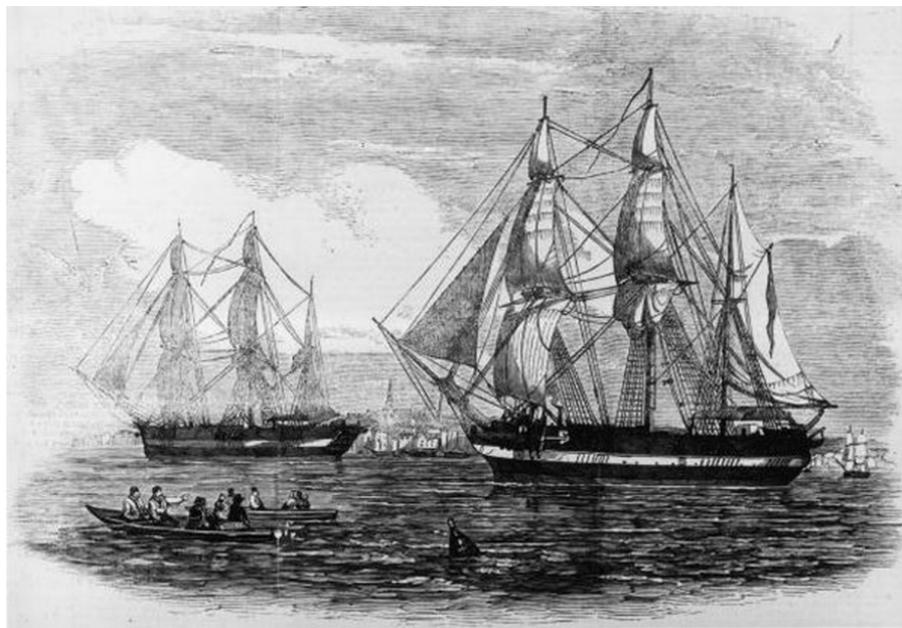
The great baobab of Porta Praya, St. Jago, Cape Verde Islands, as depicted by McCormick in 1884, showing only his initials. Wellcome Library

Departure of McCormick. By the time the *Beagle* reached Rio de Janeiro on 4 April 1832 an insoluble dissonance had developed between McCormick and the Captain, together with Wickham and Darwin. He clearly resented what he saw as an usurpation as Naturalist by Darwin. On 7 April, McCormick asked to be transferred to the *Rattlesnake*. Finding that this was not possible, on 15 April he applied to be invalided out. This was approved and he was given leave to return home on the *Tyne*, which sailed on 29 April. He arrived back in England on 18 June 1832. Darwin in a letter

to Caroline stated that MacCormack (sic) had been disagreeable to the Captain and Wickham and that *He is no loss*.²⁴ Fitz-Roy in a letter to Beaufort described McCormick as *a sad empty headed coxcomb*.²⁵ As early as 24 October 1830, Darwin had written to his mentor Henslow:

My friend the doctor is a donkey but we pretend to get along. At this time he is immersed in the great doubt of whether to paint his cabin in French gray or pale white. I have hardly heard anything about him that was not on this subject.

Despite his obvious deficiencies, McCormick was a courageous man whose exploits included attempts to reach the North and South Poles, and an open-boat expedition up the Wellington Channel in search of the doomed expedition of Sir John Franklin and HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, in Her Majesty's boat *Forlorn Hope*, under the command of McCormick.^{23 26}



Erebus and Terror . Later abandoned in the ice in northern Canada when searching for the North-West Passage

St. Paul's Rocks. Fitz-Roy weighed anchor on 8 February, after noon. Darwin could think of little but South American vegetation. He expected to find it even more luxuriant, though he knew that his first St Jago impressions would 'never be effaced'.²⁷ On 15 February they saw the rocks of St. Pauls right ahead, and next morning, when within three miles, two boats were lowered, one with Stokes for surveying the island, the other with Wickham

and Darwin for geologizing and shooting. The island was the top of a submerged mountain surmised by Darwin from the great depth of the Atlantic, the bottom of which could not be sounded, to be an enormous pyramid. They had some difficulty in landing as the long swell of the open sea broke with violence on the rocky coast. They had seen from a distance large flocks of sea birds soaring about, and when they were on the Island a most extraordinary scene was presented. They were surrounded on every side by birds, so unaccustomed to men that they would not move. They knocked down with stones and Darwin's hammer the active and swift tern. Shooting was out of the question, so they got two of the boats crew and the work of slaughter commenced. They soon collected a pile of birds, and hats full of eggs. The men in the boat caught a great number of fine large fish where the shark permitted.^{21 28} These were further examples of the nineteenth century disregard for conservation.

They all returned to the *Beagle* in great triumph with their prey, but were a good deal fatigued. The island is only 50 miles from the Equator, and the rocks being white from the birds' dung, reflected a glaring heat. The birds were of two sorts only, Boobies and Noddy terns, and these with a few insects were the only organized beings that inhabited this desolate spot.²¹

Fitz-Roy wrote:

When our party had effected a landing through the surf, and had a moment's leisure to look about them, they were astonished at the multitudes of birds which covered the rocks, and absolutely darkened the sky. Mr Darwin afterwards said, that till then he had never believed the stories of men knocking down birds with sticks; but there they might be kicked, before they would move out of the way. The first impulse of our invaders of this bird-covered rock, was to lay about them like schoolboys; even the geological hammer at last became a missile. "*Lend me the hammer?*" asked one. "*No, no,*" replied the owner, "*you'll break the handle;*" but hardly had he said so, when, overcome by the novelty of the scene, and the example of those around him, away went the hammer, with all the force of his own right-arm'.¹⁶

Crossing the Line. In the evening the ceremonies for crossing the line commenced: The officer on watch reported a boat ahead. The Captain turned 'hands up, shorten sail', and they heaved to in order to converse with Mr Neptune. The Captain held a conversation with him through a speaking trumpet, the result of which was that he would in the morning pay them a visit.²¹ Fitz-Roy, dressed as Father Neptune, summoned each of the novices to the fore-castle, where half-naked sailors daubed in paints and dancing like

demons waited to perform the Initiation. Thirty-two had never crossed, and Darwin was the first to be called.²⁷

Bahia, Brazil. On 28 February the *Beagle* anchored in All Saints Bay, on the northern side of which lay the town of Bahia, or San Salvador [Saint Savior from the Bay of All Saints], amid a forest of large ships. Darwin here first time set foot on the continent of South America and wrote poetically of the beauty of the scenery. Wickham's visit was to be a few days later.

The 4th of March was the first day of the carnival season and Darwin braved the festive streets of Bahia with Lieutenants Wickham and Sullivan, under a barrage of wax balls full of water and spray from large tins. They found it very difficult to maintain their dignity. After hours of walking the gauntlet, they at last reached the country. They stayed until dark but had difficulty in finding the road back as they had taken care to skirt the town. A heavy shower further soaked them to the skins and they were glad, at last, to reach the *Beagle*. It was the first time that Wickham had been on shore and he vowed that if he were there for six months it would be the only time.

²¹ His companion, Sullivan, would go on to survey the Falkland Islands in HMS *Arrow*, in 1838-1839; was Commander of HMS *Philomel* in 1842-1846; resided in the Falkland Islands in 1848-1851; commanded HMS *Lightning* in the Baltic in 1854-1855; was the naval officer in the marine department of the Board of Trade in 1856-1865; became an Admiral in 1877; and was knighted in 1869.



Bartholomew James Sullivan. darwinproject.ac.uk

Fitz-Roy's temper. Although he was a generous spirited man, Fitz-Roy's temper was a most unfortunate one and was shown not only by passion, but by fits of long-continued moroseness against those who had offended him. His temper was usually worst in the early morning, and with his eagle eye he could generally detect something amiss about the ship, and was then unsparing in his blame.⁶ Sailing from Bahia to St. Jago, Fitz-Roy might not be seen for a whole morning, in which case Wickham would tactfully ask Darwin 'whether much hot coffee had been dished out today', meaning how was the Captain's temper. Second Lieutenant Sullivan innocently asked how much sugar went into it.²²

Slavery. Of the merchants' warehouses in Bahia, Darwin wrote tartly, '*all the labor is done by black men.*' They came so cheap that capital investment was nil; only one wheel carriage was to be seen. The blacks carried everything. Still, '*when staggering under their heavy burthens*', they '*beat time & cheer themselves by a rude song*'.²⁷ Darwin would quarrel with Fitz-Roy over slavery.

Fitz-Roy defended and praised slavery which Darwin abominated, and told him that he had just visited a great slave-owner, who had called up many of his slaves and asked them whether they were happy, and whether they wished to be free, and all answered '*No*'. Darwin then asked him, perhaps with a sneer, whether he thought the answer of slaves in the presence of their master was worth anything? This made Fitz-Roy excessively angry, and he said that as Darwin doubted his word they could not live any longer together. Darwin thought that he would have been compelled to leave the ship but as soon as the news spread, which it did quickly. The Captain sent for the first lieutenant to assuage his anger by abusing Darwin who was deeply gratified by receiving an invitation from all the gun-room officers to mess with them. But after a few hours Fitz-Roy showed his usual magnanimity by sending an officer to him with an apology and a request that he would continue to live with him.²⁹ Wickham, as First Lieutenant, was not infrequently the recipient of abuse concerning Darwin by Fitz-Roy.

Rio de Janeiro. The *Beagle* reached Rio de Janeiro on 4 April 1832. Darwin admired the magnificent scenery and commented on their astonishing seamanship as they drew in alongside the admiral's vessel. Darwin, though knowing little of nautical matters, volunteered his services to Wickham. Phillip Gidley King wrote that during their display of smartness and shortening and re-erecting sail before the numerous men-of-war at anchorage under the flags of other nations, Darwin was told to hold a main royal sheet in each hand and a top mast studding tack in his teeth. At the order '*Shorten sail*' he was to let go and clap onto any rope he saw was short-handed. This he did and enjoyed the fun of it, afterwards remarking that '*the feat could not have been performed without me*'. In the midst of their tactics a bundle of letters arrived. '*Send them below*' thundered Wickham, '*Every fool is looking at them and neglecting his duty*'.

A few days after their arrival at Rio, Darwin became acquainted with an Englishman who was going to visit his estate, situated rather more than a hundred miles from the capital, to the north of Cape Frio. He gladly accepted the kind offer of hospitality and spent from 8 April to 5 July there. During the remainder of his stay at Rio, Darwin resided, for a time with Augustus Earle, in a cottage at Bota Fogo Bay (named after a Portuguese man-of-

war) where he indulged his passion for natural history to the full. His introduction to the bay was tumultuous as he recorded in a letter on 25 April 1832 to this sister Caroline:

Earl [sic] & myself are now living in this most retired & beautiful spot.— I trust to spend a most delightful fortnight.— I have begun however with a bad omen.— whilst landing the boat was swamped; a heavy sea knocked me head over heels & filled the boat.— I never shall forget my agony, seeing all my useful books, papers,—instruments microscopes &c &c gun rifle all floating in the Salt Water: every thing is a little injured, but not much: I must harden myself to many such calamities.

His observations were almost exclusively confined to invertebrate animals, notably flatworms (*Planaria*) on which he experimented on their remarkable powers of regeneration. Although so well-known an experiment, it was interesting to watch the gradual production of every essential organ, out of the simple extremity of another animal. ¹⁹ It has been calculated that throughout the second voyage of the *Beagle* Darwin spent 594 days or 34.1 % of the voyage on land, not counting days when he went on land but returned to the ship for the night. Francis Darwin gave the figures as 3 years and one month on land.



Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro. Conrad Martens

The weather on 21 July 1832 felt just like an Autumnal day in England. In the evening the wind freshened and a thick fog came on as was frequent in the neighbourhood of the Plata, and they were only about 50 miles from the mouth of the great river. The night was dirty and squally and they were surrounded by penguins and seals which made such odd noises that in the middle watch the Master, Chaffers, went below to report to Wickham that he heard cattle lowing on shore.³⁰

On 24 July 1832 Darwin noted that there were 76 souls on the *Beagle*, including the following: Midshipmen, Stewart, Usborne, Johnson, Stokes (Lort), Mellersh, King, Forsyth; Hellyer, Captains clerk; Binoe, acting surgeon; Rowlett, purser; Chaffers, Master; Sullivan, 2nd Lieutenant; Wickham, 1st Lieutenant; R. Fitz-Roy, Commander; also Augustus Earle, the Fuegians and Darwin.

Montevideo again. 26 July to 19 August 1832 was spent intermittently at Montevideo.

Buenos Aires. On 1 August 1832 the *Beagle* had anchored about 12 miles from Buenos Aires. It was just possible to see both the northern and southern shores of the river at the same time. To Darwin, river of such great size and dimensions possessed no interest or grandeur.

Next day, on entering the outer roadstead, they passed a Buenos Aires guard-ship. When abreast of her it fired an empty gun. Not understanding this they sailed on, and in a few minutes another discharge was accompanied by the whistling of a shot over their rigging. Before the ship could get another gun ready they had passed her range. When they arrived at anchorage, more than three miles from the landing place, two boats were lowered, and a large party started in order to stay some days in the city. Wickham went with them, and intended immediately going to Mr Fox, the English minister, to inform him of the insult offered to the British flag. When close to the shore, they were met by a quarantine boat which said they must all return on board in order to have their bill of health inspected, from fear of the cholera. Nothing that they could say had any effect. They were told that they ought to have waited for a boat from the guard-ship and that they must pull the whole distance back to the vessel, with the wind dead against them and a strong tide running in. During their absence, a boat had come with an officer whom Captain Fitz-Roy soon despatched with a message to his Commander to say

He was sorry he was not aware he was entering an uncivilized port, or he would have had his broadside ready for answering his shot.

When the *Beagle's* boats and the health one came alongside the Captain immediately gave orders to get under weigh and return to Montevideo, at the

same time sending to the Governor, through the Spanish officer, the same messages which he had sent to the guard-ship, adding that the case should be thoroughly investigated in other quarters. They then loaded and pointed all the guns on one broadside, and ran down close along the guard-ship, hailed her, and said that when they again entered the port, if she dared to fire a shot they would send their whole broadside into her rotten hulk. From Montevideo the Captain intended writing to Mr. Fox and to the Admiral; so that they might take effective steps to prevent the flag being again insulted in so unprovoked a manner.



Conrad Martens 1832. Approach to Montevideo. Metropolitan Museum of Art

They arrived at Montevideo after sunset on 3 August, and the Captain immediately went on board the *Druid*. He returned with the news that the *Druid* would next morning sail for Buenos Aires and demand an apology for the conduct they had received. Darwin then showed a streak of patriotic truculence by writing:

Oh I hope the Guard-ship will fire a gun at the Frigate; if she does, it will be her last day above water.

On the following day they altered their anchorage and found an excellent berth amongst the merchant ships. After dinner Darwin went with Wickham to Rat Island and collected some animals.

Sunday 5 August was an eventful day in the history of the *Beagle*. At 10 o'clock in the morning the Minister for the present military government

came on board and begged for assistance against a serious insurrection of some black troops who had occupied the citadel. Captain Fitz-Roy immediately went ashore to ascertain whether it was a party affair, or that the inhabitants were really in danger of having their houses ransacked. The head of the police gave his opinion that it would be doing a service to the state to land a force from the *Beagle*. The Captain signalled to hoist out and man the boats. In a very few minutes, the yawl, cutter, whaleboat and gig were ready with 52 men heavily armed with muskets, cutlasses and pistols. During this time the insurgents had planted artillery to command some of the streets, but otherwise remained quiet. They had previously broken open the prison and armed the prisoners. The chief cause of apprehension was owing to their being in possession of the citadel which contained all the ammunition. Fitz-Roy would have nothing to do with the politics of the situation. He would only remain to see that private property was not attacked. Whilst the different parties were trying to negotiate matters Fitz-Roy's men remained at their station and amused themselves by cooking beef steaks in the courtyard. At sunset the boats were sent on board and one returned with warm clothing for the men to bivouac during the night. As he had a bad headache, Darwin also returned to the ship and remained on board. The few left on the ship, under the command of Mr Chaffers, presumably Wickham was on shore, had prepared the boarding netting, loaded and pointed the guns and cleared for action. They were now, at night, in a high state of preparation so as to make the best defence possible, if the *Beagle* should be attacked but next day all boats returned. The black troops had been surrounded in the citadel by double the number of armed citizens and Fitz-Roy deemed it advisable to withdraw his force. Being in possession of the central fort, he would have found it very difficult to have preserved his character of neutrality. Darwin took a great deal of qualified pleasure in the excitement of this sort of work but considered 'empty parade' to be a waste of time.³⁰

By 13 August the unsettled 'politicks' and weather permitted them to walk in the country: Wickham, Sullivan, Hammond and Darwin went out shooting and if their sport was not very good the exercise was most delightful. Hammond and Darwin walked in a direct line for several miles to some plains covered with thistles, where they hoped to find a flock of 'Ostriches'. They saw one in the distance running like a racehorse, the rapidity of its movements was astonishing. As the breeze was rather too stiff for boats, it had been determined to walk from the Mount around the bay to the town. When far distant from it, Wickham and Sullivan found themselves so tired that they declared they could move no further. By good luck a horseman

came up and they hired him to carry them by turns till another horse was found; and thus they arrived just before the gates of Montevideo were closed for the night.³⁰

The ship lay there until 20 August whence it sailed for the shallow bay of Bahía Blanca, or the White Bay, known to the captain and crew as Blanco Bay, on the Patagonian Coast, where they arrived on 5 September. The land was low and sandy, except the Blue Mountains about twenty or thirty miles inland, and headquarters of the Patagonians. The town of Bahía Blanca was about twenty miles away and inhabited by the Spaniards. There were no trees and no surface water and they were obliged to dig wells in the sand for the supply of the ship with hard, brackish water.³¹

Augustus Earle suffered so much from continual ill health that he could not remain on board the *Beagle* after August 1832; but he lived at Montevideo several months prior to his return to England. The disappointment caused by losing his services was diminished by Fitz-Roy's meeting Conrad Martens at Montevideo and engaging him to embark as draughtsman.¹⁶



Conrad Martens by Maurice Felton. State Library of New South Wales

Blanco Bay. On 12 September Wickham and Darwin went out shooting with their rifles. To his great delight Darwin succeeded in shooting a fine buck and doe and the Captain's servant shot three more. They were obliged to send a boat's crew to carry them to the shore. One of Darwin's, however, was previously disposed of. He had left it on the ground, a substantial beast, but in the evening the vultures and hawks had picked even the bones clean. Next day, the ship's anchorage was removed a few miles up the harbour in order to be nearer a newly discovered watering place. There they pleasantly remained for some weeks.³⁰

On the following day Darwin wrote that he was spending September in Patagonia, much in the same manner as he would in England, viz in shooting; in this case however there was the extra satisfaction of knowing that he obtained fresh provisions for the ships company. He shot a deer and an Agouti or Cavy. The latter weighed more than 20 pounds and afforded the very best meat he ever tasted. Whilst shooting he walked several miles within the interior; the general features of the country remained the same, an undulating sandy plain covered with coarse herbage.²¹

On 19 September, 1832, Fitz-Roy wrote a directive to John Lort Stokes on La Paz:

H.M.S. Beagle, Blanco Bay,

It is my direction that you take command and charge of the hired vessel 'La Paz,' and of all on board of her.

You will be extremely careful to keep company with Lieutenant Wickham [on La Liebre], unless otherwise directed; and you will obey his orders, and assist him in carrying my orders into execution.

ROBERT FITZ-ROY, Commander,

To Mr. J. L. STOKES,

Assistant-Surveyor, H.M.S. Beagle.¹⁶

Punta Alta and Darwin's fossils. On 22 and 23 September 1832 Darwin looked for fossils at Punta Alta (Buenos Aires Province of Argentina, about 13 miles southeast of Bahía Blanca) about ten miles from the ship. To his great joy, he found the head of some large animal, embedded in a soft rock. It took him nearly three hours to get it out. As far as he was able to judge, it was allied to the rhinoceros. He did not get it on board till some hours after dark.²¹

Fitz-Roy added with good humour that notwithstanding their smiles at the cargoes of apparent rubbish which Darwin frequently brought on board, he and his servant used their pick axes in earnest and brought away what had

since proved to be most interesting and valuable remains of extinct animals.
18

By 24 September Darwin was employed in carefully packing up his fossil prizes. In the morning one of the schooners arrived, and the other was shortly expected. They had had a very bad passage of six days. Mr Rowlett brought back an excellent account of Rio Negro. Nothing could have exceeded the civility of the governor and the inhabitants, in striking contrast to their reception at the fort of Bahia Blanca.²¹

Darwin and Wickham. Throughout the *Beagle's* voyage, from 1831 to 1836, Darwin and Wickham remained firm friends even though the First Lieutenant was given to railing against Darwin's collections that cluttered the decks and cabins. As Francis Darwin noted: his father spoke of the officers as a fine determined set of men, and especially of Wickham, as '*a glorious fellow*'. The latter, being responsible for the smartness and appearance of the ship, strongly objected to Darwin littering the decks, and spoke of specimens as '*d—d beastly devilment*' and used to add, '*If I were skipper, I would soon have you and all your d—d mess out of the place*'.

Charles Darwin by Earle. In 1832, the official artist, August Earle, painted a humorous watercolour entitled *‘Quarter Deck of a Man of War on Diskivery of interesting Scenes on an Interesting Voyage’*. This was not rediscovered until 2015 and was sold by Sotheby’s London; the present owner has generously permitted its reproduction here. It depicts Darwin, six foot two inches tall and with beetling brow, in top hat and tails, engaged in a long-winded explanation about the characteristics of an insect to another officer, believed by some to have been the surgeon, Benjamin Bynoe, but here considered to be Lieutenant Emery. A speech bubble records Darwin pontificating about the insect: *“Observe its legs are long, and the palpi are strongly toothed on the inner side, I think the whole insect appears of a dark chestnut brown colour with a yellowish cast on the abdomen. Its history is but little known but there can be no doubt of its being of a predacious nature. What do you think Mr –?”*. The recipient of this lecture says *“I will consult my book when I go down”*, a remark in keeping with either Emery or Bynoe as collectors. He is dressed in full naval uniform, albeit casually worn. The evidence that it is Emery is that a sailor bearing an uprooted palm tree pleads *“Mr. E- Sir, [presumably Lieutenant Emery] aid me to bring you this specimen”* and directs his gaze at the uniformed officer. Here the importance of the watercolour as a record of the hierarchy in rank and dress on the ship becomes apparent. One officer, bearded and wearing a peaked cap, states *“There is no such thing as walking the deck for these cursed specimens. I wish I was down along to Dover”* and is clearly Wickham. The deck is, indeed, cluttered with specimens, including a tusk labelled 2003 BC, a skull, brightly coloured fish and botanical specimens as bustling crew members bring even more to be examined. At the bottom of the social scale is a seaman in a short jacket, patched trousers and with bare feet, who holds spiral mollusc shells in his hat and muses *“The least I can get for these ‘ere is a tot”*. Another sailor exclaims *“Stand out of MY way!!! I’ve got specimens for the Captain!!!”* and heaves a massive block of stone, carefully labelled with geological strata, chalk, granite, Felspar, mica (?) and Limestone, and a bag of garnets, for Robert Fitz-Roy who with his back to us, but one epaulette visible, is debating the nature of a mineral, given fictitious names by the artist and deciphered with difficulty: *“This is certainly something new. It can’t be actenalite! - It may be shorclite! I think it is tremalite”*. A tall sailor in a uniform of lower status holds a musket and a dangling dead bird, which a dog is sampling, and complains *“I’ve killed a fine specimen of a flying monkey. Shot three speciments of Geese, and was very near yaffled by a d-d big bear!”* Another sailor slopes off with a theodolite and a bottle of rum. and another scoffs: *“The expedition to Egypt*

was a fool to this". Among all this chaos one sailor is calculating latitude and longitude with a sextant and another calls out "*I've shipped the long telescope already now Sir!!*" Thus ranks from the Captain to the lowliest seaman are depicted.

Wickham's complaints about Darwin's specimens, though motivated by his desire to keep a tidy ship, were good-natured and in a further testimony to Wickham, and his shipmates, Darwin wrote in a letter to his father,

I like the officers much more than I did at first, especially Wickham, and young King and Stokes, and indeed all of them. The Captain continues steadily very kind and does everything in his power to assist me. We see very little of each other when in harbour, our pursuits lead us in such different tracks. I never in my life met with a man who could endure nearly so great a share of fatigue. He works incessantly, and when apparently not employed, he is thinking. If he does not kill himself, he will during this voyage do a wonderful quantity of work.²⁸ Alas, the foreboding for Fitz-Roy was to be fulfilled by his suicide many years later.

La Paz and La Liebre. On 25 September, the *Adventure* had been taken to a small creek at Port Belgrano, where Wickham, and the sail maker, armourer, cooper, and a small party were immediately established under tents. Darwin accompanied the little settlement and whilst they were rigging the tents he walked to Punta Alta and again obtained several fossils. They commenced a refit of the *Adventure*. The little schooners, *La Paz* and *La Liebre*, which Fitz-Roy had purchased in very poor condition at his own expense (£1,680), were hauled ashore for examination and a thorough refit. Then, having left them the stores and other necessaries which they would require, Fitz-Roy went with the *Beagle* towards Blanco Bay.^{16, 21} The two schooners had been purchased from a Mr Harris. He was to be in the larger, as pilot to Wickham, and his friend Mr Roberts, also settled at Del Carmen on the River Negro, was to be John Lort Stokes pilot in the smaller vessel. *La Paz* of about fifteen tons was as ugly and ill-built a craft as Fitz-Roy ever saw, covered with dirt and soaked with rancid oil. The *Liebre*, of about nine tons, was a frigate's barge, raised and decked, oily like the other, but both had given good service¹⁶ and would soon be refitted.

On Sunday 7 October they returned to the creek where the tents were pitched and slept there during the night. Wickham had established quite a comfortable little town. While some assisted the refit of his little schooners, others explored the upper parts of the port, quite to its end, and Darwin took advantage of the opportunity to make some excursions. Fitz-Roy caused great consternation when he informed a Major Rodriguez that there was a deep channel leading from Blanco Bay to the Guardia near Argentina, and

that a line-of-battle ship could approach within gunshot of the place. The larger vessel, *La Paz*, was soon nearly ready for the sea and the other needed only a few days for completion. On the 8th after breakfast Darwin walked to Punta Alta, the same place where he had before found fossils and made more major finds. ^{16 21}

Sunday 14 October saw the schooners come down from the creek and anchor alongside the *Beagle*. Their appearance was much improved by their refit but they looked very small. *La Paz* now at seventeen tons; *La Liebre* at eleven and a half. Between the two they had fifteen souls. Stokes and Mellersh were in *La Paz*; Wickham and King in *La Liebre*. They were to sail on the Wednesday. Darwin contemplated the separation from their company with much regret. He was afraid that the men would undergo many privations; the cabin in *La Liebre* was supposedly only two and a half feet high! Their immediate business was to survey south of Bahia Blanca and at the end of next month the *Beagle* would meet them at Rio Negro, in the bay of St Blas. ²¹

Fitz-Roy contentedly observed that no person who had seen the *Paz and Liebre* in their former wretched condition would easily have recognized them after being refitted, and having indeed almost a new equipment. Spars altered, improved rigging, well-cut sails, fresh paint and thorough cleanliness, had transformed the dirty scaling craft into smart little cock-boats as they sailed out of Port Belgrano with the *Beagle*.

At dusk, Wickham and his small party of venturesome associates separated from the *Beagle* and steered *La Liebre* into False Bay. The *Beagle* anchored for the night and the next day pursued her route towards Montevideo, where she arrived on 26 October.

Buenos Aires. Desirous of communicating with the government at Buenos Aires, and measuring the difference of meridians between that city and Montevideo, the *Beagle* weighed anchor on 31 October, proceeded up the Plata and remained in the outer roadstead, off Buenos Aires, until 10 November 1832. ¹⁶

Leaving Montevideo. On 27 November 1832, arrangements and observations being satisfactorily completed, a sufficient quantity of provisions on board to last eight months, at full allowance, and an extra supply of iron and coals for the forge, in case of any serious accident, the *Beagle* sailed from Montevideo. After filling water near Cape Jesu Maria, she hastened to look after her little assistants, which had been left near Bahia Blanca. ¹⁶

This trip benefited from the assistance of Mr Robert N. Hamond, an early and much esteemed friend of Fitz-Roy, who was lent to the *Beagle* from HMS *Druid*, of which he was then a mate. ¹⁶

Soon after daylight on 3 December 1832 the *Beagle* saw the very low islands just to the northward of San Blas. It stood directly towards the shore, but when eight miles from it found a wide breadth of discoloured water, and the depth shoaled suddenly from ten to three fathoms in a few casts of the lead. Hauling off, they steered southward with the ebb tide.

Wickham sunburnt. While tracing the outer edge of this bank they saw the cock-boats (*La Paz* and *La Liebre*) coming out to meet them, and soon afterwards Wickham came on board. He gave them gratifying news with little reservation but had he been half-roasted his own appearance could hardly have been more changed. Notwithstanding the protection of a huge beard, every part of his face was so scorched and blistered by the sun that he could hardly speak, much less join in the irresistible laugh at his own expense. His companions were similarly sunburnt, though not to such a degree. They had been much occupied in sounding extensive banks and harbours, under a hot sun, and while a fresh wind kept them constantly wet with spray. But this inconvenience was trifling; one of more importance was excessive seasickness because of the short and violent movements of such small craft under sail among the tide-races and eddies so numerous on that coast. ¹⁶

In other respects all had prospered so well that Fitz-Roy determined to give Wickham fresh orders, enlarging considerably his share of surveying operations. He was desired to continue exploring the coast, even as far as Port Desire, until the *Beagle's* return from her visit to Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands.

San Blas. As the weather promised well, an anchor was dropped where they were, outside the banks, but the schooners sought shelter in the harbour of San Blas. Next day they came out and anchored close to the *Beagle* in order to receive stores and various supplies that it had brought for them from Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Fitz-Roy was a little uneasy when he saw that the pilot of the *Liebre*, Mr Roberts, was one of the largest of men and that his little vessel looked, by comparison, no bigger than a coffin; but Wickham allayed his doubts by assuring him that his moveable weight answered admirably in trimming the craft; and that, when she got aground, Mr Roberts stepped overboard, and heaved her afloat. '*Certainly,*' said Mr Wickham, '*he did harm on one day, by going up to look-out, and breaking the mast.*'

In the afternoon of this day (4 December) the *Beagle* weighed anchor and parted company from the *Paz* and *Liebre*. They returned to San Blas, and the *Beagle* steered southward. Secure and capacious as was the port, it was one of the most difficult and dangerous to enter on this coast. The best, indeed only approach to it, is called by those sealers and sea-elephant fishers who have hitherto frequented it, 'Hell-gate'.

At about four the weather was very hot, the sky cloudless, and varying winds drove quantities of gossamer and numbers of insects from the land. The horizon was strangely distorted by refraction and the captain anticipated some violent change. Suddenly myriads of white butterflies surrounded the ship in such multitudes that the men exclaimed, '*it is snowing butterflies*'. They were driven before a gust from the north-west, which soon increased to a double-reefed topsail breeze and were as numerous as flakes of snow in the thickest shower. The space they occupied could not have been less than two hundred yards in height, a mile in width and several miles in length.¹⁶ Thus we see that Wickham was temporarily absent from the *Beagle* in *La Liebre* but he would soon take command of a new *Adventure*.

Fitz-Roy and Wickham sent a directive to Stokes:

ROBERT FITZ-ROY, Commander.

To Mr. J. L. STOKES,

Assistant-Surveyor, H.M.S. Beagle.

H.M.S. Beagle, off San Blas Bay, Coast of Patagonia,

4th December, 1832.

As you have already executed a considerable part of the service pointed out to you in my order, dated September 1832, and are ready for a more arduous task than I had supposed your limited means could undertake, you are hereby required and directed to examine and survey as much of the sea-coast between Port Desire and Blanco Bay as time and your means will allow.

In the first instance, you will hasten to Blanco Bay, and deliver the accompanying despatches to the Commandant of the Buenos Ayrean [sic] settlement.

Afterwards, your route will be that which appears to you the most proper for the verification of the charts with which you are furnished, and for the execution of the above-mentioned service.

You will endeavour to pass the month of March in the River Negro, and, if we do not meet sooner, you will look for the *Beagle* in Blanco Bay at the beginning of July.

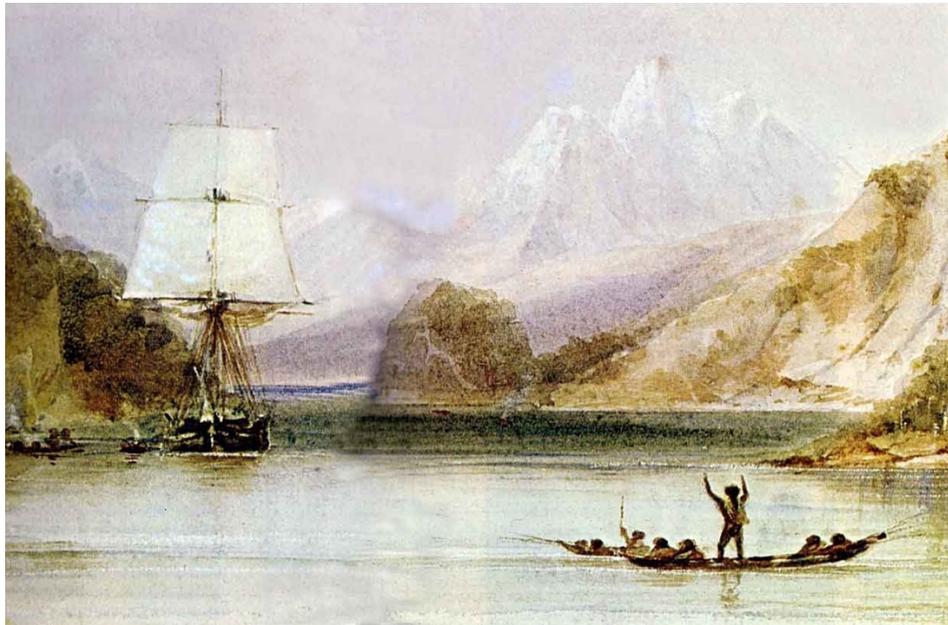
Should she not arrive there in July [1833], you will go with both vessels to Monte Video.

I have, &c.,

Lieut. J. C. WICKHAM,

ROBERT FITZ-ROY.

Tierra del Fuego. Their next object was to visit Tierra del Fuego, examine some portions of the country, and restore the Fuegians to their native places. By 15 December they saw its shores, near Cape Sansabastian. Next day they closed the shore about Cape Sunday and anchored off Santa Inez. Rough conditions forced them to weigh and run for the strait of La Maire where they sailed into Good Success Bay and introduced the Fuegians to their compatriots. It was not until well into January that York Minster, Jemmy and Fuegia were successfully returned to their native soil. Here they discovered that Jemmy, after education in England, had quite forgotten his native language. ¹⁶



Beagle hailed by Fuegians, Tierra del Fuego. Conrad Martens



A Fuegian. Watercolour by Conrad Martens

Falkland Islands. On 1 March 1833, the *Beagle* reached Cape Pembroke at the eastern extremity of the Falklands. Fitz-Roy was surprised at the appearance of the Falklands, not low and barren like Patagonia or high and woody like Tierra de Fuego but consisting of ridges of rock hills about a thousand feet high traversing extensive tracts of somber-looking moorland. Darwin and the others were astonished to learn that England had taken possession of the islands. The present inhabitants were somewhat inaccurately stated by Darwin to consist of one Englishman who had resided there for some years, twenty Spaniards and three women. There were many domestic animals. The history of the various claims to the islands, by England, Spain and France was the subject of a scholarly discussion by Fitz-Roy in his 'Narratives'. His account of the nature of the islands is of great interest but beyond our scope. It is curious that Fitz-Roy's writing style is often criticized as being uninteresting but to the present writer is unfailingly attractive.

Purchase of a new *Adventure*. On 30 March Darwin recorded in a letter home that a great event had happened in the history of the *Beagle*. It was the purchase by Fitz-Roy for £1,300 of a large schooner (the *Unicorn*) of 170 tons, only 70 less than the *Beagle*. The captain renamed it *Adventure*, here termed *Adventure II*, and intended writing to the Admiralty for men, etc. Wickham would have the command. It would double their work, perhaps shorten their cruise, and carry water and provisions. It was the present intention to take the *Adventure* to the Rio Negro, and there to refit, whilst the *Beagle* went to Montevideo: if so Darwin would stay at the former place for its better natural history. The *Adventure II* had had a complicated history: She was built at Rochester as a yacht for a Mr Perkins, the brewer, and cost at least £6,000 in building and first outfit. Soon afterwards, she was armed and used by Lord Cochrane in the Mediterranean; then she was fitted out by a merchant to break the blockade of Buenos Aires; but, taken by a Brazilian man-of-war, and carried into Montevideo, she was condemned as a prize and sold to Mr Hood, the British Consul, who went to England and back again in her with his family; after which she was fitted out for a sealing expedition. At the time of the purchase by Fitz-Roy she needed a thorough refit and her internal arrangements required alteration; but he achieved these, at small cost, because of supplies from the wrecks of the ships of Frenchman M. le Dilly and Mr. Bray.

Darwin considered that Wickham, transferring to the *Adventure*, would be a heavy loss to the *Beagle*: '*there is not another in the ship worth half of him*'. He could very plainly see there would not be much pleasure or contentment till they got out of these '*detestable latitudes, and are carrying on all sail to the land where bananas grow*'.³²

Refitting the *Adventure*. On 4 April the schooner *Adventure* sailed from Berkeley Sound in the Falklands for Rio Negro, in order, if possible, to catch Wickham before he and Stokes set out in *La Paz* and *La Liebre* on a surveying cruise. Chaffers was in command of the *Adventure* but Wickham would have it eventually. The chief cause of the *Beagle*'s delay was Fitz-Roy's having purchased what remained of the Frenchman's wreck for refitting the schooner. During this time Darwin had been very busy with the zoology of the sea; the treasures of the deep to a naturalist were indeed inexhaustible.³⁰

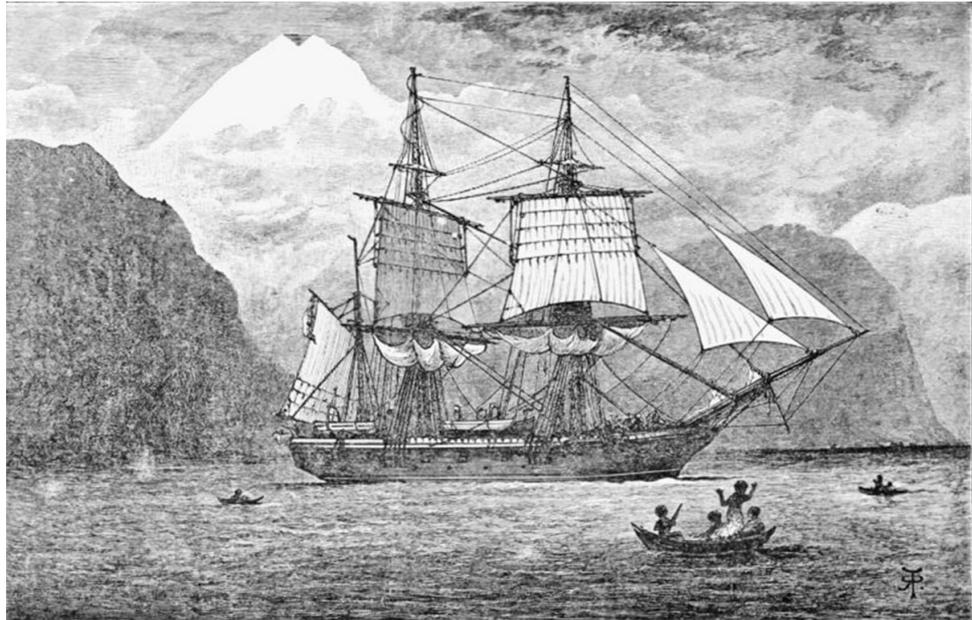
On 6 April 1833, she sailed from the Falklands, having embarked the Frenchman, M. le Dilly, with some of his officers and the crew, and lumbered the *Beagle* with the spars and stores purchased from him, Their passage to within sight of the River Negro was short though stormy, a south-east gale driving the ship before it, under a close-reefed fore-topsail. As the

sea ran high, it might have been more prudent to have hove-to, but time was precious, and the vessel's qualities as a sea-boat, scudding as well as by the wind, were well known. ¹⁶

Rio Negro. From 12 to 14 April 1833 the *Beagle* was standing off Rio Negro waiting for the swell to go down and allow a boat to cross the bar, when a sail was seen on the horizon and made out to be the *Adventure*. They steered for and spoke her, found all well, sent her on to Maldonado, and again stood towards the bar. ¹⁶ Next day a decked boat, like *La Paz*, crossed the bar and brought letters from Wickham which explained that he and his party had sailed from the river in the two small vessels only a few days before, having previously examined all the coast from Port Desire [now Puerto Deseado, far south in Argentina] to Valdes Creek. Sadly, Corporal Williams, who had been on the original *Adventure* with King from 1825 to 1830, had been drowned in the River Negro but all others were well. The *Beagle* sailed for the Bay of San Joseph to meet Wickham and the two vessels but failed to find them therefore concluding that they had run further south than was intended at their departure from the Negro, the *Beagle* made sail for the Plata and Maldonado. ¹⁶

Darwin had a most delightful opportunity of taking a glimpse at the cliffs of St Joseph's Bay. They abounded with fossil shells and were in many respects very curious and interesting. His visit was so short that there was only time to see how much was missed. At night, as soon as the tide turned, the anchor was weighed and the *Beagle* proceeded in pursuit of Wickham. Darwin recorded on 19 April that all their plans had undergone a complete revolution. During the night the soundings were very irregular and dangerous, so that they were obliged to heave to and in consequence of this a current sent them far to the south. The Captain gave up the attempt to find Wickham or of landing Darwin at Rio Negro and made sail for Maldonado.

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The *Beagle* in the Strait of Magellan. By RT Pritchett. Frontispiece to the *Voyage of the Beagle* published by John Murray.

Maldonado and Montevideo. At daylight on 26 April land was sighted near Maldonado, and at two, the *Beagle* anchored off Montevideo. In a few hours their French passengers were landed. Next day the anchor was again weighed, and at noon on 28 April they moored the *Beagle* in Maldonado Bay, close to the little island of Gorriti. Its tender, the *Adventure*, had arrived on 23 April. Fitz-Roy's thoughts were at this time occupied by arrangements connected with her, besides the usual routine observations. He was extremely anxious to fit the schooner properly, and to set her to work, but at the same time to keep all other operations in active progress. A decked boat was lying in Maldonado, just built, which her owner, Don Francisco Aguilar, offered to lend Fitz-Roy for two months if he would rig her for him. This proposal exactly suited his views, as it would enable him to send for Lieutenant Wickham and replace him with Osborne, leaving Stokes to continue the survey about San Blas and the Colorado. Accordingly, this little craft, the *Constitucion*, was hauled alongside, and Osborne, with a party, set to work in preparing her for a trip to the Rio Negro. On 1 May Osborne sailed, having with him Forsyth and five men; he was to go to the Rio Negro, join and assist Stokes, and inform Wickham that he was wanted at Maldonado to take charge of the *Adventure*. The *Constitucion* was about the size of the *Liebre*, a craft Fitz-Roy should hardly have thought fit for such a

voyage had he not heard so much from Mr Harris of the capital weather those decked boats made in a gale. With their hatches secured, tiller unshipped, a storm trysail, or no sail at all set, and nobody on deck, they tumbled about like hollow casks, without caring for wind or sea¹⁶. One feels for the navigators tumbling through the stormy, cold seas. Darwin sympathized, writing that it appeared to have been miserable work more than sufficiently dangerous: from the smallness of the vessels, it was scarcely possible to keep anything dry. To possess a dry shirt or bed was an unusual luxury. In addition to these discomforts, Wickham and some of the others constantly suffered from sea-sickness. Stokes and Osborne would continue to work in the neighbourhood of the Rio Negro.³⁰

Next day, 2 May, the *Beagle* returned to Montevideo, to procure carpenters, planks, and copper for the *Adventure*. She was so fine a vessel, and so sound, that it was well worthwhile to copper her entirely afresh. Here, to Fitz-Roy's great regret, Mr Hamond decided to return to England, and they consequently lost a valuable member of their small society.¹⁶

A letter followed on 10 May from Fitz-Roy to Captain Beaufort craving 20 supernumerary seamen for the *Beagle*, 15 Able Bodies and 5 first class ratings, and mentioning that he had sent the small schooner to La Paz and La Liebre to bring Wickham to Maldonado to fit out his new command (the *Adventure*) while Stokes worked away to the southward and he went to the Rio Negro and with Darwin took a 'peep' at the interior. Darwin was left at Maldonado. Here, in his "Voyage" Darwin wrote that he stayed 10 weeks at Maldonado, in which time a nearly perfect collection of the animals, birds, and reptiles was procured. Fitz-Roy went to Maldonado to have down and copper the *Beagle* (taking eight of his hired carpenters with him), work in peace on the charts and, when Wickham was settled in his new job as commander of the *Adventure*, take Darwin on board and go southwards, leaving the ever diligent Wickham to finish and afterwards join company. Fitz-Roy wrote: '*Wickham and Stokes have been slaving - (as I hear)*'. Once more we see his great personal expenditure to ensure the success of the expedition. He now had no fewer than five vessels. On 17 May, while standing on the keel of the *Beagle* examining the state of her copper and planking, Fitz-Roy saw the *Constitucion* in the offing and just after they righted the *Beagle* Wickham came alongside. He brought good news, including having seen the *Paz* and *Liebre* at Rio Negro on 12 May.

Fitz-Roy wrote again to Beaufort on 7 June. He mentioned that Wickham had arrived on 28 May having left Stokes in charge of the schooners at the Rio Negro. On 18 May Wickham had sailed from the Rio Negro to join the *Beagle* at La Plata leaving Stokes to successfully survey north of the Negro

between Port Desire and Bahia Blanca and later to examine the dangerous shoals off the Islas de la Confusion which only the ‘cockleshells’, with their small drafts, could enter. In a letter on 16 July he was forced, unfairly, to apologize for purchasing the new *Adventure* without prior permission and clearly had to bear the expense himself, unaided by the Admiralty. He added that if he returned to England he was thinking of raising a crusade against slavers, Montevideo having sent out four slavers – a comment which modifies the view that Fitz-Roy supported slavery.

On 11 June Darwin wrote that his time passed as in the previous three weeks at Maldonado. His collection of the birds and quadrupeds of this place was becoming very perfect, thanks to a few Spanish reales he paid to boys of the town. The progress with the *Adventure* had been very slow but another week would complete the coppering. On this day he returned from paying a visit to the vessel in order to see Wickham after his return from the south.³⁰

Gorriti to Rio Negro. On 24 July the survey work had been completed and the *Beagle* sailed from Gorriti to Cape Antonio and thence along the coast until it anchored off the Rio Negro. There they found the *Paz* and *Liebre* just returned from their examination of the vicinity of Blanco Bay and San Blas. Darwin took the opportunity to pass by boat into the river with the view of crossing overland to Buenos Aires and taking a long excursion into the interior.¹⁶ On 5 December he left the land and returned to the *Beagle*.

On 19 August they anchored near the bar of the Negro, took all of their officers and men on board from the *Paz* and *Liebre*, and left Harris and Roberts with their two small craft. On 24 August the *Beagle* moored off the Wells, in Port Belgrano. Darwin, in Argentina, rode to the Wells to see them. He was enjoying his shore-roving. By 23 September as it was clear that another month would be needed before the *Adventure* would be ready for work, therefore Fitz-Roy took the *Beagle* to complete the survey of the south shore of La Plata and a reported bank off Cape Corrientes. The *Adventure* was almost ready by 19 October and both vessels had moored by 21 October off Montevideo where the month of November was spent laying down chart work, computing observations and writing, procuring provisions, painting the outsides of the vessels and occasionally giving the crews permission to go on shore. Darwin returned at the end of November and in the first week of December both vessels sailed from the river for Tierra del Fuego and the Falklands.¹⁶

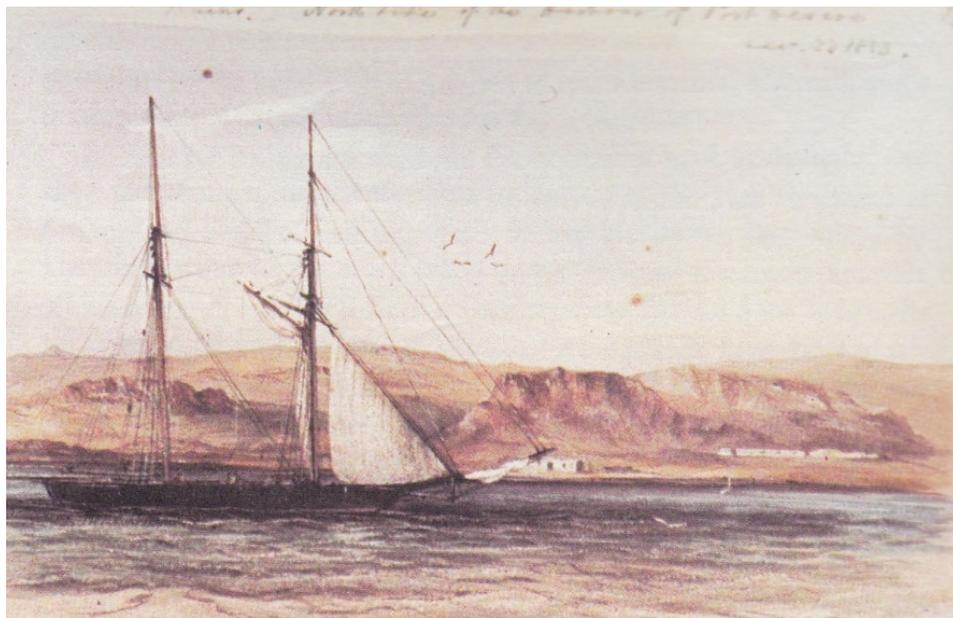
On 6 December, the *Beagle* got under way at 4 o’clock in the morning and ran up the Negro to take in fresh water. The *Adventure* was at anchor close

to her. Next day, with a fair wind, the *Beagle* stood out of the river and by the evening was in clear water; never again, Darwin trusted, to enter the muddy water of the Plata. The *Adventure* kept ahead of them. Wickham now commanded the *Adventure*; and had with him Johnstone and Forsyth as well as Osborne as under-surveyor. Kent from the *Pylades* has joined as surgeon.

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The South Revisited

Port Desire. On 6 December 1833 the *Beagle* and *Adventure*, provisioned for at least nine months, sailed from Montevideo. They arrived at Port Desire in Patagonia on 23 December. The voyage to the port had been delayed by the *Adventure*; she was found not to sail well and her sails would be altered there. On Christmas day the officers and almost all of the men went on shore. Darwin thought it quite delightful to see with what schoolboy eagerness the seamen enjoyed the games; old men with long beards and young men without any were playing like so many children. Fitz-Roy distributed prizes to the best runners, leapers and wrestlers.²¹



Port Desire. By Conrad Martens

***Beagle* damaged.** On 4 January 1834, working out of Port Desire, the *Beagle* struck a rock. Sullivan recorded in a letter home that he and then

Fitzroy dived down under the keel to inspect the damage. It was not sufficient to cause a leak but the damaged copper would later need repair.

Wickham to the Falklands. We next learn of Wickham when, on 22 January 1834, both vessels sailed from Port Desire. The *Adventure*, commanded by Wickham, parted company, steering for New Island in the Falklands to survey the coast of that archipelago while the *Beagle* examined the neighbourhood of Cape Virgins and the eastern entrance of the Magellan Strait.

Port Famine. On 29 and 30 January Darwin went on shore with Fitz-Roy and gave an account of the appearance of the Patagonian natives. By 2 February they had anchored in Port Famine, in the following week surveyed the north-eastern shore of Tierra del Fuego, by 28 February entered the *Beagle* channel and on 1 March, while replenishing wood and water, met some Yapoo Tekeenica natives who seemed not to have met white men before.¹⁶



Beagle Channel. By Conrad Martens

Darwin gave an account of the sad state of these natives. At this time they returned the Fuegians whom they had brought from their period of education in England to their native land. The response of these natives to their return and their fate is told in some detail but is beyond our scope apart from noting that Jemmy Button, unlike York Minster, showed sincere gratitude and

asked Fitz-Roy to carry a bow and a quiverful of arrows to the schoolmaster of Walthamstow, with whom he had lived, by his having made two spearheads expressly for Darwin, and by the pleasure he showed in seeing them again. Much anthropological information is given by Fitz-Roy. On 5 March 1834, Fitz-Roy shared his breakfast with Jemmy and they had a long conversation. York and Fuegia had left him some months before his arrival. York-Minster's last act had been to steal all of Jemmy's clothes, leaving him naked. Fuegia, it seemed, was very happy. Fitz-Roy could not help hoping that some benefit, however slight, might result from the intercourse of the three with other natives.¹⁶

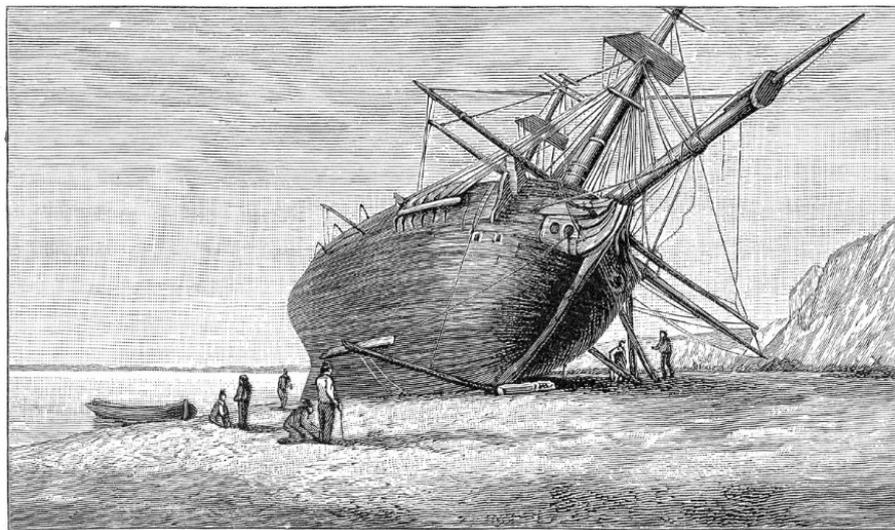
Falklands. They then sailed again to the Falklands where they were saddened by the news of the brutal murder by gauchos and Indians, on 26 August, of Mr Brisbane; Dickson, the man in charge of Vernet's store; Simon the Capitaz; a German and another settler.¹⁶ Some of the suspects were apprehended and taken on board the *Beagle*: one, Rivero, the chief murderer, was placed in irons. A Mr Low, the son of a land agent in Scotland, finding himself in danger on land, retreated to Kidney Island in Berkeley Sound. He then set out in search of a whaler and on 6 February, in great distress, fell in with the *Adventure* where Wickham took him on as a pilot in view of his great knowledge of the area, with Fitz-Roy's later approval. On 13 April Wickham brought the *Adventure* to the Falklands having most satisfactorily nearly completed her survey of the west, south and south-east coasts greatly helped by Low's acquaintance with the coast. On 7 April, when ready to leave the Falklands, their melancholy experience of the islands was compounded by finding, at high water level, the body of Lieutenant Clive, late of the *Challenger*. Having buried him they sailed, 'depressed more than ever', from the place.¹⁶

In 1834, while surveying the sea-coast on return to the Falklands in the *Adventure*, Wickham, Low and Johnson had many a bull hunt; there was risk in their encounters, being on foot, with rifles, assisted only by a good dog. They used to land in unfrequented harbours, very near herds of wild cattle or horses, creep quietly along behind tussocks or bushes, till they got within rifle-shot, take good aim at the fattest and, after firing, do their best to kill the animal, in general only wounded by a first shot. They had an excellent dog that always seized the creatures by the lower lip and diverted their attention from Johnson or Low, who otherwise might have lost their lives on more than two occasions.

What with the foxes, the wild bulls and the wild horses, it was thoroughly unsafe for a person to walk alone about the unfrequented parts of the Falkland Islands, even with the best weapons for self-defence against either

man or beast. Several unfortunate people had gone missing after they wandered away from their parties. ¹⁶

Santa Cruz river. Between 13 April and 12 May, back in Argentina, the *Beagle* explored the Santa Cruz river. She anchored in the mouth of the river and three boats set out on 18 April, carrying 25 men, including Fitz-Roy and Darwin. All involved took turns in teams dragging the boats up river for sixteen days. Darwin took careful note of the flora and fauna and the geology. Mr Stewart shot a puma which was later mounted in the British Museum. In those excursions, when the men were ashore at night and the man on watch was by the fire the wolf-like foxes plagued them continually, poking their unpleasant heads into the openings of their tents, stealing their provisions and breaking their rest after a fatiguing day's work. ¹⁶ The *Beagle* was laid ashore for repairs, as depicted by Conrad Martens.



The *Beagle* laid ashore at Santa Cruz River, Tierra del Fuego, 16 April 1834, by Conrad Martens

On 23 May 1834 the *Beagle* saw the *Adventure* coming from the Falklands. After communicating, the *Adventure* went on to survey the coast from Sweepstakes Foreland to Cape Monmouth while the *Beagle* stayed to sound the First Narrow and examine the south shore of St Philip Bay. By June both vessels were moored in Port Famine, described by Darwin as a ‘cheerless prospect’, preparing for their passage to Chiloé. ¹⁶



Chiloé Island. By Conrad Martens

Chiloé. At midnight 28 June 1834 the *Beagle* anchored at Point Arena and the *Adventure* arrived two days later having been delayed by rough weather and a broken main boom. After a supply of fresh provisions and attention to the chronometers they sailed on 14 July for Valparaiso and arrived there together on the 22nd. Fitz-Roy sent Wickham, his trustworthy, reliable messenger, who spoke Spanish and had been in Santiago before, to show his surveying instructions to the authorities and to request their approval of the examination of the shores under their jurisdiction. Nothing could have been more satisfactory than the reception that Wickham received. Fitz-Roy proposed to remain at Valparaiso during the winter months, with Stokes, the young Gidley King, and Osborne in quarters on shore in order to work while those in board attended to the refit and provisioning of the two vessels. Darwin wrote from St Jago, on 28 August, of his wanderings in the Andes which took from 31 July to 10 November.

Fitz-Roy's despair. Soon Fitz-Roy was plunged into the deepest gloom. As the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty did not wish to give him any assistance, he was forced to sell the *Adventure*, thereby endangering the safety of the expedition. He discharged its crew and took the officers, including Wickham back on the *Beagle*. She brought only £1,400 yet in 1838 was still plying on the coast, in sound condition. He quarrelled with Darwin, who was staying at Concepción, over the latter's unwillingness to give a party for the locals but a few days later when Darwin returned to the

ship was as cordial as ever. Wickham, however, said to Darwin '*Confound you, philosopher, I wish you would not quarrel with the skipper; the day you left the ship I was dead-tired and he kept me walking the deck till midnight abusing you all the time*'³⁰. The good relationship between the two men meant that this remonstrance was god humoured, however. Darwin mused that the difficulty of living on good terms with a Captain of a Man-of-War was much increased by its being almost mutinous to answer him as one would answer anyone else; and by the awe in which he was held, or was held in Darwin's time, by all on board.²⁹

Despite his depression, Fitz-Roy was able to send his completed charts of the eastern coasts of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego as well as those of the Falkland Islands, the work of the *Adventure*, to England. Darwin wrote in letters home that Fitz-Roy had become afraid that his mind was becoming deranged (being aware of this hereditary predisposition, his relative Castelreagh having committed suicide). He passed the command of the *Beagle* to Wickham who, always a good mediator, very disinterestedly gave up his own promotion and urged him most strongly to continue by taking the ship to the Pacific. Nothing would have induced Wickham to take it to Tierra del Fuego. He thus returned to the position of First Lieutenant on the *Beagle*. Their little painter, Conrad Martens, had been left to wander the world.

Darwin on shore. On 26 September 1834 Darwin sent to Valparaiso for a carriage and so reached on the next day a house belonging to Mr Corfield. There he remained in bed till the end of October. It was a grievous loss of time, as he had hoped to have collected many animals. Fitz-Roy very kindly delayed the sailing of the ship till 10 November, by which time Darwin was well again.²¹

Leaving Chiloé. After many adventures, the *Beagle* with its small boats sailed from Chiloé on 5 February 1835 and passed along the coast of southern Chile to Valdivia which it reached on 8 February.¹⁶



Torreón El Canelo restored in the 1850s, one of two remaining Spanish towers in Valdivia used to defend the city. GNU Free Documentation

Niebla Fort. A few days after 12 February Darwin crossed Valdivia bay with a party of officers, including Wickham, and landed near the fort called Niebla. The buildings were in a most ruinous state, and the gun-carriages quite rotten. Wickham remarked to the commanding officer that with one discharge they would certainly all fall to pieces. The poor man, trying to put a good face upon it, gravely replied, *'No, I am sure, sir, they would stand two!'* The Spaniards must have intended to make this place impregnable for lying in the middle of the courtyard there was a little mountain of mortar. It was brought from Chile, and cost 7,000 dollars. The Chilean revolution having broken out, prevented its being applied to any purpose, and now it remained a monument to the fallen greatness of Spain.¹⁹

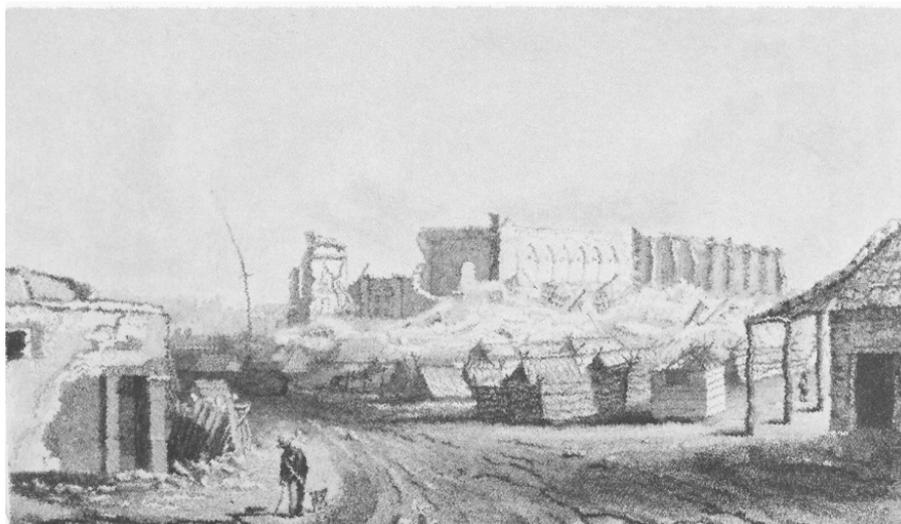


The present lighthouse at Niebla and, below it, the remains of the fort. GNU Free Documentation

The Great Earthquake

On 20 February 1835, a great earthquake struck the coast of western Chile. Darwin, in his *Diary and Voyage*, and especially Fitz-Roy, in his *Narrative*, gave detailed accounts of its nature and effects. We can only touch on these accounts here. Of some interest is the oft-related capacity of animals to predict an earthquake, thus at ten in the morning very large flights of sea-fowl (mostly seagulls) were noticed passing over the city of Concepción, from the sea-coast towards the interior. Old inhabitants were surprised by so unusual and so simultaneous a change in the habits of those birds, no signs of an approaching storm being visible, nor any expected at that season. It was said that every dog had left the town before the shock which ruined the buildings was felt. At about eleven the southerly breeze freshened up as usual. The sky was clear, and almost cloudless. At forty minutes after eleven a shock of an earthquake was felt, slightly at first, but increasing rapidly.¹⁶ Riders and their horses were thrown to the ground and householders forced to crawl on hands and knees. Cows which were standing on the steep side of Quiriquina Island were rolled into the sea.¹⁶

Innumerable small tremblings [aftershocks] followed the great earthquake, and within the first twelve days no less than 300 were counted ³⁰. The immense devastation was compounded by what would now be called tsunamis. At Talcahuano, as an example, about half an hour after the first shock, when the greater part of the population had reached the heights, the sea had retreated so much that all the vessels at anchor, even those which had been lying in seven fathoms water, were aground; and all the rocks and shoals in the bay were visible. An enormous wave then forced its way through the western passage which separated Quiriquina Island from the mainland. This immense wave passed rapidly along the western side of the bay of Concepción, sweeping the steep shores of everything movable within thirty feet (vertically) from high water mark. It broke over, dashed along, and whirled about the shipping as if they had been light boats, overflowed the greater part of the town, and then rushed back with such a torrent, that almost every movable, which the earthquake had not buried under heaps of ruins, was carried out to sea. In a few minutes the vessels were again aground, and a second great wave came, with more noise and impetuosity than the first. Though this wave was more powerful, its effects were not so considerable, simply because there was less to destroy. Again the sea fell, dragging away quantities of woodwork, and the lighter materials of houses, and leaving the shipping aground. After some minutes a third enormous swell, apparently larger than the former waves, destroyed and overwhelmed every obstacle, and quickly retired, dragging away such quantities of household effects, fences, furniture and other movables as remained. The earth was never long quiet during the three days following the great shock. Many shocks, but not all, were preceded by a rumbling, subterranean noise, like distant thunder. ¹⁶



Remains of the cathedral at Concepción by S. Bull after J.C. Wickham ¹⁶

The cathedral of Concepción, whose walls were four feet thick, supported by great buttresses and built of good brick and mortar, suffered *more* than other buildings. It was drawn in its ruined state by Wickham, an accomplished artist, many of whose drawings were destroyed in a later fire. Fitz-Roy found that misery was alleviated by the good conduct and extreme hospitality of the inhabitants of Concepción, that mutual assistance was everywhere rendered, and theft was almost unknown. Darwin was less charitable, writing that at Talcahuano:

scoundrels set to work,—crying 'Misericordia!' and with one hand beating their breasts, with the other they stole most industriously'.

The Island of Santa Maria was uplifted by an average of nine feet. Beds of dead mussels were found ten feet above the present high-water mark. Valdivia fared better, the shock began gently, increased gradually during two minutes, was at its strongest about one minute, and then diminished. Most buildings survived the quake. On the island of Chiloé the shock was slight, but lasted six or eight minutes; it was neither preceded nor followed by any subterranean noise. About thirty-four minutes after eleven, roughly the same time as at Concepción, the beginning of the shock was felt. The motion was undulating, and not strong. A floating boat was grounded and soon refloated by the swell. The island of Juan Fernandez was affected very much. Near Bacalao Head, an eruption burst through the sea in a place about a mile from the land, where the depth was from fifty to eighty fathoms. Smoke and water were thrown out during the greater part of the day and flames were seen at night. Great waves swept the shores of the island and

the sea had retreated so much that old anchors were seen at the bottom of the anchorage. Much further information was given by Fitz-Roy.¹⁶

From 13 March to 10 April 1835 Darwin made a long overland excursion from Santiago, across the Andes to Mendoza and on 27 April to 4 July to Coquimbo and Copiapo.

At noon on 23 April, the *Beagle* hove to off Valparaiso and sent boats ashore. Darwin came briefly aboard and left again with the intention of travelling overland to meet them again at Coquimbo. It may have been at this time that Phillip Gidley King was sketched at Valparaiso in 1835, and 18 years old.



Phillip Gidley King at Valparaiso in 1835. Pencil drawing by Johann Moritz Rugendas, State Library of New South Wales.

On 19 May 1835 HMS *Challenger* was wrecked on the coast of Chile. All except two of her crew were saved and on 26 May its commander, Captain Seymour, the officers and men were encamped at a place called Molguilla.

The *Blonde* was prepared for sea in order to rescue them and Fitz-Roy accepted the commodore's invitation to join the ship together with Usborne and Bennett and a whale boat. Wickham was to take command of the *Beagle* during his absence and to take her to Copiapo, Iquique and Callao before the Captain should rejoin her. They weighed on 18 June and Fitz-Roy disembarked at Concepción. On 22 June he succeeded in getting a boat, a flat-bottomed barge, and induced the horses to leap over the gunwale into it. This action was then reversed and he and his men rode and then walked overland but after failing to obtain further steeds, resumed riding on their own horses. Some Chileans informed them that the *Challenger* wreck had been abandoned and that the officers and crew were entrenched in a secure position on the heights close to the mouth of the River Leubu but in fear of attacks by Indians. They hired further horses several times and had a difficult cross-country ride. An attack by Indians was repulsed by a friendly tribe and contact was made with Captain Seymour and his crew. After adventures worthy of The Boys Own Magazine, involving a small schooner the *Carmen* manned by Usborne which had to be towed by the *Blonde*, they were returned to Valparaiso.

On 18 June 1835 Fitz-Roy, before embarking on the *Challenger* rescue in the *Blonde*, had written a directive to Wickham:

By ROBERT FITZ-ROY, Captain of His Majesty's Surveying Sloop *Beagle*.

You are hereby required and directed to take charge and command of his Majesty's surveying sloop *Beagle*, until I rejoin you at Callao.

You will conform your conduct, in all respects, to the instructions sent to me for my guidance by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

You will sail from Valparaiso on the 28th of this month, or as soon after as possible, and proceed direct to Copiapo.

Thence you will proceed to Callao, calling at Iquique, if circumstances are favourable; and at Callao you will await my arrival.

H.M. sloop *Beagle*, in Valparaiso Bay, 18th of June 1835.

R. F.

To Lieut. J. C. WICKHAM,

H.M.S. *Beagle*.

N.B. Remember that Peru is in a state of anarchy. ¹⁶

Callao Bay and purchase of *Constitucion*. On 9 August the *Blonde* anchored far to the North in Callao Bay, Peru, and as planned Fitz-Roy went aboard the *Beagle* and had the satisfaction of finding all well. Lieutenant

Sullivan, having charted the coast of Chile, brought the little *Constitucion* to anchor near the *Beagle* on 30 August. She had touched at Copiaio and Iquique for Darwin.¹⁶ Wickham's part in these proceedings was not discussed. Fitz-Roy decided to purchase the *Constitucion* in order to set in motion the examination of the coast of Peru. He arranged for Usborne, with seven good seamen and a boy, volunteers from the *Beagle*, to take the *Constitucion* to Peru. In eight to ten months the whole coast of Peru had been charted, from Papaso, near Atacama, to the River Guayaquil and charts were soon engraved in England.¹⁶

Galapagos Islands

On 4 September, the *Beagle* left Callao and steered direct towards the Galapagos Islands which were visited from 16 September to 20 October 1835. There began a survey of the fauna and flora which would lead after many years, in 1859, to Darwin's epoch making book, '*On the Origin of Species*'. The revolutionary statement in his '*Voyage of the Beagle*' in relation to the Galapagos finches that:

one might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species has been taken and modified for different ends was an early glimmer of his theory of transmutation of species by natural selection. Darwin had not labelled the finches by islands but from the notes of others on the *Beagle*, particularly Fitz-Roy, and the classification by Gould, he was able to unravel their relationships.

Although Wickham played a vital role in the maintenance and navigation of the *Beagle* throughout its long voyage to England, it is curious that he is rarely mentioned in the chronicles of the continuing voyage from South America. This lapse therefore regrettably places most of the remainder of the expedition outside the scope of this book which is to record mentions of Wickham.

Worthy of mention, nevertheless, is the cavalier attitude of the visitors to the islands towards what is now termed conservation. Thus Darwin mentions that the tortoises were so abundant that a '*single ship's company caught 500-800 in a short time*', with no adverse comment on his part, and that his party brought eighteen 'terrapin' on board. Curious aesthetic judgments were made, also, as in the characterization of iguanas as '*most disgusting, clumsy lizards*'. Such indifference in obtaining specimens is reminiscent of eighteenth century works, such as Gilbert White's incomparable and much-loved '*Natural History of Selbourne*' (1779), where rare bird visitors to England would be shot as specimens. The wanton

destruction of 'game' animals in Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries similarly depended on the myopic view that their numbers were inexhaustible.



Harriet, the giant Galapagos tortoise, given to Wickham by Darwin, compared with a common tortoise. Courtesy of Australia Zoo

Giant Galapagos tortoise. Wickham does, however, appear briefly in connection with the Galapagos. A giant tortoise was collected by Darwin in 1835 when it was only the size of a dinner plate. This means that it probably hatched in approximately the year 1830. Its body shape suggested that it originated from the island of Santa Cruz. This is an island which Darwin may not have visited but it appears that there was interchange of tortoises among the ships visiting the archipelago. After a short time in temperate England with Darwin, the tortoise was brought to Australia by Wickham, who arrived in Brisbane in 1842, to enjoy a warmer climate in Australia. For more than 100 years the tortoise lived in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens and it was there in the early 1900s that it was given the name Harry, in honour of Harry Oakman, the groundskeeper of the time. It was eventually transferred to Fleay's Fauna Sanctuary on the Gold Coast where David Fleay discovered that Harry was, in fact, Harriet. She died from heart failure at Australia Zoo on 23 June 2006, aged approximately 175.

Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia

The *Beagle* sailed from the Galapagos Islands on 20 October, making for the Low Islands and thence Tahiti which was reached on 15 November. By the 17th they were at the site of the observatory from which Cook had studied the passage of Venus. Fitz-Roy asked Wickham to allow the natives to hold a market on the deck of the *Beagle*. The fair did not last more than an hour after breakfast and some purloining of articles from the ship was detected, including the top of a brass stanchion.¹⁶ Much interesting discussion of Tahiti by Fitz-Roy and Darwin is beyond our scope and no more is heard specifically of the ever-active Wickham. They spent from 15 to 26 November in Tahiti. Fitz-Roy parted on affectionate good terms from the queen and senior Tahitians.

By 21 December an easterly breeze enabled them to steer toward New Zealand's Bay of Islands. Fitz-Roy, Darwin and Syms Covington give detailed anthropological and other observations. On the last day of 1835 they passed the north cape of New Zealand and steered for Port Jackson, in Australia. Fitz-Roy did not know that he would return as Governor of New Zealand. In that post he upheld the rights of the native people to the extent of offending the authorities before his recall to England.³³

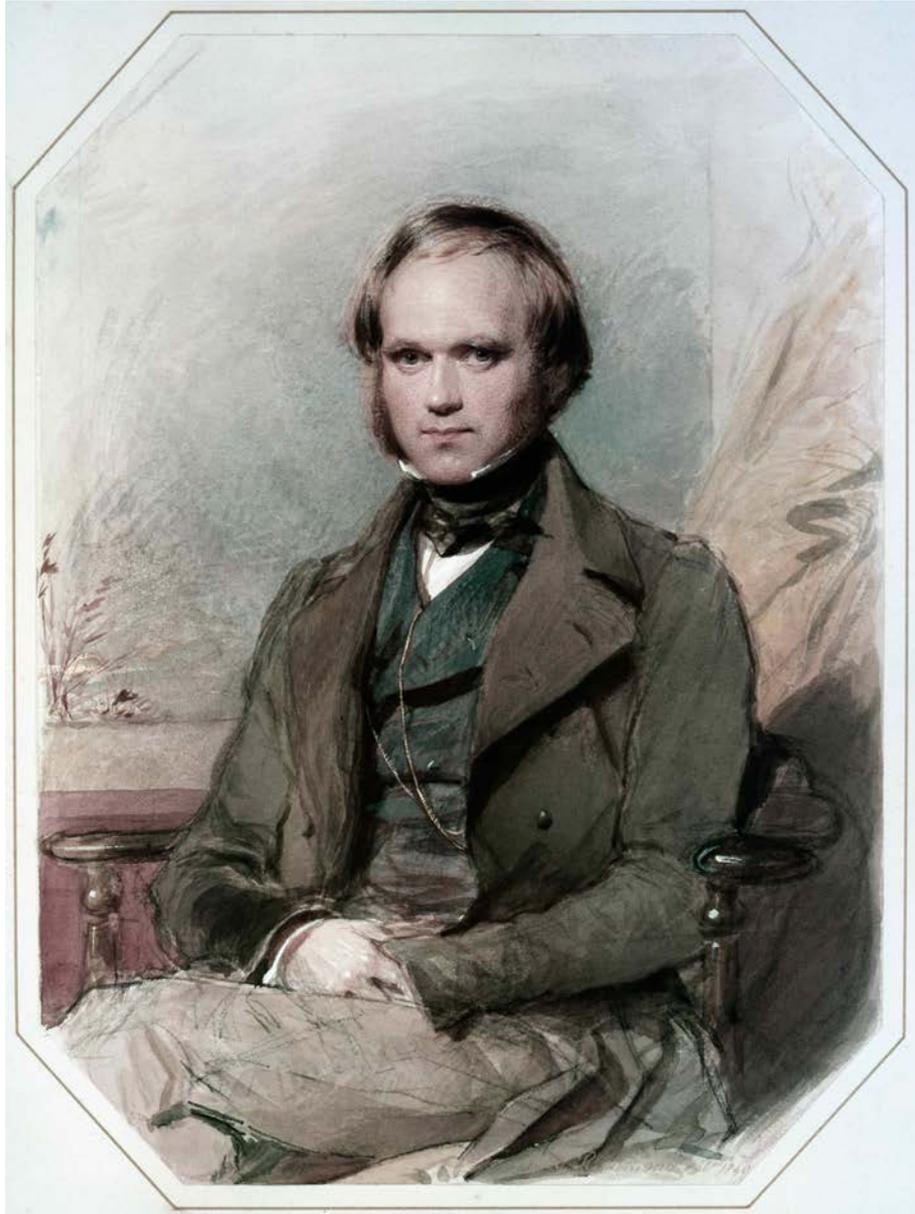
Return to England

The small, gallant *Beagle* returned to England by a long and tortuous route. From 12 to 30 January 1836 it was at Sydney; 2 to 17 February at Hobart, Tasmania, where the ill-fated Sir John Franklin, and Lady Franklin, sent out tiny invitation letters in neat diminutive hands asking 'respectable residents' to a ball and supper to welcome Captain Wickham and the officers of HMS *Beagle* to Hobart¹¹. The homeward route continued: 3 to 14 March King George's Sound, Western Australia; 2 to 12 April Cocos Keeling Islands; 20 April to 9 May ; 31 May to 18 June Cape of Good Hope; 7 to 14 July Saint Helena; 19 to 23 July Ascencion Island; 1 to 6 August Bahia; 12 to 17 August Pernambuco; and 2 October arrival at Falmouth¹². At King George's Sound, more surveying was done; rivers, bays, and coast-lines were charted, and Lieutenant Wickham even acted as pilot to British and foreign ships that were seeking safe entrances into the then little-known harbours.¹¹ Of Australia, Darwin wrote somewhat pompously but perhaps because he was disillusioned by years at sea and five years away from home:

Farewell, Australia! You are a rising child and doubtless some day will reign a great princess in the south: but you are too great and ambitious for affection, yet not great enough for respect. I leave your shores without sorrow or regret. ³⁴

His ennui extended to disliking the way in which the leaves hung from the gum trees.

The *Beagle* returned with a full complement of men though considerably changed. Many of the crew had sailed with Fitz-Roy in the previous voyage; and there were a few officers, as well as some marines and seamen, who had served in the *Beagle*, or *Adventure*, during the whole of the former voyage. These determined 'admirers of Tierra del Fuego' were Lieutenant Wickham; Mr Bynoe; Mr Stokes; Mr Mellersh and Mr King; the boatswain; carpenter; and sergeant; four private marines; his coxswain; and some seamen. ¹⁶



Charles Darwin in 1840. Watercolour by George Richmond

Fitz-Roy, in his sketch of 1836, summarized some of the accomplishments of the expedition:

Beginning with the right or southern bank of the wide River Plata, every mile of the coast thence to Cape Horn was closely surveyed and laid down

on a large scale. Each harbour and anchorage was planned; thirty miles of the River Negro, and two hundred of the Santa Cruz, were examined and laid down, and a chart was made of the Falkland Islands. These earlier productions of the *Beagle's* voyage were in the engraver's hands. Before going westward of Cape Horn the detailed survey of so much coast in a short time was accomplished by the constant exertions of Lieutenant John C. Wickham, Mr J. L. Stokes, and Mr A. B. Usborne who ran every risk, and worked by night as well as *every* day, in two small decked boats, during the first year, and afterwards in a tender. The *Beagle* took portions of coast towards the south, while her detached party were at work between Port Desire and Blanco Bay, and afterwards at the Falkland Islands.⁹

Syms Covington clearly did not share Darwin's disdain of Australia as he worked his passage back to Sydney where he arrived in 1840, having been of considerable service to Darwin. He worked as a clerk in the Australian Agricultural Company, on which Phillip Parker King and his shipmate Phillip Gidley King served. In about 1844 Covington, his wife and two sons (the start of a family of eight), moved to Pambula on the South coast of New South Wales, and from its vicinity he collected significant specimens for Darwin. In 1854, he became Postmaster of Pambula, at the same time managing a small inn, *The Retreat*, which now functions as a restaurant. In 1861, three years before Wickham's death, Covington died at the modest age of 47.³⁵



The grave of Syms Covington and his son, at Pambula, New South Wales. The end of the second Beagle voyage is wrongly given as 1835. Photo Courtesy of Geoffrey Dyne

4. The Third *Beagle* Voyage 1837-1841

Ship's complement. Commander John Clements Wickham was re-appointed to the *Beagle* on 16 February 1837 (wrongly given as 1838 by Dawson), at Woolwich. The company embarked in the *Beagle* on her third voyage, consisted of John Clements Wickham, Commander and Surveyor; James B. Emery, Lieutenant; Henry Eden, Lieutenant; John Lort Stokes, Lieutenant and Assistant Surveyor; Alexander B. Usborne, Master; Benjamin Bynoe, Surgeon; Thomas Tait, Assistant Surgeon; John E. Dring, Clerk in charge; Benjamin F. Helpman, Mate; Auchmuty T. Freeze, Mate; Thomas T. Birch, Mate; L. R. Fitzmaurice, Mate; William Tarrant, Master's Assistant; Charles Keys, Clerk; Thomas Sorrell, Boatswain; John Weeks, Carpenter; A corporal of marines and seven privates, with forty seamen and boys. ⁸

43-2
 H. M. S. Beagle, Greenwich
 February 27th 1837 -
 Sir,
 I have the honor to request
 that you will be pleased to advise
 my Lords Commissioners of the
 Admiralty, to grant that the
 party of Royal Marines for the
 Beagle, may be allowed to volun-
 teer for the service upon which
 she is going; as some of those men
 that formerly belonged to her,
 are desirous of rejoicing, and
 much will depend upon the
 good conduct of the party.
 I have the honor to be
 Sir,
 your very humble servant
 J. Wickham
 Admiralty

Wickham's letter to Beaufort, requesting additional Royal Marines

Objectives. The objects of her voyage were not confined to one spot or portion of the coast of New Holland, but, generally, to complete all parts that had hitherto escaped the notice of, or had not been visited by, previous navigators, particularly, portions of the north-western coast which were not

seen by Captains Flinders and King, or in the year 1802 by the French expedition under Commodore Baudin.³⁶

Letters to the Admiralty. In the long preparation at Woolwich for the voyage, Wickham sent a number of letters from the *Beagle* to the Admiralty. On 27 February 1837 he requested that a party of marines, some of whom had served before be allowed to join the ship.³⁷ On 21 March 1837 in a letter to Rear Admiral Sir Charles Adam KCB, at the Admiralty, London, he requested that the vessel:

may be supplied with three dozen small Congreve [signalling] rockets to be used in the event of the natives of New Holland and New Guinea showing a disposition to be troublesome, as they have much greater effect in intimidating them, than by firing blank cartridges.

During the first voyage to the Straits of Magellan in 1826 a single rocket had more effect in keeping that natives at a distance than the 12 Pounder cannonades with which the *Adventure* was armed.³⁸

Again, on 24 April 1837, from the same address, Wickham sent a request, more conciliatory to the Aborigines, to Captain Beaufort at the Admiralty for supplies:

Thinking it of consequence that the *Beagle* should be supplied with some useful articles as presents to the natives of New Holland, I have taken the liberty of drawing up the following lists for your approval (the articles being those in greatest request during Captain King's visits to the North and North-west coasts) – Axes 4 dozen, Scissors 6 dozen, Knives (large) 12 dozen, Saws (hand) 2 dozen, Hammers 3 dozen, Gimblets [gimlets] 3 dozen, Nails 5 ..., Fishing gear.

He also requested

Rifle Powder, Caps, and small shots, for the purpose of procuring specimens of Natural History. In our first voyage to the Straits of Magellan, fowling pieces were also supplied for that purpose by the Government.³⁹

On 5 June 1837, again from Woolwich, Wickham wrote to Captain Beaufort, at the Admiralty, requesting two 'Chambers' for measuring distance by sound.⁴⁰ On the same day he requested that he be permitted to fill any vacancies in the complement of the *Beagle* with able bodies or with seamen, as the total number was hardly sufficient to work the 'sweeps' and generally a boat would be required ahead of the ship.³⁹ On 15 June he wrote from Spithead to the Storekeeper General of Her Majesty's Navy that no candles had been supplied, as previously requested, for the *Beagle*.⁴¹

On the eve of departure from Plymouth, Wickham wrote to the Secretary to the Admiralty listing those crew who held Petty Officer ratings. The list

nicely demonstrates some of the skills necessary to maintain the *Beagle* on its challenging voyage:

William Mitchell, Red Coat [marine]; John Way, Sailmaker; Stephen King, Ropemaker; William Yabsley, Carpenter's [?] Mate; David Collins, Caulker; Thos Harris, Armourer; Joel Legon, Cooper.⁴²

The morning of 5 July 1837 saw the *Beagle*, under the command of Captain Wickham, running out of Plymouth Sound. It was a fortnight after the death of King William IV and on the accession of Queen Victoria. There was a light northerly wind, and hazy weather. Soon after she was outside she spoke to HMS *Princess Charlotte*, bearing the flag of Admiral Sir R. Stopford and, as she was bound down channel, they kept together for the next three days.⁸

Its first port of call on 18 July 1837 was to be Santa Cruz in Tenerife in the Canary Islands. On that day, Wickham wrote

To Charles Wood Esq., Admiralty, from Santa Cruz, Teneriffe [sic]:

I have the honor to acquaint you that Her Majesty's Surveying Sloop under my command arrived at this anchorage today at 4 pm and that she will proceed to Bahia as soon as observations are obtained for rating the chronometers.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your Most Obedient, Humble Servant, J.C. Wickham, Commander⁴³.

From Tenerife the *Beagle* crossed the Atlantic to the deep natural harbour of San Salvador, in Bahia, Brazil. Stokes commented on the evils of the slave trade with Africa. He observed that

the poor victims ... are packed away between decks scarcely three feet high, in small vessels of 30 or 40 tons, and thus situated have to encounter the cold and stormy passage round the Cape: the average mortality is of course most frightful, but the smallness of the vessels employed decreases the risk of the speculators in human flesh, who consider themselves amply repaid, if they save one living cargo out of every five embarked!⁸

During their brief stay at Bahia Stokes paid a visit to the grave of poor young Musters, a little midshipman on the *Beagle* during its second voyage, who died there on 19 May 1832 from the effects of a fever caught while away on an excursion up the river Macacu. He was a son of Lord Byron's Mary, and a great favourite with all on board. No stone marked his humble grave. The *Beagle* sailed from Bahia on 25 May for South Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope.

From the Cape to Swan River. They had a favourable passage across to the Cape but on 17 September 1837, when distant from it about 500 miles, they encountered a moderate gale from the north. The passengers gazed with

admiration and awe on the huge waves as they rolled past, occasionally immersing the little vessel in their white crests. They rounded the Cape on 21 September and anchored in South Africa at Simon's Bay. They were pleased to see that the chronometers agreed well with readings on a previous voyage.

Wickham reported to the Admiralty:

Lieutenants Grey and Lushington with their medical attendants and two non-commissioned officers were discharged on 30th, Lieutenant Grey having hired a vessel in which they would proceed to the NW Coast of New Holland (about Prince Regent's Inlet).⁴⁴

Grey would later become Governor in Chief of the colony of New Zealand.

Wickham wrote from Simon's Bay in October to the Secretary for the Admiralty to request additional crew:

I have the honor to request My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty will be pleased to grant four additional boys to be borne on the books of Her Majesty's Survey Vessel under my command, or as supernumeraries, as the whole crew are barely sufficient to man the boats.

During the *Beagle's* last voyage she had seven [?] boys above the present complement which enabled us to send a greater proportion of seamen in the boats without disabling the ship.⁴⁴

Having completed their observations and crammed every available square inch of the *Beagle* with various stores, a proceeding rendered absolutely necessary by the unsatisfactory accounts they had received of the state of affairs at Swan River, they sailed for that place on the morning of 12 October. They encountered a good deal of heavy weather during their run to Swan River and, owing to the deep state of the loaded little vessel, her decks were almost constantly flooded. This extra weight, in the already overburdened craft, did not add to her liveliness but she struggled on.

By 1 November they were passing to the southward of the Island of Amsterdam. The summit of the Island they found to be 2,760 feet high, in latitude 38 degrees 53 minutes South, longitude 77 degrees 37 minutes East of Greenwich, never before determined despite the island being a signpost for ships bound to New Holland or India. It was clearly volcanic and like St Paul's, though well-watered, too rugged for watering a ship. The southern island, St Paul's, afforded a good anchorage.

They lost sight of Amsterdam Island towards evening. Later the constant huge following seas carried the little vessel much faster to the eastward than could be easily credited. During the last three or four days, they had run upwards of 195 miles daily, being from 20 to 30 more each day than appeared from the reckoning.

Australia reached. They reached Rottneest Island of the coast of Western Australia on the morning of Wednesday 15 November and in the afternoon of the same day, anchored in Gage's Road, Swan River, about 30 miles from the mainland. They passed along the north shore of Rottneest. It could not be approached within a mile as there was a shallow, rocky patch (later called Roe's Patch). They visited the Swan River Settlement, a portion of the colony of Western Australia, which was founded in August 1829 under the auspices of the Colonial Office. ⁸ Wickham conferred with the Governor, Sir James Stirling, and the Surveyor-General, Lieutenant Septimus Roe who had served under King in the *Mermaid* and the *Bathurst* and decided to survey the northwest coast. ⁵

Stokes found nothing particularly inviting in the first appearance of Western Australia: dull-green-looking downs, backed by a slightly undulating range of hills, rising to nearly 2,000 feet. Fremantle, of which it was wittily said by the quartermaster of one of His Majesty's ships '*You might run it through an hourglass in a day*', was but a collection of low white houses scattered over the scarce whiter sand. The only conspicuous landmark visible in approaching the anchorage was the jail which Stokes induced the Governor to have white-washed as an excellent landmark to point out the river, as well as the town. Fremantle, at the entrance of Swan River, was the sea port; and Perth, situated about nine miles inland, the seat of Government. Guildford and York were the other chief places in the colony. Stokes, with little vision, doubted the future success of the colony. However, he later noted from the lake-like Melville Water:

the eye first rests upon the capital of Western Australia, a large straggling village, partly concealed by the abrupt termination of a woody ridge, and standing upon a picturesque slope on the right bank of the river, thirteen miles from its mouth. The distant range of the Darling mountains supplies a splendid background to the picture, and the refreshing sea breeze which curls the surface of Melville water every afternoon, adds to the health, no less than comfort, of the inhabitants.

The Surveyor-General, Mr Roe, strongly recommended that the *Beagle* proceed to the north-west coast and return again to Swan River to recruit; saying that they should find the heat there too great to remain for a longer period. This course Captain Wickham, after due deliberation, resolved to adopt, and accordingly all the stores not absolutely required were landed and the ship made in every respect as airy as possible. ⁸ However, on 3 Jan 1838 Wickham wrote from Swan River:

for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that Her Majesty's Surveying Vessel under my Command arrived at this anchorage

on the 15th of November last and that she would have sailed for the North coast in eight or ten days from that date but that I was unfortunately laid up by a severe attack of Dysentery which confined me to bed for three weeks and has kept me several days since in so weak a state as to be unable to attend to any duty whatever, but being now greatly recovered we shall sail tomorrow in the prosecution of their lordships orders. ⁴⁵

In the meantime, the officers had made tidal observations and found to their surprise that the greatest rise was only 31 inches and that there was only one tide a day. The solemnities of Christmas, and the festal celebration of the New Year, beneath a cloudless sky, and with the thermometer at 90, concluded their first visit to Swan River. ⁸

Leaving Swan River. They left the anchorage in Gage's Road on Thursday, 4 January 1838. On 5 January they sounded regularly every four hours but found no bottom at 200 fathoms. At midnight, they passed within 60 miles of the position assigned in the chart to the low coral group known as Houtman's Abrolhos and again sounded unsuccessfully with 200 fathoms. Subsequent observations placed these islands 30 miles more to the eastward than the position assigned to them in the chart. Their track, therefore, was really 90 miles from them. They continued steering a northerly course up to 9 January, keeping within 60 to 80 miles distance of the coast, and repeating their deep-sea soundings every six hours without finding bottom. At sunset, 14 miles from their noon position, the depth was 145 fathoms, bottom a fine white sand and powdered shells but when 50 miles from their noon position, they could, again, find no bottom at 200 fathoms. By 12 January they were 220 miles from Roebuck Bay and by 14 January had made only 51 miles progress in the direction of that Bay in the previous 24 hours.

On 15 January the anchor was dropped in 14 fathoms, about 17 miles from the south point of Roebuck Bay but next day a heavy squall broke their best bower anchor and drove them half a mile out to sea, when the remaining fluke hooked a rock and brought them up. At daylight, they were again favoured with fine weather. Cape Villaret was visible as the most northerly point, at 16 or 17 miles. The hillock upon this cape and two other hummocks, lying to the southward, formed the only prominent features of the low land in sight. Light airs and the aid of the flood-tide carried them into the centre of Roebuck Bay where they came to an anchor in 7 fathoms. Cape Villaret was about 10 miles away. The fall of the tide was no less than 18 feet.

Collecting materials for the chart was the chief occupation of 17 January. Osborne discovered a high-water inlet in the south shore of the bay, five

miles east of Cape Villaret. While the party were on shore, they were visited by six aborigines. They were of a larger race of men than those on the south coast, seemingly ignorant of the use of the throwing stick, but carrying unbarbed spears, boomerangs, and each carrying a stone axe. None of them had suffered the loss of the front tooth, which was seen in some tribes.

On 19 January Wickham and the surgeon visited an inlet near the ship, which had not been explored before. They proceeded to the south-west for about three miles, through a very tortuous channel, dry in many parts at low water, thickly studded with mangrove bushes, over and through which the tide made its way at high water, giving to that part of the country the appearance of an extensive morass. A slightly elevated table-topped range of land was seen from time to time, some eight or nine miles to the south-east, but in its highest elevation did not reach 200 feet. ⁸ In a letter to the Admiralty on 17 April, Wickham described this channel as a river which they traced in a straight line for about 15 miles in a S.S.E. direction, varying in depth from two feet to two fathoms though generally very shallow. He went on to write that he was

happy to say that there had been no sickness on board, occasioned by the climate, which appears to be equal to any in the world, although the heat is very great. ⁴⁶

Usborne wounded. On 20 January a careful examination of the bay ended, as Stokes had anticipated, in proving that no opening to the interior would be found in it. The party was returning to the boats in the afternoon, when, from the accidental explosion of a musket in the hand of one of the party, a ball entered Usborne's right side, near the spine, between the lower rib and hip bone, making an exit in a line with the navel. The severely injured man was returned to the ship. ⁸

They were again at work by daylight on 24 January but were delayed, getting clear of the foul ground lying off Cape Baskerville. In the bight formed between this Beagle Bay and Cape Baskerville they passed two high-water inlets, the mouths of which were fronted with rocky ledges. They anchored there, soon after midday, and had every reason to be satisfied with their berth. Beagle Bay is about three miles broad and seven deep. A fresh wind in the night made them additionally prize the good anchorage there. Next day, the forenoon was devoted to examining this excellent anchorage, and a party was also despatched to haul the seine nets. On landing they were met by a party of Aborigines, who saluted them in a manner which strikingly resembled the eastern mode. They had no weapon, save one kiley or boomerang. Wickham kept the *Beagle* at the bay until 10 February in order to rate the chronometers and replenish wood and water.

In the afternoon they reached another anchorage, some ten miles further to the north-east. The coast along which they sailed within the distance of two miles was chiefly remarkable for its tall, dark-looking cliffs, with here and there a small sandy bay intervening. They anchored under Point Emeriau, so named by Captain Baudin. Beyond this the coast curved away to the eastward, forming a bight about eleven miles in length.

Leaving their anchorage at daylight on 26 January, they passed the north point of the bight soon after noon; and passed another bight in the afternoon, the shores of which were low and rocky, with a mangrove creek in its depth. From this bight the coast became almost straight, the line being hardly broken by rocky points and shallow sandy bays, to Cape Leveque, on the north-east side of which they found an indifferent anchorage just before sunset. Cape Leveque was a red cliffy point some sixty feet in height, with an islet of the same character lying close off it.

They proceeded on the morning of 27 January in the direction of Point Swan, named by Captain King in honour of Captain Swan of the *Cygnets*, under whom Dampier first discovered it. As they approached it they experienced the heavy tide-race which had buffeted Captain King so roughly, and which subsequent surveying operations enabled them to account for, from great irregularity in the bottom, changing almost at once from 40 to 17 fathoms. At slack water they passed around it quietly enough and anchored in a small bight, one and a half miles from Point Swan, in seven fathoms, or three fathoms at low-water. A strong party was sent on shore, early in the morning, with the necessary tools for digging a well. Aborigines mustered in force upon the heights and three days later it was considered necessary to fire a harmless Congreve rocket over them to ensure safety. However, they soon had a friendly meeting with a party of Aborigines on the beach. On 7 February they secured several boat-loads of rainwater from holes in the rocks, compensating for their well-digging having been unsuccessful.

They remained at this anchorage until 10 February because of continuing bad weather with monsoon-like rain. Having completed their survey and observations, and the wind being favourable, it was resolved to get underway. In the very act of weighing, the ship's keel grazed a sunken rock but with no serious damage. In passing out, they named two low small rocky islands, the Twins.

They found a temporary anchorage on the same morning, on the east side of the large group forming the eastern side of Sunday Strait; so-named by Captain King, who had experienced dangerous conditions on 19 August 1821. This group they named after Lieutenant Roe, R.N., Surveyor-General

of Western Australia, who had accompanied Captain King on that perilous voyage, and whose valuable information had enabled them to escape many of the dangers to which their predecessors had been exposed. Soon after daylight on 12 February they left this anchorage. They later anchored in five fathoms, on the south side of Roe's group, three miles from their former anchorage. A party landed in the afternoon to procure the requisite observations. They found nothing worth particular attention, except a native raft, the first they had seen. It was formed of nine small poles pegged together, and measured ten feet in length by four in breadth; the greatest diameter of the largest pole was three inches. All the poles were of the palm tree, a wood so light that one man could carry the whole affair with the greatest ease. By it there was a double-bladed paddle.

On 14 February, leaving this anchorage, they found another in a bay on the mainland, 12 miles south from Point Swan, and 11 north-west from a remarkable headland named by Captain King, Point Cunningham, in honour of the distinguished botanist after whom Australian plants and geographic features, such as Cunningham's Gap, are named. Stokes recalled, in glowing Victorian language, that when they were preparing to sail from Sydney, in May 1839, the scientific veteran seemed to enter with the utmost interest into all the details of the coming adventure, even though debilitated from his former exertions, only two months before his death.

They remained at this sheltered anchorage until 21 February, by which time the coast, as far as Point Cunningham, had been carefully examined. They found it everywhere indented with deep bays, in each of which good anchorage was to be found. In the afternoon they moved into a bay north-west of Point Cunningham. The greater part of the day was spent in making a more minute examination of the bay. A singular cliff, projecting on its south-east side, was called by Captain King Carlisle Head, but they searched in vain for the fresh water which that distinguished navigator had found there in 1819.

They weighed early in the morning of 23 February and rounded Point Cunningham, anchoring again at 10 o'clock A.M., 8 miles north of it. One mile from where they lay, there was a red cliffy head, called by Captain King in memory of the difficulties that ultimately compelled him to leave this interesting coast, Foul Point. It marked the limit of his survey of this part of the northern shore of Australia and terminated the range of cliffs. Beyond it, the coast assumed a low and treacherous character and subsided into a deep bay, previously called by King, not without reason, Disaster Bay.

Next day, 26 February, two boats crossed Disaster Bay: Helpman in the whaleboat and Stokes and Tarrant in the yawl, steering in the direction of

Valentine Island. They landed on a spit with luxuriant vegetation beyond which was a small freshwater lake. They reached the island in the early afternoon. At each end it was bounded by high cliffs and a low valley intervened. They pulled up the boats on a sandy beach at what, because of the mosquitoes, they termed Point Torment, 17 degrees 5 minutes South. Here they found an *Adansonia*-like tree, the fruit of which was described in some detail. The nearest land was afterwards named Escape Point because the boats were nearly marooned because of tidal conditions. They discovered the mouth of a large river.

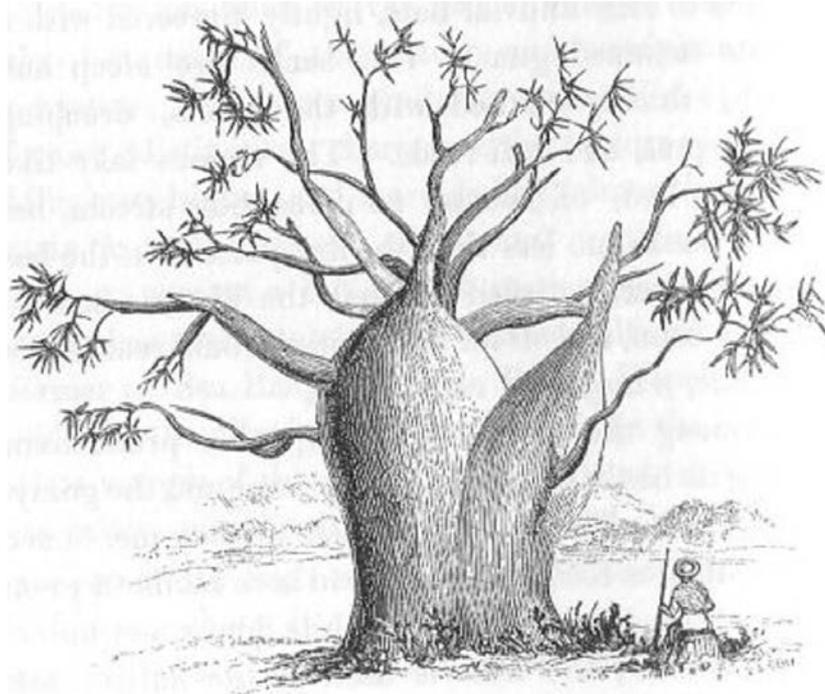
Fitz-Roy River. Stokes suggested with Wickham's approval, that this river in what is now called the Kimberleys, in north-western Australia, should be named the Fitz-Roy in grateful recollection of his personal kindness; thus, in Stokes' words

perpetuating, by the most durable of monuments, the services and the career of one, in whom, with rare and enviable prodigality, were mingled the daring of the seaman, the accomplishments of the student, the graces of the Christian and calm fortitude in the hour of impending danger.⁸

After several adventures exploring the river, its exploration was resumed at noon of 7 March by Wickham, Eden and Stokes in the gig and Tarrant in one of the whale-boats. They reached mangrove isles at sunset and spent the night between them and the eastern shore. On the 8th the tide suited them badly, and they were able to proceed only about four miles beyond 'Escape Point', where they secured the boats in a creek out of the influence of the tide. In the evening they made an excursion into the interior but were disappointed to find the channel occupied, at low water, by a mere rivulet, draining the extensive mud flats then left uncovered. Further up, the river deepened to as much as 12 feet but by 11 March they encountered rapids and Wickham decided to give up the exploration and ordered the boats to return, considering the evident risks too great to justify further perseverance. They therefore gave up the exploration of the Fitz-Roy at 17° 44' S., 124° 34' E., having traced its course for 22 miles in a general S.S.W. direction, and having penetrated 90 miles from the coast line, towards the centre of Australia, from which they estimated that they were still distant 600 miles. They had had several sightings of Aborigines who seemed very afraid. Wickham named a large bay after Stokes on 14 March, a name which persists.

On 21 March, Usborne, somewhat recovered from his wound, was despatched to look for a berth for the ship further to the North-West, while Wickham and Stokes went towards Compass Hill, accompanied by Bynoe, who, during the excursion, added several rare birds to his collection. They

saw a gouty-stem tree [clearly a baobab] and what seemed to be a new species of vine.



A gouty-stem tree, clearly a baobab

Port Usborne. They found Compass Hill to be a mound on a sandstone platform. Bynoe wounded a large kangaroo; they gave chase but lost not only it but also a compass. On another occasion they killed a kangaroo, using dogs.



An unpleasant scene. Killing a kangaroo, using dogs ⁴⁷

On their return to the *Beagle*, they found that Usborne had discovered good anchorage in a cove, hence named Port Usborne.

On March 22 they moved the ship into Port Usborne, the only safe anchorage among the islands on the eastern shore of King's Sound. This snug little port was three-quarters of a mile broad and one deep and varying in depth from seven to fifteen fathoms. On 23 March, the boats were manned early, and they left the ship. Usborne proceeded in one boat to examine a group of islands, lying six miles north-west from the anchorage, Tarrant and Stokes in the other, to explore the eastern shore of King's Sound. After passing the extreme north-west point of the mainland, seen from the ship, they discovered a deep bay which, once reached, would afford safe anchorage for a fleet. Later, a small bay fortunately afforded them the means of avoiding a treacherous ledge of sunken rocks. Landing to cook their dinners, Stokes went to the top of the highest neighbouring hill, to obtain a round of angles. After dinner they crossed two deep bays, both affording good anchorage, but utterly useless because of the barrier of reefs and islets extending across their mouths. The second and deepest they named Cone Bay, from a singular hill on its eastern shore. It was nearly dark when they anchored, and therefore their intended attempt to gain the summit of the neighbouring heights was necessarily postponed till morning.⁸ William Dampier had spent three days on the shores of King's Sound in 1688, the first Briton to visit Australia.⁴⁸

On March 24, after a late breakfast they again bore away to the north-east under a double-reefed sail as the sky wore a threatening appearance. After clearing the channel they crossed a bay about two miles wide and four deep, thickly studded with small islands. At noon, being near the north point of it, Stokes landed in order to secure coordinates. Here for the first time since leaving the Fitzroy River they saw native fires. They had as yet seen no traces of either canoes or rafts, and therefore were not a little curious to see what mode of conveyance the aborigines of these parts used.

The north point of this bay formed a most remarkable headland, rising abruptly from the water to an elevation of 400 feet with strange columnar rocks scattered over its level summit. They experienced violent whirlpools, the first of which handled them very roughly, suddenly wrenching the oars out of the men's hands and whirling the boat round with alarming rapidity. After several round turns of this kind they shot out of the channel, that they named Whirlpool Channel, into a bay about three miles wide at the head of which were some snug coves, the shores of which were clothed with long rich grass and clumps of palm trees. They pushed on across the bay for a

group of islands three miles further in a north-north-east direction, where they obtained snug quarters for the night in a little sandy cove, in the largest of this small cluster of slatey isles. They named the largest island Bathurst Island, after Captain King's vessel. The Macleay Isles of Captain King bore NNE about six miles. They were glad to find the islands becoming less numerous, and a prospect of at last making their way to the eastward.

Aboriginal huts. They found several Aboriginal habitations of a totally different and very superior description to any they had seen in any other part of Australia; they bore a marked resemblance to those seen on the south-east coast of Tierra del Fuego.



A substantial native hut . ⁸

Stout poles from 14 to 16 feet high formed the framework of these snug huts; these were brought together conically at the roof; a stout thatching of dried grass completely excluded both wind and rain. The remains of small fires, a well greased bark pillow, a head ornament of seabird's feathers, together with several other trifling articles, strewn upon the floors of these wigwams, proved that they had been very recently inhabited. But perhaps the most interesting discovery in this bay was a native raft, described in some detail by Stokes.

With the first grey of the morning on 26 March they left Bathurst Island, on their return southward. A dignified native whom they had previously met came alongside. They found that Miago, the native of Swan River they had on board, could never understand the language spoken by his countrymen on the western shore of King's Sound. The raft of the man was similar to that previously seen upon Roe's Group, with the exception that between each pole several small pieces of wood were inserted so as to make the flooring

of the raft almost smooth. Into the large end of the centre, and largest pole, six long pegs were driven, forming a kind of basket in which were secured his means for procuring fire. They consisted of two pieces of white flint, and some tinder manufactured from the inner bark of the 'papyrus tree'. He paddled with a short spear, sharp at each end, and struck the water alternately on either side and thus contrived to make way with a rapidity that astonished them.

After endeavouring to make him understand that they would sleep some distance to the south, where there was a larger boat, the *Beagle*, they filled his basket with bread, gave him as much water as he could drink, and bidding him farewell, reluctantly cut him adrift. On 27 March Stokes' party stopped at Tide Race Bay, and on the 28th Cascade Bay, with its beautiful stream.

The boats did not reach the ship until the morning of 29 March, entering Port Usborne by a narrow rocky channel, on its north-west shore. On the precipitous sides in this passage they noticed several Rock Kangaroo. Usborne had returned three days before them and gave an account of the islands he had visited. During the absence of the boats, tidal and magnetic observations had been made and some specimens in natural history had been collected. They closed at Port Usborne their explorations in the vast King's Sound, the result of which enabled them to fill up the gap long existing in the charts of the north-west coast of Australia.

They left Port Usborne on 30 March. Point Cunningham and Carlisle Head on the western shore of King's Sound appeared like two high square-looking islands. They anchored soon after high-water and remained at this anchorage till 3 April, during which time several unsuccessful hauls were made with the seine, confirming the scarcity of fish noted by King.

On 1 April Wickham and Stokes left the *Beagle*, in the unsuccessful hope of inducing the Aborigines to return with them. They looked forward anxiously to their arrival at Port George the Fourth, as there, or at least in that neighbourhood, they hoped to hear some tidings of their friends Grey and Lushington, who, when separated from them at the Cape, intended to land in Hanover Bay, establish a depot for stores and thence penetrate into the interior.

Early in the morning of the 3 April, they left their anchorage under Point Cunningham, and worked through Sunday Strait, passed Caffarelli Island and anchored in 29 fathoms. 24 April, saw them again underway but they did not get beyond Adele Island and anchored 3 miles from it.

Brue Reef was seen in the course of the day, and appeared to be correctly laid down by Captain King. There appeared, however, some discrepancy in

the position of Adele Island, the southern extremity of which they found to be one mile and a half to the southward of the place assigned to it in his chart. The island was low, desolate and barren. One beautiful fragment of coral was obtained in sounding in Sunday Strait at 30 fathoms, a depth at which living coral was rarely found.

Daylight on 5 April found the *Beagle* standing to the eastward with a light northerly wind, in soundings ranging from 14 to 40 fathoms. They named a bank of dead coral, rising some 15 feet above the mean level of the blue surrounding water, Beagle Bank, at latitude 15 degrees 20 minutes South, longitude 123 degrees 36 minutes East. They anchored in the evening in 16 fathoms, 3½ miles from the bank. The tide was two hours later here than in the entrance to King's Sound. On 6 April they anchored in 31 fathoms. The soundings during the run varied from 35 to 39 fathoms, 17 miles west of Red Island.

It was nearly dark before they reached an anchorage on 7 April, in 18 fathoms, one mile from Point Adieu having observed the sea-face of the Champagny Islands.

The most remarkable objects in this neighbourhood, were two hills, named by King Mount Trafalgar, and Mount Waterloo. The ship was delayed for some days, searching for traces of Lieutenants Grey and Lushington's party. As the examination of Collier Bay, where they still hoped to find an opening leading into the interior, would prevent the necessity of their return to this part of the coast, Stokes applied to Wickham, for permission to proceed with the two whaleboats on that service.

By daylight on 8 April, the boats had left the ship, and were standing to the southward among the islands. The party consisted of Helpman, Fitzmaurice and Stokes. Passing through the eastern part of Port George the Fourth, they entered Roger Strait, which led into a large sheet of water, forming a beautiful harbour. They landed to obtain a better view of it, on an attractive, grassy island at the southern entrance of this strait. They then pushed on for an island lying in the entrance of the harbour, afterwards called Brecknock Harbour, as King had named the entrance Camden Sound.

The island was called from its situation, Entrance Island. Their labours closed with observations for a boat rate, for the chronometers and latitude, the latter being 15 degrees 27 1/4 minutes South on a sandy beach at the eastern side of Entrance Isle.

On 9 April they named Battery Point, Slate Islands, Freshwater Cove, and saw the Montgomery Islands of Captain King and Point Hall a headland, named by him. At daylight on 10 April they landed on a small rocky islet, to take coordinates. This island was overrun with a great variety of lizards

and they therefore named it Lizard Island [not the Barrier Reef island named by Captain Cook]. They named Eagle Point for a projection where they shot an 'eagle' (*Falco*). On 11 April they landed on a high rocky island in the mouth of it, the summit of which afforded a good view of a shallow inlet of Collier Bay. Thus terminated their explorations in Collier Bay, revealing that it did not lead to a substantial water course into the interior.

In the afternoon they commenced their return to Port George the Fourth, from which they were then distant about 80 miles, after delaying to examine two slaty islands four miles from the inlet. Towards the morning of 12 April there was a south-east breeze which brought the thermometer down to 76 degrees; it generally ranged between 80 and 96 degrees. They continued in the boats to explore a large bay, later called Doubtful Bay because of their failure to establish whether it contained the mouth of the Glenelg, and named Raft Point after observing further native rafts. Helpman explored the north east of the bay, Stokes and Fitzmaurice climbed to a tableland at 900 feet. On 14 April on the way to Point Hall, they named the Slate Isles, flanking Camden Sound, and on the 15th reached Entrance Island in the large Brecknock Harbour. By 16 April they cleared Roger Strait and returned to the *Beagle*. There they found Lieutenant Grey, wounded and emaciated, after his long journeys in the interior having parted from the *Beagle* a few months earlier on the schooner *Lynsailher* at the Cape. He and his party, now all safe, had discovered the river they named the Glenelg, on 2 March.

Port George the Fourth. On moving into Port George the Fourth, the *Beagle's* guns had been fired to apprise Grey's party of the presence of the ship. They had been heard by the master of the *Lynher*, Mr. Browse, anxiously awaiting the arrival of Grey at an agreed depot. Next day, 9 April, Wickham started in the yawl for Hanover Bay, the site for the depot, and on rounding the headland found the schooner at anchor. The further care of Lieutenant Grey and his comrades was at once undertaken by Wickham, who determined, owing to the shortness of provisions on board the *Beagle*, to proceed to Timor on the return of the boats, in the hope of being able to revictual there. A party was despatched on shore and upon the face of the sandstone cliff they painted in characters of gigantic proportion, Beagle Observatory. Letters South-east 52 paces. Having waited for the boats, Captain Wickham returned to the *Beagle*.

Reappearance of Grey and Lushington. On the morning of 15 April, Lieutenant Grey, accompanied by two of his party, had made his appearance upon the shores of Hanover Bay, very exhausted after wandering for twelve weeks in the interior; during which great hardships, fatigue, and peril had

been experienced but valuable information collected. The whole party then joined the *Beagle*.

The next afternoon Stokes followed Grey round to Hanover Bay, twelve miles from the *Beagle*'s anchorage. After sunset they reached the schooner and the greater part of the night was devoted to an examination of Lieutenant Grey's meticulously kept records of his expedition. Next day they visited Grey's encampment. This, with six Timor ponies, was abandoned.

While the men were preparing for embarkation onto the *Lynher*, Stokes strolled with Lushington up the valley, a little beyond the late encampment. Assisted by the boats the whole party embarked in the early afternoon and were highly delighted to find themselves again on board the schooner. The same evening the *Lynher* was moved round to Port George the Fourth, thus affording the *Beagle*'s crew an opportunity of welcoming all their former fellow-voyagers once more on board their ship.⁸

On 9 April the *Beagle* left Port George the Fourth on its return to Swan River, in company with the *Lynher*, in which Grey and his party had arranged to proceed to Mauritius. Progress through the day was slow, the wind light and most provokingly foul at WNW.⁸

At daylight, on 20 April, whilst standing to the south-west the water shoaled rapidly though regularly from 20 to 6 fathoms, they then tacked one and a quarter miles from Red Island. They passed the island on the way to Port George the Fourth and on 21 April, passed four miles from the northern side of the formerly named Beagle Reef.

In the evening of 23 April the *Beagle* parted from the *Lynher* after evenings passed together at sea which had been rendered very pleasant and amusing by the crews singing to each other as the vessels, side by side, slipped stealthily through the moonlit waters.⁸

They passed within fifteen miles of Lively's Reef on 24 April. By 27 April they were approaching the usual track of vessels bound from Australia to India, when they observed a strange sail. They concluded that Tremouille Island and its outlying reefs were the site where the Tryal Rocks were supposed to lie.

Miago's skill. Stokes noted how their Aboriginal passenger, Miago, could indicate at once and correctly the exact direction of a wished-for harbour. He also seemed to have carried the ship's track in his memory with the most careful accuracy. Despite Miago's evocations for a change of wind they did not see Rottneest Island before the morning of 25 May.

As Gage Road was not considered safe at this time of the year, the ship was taken into Owen's anchorage under the guidance of Osborne. They steered for a patch of low cliffs about two miles south of Fremantle, which

brought them up to the anchorage in 7 and 8 fathoms, passing between Success Bank and Palmelia Bank.

Thus concluded their first cruise on this almost hitherto unknown part of the continent. They had added 300 miles of new land to the geographical store and succeeded in the discovery of a river, the Fitzroy. Besides the nautical information obtained, some additions were made to the secondary objects of the voyage, by increasing knowledge of the natural history and indigenous productions of North-western Australia.

Swan River. They found the Swan River colony, on its anniversary, in a state of neglect. In the space of six months its only visitor had been the *Pelorus*. Many necessary articles of home manufacture or importation were becoming almost unattainable: the price of yellow soap had risen to four shillings per pound. The usual winter anchorage in Cockburn Sound being seven miles from the town of Fremantle, the *Beagle* moved to Owen's anchorage, nearer in and proving safe. A party from the ship visited York, some sixty miles east of Perth, with disappointed comments on the fertility of the country. Aborigines employed as servants appeared sharp and intelligent lads.

On 20 June the *Beagle* took leave of her friends in Western Australia, proceeding out of Owen's anchorage. During their stay there, nothing could have exceeded the kindness and hospitality with which they were welcomed. At midnight of 23 June they passed Cape Leeuwin, the south-western extremity of the continent; named by the first discoverer in 1622, Landt van de Leeuwin or the land of Lions. There they experienced severe gales during which they were attended by the White Albatross, *Diomedea exulans*. In a gale off this Cape in 1836, HMS *Zebra* had been compelled to throw her guns overboard.

Tasmania. It had been their intention to have passed through Bass Strait but owing to severe gales they steered on 6 July for Hobart. Early on the morning of the 8th they observed the south-western extremity of the land of Van Diemen, discovered in 1633 by the celebrated Dutch navigator, Abel Tasman, and so named by him after the Governor of Batavia, under whose authority the voyage, crowned with success, had been performed. That Tasmania was an island was not fully ascertained until the year 1798, when the intrepid Bass, then surgeon of HMS *Reliance*, while on a whaleboat cruise from Sydney, discovered the strait that henceforth bore his name. It was now known as Tasmania, though this name was not recognized by the Legislative Council of Van Diemen's Land until 1855. ⁸

Towards 10 A.M. they passed about six miles from the south-west Cape of Tasmania. The view of this headland was striking with its white and aged

face rising a thousand feet precipitously above the level of the sea and terminating in a peak.

On opening d'Entrecasteaux Channel, they observed the splendid lighthouse erected by Sir John Franklin, the Governor, on the south-west extremity of Bruny Island. They entered the aptly named Storm Bay after dark and it was morning before they were abreast of the Iron Pot lighthouse at the entrance of the Derwent River and after dark before they reached Sullivan's cove, Hobart. They saw many pretty little cottages scattered along the sloping banks of the river and, adding to the luxuriant appearance of the country, the peaceful grace and sanctity of home.

They were detained at Hobart till 19 July by bad weather and encountered two or three snowstorms during that time, but even in fine weather the proximity of Mount Wellington, towering above Hobart, and throwing its strange square-headed shadow across the still waters of Sullivan's cove, rendered Fort Mulgrave an unfavourable spot for observations.

Sydney Harbour. They sailed from Hobart on 19 July and by the 24th distinguished the light near the entrance of Sydney Harbour, while at a distance of thirty miles from it. The low land in the vicinity of Sydney and Botany Bay presented a striking contrast with the coast of the Illawarra district, a little further southwards, with its lofty range of hills separated from the sea by an extensive tract of low country.⁸

In a letter to the Admiralty on 25 July Wickham recorded the arrival of the 'Sloop Beagle' at Sydney from Swan River on the previous day:

having called at Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, for the purpose of rating the chronometers. She will proceed to Bass Strait, after refitting and having laid down the work collected on the N.W. Coast, a tracing of which I hope to be able to send to the Hydrographer by an early conveyance with a more detailed account of the proceedings there than time permitted me to send by Lieut. Grey of the overland expedition in April last, a duplicate of which accompanies this communication.⁴⁹

Port Jackson. They entered the magnificent harbour of Port Jackson, admiring the security and capacity of the port:

its many snug coves and quiet islets with their sloping shores, sleeping upon the silver tide - pretty white cottages and many English-looking villas peeping out here and there from their surrounding shrubberies, and the whole canopied by a sky of ethereal blue, present a picture which must at once enchant the most fastidious observer.

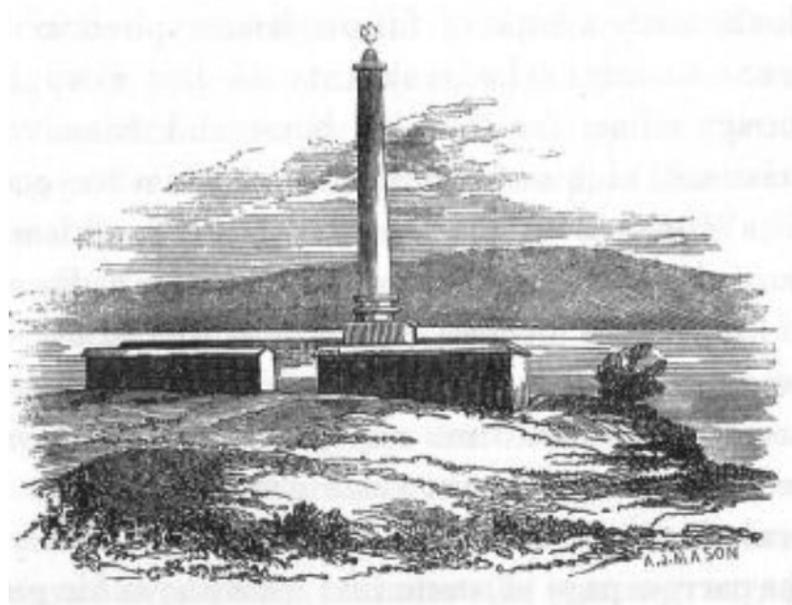
A noble city had sprung as though by magic from the ground. They found lying in the famous cove of Sydney, HMS *Alligator* and HMS *Britomart*, commanded by Captain Sir Gordon Bremer, and Lieutenant (later Captain)

Owen Stanley, going to form a settlement at Port Essington (of which more later) on the North coast. ⁸

On 6 November Wickham wrote from Sydney to the Admiralty:

Her Majesty's Surveying Vessel under my command will sail on the 8th instant [November] for Bass Strait where she will be employed until the end of March ... calling at Port Essington early in May. The *Beagle* will in all probability be employed on the North and West Coasts until the end of next year when she will return to this place for stores and provisions before commencing the examination of Torres Strait and the shores of New Guinea. Tracings of the work collected on the North Coast have been sent to the Hydrographer by their conveyances. ⁵⁰

Among the few occurrences at Sydney which Stokes considered worth mentioning was the departure of the expedition sent out to form a settlement at Port Essington on the northern coast. Its object was simply military occupation, it having been deemed advisable about that time to assert the supremacy of Great Britain over the Continent by occupying some of its most prominent points; but as soon as its destination became known in the colony, several persons came forward as volunteer-settlers and expressed the greatest anxiety to be allowed to accompany the expedition. ⁸



Monument to La Perouse at Botany Bay ⁸

Botany Bay and La Perouse. During their stay at Sydney they paid a visit to Botany Bay, the point first touched at by Captain Cook, a journey over a sandy plain which was disagreeable to both man and beast. There they saw the monument to the ill-fated La Perouse, erected by de Bougainville and Ducampier in 1825, with the support of Governor Brisbane. At Cape Solander, on the opposite point of the bay, they saw a plate set in the rock, recording the first visit of ‘the immortal Cook’. They also visited Illawara, ‘the Garden of New South Wales’, and admired its luxuriant vegetation. Stokes commented unfavourably on the degraded state of the Aborigines of the Sydney region. Among people they met was Captain King. Soundings in Port Jackson compared with those formerly made convinced them that the Australian continent was rising.

South to Bass Strait. It was not until 11 November that they sailed from Sydney to commence their contemplated operations. On the 14th they passed the rocky islands (Kent's Group) at the eastern entrance of Bass Strait. On the 17th they passed Wilson's Promontory, the southern extremity of Australia, connected with the mainland by a low sandy isthmus. Passing Port Western, generally called Western Port, a high mound on the south-eastern extremity of Grant Island was the most conspicuous object. The next remarkable feature in the coast was Cape Shanck, a projection at the western end of a long line of cliffs. Lying close off it was the descriptively named Pulpit Rock.



Cape Schanck looking towards Pulpit Rock at dawn in 2016. Photo Marshlung, Wikipedia.

Port Phillip. The *Beagle* reached Port Phillip on the afternoon of 18 November. Despite the surprising absence of ‘rippings’ there was a strong outward current, sufficient to carry a schooner, with sails set, afterwards. Besides high land forming a bluff (called by the Aborigines Dandonong) in the north east the principal features were Arthur's Seat, and Station Peak. The latter, called Youang by the Aborigines, was one of a small group of lofty peaks rising abruptly out of a low plain on the western shore of the bay; whilst Arthur's Seat towered over the eastern shore and formed the northern extremity of a range subsiding gradually to the coast at Cape Shanck.

They made additions to Matthew Flinders’s chart of the South coast. This testified to the great abilities of that intrepid navigator and explorer.

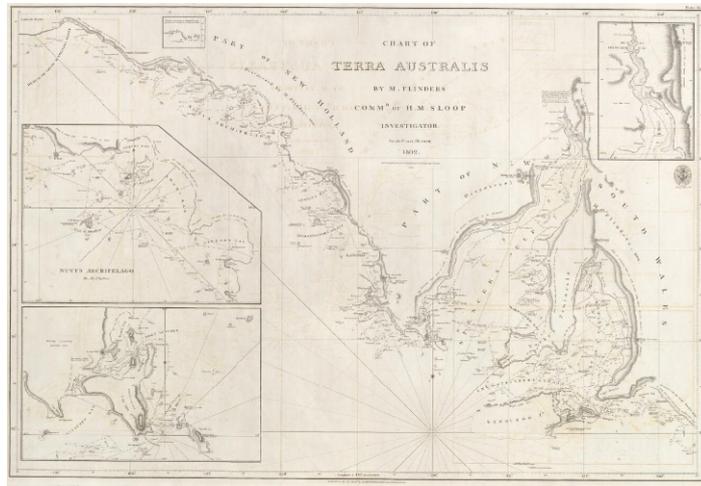


Chart of Terra Australis. South coast by M. Flinders, Commander of HM. Sloop *Investigator*, 1802; with additions by Commanders J.C. Wickham and J.L. Stokes, 1841. National Library of Australia

Busy with their soundings, they had no opportunity of visiting the town of Melbourne, situated near the northern side of the bay. This capital of Australia Felix had for a long time been known to some squatters from Tasmania but Sir Thomas Mitchell had revealed to the world at large the fertility of the districts in its neighbourhood. It was surprising that the attempt to form a settlement at this place in 1826 should have failed. A fort was built and abandoned and of the party of convicts who accompanied the expedition, two escaped and joined the Aborigines, by whom one was murdered. The other, contriving by some means to ingratiate himself with

them, remained in their company until 1835, when he was discovered by the settlers from Tasmania. During the eleven years he had passed in the bush, without coming in contact with any other European, he had entirely forgotten his own language and had degenerated into a 'perfect savage'. Nothing of any value could be gleaned from him respecting the history and manners of the tribe with whom he had so long dwelt. He received his pardon and went to Hobart, but such was the indolence he had contracted that nothing could be made of him.⁸

Bad weather prolonged their stay in Port Phillip until 26 November. They noted Point Flinders, resembling an island from seaward, and the mouth of the river Barwon, navigable for boats entering in very fine weather. On its northern bank, eight miles from the sea was the site of the town of Geelong.

Bass Strait. They next encountered Cape Otway, the northern point of the western extremity of Bass Strait. The pernicious effect of the winds from the Strait to which it was exposed was evident in the stunted appearance of the trees in its neighbourhood. It formed a bold projection in latitude 38 degrees 51 minutes, and appeared to be the south-west extremity of a ridge of granite gradually rising from it in a North-east direction.

To expedite the work of the *Beagle* in Bass Strait, Sir John Franklin placed at the disposal of the Commander, Wickham, the colonial cutter *Vansittart*, a Port Arthur built vessel of 70 tons. Two of the *Beagle's* officers were placed on board in charge: Mr Forsyth, commander, with Mr Pasco as second. Captain Pasco ultimately settled in Melbourne and was for many years a well-known figure in Australian marine circles, well-known also in Tasmania and remembered as president of the geographical section of the 1892 session (Hobart meeting) Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science.

The *Beagle* then proceeded to cross over to Tasmania. About halfway was King Island, named after Philip Gidley King, the former. . It lay right across the entrance of the Strait, about forty miles from either shore, and from its isolated position was 'well adapted for a penal settlement'. The more northern channel of the two formed by this island was the safer; the most conspicuous point was a round hill 600 feet high over the northern point called Cape Wickham. They anchored in a bay on the north-west side, under New Year Island, which afforded shelter for a few vessels from all winds. They met a sealer, established on the north island with two native wives. They were clothed in very comfortable greatcoats made of kangaroo skins and seemed contented. Their offspring appeared sharp and intelligent. The principal occupation of these people during this month of the year was taking the Sooty Petrel, still called by Australians the Mutton Bird. From

the top of this island they had a good view of the Harbinger reefs, so-called from a convict ship of that name which was wrecked upon them with loss of all hands.



Built in 1861, the Cape Wickham Lighthouse is the tallest in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere

King Island. They visited a Captain Smith who had taken up his residence on the shores of King Island with his family. He had given the name of Port Franklin to the bay, which the *Beagle* officers changed to Franklin Road, as it was not worthy of the title of a port. His house was a slab hut, thatched with grass but it had a good library and a flute with music.

On 29 November they passed down the western shore of King Island. About eight miles from the extremity of the island they discovered a bay which afforded good anchorage in east winds. It was afterwards called

Fitzmaurice Bay. The island stretched out into a low dangerous rocky point, named after Stokes. Rounding this they anchored on the eastern side of it in Seal Bay, a wild anchorage, the swell constantly rolling in with too much surf to allow tidal observations. Bynoe shot a wallaby (*Halmaturus belliderei*) out of whose pouch he took a young one which he kept on board and tamed. It subsequently became a great pet with them all.

Leaving Seal Bay, from the south point of which they saw the principal dangers at this extremity of Bass Strait, Reid's rocks, they coasted round the eastern shore and anchored off a sandy bay about the centre of the island. The only remarkable object was a rock, lying one mile from the shore and five from Seal Bay, on which they bestowed the name, from its form, Brig Rock. Off the north point of the bay in which they anchored was a white rock or islet called Sea Elephant Rock, with a reef a mile off its north point. They then crossed over to the group of islands fronting the north-western point of Tasmania, and confining the southern side of the mouth of the Strait.

Early on the morning of 3 December, they reached a secure anchorage between Three Hummock Island, and Hunter, formerly called Barren Island, and thus escaped destructive gales. The south of its three peaks rose abruptly from the water and formed a singular sugar-loaf 790 feet high. Bynoe procured a few specimens of birds.

Islands visited. From stations on Hunter Island they were able to determine the positions of the numerous dangers fronting its west or seaward side, and also that of a dark mass of rock, 250 feet high, appropriately named the Black Pyramid, which Wickham painted, lying 16 miles from the centre of the island, and nearly five miles south of its position in the old charts. It was quite a finger-post to this entrance of the Strait.



Black Pyramid at the entrance to Bass Strait. By John Wickham. Mitchell Library

Rounding Hunter Island, Captain Flinders and his enterprising companion Bass, the discoverers of the north-western part of Tasmania in their little Norfolk cutter, had shown that Tasmania was an island. The south end of Hunter Island was about three miles from a point on the mainland, called Point Woolnorth. From the rocks and inlets that encumbered the passage and the rapid rush of the tide it was navigable only for small vessels with great caution. Ten miles south of it a raised beach lay at 100 feet above the level of the sea. Circular Head was 26 miles away.

Walker and Robbins islands, which lay together in the shape of an equilateral triangle, with sides of nine miles, fronted the coast about midway, and left only a narrow boat-channel between them and the main. On Walker Island their boats met the wives of some sealers whose husbands had gone to King Island on a sealing excursion. One was half European and half Tasmanian, and by no means ill-looking; she spoke very good English. Her two companions were Aborigines of pure blood. A few wild flowers were tastefully entwined with her hair, which was dressed with some pretensions of elegance. They had a pack of dogs and depended in a great measure for their maintenance on the wallabies they killed. The skin of these animals also constituted to them an important article of trade.

Owing to constant bad weather, it was 15 December before they had completed their survey in the boats.

They then examined the coast to Circular Head, under the north side of which they anchored in 7 fathoms on the morning of the 18th, after spending a day under the south-east corner off Robbins Island, where they had found

good anchorage in westerly winds. The Head was a singular cliffy mass rising abruptly from the water till its flattened crest reached an elevation of 490 feet. On the parts broken off where it joined the sandy bay on the north side, they found the compass perfectly useless, from the increased quantity of magnetic iron ore they contained. Hyfield, a straggling village with English gardens, occupied a flat to the left. In the bay on the south side of the head, which was the usual anchorage, there was a store with a substantial jetty. In the Park at Hyfield were some thriving fallow deer, imported from England.

Stokes records that Count Strzelecki had traversed the country between Circular Head and Point Woolnorth and described it as presenting:

eight rivers as difficult to cross as the Scamander, with deep gullies and rocky ridges, and marshes more difficult to overcome than either ridges or rivers.

Tamar River. On the same day the *Beagle* left for the Tamar River, in order to measure the longitude, passing six miles from Rocky Cape, and approached the mouth of the Tamar. The 19th was one of the few fine days and gave a splendid view of the alpine features of Tasmania, towering peaks connected sometimes by high tablelands.

Early in the afternoon, the lighthouse on Low Head appeared and by evening they were at anchor just within the reefs fronting the west entrance point of Port Dalrymple and the Tamar river [in fact a 43 mile (70km) long estuary, saline throughout its length]. They imagined the joy experienced by Captain Flinders on first discovering the Tamar in 1798. George Town was a straggling village lying two miles within the entrance of the Tamar. Launceston, the northern capital of Tasmania, lay thirty miles up the river at the confluence of two streams, the North and South Esk.⁸ George Town was named for George III and was settled in 1804, two years before Launceston.

Franklin. Stokes paid tribute to Sir John Franklin who was Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1837 to 1843. In 1845 he led the Arctic expedition seeking the North-West Passage when his ships became locked in ice and his entire party perished most tragically.



Sir John Franklin

Port Phillip and Melbourne. On the morning of 22 December, the *Beagle* sailed from the Tamar and at noon on the 23rd entered Port Phillip. By 3 PM they were anchored in Hobson's Bay in the vicinity of William Town, named after King William IV. It stood on a low piece of land forming the southern shore of the Bay, called Point Gellibrand after a local businessman, and consisted of only a few houses. In the north-west corner of the bay was the mouth of the Yarra-Yarra river.

Proceeding up the Yarra, they found that about two miles from the mouth, the river divided, one branch continuing in a northerly direction and the other, a narrow sluggish stream, turning suddenly off to the eastward. The township of Melbourne on its north bank, five miles from the river mouth, was a very bustling place. It is hard now to imagine the great city it has become with, in 1838, scarcely two thousand persons. ⁸ It had been founded in 1835 under the short-lived native name of Dootigala . This was the most fertile district the *Beagle* company had seen in all Australia and we may sadly reflect that so much of this fertile ground has been built over.

A rocky ledge extended across the river fronting the town, upon which the plan had been formed of erecting a dam for the purpose of keeping the water fresh; whereas then the river was salt above the town, and the well water was not particularly good. The Yarra was not navigable, even for boats, many miles beyond Melbourne, on account of the numerous falls. There were now no Aborigines in the neighbourhood of Melbourne but some of the old men remember the time when the site of the town was under water.

The party returned to the ship by a short route leading direct from Melbourne to the northern shore of Hobson's Bay where they spent Christmas day. The thermometer on a wall under the glare of the sun stood at 135 degrees. They surveyed the Bay during their stay.

Corio Harbour to Geelong. Having completed operations, the *Beagle* next morning, New Year's Day, 1 January 1839, departed for Corio Harbour, situated at the head of a deep inlet midway on the western shore of Port Phillip. In the afternoon she anchored in three fathoms, about a quarter of a mile from the south point of Corio Harbour. This was a level expanse of land named Point Henry, from which a long spit extended, leaving only a shoal channel between it and the northern shore. Thus, though the harbour had apparently a broad open mouth, it was impossible for a large vessel to enter it.

After breakfast next day, a party went to visit Captain Fyans, the police magistrate of the district, to arrange a trip to Station Peak. They landed on the south-west corner of Corio Harbour immediately over which was the north end of the township of Geelong. Captain Fyans was living in a log-hut on the banks of the Marabul River. The road thither lay west about three miles across a woody down.

The Marabul ran to the southward, and joined the Barwon flowing from the west, after which the united streams took a south-easterly direction. They traced the Barwon almost to its confluence with the sea. On their return they met some of the Aborigines who were the first they had seen on this part of the continent. Stokes considered them a finer race than the people on

the western coasts. They complained of the white men bringing animals into their country that scared away the kangaroo, and destroyed the roots which at certain seasons of the year formed part of their sustenance. This was a very general complaint.

They started for Station Peak (Ude Youang to the Aborigines) very early next morning. Some miles on they crossed a hollow where they noticed shells of recent species, showing that an upheaval had taken place in this part of the continent; shells had been found at over a hundred feet. Leaving their horses at the foot of the peak, they ascended it by a sloping ridge on the south-east face. Huge blocks of granite covered the sides and summits of this and the smaller peak. At the summit was a pilfered cairn of stones erected by Captain Flinders. [Now we have in his memory his inscribed grave, discovered under Euston Station.] The peak gave splendid views of Port Phillip and the course of the Little and Weariby rivers meandering through the plain. Stokes noted that local native place names ended in 'ng', in Gippsland, with 'n' and in Western Australia with 'up'.

On the morning of 5 January the *Beagle* left Geelong, touched at Hobson's Bay for a chronometric check, and proceeded to sea by the south channel. Arthur's Seat was a good guide for its entrance from the bay. Because of bad weather it was three days before they passed through the highly navigable channel. They saw Flinders Point between Lonsdale and Nepean Points.

Western Port to Port Phillip and back. Leaving Port Phillip, they surveyed the coast to the eastward, and anchored in the entrance of Port Western after dark on the 10th. Next morning, they examined the south-west part of Grant Island, and moved the ship to a more secure anchorage off its North-east point. Port Western lay between Grant and French islands.⁸

Gales detained them until the 19th. They saw an almost black kangaroo and very numerous black swans. The birds were very cruelly treated by sealers who confined them until almost starved so as not to contaminate the feathers with fat. There were a few relics of an abandoned settlement. The port was commended for its ease of access.

On 19 January they left Port Western, passing Tortoise Head, on the south-east extremity of French Island. The western half of the south side of Grant Island was a line of cliffs, from one to three hundred feet in height. They reached Cape Patterson by daylight of the 20th and then returned towards Port Phillip.

Bass Strait again. The next day towards evening they again anchored in Hobson's Bay, where they stayed till the 23rd. After a temporary grounding, it was noon next day before they were again outside, steering for the north

end of King Island. On 26 January they passed through Franklin Road and in the evening anchored in Fitzmaurice Bay.

Next morning, they proceeded in search of Bell Rock, lying in the middle of the south entrance of Bass Strait. They passed between Reid's Rocks and Black Pyramid and passed the night standing to and fro close to the Pyramid.

They found themselves at daylight of 27 January two miles south-west from the Pyramid and continued to a seaward view of the entrance between Hunter Island and Point Woolnorth where no shipping channel was revealed. They went between Black Rock and Steep Island and steered between the north of Black Rock and the west point of Hunter. Continuing their northern course, they passed a mile from the west side of Albatross Island. The wind had now increased to a gale from the westward and they were obliged to seek shelter under Hunter Island. On 28 January a severe gale developed and lasted until the evening of the 31st. Their fishermen were, nevertheless, very successful with hook and line, taking great numbers of fish, some of which were a species of rock cod. Alongside the ship they caught only sharks, one of which contained thirty-six young. On 3 February the ship was moved to near the south end of Hunter Island, where they found a nice quiet anchorage with scarcely any tide, off a long sandy beach.

By 6 February they had completed their surveys and proceeded to take soundings between Three Hummock Island and Circular Head, anchoring under the latter. On the morning of the 9th they again left but owing to a heavy storm they sought shelter under the south-east end of Robbins Island. During the following two days, it blew the heaviest gale they had yet met within the Strait.

On 11 February they left this anchorage and steered across the Strait to Sea Elephant Rock on the eastern shore of King Island. In the evening they anchored on the north side of Sea Elephant Rock, which they visited the following morning. It was nearly a mile in circumference and 120 feet high. Besides wild dogs, they saw some small penguins, a bird rarely met with in the Strait. Leaving this anchorage, they examined the eastern shore of the island and found further errors in the French chart of the strait.

The next day, 13 February, they examined the dangers fronting the north side of the island, consisting of Navarin and Harbinger Rocks. Prior to performing their survey of Torres Strait, they needed to complete their survey of the entrance of Port Phillip. They spent one night at anchor near the entrance, about six miles south from Point Flinders. These operations closed their work in Bass Strait for the time being.

On 1 March, they left Port Phillip, and having spent a night at Port Western, stood out from it next morning. Pursuing their course to the

eastward, they were detained by contrary winds among the islands at the eastern entrance of the Strait. All these they found to be considerably out in position on the charts. They were delighted when on 5 March they turned their back on Bass Strait, that region of storms. At noon on the 8th they were close to the land in the neighbourhood of Jervis Bay. To the south-west of this bay they saw the rock Captain Cook had called the Pigeon House. Next day in the forenoon, the *Beagle* again arrived at Sydney where they remained from 10 March to 21 May, employing the time in completing the charts, sending home tracings of them, and preparing for their cruise on the Northern coast.⁸

Courting Anna Macarthur. While at Sydney, Wickham was a regular visitor to the Macarthur family at *The Vineyard* and it was there that he wooed Hannibal's second daughter, Anna. We have this on the authority of Francis Helpman, ship's mate on the *Beagle*, who noted, somewhat crudely, on 21 March 1839:

Certain news of the Captain being accepted by Anna Macarthur. It is decided that he is to have her after completing the voyage,

adding whimsically

which will consequently diminish our time vastly.⁵¹

Anna was one of the six daughters of Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur, a nephew of John Macarthur of Camden. John Macarthur had married Anna Maria King, daughter of Philip Gidley King, Governor of New South Wales from 1800-1806. She was thus a sister of Captain King, Wickham's commander in HMS *Adventure*, and young Phillip Gidley King was her nephew. Drury Clarke made the reasonable speculation that Wickham and Anna Macarthur first met when the *Beagle* was in Sydney in January 1836. He had spent two periods of his service life in Australian waters during each of which he had visited Sydney. In 1839 he had spent more than two months there and was a regular visitor to *The Vineyard* in that year.⁴

John Gould. On 9 April, Wickham and his officers met the celebrated ornithologist John Gould in Sydney.⁵² Later, Gould wrote that he was: indebted to Captain Wickham and the other officers...for their polite attention to my wishes...Many of the officers of the *Beagle* will have their names handed down to posterity in consequence of the attention they have paid to this branch of science...particularly...Mr. Charles Darwin, Captain Wickham, Captain Stokes, Mr. Dring etc.⁵³

Sydney economy. Sydney was in the grip of a prolonged drought, especially evident towards Parramatta. The people of Tasmania seized on the opportunity to raise the price of grain, expecting to make a large profit, but instead of sending to them for corn the people of Sydney despatched

vessels to South America until there was a glut. But the large amount of bullion going out of the country to purchase it had much to do with the subsequent depression. Alas, the annual revenue derived from rum, which in 1839 was £190,000, amounted to more than seven gallons for every individual in the colony.⁸

Usborne incapacitated. On 20 May 1838, Wickham wrote from Sydney to the Admiralty:

In consequence of a letter from Mr. Benjamin Bynoe Surgeon of Her Majesty's Survey Vessel under my command, requesting that a survey might be held for Mr. AB Usborne (Master) that officer being incapable of performing his duty, owing to a wound he received while employed in Surveying Service on the Nth Coast of New Holland.

I have the honour to inform you for the information of My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that no Senior Officer being present, and it being necessary that the *Beagle* should proceed as soon as possible to the Northward, I have taken upon myself to order a Survey to be held on Mr. Usborne, calling to my assistance Mr. Jn. Dobie Surgeon Ret and Health Officer at Port Jackson, also Mr. Campbell France Surgeon Ret and late Superintendent of Convicts by the Transport 'John Barry'. My order, together with the Report of Survey, are herewith transmitted.⁵⁴

A letter accompanied this, signed on 18 May by Wickham and these surgeons which testified to the nature of Usborne's injury and confirming his inability to perform his duties.⁵⁵ The convict ship *John Barry* had departed Sheerness on 17 November 1838 and arrived in Port Jackson on 22 March 1839 and was on its return voyage.

Cunningham. There was a meeting with Mr. Cunningham, the Botanist, whose death was to occur two months after their departure from Sydney. Though worn out by disease, and evidently on the brink of the grave, the fire of enthusiasm kindled in his frame, and his eyes glistened as he talked of their projected enterprise. It was with difficulty that he could be dissuaded from accompanying them. The presence and attention of his valued friend Captain King soothed his last moments.⁸

Plan of action for the *Beagle*. On 20 May 1839 Wickham wrote to the Admiralty from Sydney to indicate his plan of action for the *Beagle*:

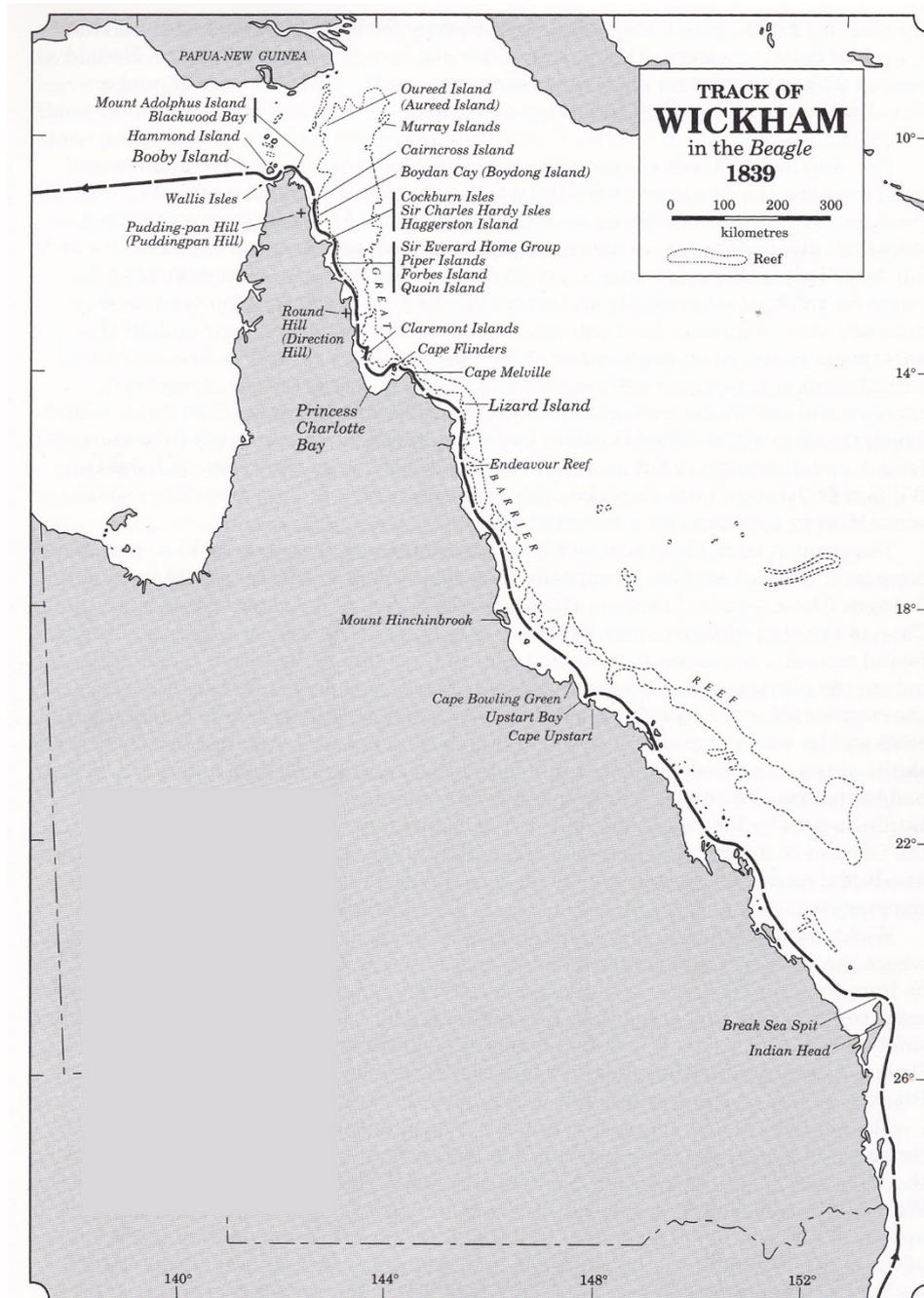
Her Majesty's Surveying Vessel under my command arrived at this anchorage, on the 9th of March from Bass Strait where we were employed during the Summer months. The examination of the Western Entrance to the Strait is nearly completed, tracings of which are now sent to the Hydrographer, with a more detailed account of the proceedings.

The Beagle is completed to six months provisions and will sail tomorrow for Torres Strait making the best of her way to Port Essington where we shall remain to rate the chronometers and complete with water. From there we shall proceed to Cambridge Gulf, as a report (although vague) is in circulation that a river of some magnitude has been found in that neighbourhood. We shall then go on to Camden Bay and endeavour to ascertain the point at which the Glenelg river winds[?] into the sea, and from that go direct to Roebuck Bay, and commence the examination of the Coast towards the N.W. Cape, and if we are fortunate enough to find fresh water on that Coast. I hope to be able to ascertain the extent of the Abrolhos Shoals, and to look into Shark's Bay before being obliged to go to Swan River at which place we shall touch for supplies on our way to Bass Strait where I hope to arrive in December next to recommence the Survey of that Place.⁵⁶

Up the East coast of Australia. It was on 22 May 1839, that *Beagle* sailed from Sydney to explore the north-western part of the continent and its unexamined openings.

Port Stephens. After severe gales they anchored in the large estuary of Port Stephens on 5 June to adjust chronometers. They found the Admiralty chart of the coast in the neighbourhood very defective, some islands being completely omitted whilst others were much misplaced. On the side of a hill, half a mile to the westward, they visited the residence of the superintendent, none other than Captain King. *Tahlee*, the name of this spot, surpassed in beauty all that Stokes had ever seen in Australia, standing on the crest of a steep grassy slope, over which were scattered numerous small bushy lemon trees, the deep verdure of their foliage, interspersed with golden fruit, contrasting charmingly with the light green carpet from which they sprang. The 'fairy boats' of the Aborigines, stealing along the water on a fine calm morning, greatly enhanced the beauty of the scene. This indicates the good intentions of the navigators towards the Aborigines.

Stokes ascended the Karuah river, flowing into the north-west corner of Port Stephens, for twelve miles, to a place called Boorral. He was met there by a Mr. White, with horses, and they rode to Stroud, about seven miles higher up on the eastern bank of the river. It had quite the appearance of a truly English village, each cottage having its neat little garden. Near Stroud there were great numbers of lyre birds. He also explored the Allyn river.



The voyage of Wickham on the *Beagle* 1839. After Gill 1988 ⁵⁷

Fraser Island. On the morning of 16 June, Wickham again sailed for the north coast with a fine southerly wind. By 19 June they saw Indian Head

(on present Fraser Island), and by 8 P.M. Sandy Cape, so named by Captain Cook for its being a low point streaked with patches of white sand. In constant squalls and thick rainy weather, the ship was brought to the wind under snug sail for the night. Early next day they were in 18 fathoms, at Breaksea Spit. Soon they passed Lady Elliott Island, forming the south-eastern isle of Bunker's Group.

Cape Upstart. At daylight on 25 June the *Beagle* was a few miles east of Cape Upstart (lying between the present Bowen and Townsville), named by Cook because of its prominence. Chronometers being chiefly affected by changes of temperature needed checking and they therefore entered Upstart Bay and anchored half a mile within the north-east point. Wickham and Lieutenant Eden explored a river mouth. It had two entrances, both very shallow. They found the river fresh ten miles from the entrance but at that point it was nearly lost in the sands and was so shallow that the Aborigines had a fishing weir across it. They found the Cape to be two thousand feet high. From there the party commanded a view of the whole of the bay and discovered that they were, strictly speaking, standing upon an island, a small creek winding round the southern foot of the high land, and connecting the bays on the eastern and western side of Cape Upstart. They found a new species of Kangaroo, later named *Petrogale inanata*, by John Gould and deposited in the British Museum.⁸

In the afternoon of 30 June they left the anchorage and by 9 P.M. rounded the northern extremity of Cape Upstart, called Cape Bowling Green, at a distance of six miles, in 17 fathoms, steering then to pass about four miles outside the Palm Isles. During the whole night their soundings varied from only 17 to 19 fathoms.



The *Beagle* at Magnetic Island. By Lieutenant Gore ⁸

Magnetic Island. By daylight of 1 July they were within sight of both 'Magnetical' Island and the south and largest of the Palm Isles. Magnetical Island was so named by Cook, because he considered it affected the *Endeavour's* compass in passing it but the *Beagle* did not notice this effect. They passed the Palm Islands early in the forenoon. The largest was found to be 750 feet high. By about noon they were abreast of Mount Hinchinbrook, in latitude 18 degrees 22 minutes South, rising to the height, according to their observations, of 3500 feet (close to the present estimate of 3747 feet). They rightly saw it as an extension of the 'cordillera' (Great Dividing Range) but did not realise that it was an island, separated by a narrow channel from the mainland.

Halifax Bay to Lizard Island. On 2 July they skirted Halifax Bay and by 6 P.M. saw Dunk Island eight miles distant and passed Barnard's Group soon after dark. Numerous native fires were observed burning on the shore, at the foot of the Bellenden Ker mountains. Soon after midnight they were abreast of the Frankland Group, and at 7 A.M. passed three miles to the eastward of Fitzroy Island, with its singular peaked summit 550 feet high, near the north-east end and on the western side a little cove where Captain King had found snug anchorage.

Passing midway between Green Island, about twenty feet high, encircled with a coral reef, and Cape Grafton, the *Beagle* steered for a shoal on which

HMS *Imogene* had grounded. At sunset the anchor was dropped in thirteen fathoms, for the first time since leaving Port Stephens. Weary Bay was three miles away, and Cape Tribulation six miles.

The land over Cape Tribulation was very high, presenting several singular peaks. That over Trinity Bay, which the *Beagle* was the greater part of the day crossing, was also of great altitude. In its south corner they noticed the river-like opening spoken of by Captain King, lying in the rear of some remarkable peaks. They re-surveyed this part of the coast and affirmed the extreme correctness of Captain King's original chart. Soon after passing the Hope Islands, they saw the reef, aptly named Endeavour Reef, where Cook's vessel had so miraculous an escape in 1770, after grinding on the rocks for 23 hours. That mishap had revealed the great river to him that he named after the *Endeavour*.

Continuing on the same course, they passed three miles from Cape Bedford, at 4 P.M., a bluff detached piece of tableland, surmounted by a low line of cliffs. Leaving the Cape, they went in search of a shoal laid down by HMS *Victor*, as lying two miles from Three Isles. Both Captain King and Lieutenant Roe had doubted its existence in the position marked, a doubt which *Beagle* researches fully justified. From there they steered north for Lizard Island, the remarkable peak on which soon rose in sight, taking them within three miles of Cape Flattery, where a couple of peaks, with a slope between them, rendered it a conspicuous headland. Having still a little moonlight, they were able to continue and anchor at 13 fathoms, in a bay on the west side of Lizard Island. They remained at this anchorage until the following morning, 3 July, for the purpose of determining the position of the island, making magnetic observations and visiting the peak, which they found to be nearly 1200 feet high (conforming well to the present estimate of 1177 feet). They observed the opening 9 miles away in the Barrier Reef through which Captain Cook passed out to sea, the outer line of the reef curving from it to the north-west and following the trend of the land. Observations were made on the flora and fauna of the island.

They departed from Lizard Island early on 4 July and steered, somewhat perilously, between the islands of the Howick Group and on towards Point Barrow near a reef extending from Coles Island and the remarkable pyramidal-shaped rocky height of Noble Island. They then approached to within seven miles of the mainland, which presented a low sandy shore, with a few remarkable hummocks rising over it, and somewhat high, broken, rocky land immediately behind.

Cape Melville to Claremont Isles. Passing Point Barrow, they anchored ten miles from the north end of a large reef, Cape Melville. They deduced

the outer edge of the Barrier Reef to be not more than four or five leagues distant from the land. Captain King and others had drawn their attention to the singular appearance of the rocks on Cape Melville with piles of reddish-coloured stones, possibly of volcanic origin, scattered about in the utmost confusion.

Between the rocks off Cape Melville, and a reef encircling two small islets, Wickham found that the channel was not more than a mile in width. The *Beagle* steered for the latter cape, between it and Clack Island. The island was a remarkable cliffy lump, interesting as Cunningham had found native drawings in its caves. After clearing this danger, and passing the Cape, they steered across Princess Charlotte Bay. The bay was so large and free from shoals that a vessel not wishing to anchor might pass the night standing off and on with perfect safety. They saw, over the head of this bay, a remarkable level-topped hill, called by Captain Cook, Janes' tableland.

On Sunday 7 July they did not proceed further than Number 4 of the Claremont Isles, a low rocky group encircled by coral reefs, to give the ship's company a run on shore during the afternoon supposedly to remind them of its being a day of rest.

Restoration to Cairncross Island. Wickham and his men weighed anchor at 6 A.M. next day, 8 July, and about the same hour in the evening again anchored under Restoration Island so named by Captain Bligh as he had reached it upon the anniversary of the restoration of Charles II to the throne of England. The ship's track during the day followed the trend of the land, keeping about seven miles from it, except when opposite Cape Direction, where it was about half that distance from the shore. They found little to add to Captain King's chart, with the exception of some reefs lying about ten miles east from that headland.⁸ Wickham remarked how the height of the Eastern Cordillera diminished progressively as the northern limit of the continent was approached. At 36½°S it attains its greatest elevation of 6500 feet, at 18°S it was 3500 feet high, at 13°S a round hill 10 miles south of Cape Direction was 1250 feet high, while Puddingpan Hill in 11°19'S had a height of only 384 feet.⁵⁸

They spent next day surveying and on the following morning were again on their passage, the cloudy weather enabling them to make out the eastern reefs. Usually the morning sun made the reefs hard to see from a ship passing to the westward. The reefs fronted Quoin and Forbes Islands, remarkable rocky lumps, the latter being 340 feet high. A north-west by north course from Restoration brought them to Piper Islands. Next they reached Sir Everard Home's Islands, a low group connected by shoal water

and extending about four miles from Cape Grenville. They passed midway between them and Haggerston's Islands, a square lump 240 feet high.

Sir Charles Hardy's and the Cockburn Isles were also conspicuous in this neighbourhood, particularly the former, which was visible from outside the Barrier, and thus formed a leading mark for ships making their way through these reefs. In the evening of 10 July, the anchor was dropped about a mile from the north side of the Bird Isles in ten fathoms. The only additions made in Wickham's survey to the chart during the day were a few soundings, besides increasing the number and altering the position of Cockburn Islands, with the reefs fronting them. The number of these isles was thus increased from two to four. They were square rocky lumps, the largest being three hundred feet high. The islands passed during the day were of a small lagoon character and the reefs oval-shaped, with an elevated patch of dead coral at their north extreme. The mainland had subsided into a wearisome series of undulating hills, varying from five to seven hundred feet in height. The coast was, therefore, utterly void of any feature of interest, after passing Fair Cape.

At daylight on 11 July the *Beagle* was again underway and steered north by east for the purpose of ascertaining if there were any further reefs to the eastward. When four and a half miles from an island next south of Cairncross the course was changed to pass between the reef fronting its south side and another reef where they had a depth of 20 fathoms, somewhat altering the chart. At the time of altering course, the ship was two miles from the position of an island according to the chart; but as they did not see it, and as Captain King had not charted it, they concluded that it either did not exist, or that it was much out of position.

Charles Eaton massacre. En route to Cairncross Island on 11 July Wickham tried to identify Boydan Island where the crew of the wrecked *Charles Eaton* had been massacred in 1834. (The island lies west of the present Jardine National Park on the eastern side of Cape York). Most of the crew and all the passengers survived on the wrecked ship. They built two rafts. The first drifted off with the master, surgeon, two seamen and all the passengers. The second raft, carrying the rest of the crew also drifted away. The rafts were beached on an island that the Aborigines called Boydan. A party of islanders from Oureed Island, on a fishing expedition, massacred the survivors as they came ashore. Only William D'Oyley and the ship's boy, John Ireland, survived. They were later sold to some Murray Islanders for a bunch of bananas each.^{8 58 59} Later, the Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, sent the colonial schooner *Isabella*, captained by C.M. Lewis, to Murray Island on 3 June 1836 and he was successful in rescuing both boys. Lewis tracked

down the skulls of the murdered castaways and found that together with 28 native skulls they had been used to decorate a hideous idol at Oureed Island. He brought all the skulls back to Sydney and those of the Europeans were buried, at the direction of Governor Richard Bourke, in a mass grave at the Old Devonshire Street Cemetery, The Sandhills. In 1901 the cemetery was resumed for the site of the Sydney Central Railway Station. The remains and the handsome memorial which had been erected over them were removed to the Bunnering cemetery at Botany Bay. Just a few paces away was the grave of Richard Nugent, the chief officer of the *Isabella* who died on 9 November 1836 after a short illness brought on by his arduous duties in search of the survivors of the *Charles Eaton*.^{58 59}

Though a bright, sunny day, at 3 P.M. Stokes observed the latitude by a meridian altitude of Venus. The result agreed with Captain King's chart, placing the centre of the island in latitude 11 degrees 28 minutes South. Three or four ships passing together would find a secure berth about two miles from where the *Beagle* anchored at Boydan Island, where the depth was moderate, with good holding ground.

They left at an early hour, on 12 July, steering for Cairncross Island, which was passed at a distance of half a mile from the eastern side in 16 fathoms. Its height was seventy-five feet to the tops of the trees, which, according to Mr. Bynoe, who subsequently visited it in the month of September, were dwarf gums. The most remarkable feature on the adjacent mainland was a hill bearing over the extremity of the reef fronting the south side of Cairncross, to which Captain Bligh had given the quaint name of Pudding-Pan Hill from its resemblance to an inverted pudding dish, commonly used by sailors, and 354 feet high. The coast about ten miles to the northward projected a mile and a half further eastward than was marked in the chart.

Escape River. At noon they were in the parallel of the south point of Escape River, in latitude 10 degrees 58 minutes South [Eastern Cape York]. This river received its name from the narrow escape Captain King had when nearly wrecked there in the *Mermaid*. Attempting to enter the river he found it not to be navigable, a reef extending across its mouth, on which his vessel struck very heavily. At 4 P.M. the *Beagle* anchored in Blackwood Bay in a depth of 10 fathoms. Point Dicky bearing south half a mile, and Mount Adolphus North-east. In the evening a plan was made of this very convenient stopping place for ships. They made several adjustments to charts prepared under unfavourable circumstances by King. The appearance of the island there was similar to that of the Albany cluster, it having the same rocky, bleak, and almost wild appearance. Parts of the island appeared to be intersected by mangroves. Irregular tides were recorded.

Torres Strait

York Island. The *Beagle* reached York Island, a coral cay of the Torres Strait Islands archipelago, situated in the eastern part of the central island group, at the top end of the Great Barrier Reef and north-east of the tip of Cape York Peninsula. Stokes recorded that the strait took its name from the Spanish navigator Torres, who sailed in 1605, second in command under Pedro Fernandes de Quiros, from Callao in Peru, with the object of discovering the Tierra Austral, then supposed to be a continent occupying a considerable portion of the southern hemisphere. Torres passed through this strait in 1606, but despite the great importance of the discovery, its existence remained unknown until 1762 because of the jealousy of the Spanish monarchy, which kept the reports of its navigators a secret from the world. At the time in question, however, Manila fell into British hands and in the archives of that colony a duplicate copy of Torres's letter to the king of Spain was found by the hydrographer, Dalrymple. The passage then received the name of Torres Strait, in tribute to the great navigator. It was not however until 1770 that Captain Cook, then passing through the strait, settled the question of its existence.⁸

Endeavour Strait. The *Beagle* sought out a practicable channel through Endeavour Strait and passed along the north-eastern extreme of the continent, and between the Possession Islands entered Endeavour Strait. This termination of the shores of Australia, being level and of moderate elevation, presented nothing remarkable, except for a peak over Cape York and fronting the Possession Isles.⁸

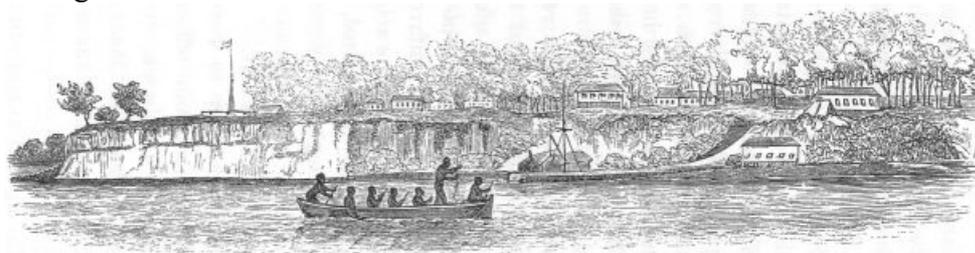
There was no impediment to their passage through the Strait, until they were abreast of Wallis Isles, near Cape Cornwall, when the water shoaled to four fathoms and a half. Finding by sounding that they were on a ridge extending from the Cape, they ran to the westward until they could cross it, which they did in three and a half fathoms, North Wallis Island bearing South-West five miles.⁸

After crossing the ridge, they steered for Booby Island, in regular soundings of six and seven fathoms, and late in the afternoon anchored nearly a mile from its western side. They found a flagstaff which had been erected in 1835 by Captain William Hobson (later to become the first Governor of New Zealand), of HMS *Rattlesnake*, who at the same time placed in a large box, made for the purpose, a book with printed forms, which every ship passing filled up, with the addition of such remarks as were thought of consequence. Over this box in large letters were painted the

words Post Office. Here they first heard of the Port Essington expedition having passed eight months previously also of the schooner *Essington*, that left Sydney in advance of the expedition for that place, having succeeded in determining the fact of the non-existence of the other young D'Oyly, one of the passengers of the ill-fated *Charles Eaton*. Hobson's researches fully confirmed the fact mentioned by Captain King, on the authority of the Darnley islanders, that the boy shared the fate of his parents, being devoured by their captors. ⁸

Coburg Peninsula

Port Essington. The *Beagle* then proceeded, as Wickham had proposed, towards the settlement of Port Essington. On the morning of 17 July, after daylight they found themselves steering within a large patch of discoloured water, extending off Cape Croker, the north-east extreme of the Coburg Peninsula. On the north side of this peninsula was Port Essington, an inlet of the Arafura Sea, thirty miles to the westward of the Cape. In September 1824 at Record Point, Port Essington, Captain Bremer had planted the British flag and taken possession of two thousand miles of coastline from Cape York westwards, considered uninhabited despite the presence of Aborigines.



The settlement of Victoria, at Port Essington, from the anchorage ⁸

The site of Victoria, the name bestowed on the settlement, in honour of the queen, was the highest ground, about fifty feet above high-water level. It presented the appearance of a large straggling village. A pier was speedily run out into the sea; and a good road cut to it. A church overlooked the Government cottage and officers' quarters; and deep wells proved good and abundant water. Not long after settlement, the French explorer, Dumont d'Urville, with the *Astrolabe* and *Zéliée*, arrived in adjacent Raffles Bay ⁶⁰, and it was popularly believed that they had entertained some intentions of forestalling the settlement. Nevertheless, a boat was despatched from

Victoria to invite them to enter the harbour, and the greatest harmony prevailed during their stay.



Jules Dumont d'Urville. French explorer. Wikipedia



A native of Port Essington. Early 20th Century. Northern Territory Library

There was, however, nothing striking to the *Beagle* crew in the first appearance of the land, a low woody shore; the most remarkable object being a sandy islet, with a tree in its centre, about a mile east of Point Smith, the eastern point of Port Essington, Vashon Head forming the western. As they drew near, a boat came alongside belonging to HMS *Britomart*. They heard that HMS *Alligator* had just sailed for Sydney, leaving the *Britomart* to await her return at Port Essington. They also heard with much regret, of the wreck of the *Orontes*, which had accompanied the expedition from Sydney. She had left the settlement with the intention of proceeding to some port in the East Indies and when just clearing the harbour struck on a reef, knocking a hole in her bows. She filled so rapidly that they had barely time to reach the shore under Vashon Head, before she sank. The reef, thereafter named *Orontes Reef*, was a mile in extent east and west, and half a mile north and south; distant nearly five miles from Vashon Head and Point Smith.

The expanse of water presented to the *Beagle* in entering Port Essington delighted them. It was a magnificent harbour. They considered it well worthy of having on its shores the capital of Northern Australia. It appeared destined, from its proximity to India, and England's other fast-increasing eastern possessions, to become not only a great commercial resort but a valuable naval post in time of war. Many circumstances combined to render it a desirable station. Its great size, having an extent sufficient to hold the largest fleet, was in itself of vast importance, while, as a shelter for distressed vessels, or the surviving crews of wrecks, it could be too highly rated: the more so that excellent wood for repairing ships grows in the neighbourhood, especially teak and oak.⁸

This was one of the few prophecies of successful colonization of Australia which did not come to fruition whereas Fitz-Roy's doubts as to the future success of the Swan River settlement were ill-founded. The Essington settlement was assailed by woes. It was too far south of the main shipping lanes to attract ships. The entrance of its great harbour was dangerous, though offering protection from attack, while the settlement was far, 16 miles, from the mouth of the harbour. On 25 November 1839 a great cyclone caused much damage to the settlement and to the wharf. The brig *Pelorus* was driven ashore with the loss of twelve lives and it was nine months before a relief ship HMS *Gilmore* arrived.



HMS *Pelorus* aground at low water, in 1840. Watercolour by Owen Stanley
State Library of New South Wales

The soldiers of what was intended as a military garrison endured great hardship and deprivation. Sickness was prevalent in 1843. With no sea breeze at the land-locked harbour, fever was rampant. Attempts to raise crops had little success and the gardens could not be tended by sick men, with the result that scurvy broke out. There were no medicines and not a sign of a ship's sail for a year. There was little work other than the digging of graves. In 1844 Lieutenant George Lambrick, his wife Emma, their 18 months old daughter Emma and a newborn son arrived at Victoria. Soon she and two children were dead. A happier event was the emergence from the unknown interior in December 1845 of Dr Ludwig Leichhardt (later to be lost) and his exhausted, starving company. They hailed Port Essington as civilization after more than 14 months without seeing another white man. The settlement fed and nursed them back to health. In the same year a Tyrolean Roman Catholic missionary, Fr Angelo Bernard Confalonieri, arrived to care for the spiritual needs of the settlement and also to administer to the Aborigines.⁶¹ Fr Confalonieri had been shipwrecked in Torres Strait and arrived at the settlement devoid of any possessions. Captain John McArthur ordered the marines to build him a hut at Black Rock Point just south of Point Smith.

By 1849 the British Government decreed that the Port Essington settlement was a failure, both as a colonizing experiment, a trading post, and a port of call for ships. On 3 November 1849 the settlement was abandoned and McArthur and his company sailed away on the *Meander* for Sydney, to the dismay of the friendly aborigines. McArthur, Lambrick with his daughter Emma, and Lieutenant Dunbar returned to England arriving there on 9 November 1850. The ruins of the Victorian and earlier buildings are still to be seen. Jim Allen gives a comprehensive survey of Port Essington. It was the longest lived of three failed settlements in the Northern Territory.

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On 24 July 1839, finding that they could not procure provisions from the settlement, the *Beagle* sailed out of Port Essington. It steered to the westward, along the northern side of the Peninsula and early in the afternoon anchored in Popham Bay, at the north-west extreme of Cape York Peninsula, fronted by an extensive coral reef. On the eastern side was a snug boat or small-craft harbour, much frequented by Malays, who call it Blue-mud Bay. They proceeded towards the first of some openings on the coast opposite Melville Island, lying on the south side of Clarence Strait. It was important to ascertain if that strait was navigable and also to examine the south-eastern side of Melville Island.

They found that the western shore of Cobourg Peninsula had been placed too far from Port Essington in Captain King's chart, and therefore commenced a survey at Popham Bay, choosing for the observation spot a small bank of sand and dead coral which they named Bird Island, from finding it almost covered with terns and gulls. It appeared that the discrepancy was chiefly in the position of Port Essington.

Melville Island. On leaving at daylight on 25 July they crossed over to examine the western shores of Dundas Strait, formed by the eastern side of Melville Island. They found the soundings very irregular and six miles from Cape Keith, only three or four fathoms. This part of Melville Island consisted of low rocky points, separating sandy bays. One of the few remarkable features on it was a round hill 320 feet high, five miles north-west from Cape Keith.

Cape Hotham. Passing Cape Keith, they crossed over to the opposite eastern entrance point of Clarence Strait, Cape Hotham. The deepest water found while crossing was 22 fathoms. The wind failing in the afternoon, it was evening when they reached their anchorage in nine fathoms, two and a half miles from Cape Hotham. They moved the ship a few miles down the opening in the south side of the strait, and in the afternoon a party went on shore near the cape. They found the country very poor and sandy, and

elevated about fifteen feet above high-water mark. Despite this, the white gum-trees appeared to thrive, growing in great abundance, about thirty or forty feet high; there were also others of a different kind, besides a few palms. The rocks were red sand and ironstone blended together. Mr. Bynoe added to his collection of birds.⁸

Discovery of Adelaide River. On returning to the ship they found that Fitzmaurice had arrived with the news that a large river with two branches, running south-east and south, with a depth of four fathoms, emptied itself into the head of the bay. An exploring party was at once formed, consisting of Wickham, Emery and Helpman, who, the next day being Sunday, did not leave before the morning of 29 July 1839, with two boats and four days' provisions. They named the river the Adelaide, after the Queen Dowager, widow of William IV. The bay that received its waters was named after Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Adam.

They met a small family of Aborigines, consisting of an elderly man, his wife, and four children. The eldest child, a youth of about 15, had a small piece of wood two feet long, sticking through the cartilage of his nose. His teeth and those of the other children were perfect but in the father and mother two of the upper incisors had been removed, as was the case with the Aborigines at Port Essington, where this ceremony was performed after marriage. Their hair was neither curly nor straight but of that wavy nature sometimes noticed in Europeans. They had with them three small-sized dogs of a light brown colour, of which they appeared very fond. The old man's spear was not barbed, and the womera [woomera] or throwing stick was of the same long narrow shape as at Port Essington. The woman had also the same bottle-shaped basket slung over her neck and containing white and red earths for painting their bodies. Stokes unsuccessfully invited the old man, who came alongside in a 20 foot bark canoe, to board the *Beagle*. Later Fitzmaurice went on shore, with Keys, to adjust the chronometers and they were obliged to dance and shout, though in momentary expectation of being pierced by a dozen spears, in order to distract hostile Aborigines from attacking them, before being rescued by a boat bearing marines.⁸



Fitzmaurice and Keys dancing for their lives ⁴⁷

On the morning of 2 August the boats returned from an exploration of the Adelaide. They had gone up the river in a general southerly direction, nearly 80 miles. It became at this distance very narrow and was divided into two branches, one taking a southerly direction the other an easterly; the latter was too narrow for the boat's oars, while the former was blocked up by fallen trees lying across it. The adjoining country seemed very favourable for cultivation. Nevertheless, from the highest tree at Captain Wickham's furthest point, the appearance of the country was one wearisome level, broken to the southward, at a distance of ten miles, by a rocky mound about 150 feet high. They saw Brush Turkeys, 'Vampires' (*Pteropus*) and swarms of 'alligators' and catfish.

On 4 August they explored the south branch of the river. They met a party of Aborigines about seven miles from the mouth, in a very pretty bark canoe, fifteen feet long and about two deep. The bark was sewn together with much neatness, and it was altogether the most artistic piece of workmanship Stokes had seen among the Aborigines. 'Alligators' being so very numerous, he was surprised to notice what little dread the aborigines appeared to have of them, dancing and wading about in the water near the bank as if they and the animal had entered into a treaty of amity. The sailors reached a point fifteen miles up the river, bagged about twenty whistling

duck and returned to the mouth. They were back on board in the forenoon of 6 August. They had discovered a river navigable for vessels of four and five hundred tons for about fifty miles and into fresh water, a thing hitherto unknown in Australia and congratulated themselves on the discovery of the Adelaide.

They briefly surveyed Adam Bay, into which the Adelaide flowed, and found a tidal rise of 18 feet. They then sailed to examine the southern shores of Melville Island, where they anchored two miles from the beach and fifteen within the west entrance of the strait. The necessary angles and bearings for the survey were taken from the top of some cliffs sixty feet high, composed of a red sand and ironstone and a white kind of marl or pipe clay. A singular clump of *Casuarina* was close to the westward of the cliffs and its dark naked aspect contrasted with the stunted gumtrees and scattered palms, sparingly sprinkled over this sterile tract of country. With the exception of a few seabirds, there was nothing stirring.

On 15 August the *Beagle* recrossed Clarence Strait to obtain observations for rating the chronometers and to examine the extensive shoal off Cape Hotham which had to be approached with caution.

Shortage of water led them to seek fresh supplies. They considered obtaining water from the Adelaide River but rejected this in view of the time it would take to navigate its reaches. It was finally resolved to return to Port Essington and on 17 August the anchor was dropped at sunset in 22 fathoms, eight miles from Cape Fleming, the north-east point of Melville Island. The appearance of the north-east part of the island was still very unappealing, presenting nothing except patches of mangroves, behind which rose a range of ill-defined hills, 300 feet high.

A breeze springing up late in the morning, they beat along the north side of the Cobourg Peninsula, entering Port Essington at dusk. In working round Vashon Head, they found the water to shoal very rapidly. Continuous sounding with the lead was necessary. The *Britomart* was still the only guardian of the port and there was no possibility of their obtaining supplies other than water.



Port Essington in 1846. By Louis Le Breton ⁶⁰

They decided to put on a play for the inhabitants. The scenery was painted by Captain Stanley of the *Britomart* with earths of the country. He was also stage manager and general planner. The wives of some of the garrison supplied female costumes, while a large workshop was converted into a theatre for the first performance of the drama in Northern Australia. Tickets were issued, a small piece of card containing the words '*Victoria Theatre, Port Essington, August 24th, 1839.*' The performance was greatly enlivened with arrival of HMS *Pelorus* with supplies and letters from Sydney. Everything went off smoothly, and with hearty peals of laughter. All the characters being supported by men, the female personages of the drama presented a most grotesque appearance. Departure from Port Essington, was not therefore hurried. The *Pelorus* brought orders for the *Britomart* to proceed to Sydney. During the visit to Port Essington, Mr Forsyth joined the *Beagle* from the *Pelorus*, with valuable knowledge of surveying. ⁸

Stokes' account continued in volume 2 of 'Discoveries' ⁴⁷, from which this account is largely drawn. Early on the morning of 4 September 1839, the *Beagle* was once more slipping out of Port Essington before a light land wind. They shaped their course for Clarence Strait, the western entrance of which was still unexamined. The wind, however, being light, they passed the night in Popham Bay; and on leaving next morning, had only six fathoms

in some tide rippings nearly two miles off its south point, Cape Don. They passed along the south side of Melville Island, and early in the evening anchored in seven fathoms to wait for a boat that had been sent to examine a shoal bay on the north-west side of Cape Keith.

Naming of Port Darwin. Weighing at daylight on 7 September they hauled up south and passed midway between North Vernon Isle and Cape Gambier, where the width of the channel was seven miles, though the whole of it was not available for the purposes of navigation. They then passed four miles from the western extremity of the Vernon Isles. Exploring in a boat on 8 September, Stokes and Forsyth gave the name of Hope Inlet to an opening which proved to be only a shallow creek. The bay in which it lay was called Shoal Bay.

Next day, 9 September, they discovered a wide bay with large openings in the south-east and south-west corners. A table-shaped hill between the openings they named Talc Hill, after the discovery of talc slate there. The other rocks near it were of a fine-grained sandstone, a new feature in the geology of this part of the continent, which afforded them an opportunity of convincing an old shipmate and friend that he still lived in their memory and Wickham accordingly gave this sheet of water the (to us) momentous name of Port Darwin.^{10 47}



Port Darwin and adjacent inlets. Surveyed by Commanders J. C. Wickham and J. L. Stokes. HMS *Beagle*, 1840. Published 1845. National Library of Australia

The tide was found to be very irregular in Port Darwin, rising at springs 24 feet, and at neaps sometimes only two; its rate being from one and a half to three knots. They then proceeded to explore the north-eastern and largest opening, distant six miles from their station. A large islet and a reef left the entrance only a mile wide. Expanding again, it formed two arms. They found it necessary to keep a sharp lookout for 'alligators', as they swarmed in dangerous numbers. After further exploring they returned to Shoal Bay.

During the time they had been absent, some of their people who had been on shore received a visit from a party of Aborigines who evinced the most friendly disposition. This verified what Stokes before observed, as to the remarkable differences of character that existed between many Australian tribes, though living in the immediate neighbourhood of each other, some of which had been hostile. There were twenty-seven visitors and they came down to the party without any symptoms of hesitation. Both men and women were finer than those they had seen in Adam Bay. The tallest man measured five feet eleven. The teeth of these people were all perfect, an additional proof that the ceremony of knocking them out, like others practised in Australia, was very partially diffused. He noted that unlike European explorers, they were never harassed with the idea of being without water as they could drink brackish water and knew how to collect as much as a pint of water with a sponge from leaves of plants. They sometimes procured water by digging up the lateral roots of the small gumtree. They broke them off in short bits and set them up to drain into a piece of bark or a large shell. By tapping also the knotty excrescences of trees they also found the fluid, which they sucked out.⁴⁷

They moved the *Beagle* into Port Darwin, anchoring just within the eastern cliffy head which they named after Lieutenant Emery to commemorate his success in finding water by digging. All the surveying force was now activated; Wickham went to examine an opening in the coast mentioned by Captain King, lying about twelve miles further to the westward, whilst the other boats explored the openings at the head of the harbour. Fitzmaurice traced an opening for ten miles, being the greatest distance it was navigable. Forsyth and Stokes explored to the extent to which it was possible to advance but were stopped by an impenetrable network of mangroves. They found it very tortuous, extending in a general direction south nine miles. After completing the survey of the southern and western portion of this harbour, they returned to the ship, where soon afterwards Wickham also arrived, having found Patterson Bay to be a good port. The slow progress made in watering, from the soft nature of the soil in the bottom of the well,

lengthened their stay considerably in Port Darwin. Its great depth astonished the Aborigines. An influenza appeared to be raging among the Aborigines, all having the remnants of colds, coughing severely when met. We may speculate that these illnesses were derived from colonists and would have deleterious effects on a population with limited immunity.

Several vain attempts were made to induce them to come on board. Some brilliant meteor displays were seen. Later, at Victoria River, Stokes wrote admiringly of two Aborigines who approached them, noting:

their fine manly bearing, head erect, no crouching or quailing of eye-with the miserable objects I had seen at Sydney. Before me stood two of the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia who had never, until then, encountered the hitherto blighting look of a European.⁴⁷

Port Patterson. They moved towards Port Patterson, which they entered, passing on the eastern side of the reef in the mouth, and anchoring close to the eastern shore of the outermost of a chain of sandy islets, forming the west entrance point of the harbour. They named an island Quail Island, from that bird being found in great abundance. They found a native well of excellent water near the middle of the island, which, having been enlarged, afforded an ample supply. They moved on to Point Pearce, named by King, and named a bluff Fossil Head, after its fossils. It was now necessary to find a channel for the ship, which they succeeded in doing the next day, and on that following, 12 September, Wickham, Bynoe and Stokes, went to visit the high table range, while Fitzmaurice and Keys went to examine the large inlet running in towards the foot of Table Hill. They named the area Macadam Range from its resemblance in texture to a macadamized road. Swimming across a creek, Stokes had a very narrow escape from a pursuing 'alligator'.

Victoria River. They got back on board the *Beagle* about noon on 13 October and the next day Fitzmaurice returned from Table Hill. The ship got underway on the 16th. Passing between Clump and Quoin Islands, they anchored midway between the latter and Driftwood Island. The high land south of MacAdam Range was found to terminate in a remarkable peak, which in the certainty of their search proving successful, they named River Peak. It was soon arranged that Wickham and Stokes, should at once dispel all doubts and that next morning Fitzmaurice and Keys should start to explore the river-like opening, under the south end of MacAdam Range. They were soon in the gig exploring a large river, the mouth of which had been found by King.⁴⁷

The gig kept close to the eastern low land, when out burst the moon above the hills in all its glory, shedding a silvery stream of light upon the water

and revealing to their anxious eyes the long looked-for river, rippling and swelling, as it forced its way between high rocky ranges. The sounding lead gave a depth of eighteen and twenty fathoms and the velocity of the stream at the same time clearly showed how large a body of water was pouring through. '*This is indeed a noble river!*' burst from several lips at the same moment; and Stokes and Wickham at once bestowed upon it the name of Victoria River. Pursuing their course between the rocky heights in a south-east direction, the outline of a high peaked hill, standing between two ranges, became visible. It appeared, even at that time, so remarkable that they named it Endeavour Hill. The wind failing, they pushed into a small opening out of the stream, on the right hand, to pass the night. ⁴⁶

Anxious to trace further the course of the river, Wickham and Stokes ascended the top of a neighbouring hill before early dawn. A rapid stream passing between barren rocky heights, lay at their feet. Their boat lay in the mouth of a creek, which communicating with another four miles further down, formed an island on the eastern side of the river, which they called Entrance Isle.

After a hasty breakfast, they pulled up the river; the tortuous nature of the first reaches, changing their directions suddenly from north to east-south-east with a depth of seventeen and twenty fathoms, produced violent eddies and whirlpools. Passing these, a splendid sheet of water lay before them, trending south-east by south, as far as the eye could reach from the boat and more than a mile wide. In the first part of this they had a few shallow casts of the lead, but afterwards the depth was eight and ten fathoms, it being near low-water. In order to catch a glance at what was beyond and to give a spell from the oars, they landed at a point on the east side. Here the river by taking a slight turn more to the southward was lost sight of but was much occupied by shoals. Blocks of sandstone strewn over the heights bore a strong resemblance to old ruins. The appearance of the country remained uninviting but soon improved.

Continuing, at the end of sixteen miles the river suddenly turned off to the eastward. The width had hitherto been almost two miles, but there was not sufficient depth to give any hope of bringing the ship up thus far.

On the opposite side the hills formed an amphitheatre around a level plain, through which ran a creek. On its banks, for the first time, they saw fires of the Aborigines. Here, also for the first time, they noticed gouty-stem trees (probably baobabs); whilst the slope of the hill they ascended was covered with a tolerable sprinkling of grass. Kangaroos were observed on every side springing along the turf; and a few great 'alligators' passed up the stream, after reconnoitering their boat at the risk of a shot or two. They were now

nearly thirty miles from the ship and a few stations were still necessary to be made to complete the survey so far. An exploring expedition would have to pass up the river. Retracing their route they reached the ship near midnight on the 20th. Fitzmaurice had not returned from his search for the other river.

On 21 October, Forsyth having collected all the necessary material for the survey near the ship, they shifted their berth in the afternoon into deeper water, between the south end of Quoin Island and another small islet to the south-west, which from their operations on its south-eastern corner they called Observation Island.⁴⁷

FitzMaurice River. On the afternoon of 22 October, FitzMaurice returned, having discovered a river that carried his boat thirty miles in an east direction from the south end of McAdam Range. Towards the upper part it was scarcely half a mile wide; but for an Australian stream was remarkably free from bends, pursuing a straight course between rocky heights, with a depth varying from two to seven fathoms. Many shoals occurred towards the entrance, where in some places it was more than two miles wide. This river was named Fitzmaurice River after its discoverer and the mouth or inlet of it, after his companion, Keys Inlet.

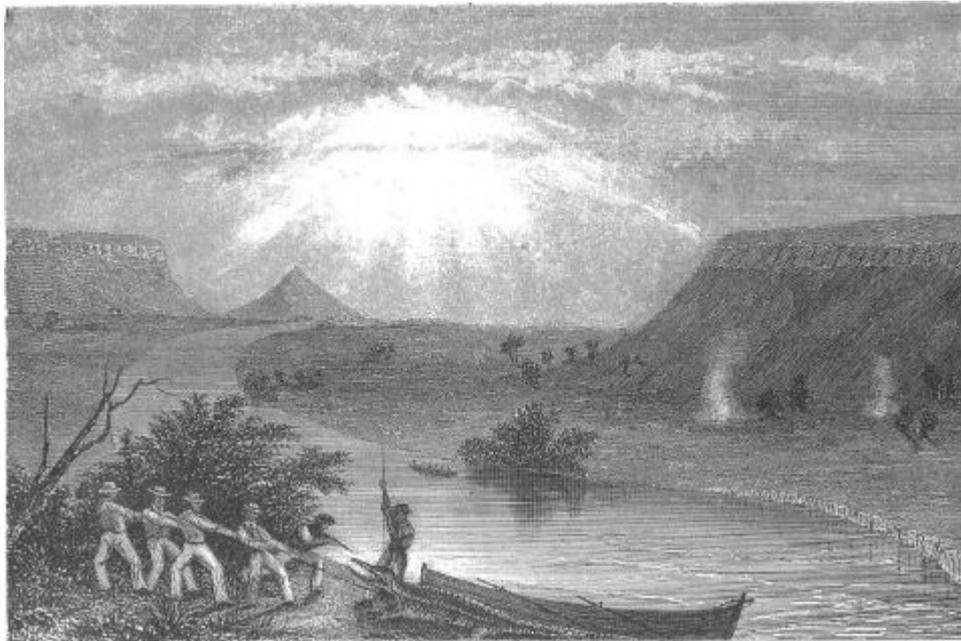
Wickham ascends the Victoria. On the morning of the same day Wickham determined on pushing up the river in the gig to ascertain if it was fresh sufficiently near to provide water for the ship, when she had been taken as far up the Victoria river as was possible. He returned on the morning of 27 October having discovered the river to be fresh about seventy miles above the ship. For some distance it had not decreased in size.

On 29 October the *Beagle* was taken up the river as far as the commencement of the long southerly reach. As the shoals in that part had not been sufficiently examined, they investigated them with boats in the evening, and two channels were discovered; the narrower one was found to be the better. The least depth was four fathoms.

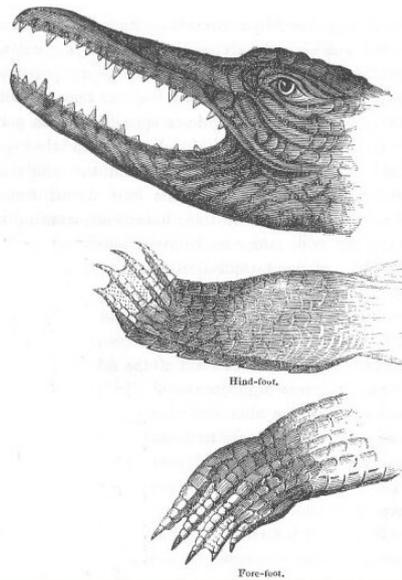
The *Beagle* was taken nearly fifty miles up the Victoria and might have gone seven miles further, but the distance at which the river was fresh was too great to consider completing their stock and they anchored. On shore they made observations for the errors of the chronometers in the afternoon.⁴⁷

Exploration of the Victoria. An expedition, consisting of the two large boats and gig, with Wickham who was to show them the watering place left the ship early on the morning of 31 October. Stokes was to follow in one of the whaleboats, and explore the upper parts in company with Wickham; and after completing the survey near the ship. Stokes, accompanied by Forsyth,

was off to explore the Victoria with the first glimmer of light on the following morning. They named Curiosity Peak and Whirlwind Plains. On 23 November they had an interesting encounter with an 'alligator' which they killed with shot after several attempts and was described in great detail by Stokes. Being anxious to join the gig, they pushed on, and at midnight were surprised by a loud call from Wickham, who lay beneath the shadow of a high bank. It was a strange sound, this English hail, echoed in the wild hills.



Killing an 'alligator' on the Victoria River ⁴⁷



The head and feet of the 'alligator' ⁴⁷

On 4 November, both boats proceeded up the river at daylight. They started from the end of Short Reach. The first reach led them a mile and a half in a south-east direction, and at the end of it a flat of large boulders extended across which they dragged the boats easily. The river now took a turn from east-north-east to north and at the end of a mile they came to another extensive flat, quite dry. There was a deep pool below it, with a precipitous hill, 350 feet high, on the eastern side. This they called Steep Head. ⁴⁷

Shoals in the river. With the thermometer at 93 degrees in the shade, they had to drag the boats over the large flat. The way was made as smooth as possible, and plenty of rollers laid, but an unlucky stone found its way through the thin plank of the gig. Wickham, ever resourceful, acted as head carpenter in repairing the damage, which occupied so much time that it was dark before the boats were floated in the deep water beyond. They dined on the bank by the light of a lantern hung on a tree. The tide at this place rose only two feet. Mr. Bynoe shot a bird later figured by Gould as *Geophaps plumifera* [Spinifex pigeon] and also obtained a goose-like bird named by Gould *Nettapus pulchellas* [Green Pygmy Goose]. The whistling duck of the Adelaide River was also only seen on this part of the Victoria. ⁴⁷

After proceeding north-east one mile and a half, and east two miles, they came to a pretty little islet covered with palms and acacias and rich long grass. Numbers of large white waterlilies grew on its banks. The river was

now only an eighth of a mile wide, and two fathoms deep. Scarcely had they indulged in the hope that the Victoria might yet convey the boats many miles into the interior, when a shoal appeared.

The water was fresh soon after passing a verdant island which they named Palm Island but the shoals finally deterred them from proceeding farther with the boats and they were compelled to pause, after having ascended in the boats from the ship more than 75 miles. They named this reach, in consequence, Reach Hopeless.

Its being impracticable to proceed higher up in the boats, a small party landed at daylight, on 6 November, in order to ascend a neighbouring height, and thence to trace as far as possible the upward course of the river, preparatory to a pedestrian excursion along its banks. Wickham had intended heading the further expedition himself but on 8 November because he felt indisposed the party was placed under the command of Stokes and in addition to him consisted of Bynoe, surgeon; Forsyth, mate; George Knox, Robert Gower, and William Willing, seamen; John Brown, and Richard Martin, marines. Besides provisions for six days, and arms, they had with them the following instruments: large sextant, small sextant, artificial horizon, chronometer, two compasses, spyglass, watch, lantern, and measuring tape. Their adventures, places named, and features of the river are well summarised by Hordern.¹³

Emu Plains. Eventually, they came upon a fine open plain, over which two emus were going best pace and therefore named it in their honour: while the valley to the southward was christened after the *Beagle*, and the ranges on either side bore the names of her former and present commander: those to the north-east and south-west were called Forsyth and Bynoe Ranges. The soil on Emu Plains was far superior to any they had seen since leaving the boat and was lightly and picturesquely timbered with the white gum. They camped overnight in a friendly hollow beneath the stem of a straggling and drooping old gumtree, large enough to conceal the whole party.

On 12 November they made a short march 'homewards' in the cool of the early morning and reached Tortoise Reach by 8 A.M. where they passed the day. They killed a female kangaroo with a very young offspring in its pouch. Examination of this and, later, many other females enabled Bynoe to be the first to reveal the mode of parturition in marsupials. He showed that there was no placenta in the womb and that the tiny virtually embryonic young, when the hind limbs had still not developed, reached the pouch and attached to a teat. He also added to his important collection of birds, which was helpful to Charles Darwin in elucidating the relationships of the Galapagos finches. Stokes illustrated Wickham Heights, showing the singular features

of the hills, the low line of cliffs resembling fortifications near their summit and remarkable horizontal black streaks near their base. A new species of freshwater tortoise was found.



Wickham Heights drawn by Stokes ⁴⁷

On 14 November [there is some confusion in the dates given] a rapid walk brought Stokes' party to their old bivouac. They found only one boat at Reach Hopeless as Captain Wickham had gone down the river with the others in order to hasten the watering party digging for water. Stokes pushed on to gain a station on the eastern side of what are still called Whirlwind Plains. Emery shot a 'kangaroo' which was later described by Gould as *Petrogale concinna* and was donated to the British Museum.

At daybreak on 18 November one of the crew became delirious from drinking sea water but after they rejoined the ship was restored to health under the ministrations of Bynoe. They heard with great satisfaction that Emery's search for water had been completely successful, and that two large wells had been dug in the valley, abreast of which the ship was anchored. They observed a 'bird's playhouse' where a bird had built a bower. ⁴⁷

During 25 to 27 November they experienced very changeable winds related to a hurricane at Port Essington on the latter date. Captain Stanley later published an account of the hurricane in the *Nautical Magazine* for September 1841. It was in this storm, on the north-east point of the settlement, that HMS *Pelorus* parted her cables and was driven on shore and thrown over on her beam ends. Heeling over 82 degrees, her starboard side was buried nine feet in the mud, leaving the keel three feet clear of the ground. It appeared the hurricanes were very rare as the Aborigines were as much astonished as they were and came to beg for shelter: they had no name for it and no tradition of anything of the sort having happened before. They were informed later, at Timor, that hurricanes were never felt there but occurred once in four or five years to the southward of it. A vessel lost her

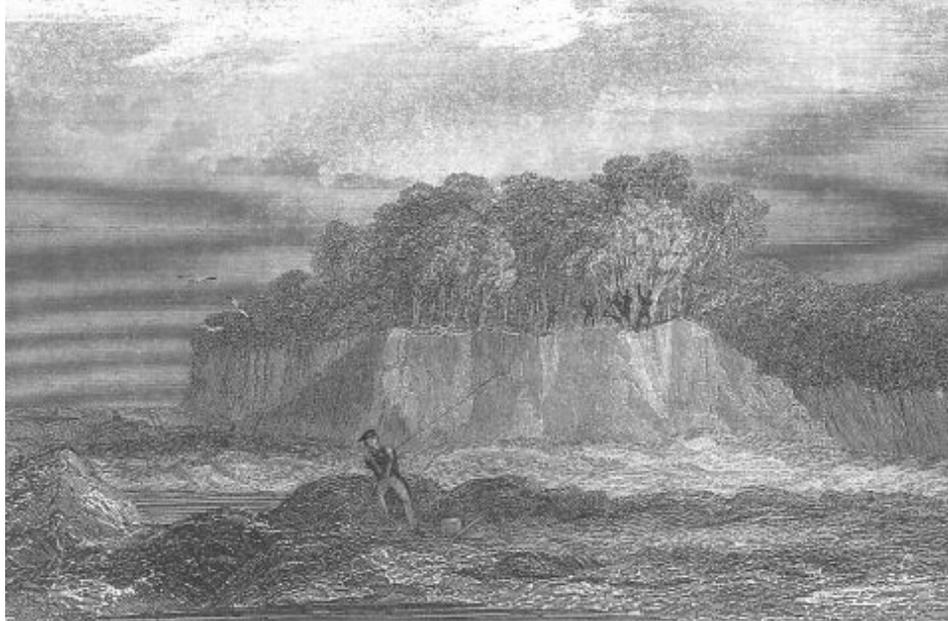
top-masts in the Port Essington hurricane, near Sandalwood Island. The *Pelorus* was dug out of the mud and refloated towards the middle of February thanks to the indefatigable exertion and mechanical skill of her commander, Captain Kuper, C.B., assisted by Captain Stanley.

Two anchors lost. On 29 November, and the whole of the next day, when the tide suited, they tried to weigh the *Beagle's* anchors; but together with the cables they were so embedded in the bottom, which must have been a quicksand, that this proved impossible. They were obliged to leave both behind, and thirty fathoms of cable with one and fifteen with the other. This suggested the appropriate name of Holdfast Reach for this locality. It was prescient of Stokes to write:

perhaps in some future generations, when this part of the world has undergone the changes that seems destined for it, the archaeologist of Victoria River may in vain puzzle his wits with speculations concerning the *Beagle's* anchors.⁴⁷

The location of the anchors eluded discovery until October 2018. Then, assisted by the Northern Territory Government, John Canaris and a team of explorers aboard the 65 foot *Island Explorer* located the smaller bower anchor by means of remote scanning with a survey vessel. The search for the larger anchor continues and it is hoped that both anchors will be retrieved.⁶³

Leaving the Victoria. On 1 December, the *Beagle* slipped from its last anchor at daylight, and proceeded down the Victoria River. After pirouetting through Whirlpool Reach, she got as far down as the flats fronting River Peak, above which they anchored near noon. Next morning, they beat down the main channel, which was called the Queen's. Some shoal patches of a quarter and two fathoms, lying midway between Observation Island and the end of the long sand extending off its northern side, prevented their proceeding further. The boats completed the survey of the western side of the channel in the afternoon: the largest creek examined by Forsyth received his name. They passed Observation Island and Quoin Island and the anchor was dropped in eight fathoms, and the boats were again employed in sounding. On 4 December the ship was moved to within three miles and a half of the south extreme point of the river. A party visited the shore, and, from a rather extraordinary sight of numerous dead turtles called it Turtle Point. A turtle specimen was brought away and later deposited in the Museum at Sydney. On 5 December they crossed over to Point Pearce at daylight and named a bank Mermaid Bank after Captain King's former ship.



Captain Stokes speared by Aborigines at Point Pearce. By Conrad Martens ⁴⁷

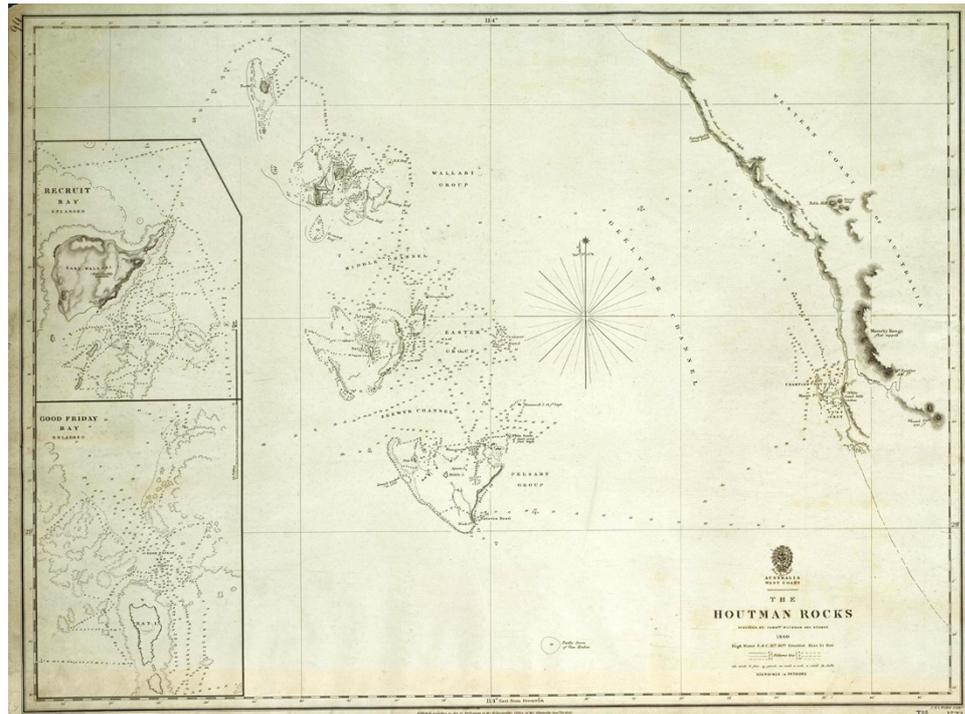
Stokes speared by Aborigines. Stokes, Tarrant and one of the boat's crew went on shore. Stokes went ahead, carrying a chronometer instead of his gun, and was speared in the shoulder by a native. A party, headed by Emery, hastened over the reef to their support, narrowly averting a massacre. Stokes was taken back to the ship and tended to by Bynoe. To commemorate the accident, the bay within Point Pearce was called Treachery Bay and a high hill over it Providence Hill, as they are to this day. Stokes gives an account of the course of the Victoria River and its natural resources. By 12 December Bynoe thought Stokes sufficiently recovered to be able to bear the motion of the ship at sea and accordingly the *Beagle* sailed in the morning for Swan River. They left the Victoria with regret. It would afford a certain pathway far into the centre of that country, of which it was one of the largest known rivers. ⁴⁷ The area around Bynoe and Forsyth Ranges is still almost unpopulated but their names have persisted, testimony to the efficiency of the *Beagle* officers in maintaining their charts.

Several water-snakes were seen on 24 December, and in the afternoon they passed about six miles from the north end of Scott's Reef (named by Captain Peter Heywood, R.N.) which they placed a few miles to the westward of its position on the chart. Stokes was now so far recovered as to be able to crawl on the poop to see this reef but soon found that he had overrated his strength. He suffered lifelong weakness from the spearing. ⁴⁷

Return to Swan River. By 24 January 1840, the *Beagle* was 700 miles west of its destination, Swan River. They arrived there on 31 January. They had not seen land for fifty-two days, and were steering through a dense fog. Suddenly they saw the shipping in Gage's Road, not more than a mile ahead. They found a vast improvement in the colony of Western Australia since their last visit and again experienced the greatest hospitality from the colonists.⁴⁷

Rottneest Island (known as Wadjemup to the local Noongar people), is an island off the coast of Western Australia, 11 miles west of Fremantle. The *Beagle* company visited a penal settlement for Aborigines there. Stokes observed that no one would say that the Australian natives could not work, if they could just see the nice cottages of which this settlement was composed. The Superintendent merely gave the convicts a little instruction at first, and they followed his directions with astonishing precision. They took great pride in showing visitors their own work. It was an interesting though sorrowful sight to see these poor fellows - some of them deprived of their liberty for life, perhaps for crimes into which they had been driven by the treatment they received from those who have deprived them both of their land and of their liberty.⁸

Stokes went on to discuss American whalers and gave a list of Western Australian plants. Soundings of the island revealed why Gage Roads afforded safe anchorage to ships. The improved state of the colony enabled the *Beagle* to get supplies and it was resolved that they should return to the north-west coast, examining on the way, Houtman's Abrolhos, a coral group that had very rarely been visited since the Dutch ships were lost on them, one 120 and the other 220 years previously.



“Houtman Rocks”, British Admiralty Chart 1723, Now known as Houtman Abrolhos. Published in 1845 based on the survey undertaken by John Clements Wickham and John Lort Stokes on HMS *Beagle* in 1840

Houtman Abrolhos. On 6 April they anchored off an island in the Abrolhos Group. The Houtman Abrolhos is a chain of 122 islands, and associated coral reefs about 50 miles west of present-day Geraldton. It is the southernmost true coral reef in the Indian Ocean and, at 29 degrees South, one of the highest latitude reef systems in the world, another being Bermuda. In the afternoon of 8 April, they got underway and lost sight of the island. They came in sight of the land, forming a high, level range, with a knob or lump on its south extreme. Some five or six miles to the south-east were seen isolated peaks, which they rightly supposed to be the Wizard Hills of Captain King, while a nearby lump proved to be Mount Fairfax, the level range being Moresby's Flat-topped Range. As they neared them, the Menai Hills began to show themselves. They stood off and on during the night in the space between the Abrolhos and the main which bore the name of Geelvink Channel, after Vlaming's ship, the first that ever passed through (A.D. 1680). Captain King had missed this portion of the coast by crossing over to the Abrolhos which he placed some five miles too much to the westward.

On 9 April they anchored in a bay which they named Champion Bay. A projection sheltering it from the south-west was called Point Moore, after the Attorney-general at Swan River, who later visited it in the colonial schooner. They left this anchorage next day. At noon on 10 April, the *Beagle* was in latitude 28 degrees 26 minutes South, 10 miles from the Menai Hills, a group lying just off the north end of Moresby's Flat-topped Range. South-east of the Menai Hills the country appeared much broken, with high table ranges of from 4 to 700 feet. It was now necessary to resume examination of the Abrolhos, and thirty-one miles brought the *Beagle* between two groups of them, where they anchored for the night in 23 fathoms. The soundings in standing across Geelvink Channel were 22 and 26 fathoms.⁴⁷

On 11 April the *Beagle* beat to the southward in search of a harbour where the ship might lie in safety whilst they went to work with the boats. They discovered one close to the north-east point of a large island lying in the centre of a group which they named Easter Group. They named the harbour Good Friday Harbour, to commemorate the season of the Christian year, at which they visited it. It was an excellent port, capable of holding a large number of ships, and with a general depth between the coral fan patches of from 15 to 17 fathoms, with a fine muddy sandy bottom.

They found to their surprise that the island group was entirely distinct from that under which they had first anchored to the southward, so that they had already discovered the Abrolhos to form three separate groups. The centre island they named Rat Island, from the quantity of that vermin with which it was infested. It lay at latitude 32 degrees 42 minutes 50 seconds South and its geology resembled other islands of the Pelsaert group. They saw some very pretty lizards. Stokes kept one for nine months on board and afterwards presented it to Lady Gipps. Emery took one alive to England, in 1841, where it thrived remarkably well. He wrote to Stokes:

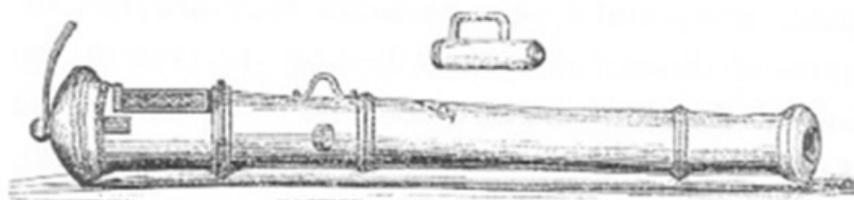
The Abrolhos lizard is very docile, and knows Mrs. Emery quite well, and will eat and drink out of her hand; but is timid with strangers. Its habits are rather torpid, but it becomes active when in the sun or before the fire. It eats so very little that a piece of sponge cake about the size of a small bean will satisfy it for three or four weeks. It changes its skin twice a year.

They later anchored near the south-east end of a bank which they called Snapper Bank for the immense quantities of fish that they caught there. Next morning they stood out to sea between Easter and Pelsaert groups to ascertain if there were any more reefs to the westward.⁴⁷

The great vessel VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) *Batavia* was wrecked on a coral reef to the west of New Holland on 4 June 1625. The 'commandeur', the Upper-Merchant, Francisco Pelsaert, rightly

deduced that the shipwreck had occurred on the chain of islands then known as Houtman's Abrolhos. The story of the atrocities which occurred on the island on which the survivors found themselves, and the execution of the mutineers when returned to the town of Batavia (now Jakarta) in the Dutch East Indies by Pelsaert, has been told many times ⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ and need not be repeated here. In the following century, on 9 June 1727, the VOC *Zeewijk* was also wrecked on the Abrolhos and, again, some survivors built a boat in which they reached Batavia. Remnants of Dutch ships were not located until the *Beagle* visited the Houtman Abrolhos in 1840.

On the morning of 24 April 1840 the *Beagle's* boats were despatched on their ordinary surveying work, and Captain Wickham and Stokes landed on the largest island, a quarter of a mile long, forming the north-western extreme of the Pelsaert Group, and which they named Gun Island, from finding on it a small brass four-pounder of singular construction. ⁴⁷



A Dutch four-pounder found at Gun Island ⁷

It was later deposited in the United Service Museum, with quantities of ornamental brasswork for harness, on which the gilding was in a wonderful state of preservation; a number of glass bottles and pipes, and two Dutch doits [small coins], bearing dates 1707 and 1720. This left no doubt that they had found the island on which the *Zeewyk* (*Zeewijk*) was wrecked, Wallaby Island in 1727, and where the survivors remained so long, whilst building a sloop from the fragments of their vessel in which they got to sea by the passage between Easter and Pelsaert groups, which had consequently been called Zeewyk Passage. They considered that the scene of the *Zeewyk* disaster must have been on the outer reef, a mile and three-quarters south-west from Gun Island, along which ran a white ridge of high breakers. Thus, Wickham and Stokes were the first to find remnants of the *Zeewyk*, as confirmed in a detailed analysis of the archives. Identification of the wreck site would have been greatly aided by their seeing at least one of several Dutch charts showing the correct location of the wreck of the *Zeewijk* ⁶⁶, though it was not until March 1968 that divers searching the outside of the

reef for the wreck found the main site consisting of anchors, cannon and a large mound of conglomerate, followed by further investigations in 1977.⁶⁷

As Stokes recounts, the glass bottles were of a short, stout Dutch build, and had been placed in rows, as if for the purpose of collecting water; some of them were very large, being capable of holding five or six gallons; they were in part buried in the sand. A number of seal bones were noticed on this island, doubtless the remains of those that were killed by the crew of the *Zeewyk* for their subsistence.

The next small islet they discovered to be that on which the Dutchmen had built their sloop. On the west side of it was a spot free from coral reefs, thus offering them facilities, nowhere else afforded, for launching the bark which ultimately carried them in safety to Batavia. On the south west point of the island the beams of a large vessel were discovered and as the crew of the *Zeewyk*, lost in 1728, reported having seen the wreck of a ship on this part, Wickham's company had little doubt, now disputed, that the latter remains were those of the *Batavia*, which Commodore Pelsaert lost in 1627. They therefore named their temporary anchorage Batavia Road, and hence the whole group of islands the Pelsart Group. It was the wreck of this Dutch ship that led to the discovery of this part of the continent of Australia, Pelsaert himself having crossed over to it in a boat in search of water.⁴⁷

It has been suggested elsewhere that the wreckage attributed by Wickham and Stokes to the *Zeewyk* was in fact that of the *Batavia*. However, they unequivocally identified the *Zeewyk* wreck site from the cannons which bore eighteenth century dates, whereas the *Batavia*, tentatively identified with the further wreck, was a seventeenth century vessel. The Shipwreck Databases of the Western Australian Museum confirm the identification of the *Zeewik* wreckage but the other, large wreckage observed by Stokes and Wickham has not proved to be that of the *Batavia* but is of unknown origin. The wreck of the *Batavia* was not discovered until 1963 when divers found its remains on Morning Reef, still in the Abrolhos but well to the north.⁶⁵ Timbers from the *Batavia*, together with many artefacts, are displayed in the museum. The accounts on the museum's database show differences as to dates of discovery and diving teams concerned from the popular work of 2011.⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that neither of the recent works^{64 65} references the careful account of Stokes nor mentions Wickham, both of whom contributed so greatly to the discovery of the wrecks and, indeed, to the founding of Australia.



Timbers of the *Batavia*. Western Australian Museum

A mile and a half to the southward of Gun Island, opposite a singular-looking indentation in the outer side of the reefs, a small cluster of cliffy islets approached within half a mile of them. The north point of Gun Island, which their observations placed in latitude 28 degrees 53 minutes 10 seconds South, was fronted for half a mile by a reef. They then anchored a mile north-west of a cluster of islets covered in places with mangroves, after which they were named. One of the eastern Mangrove Islets was a mere cay, formed of large flat pieces of dead fan coral, strewn over a limestone foundation one foot above the level of the sea, to the height of five feet.

On 3 May they fetched in under the lee of Easter Group as a violent north-west gale commenced. By the evening of 5 May all was clear overhead but they moved their berth and observed several small water spouts. On the 8th they bore away for the northern group; the space between was named Middle Passage. They then hauled up south-east, and by feeling their way with the boats, got the ship into a snug harbour on the south-east side of the highest island of the Abrolhos, which was afterwards named East Wallaby Island; another large one, named West Wallaby Island, lying two miles to the West-South-West with three small flat islets just between. To these they gave the name of Pigeon Islands, the common bronze-winged pigeon being found there in great numbers. The harbour they named Recruit Harbour, from its affording fresh supplies of the small kangaroo, in addition to the fish found everywhere else. Like the other ports in the Abrolhos, it was full

of coral patches. They found a snug harbour perfectly sheltered on all sides. The loftiest point rising on the north-east extreme of East Wallaby Island measured no more than 50 feet and was named Flag Hill. A finger-shaped point running out from its foot in a north-east direction, was called Fish Point, from the number of voracious snappers they caught there.

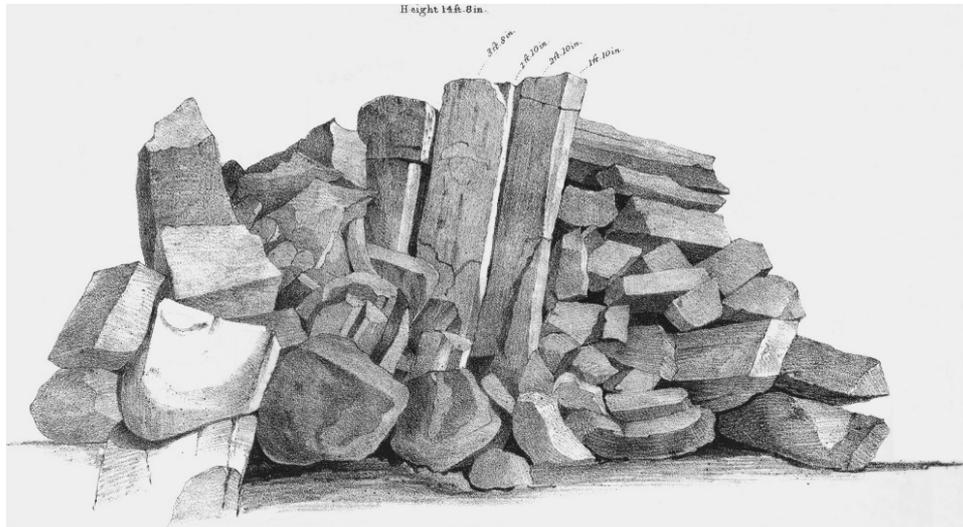
They found a new species of wallaby. This was named *Halmaturus houtmannii* by Gould in 1844.⁶⁸ Regrettably (to modern sensibilities) on one day, within four hours, Stokes shot 36, and with three guns they killed 76, averaging in weight about seven pounds each. This gave rise to the name of Slaughter Point for the eastern extreme of the island. It was here that surgeon Bynoe made his important observations, referred to above, on parturition in marsupials, dissecting two to three hundred specimens of this species. Stokes continued to favour the settlers' misconception that the young were born on the nipple. They were detained in Recruit Harbour until 21 May, determining the position of the number of small islands and detached reefs to the south-east of Wallaby Islands but at length anchored at an isolated patch of land which, from its relative position to the remainder of Houtman's Abrolhos, they called North Island. The highest hill on the south-west point, measuring 42 feet, received the name of Record Hill, from their leaving a paper in a bottle, giving an account of their cruise.

In the morning of 23 May, satisfied that the *Beagle* had reached the northern extremity of Houtman's Abrolhos, they weighed anchor. Their soundings indicated that the islands were not connected with each other but rested on the outer extremity of a level or bank, stretching out from the main, and having a slight southerly inclination. After leaving the Abrolhos, progress to the northward was unusually slow.

Dirk Hartog's Island. The *Beagle* passed Dirk Hartog's island and rounded the north-west extremity of the continent. The part of the north-west coast that had not been seen by Captain King, commencing a short distance to the east of Depuch Island, it was resolved that their survey should begin there and on 9 June the *Beagle* anchored off a sandy bay on the north-east side of that island.⁴⁷ Dirk Hartog's island had been visited by Dampier.⁶⁹

Depuch Island is described in some detail by Wickham.⁷⁰ It was found to be circular, 8 miles in circumference, and with a height of 514 feet, contrasting with less than 50 feet for other islands of the Forestier's Group (near Port Headland in north western Australia). It appeared to be a vast pile of greenstone blocks with here and there in the valleys and on more level spaces a sprinkling of soil that nourished a few stunted gum trees, shrubs and coarse grass. All of the islands were connected to the mainland, at least

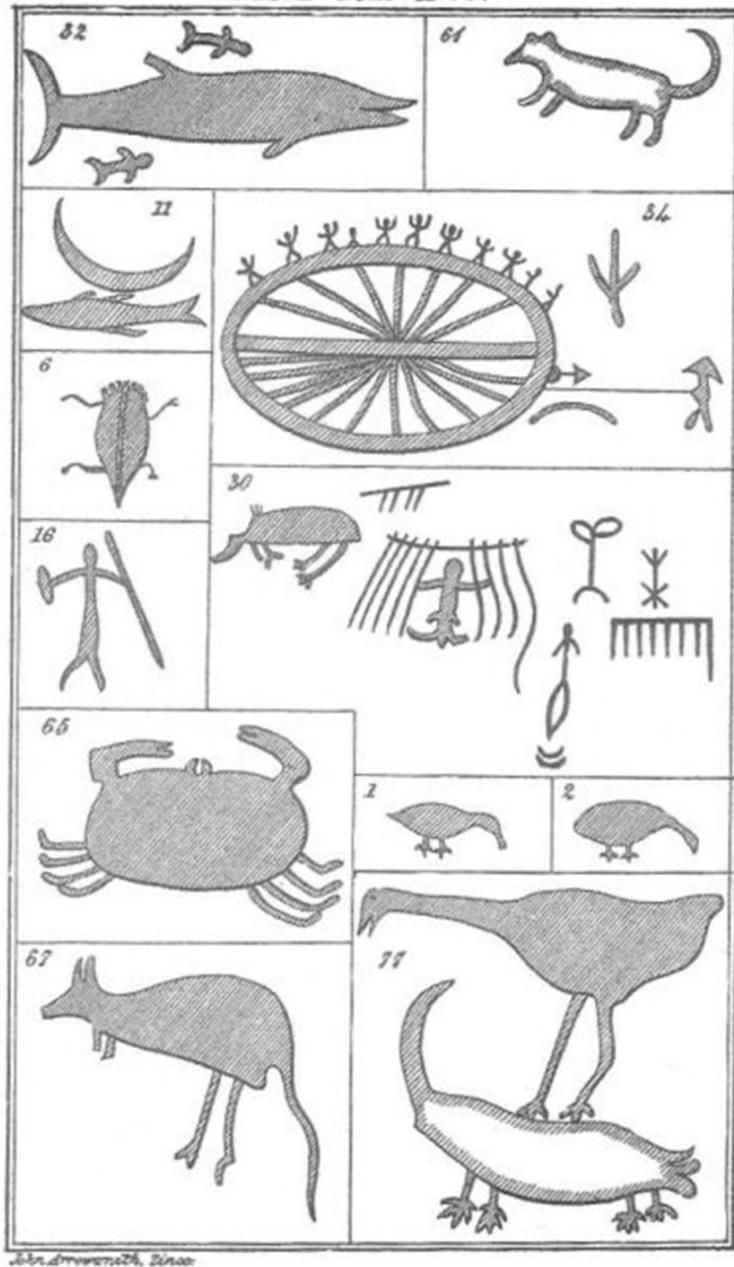
at low tide, by extensive flats and sand ridges, though six or seven miles from the shore, and were therefore easily accessible to the Aborigines, though they were seen only on the mainland on this occasion. Canoes and rafts were not seen.⁷⁰ One of Wickham's characteristically fine drawings has survived and shows the greenstone blocks. He also delineated Aboriginal drawings which are reproduced here.^{47, 70} One of the more interesting drawings is that of a native gathering or corroboree. Incomplete keys to the figures were given. The aboriginal drawings were made by incising the red surface of the rock to expose the underlying green colouration. The artists were considered by Stokes to have in one thing proved themselves superior to the Egyptian and the Etruscan in that there was not in them the slightest trace of indecency. Several native huts were still standing. They were constructed of boughs and twigs fixed in the ground and joined overhead in a circular shape. Over this was thrown a loose matting of twisted grass.⁴⁷



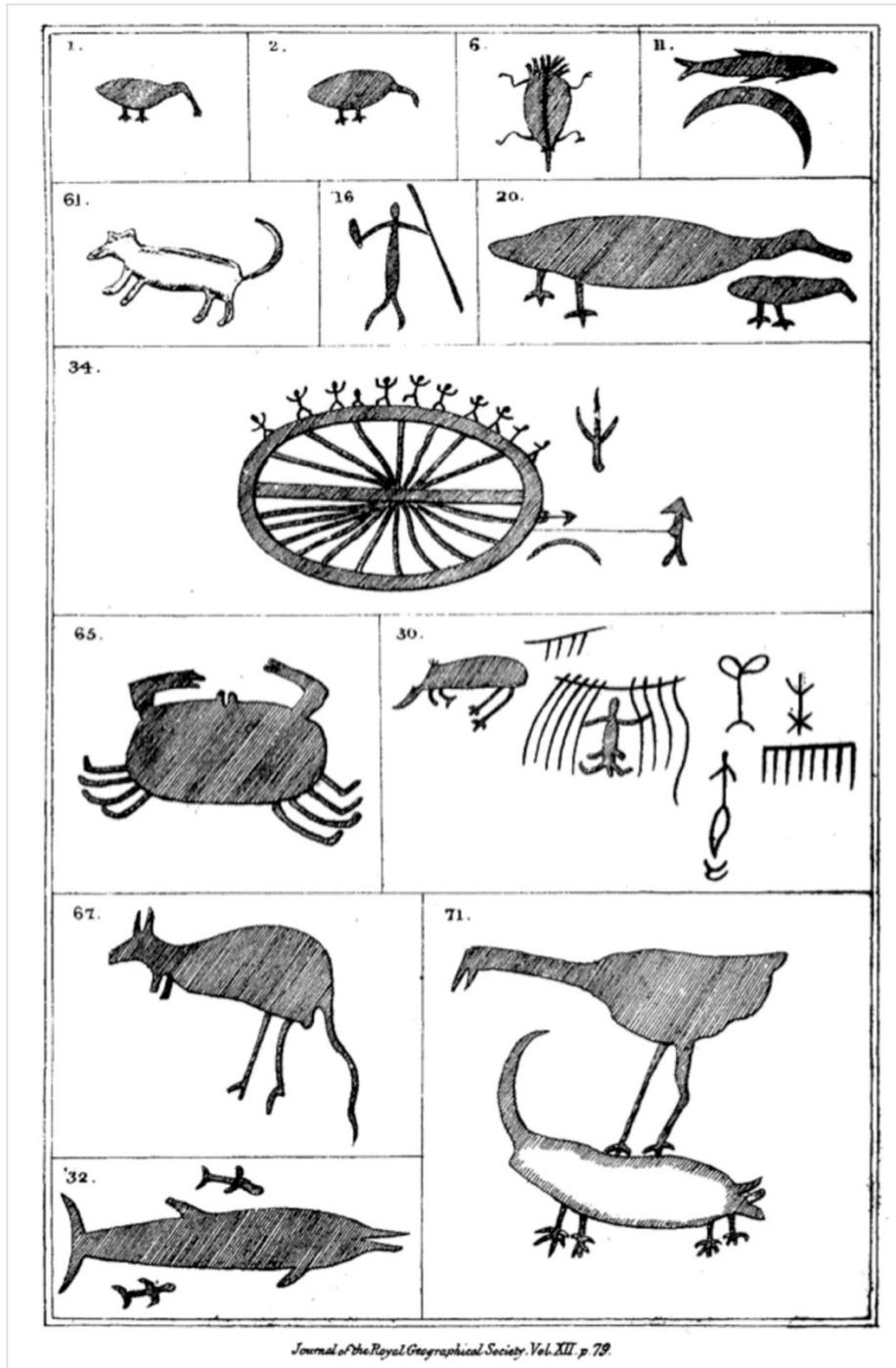
Depuch Island rocks, by Wickham ⁷⁰

They found the anchorage at Depuch Island to form a tolerable port, being protected from the north-east by one of the group, distant about three miles, from which a reef extended, leaving the mouth of the harbour exposed only partially. Observations placed the centre of the sandy beach on the north-east side of the island in latitude 20 degrees 37 minutes 47 seconds South and longitude 2 degrees 20 seconds West of Swan River. The tide rose 15 feet, but only 5 during neaps. They found a new species of finch, *Emblema picta*, and a wallaby, possibly *Petrogale lateralis*, the Stripe-Sided Rock Wallaby.

NATIVE DRAWINGS.

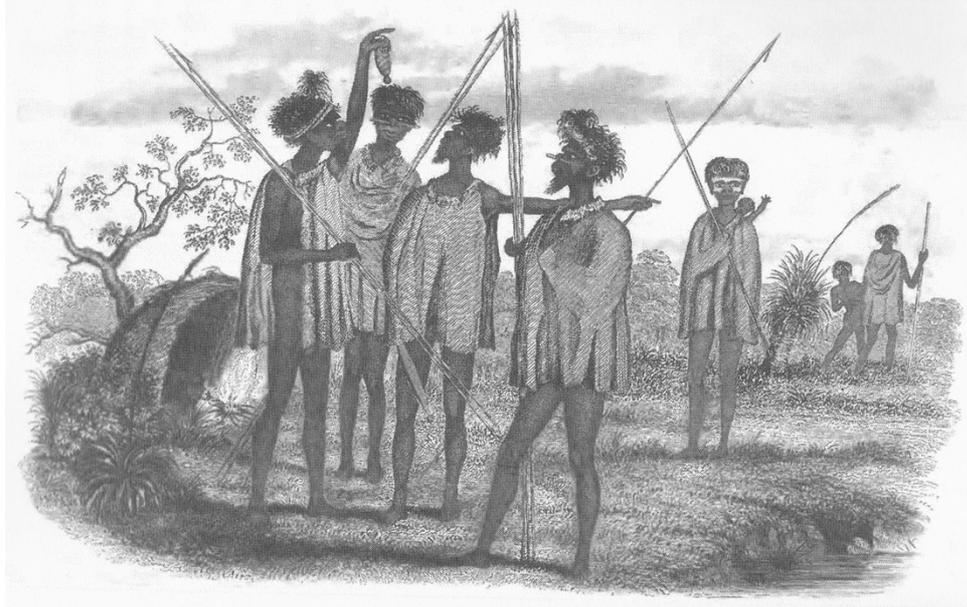


Drawings by Aborigines at Depuch Island, by Wickham in Stokes Volume 2 ⁴⁷



Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. XIII, p. 79.

Drawings by Aborigines at Depuch Island, by Wickham. ⁷⁰



Natives of Western Australia sketched by Lieutenant Fitzmaurice ⁸

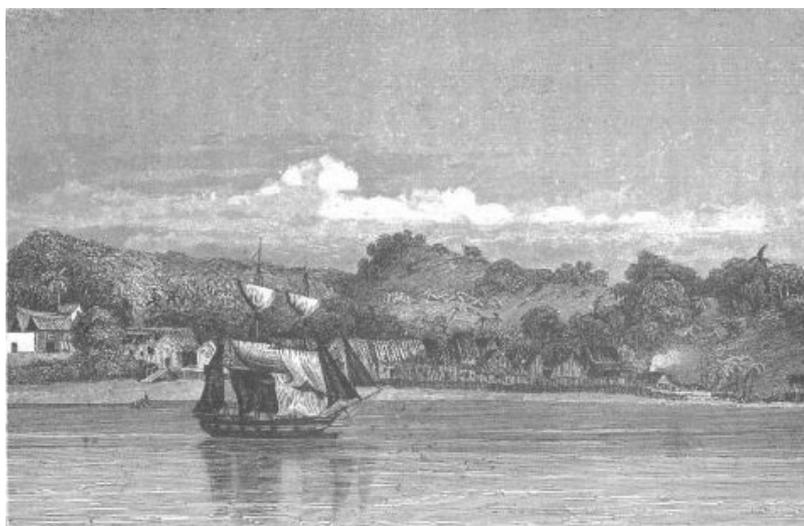
Turtle Isles. Leaving Depuch Island, they examined the coast to the eastward as far as the Turtle Isles, a distance of eighty-five miles. The only opening of any consequence was forty-three miles from Depuch Island. From its abundant oysters they named an inlet in the coast Oyster Inlet. Across the mouth of it lay an islet, just within the north-eastern end of which there was a sufficient depth for the *Beagle*. The formation of the island was a reddish porous sandstone. At a native fire-place Stokes found a piece of quartz and a large pearl oyster-shell. The tide rose here 15 feet near full moon.

Wickham followed the coast to the Geographe Shoals. These were the only outlying dangers on this extent of coast, two rocky patches some distance from each other. The outer one was thirteen miles from the mainland and twenty-three miles from Depuch Island. In the course of four hours on a Turtle Isle, thirty green turtles were brought on board, one of which, and not the largest, weighed 385 pounds. A small hawk's bill turtle was also taken. A fruitless attempt was made to procure water on this island by digging and as they were now reduced to a supply for only ten days it became necessary to immediately proceed to Timor in search of some. The unusual fogs that had prevailed for three days dispersing on 14 July, allowed them to leave their anchorage under the south-east side of North Turtle Isle and soon after dark they occupied another near Bedout Island. They weighed early in the afternoon of the 15th and passed round the north-west end of Bedout. They

carried soundings until abreast of the north end of Rowley Shoals and twenty-five miles from their inner side, in from 45 to 154 fathoms. These shoals, like the Abrolhos, appeared to stand on the outer edge of a bank projecting off this portion of the coast, as they did not get bottom after leaving their parallel. On 20 July, in the afternoon, they passed, having no soundings with 200 fathoms, along the western side of Scott's Reef, at a distance of three miles and determined its position.

Timorese Islands. By 23 July, they were in sight of the Timorese islands of Pulo Douw and Rotee. They rounded the north-west end of the former at the distance of a mile and a half. It appeared to be thickly inhabited, and was encircled by a reef, except where there was a cliffy projection. They found that the islands had been wrongly charted. They passed some distance from the western end of Samow Island in the morning but the high peaks of Timor, astonishing the Swan River native on board, were not seen till near noon.

In crossing the mouth of Coepang Bay towards Samow, in the evening, the appearance was truly grand. The great Timoree Range and dazzling white sand beaches contrasting with the dark blue sea, heightened the beauty of the scene. During the first watch they beat up the bay and at midnight anchored; the barking of dogs, the crowing of cocks, and the tolling of bells assuring them that they were in the vicinity of civilization. In the morning they found themselves off the town of Coepang, when they shifted their berth farther in a quarter of a mile from the flagstaff of Fort Concordia.



Coepang from the anchorage. By Lieutenant Gore ⁴⁷

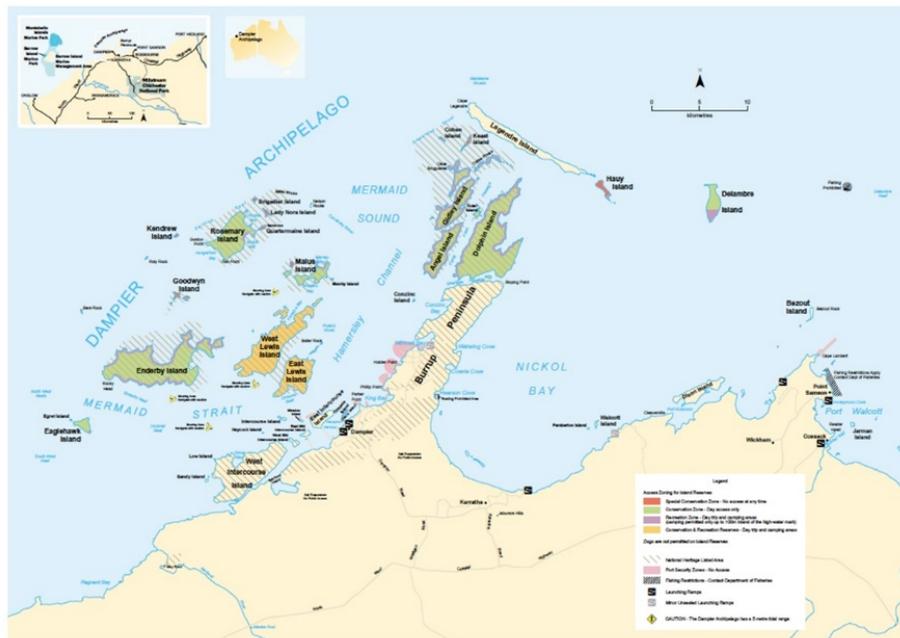
On the second day after their arrival they visited the Dutch Resident, Vanden Dungen Gronovius. They passed through narrow streets, lined with Chinese shops and pedlars of every description, from the long-tailed Chinaman to the thick, crisp-haired, athletic 'Timoree', and entered a rich green valley, with some fine houses. What they most enjoyed was the vegetation, a feast for their eyes after the dull arid shores of north-western Australia. They gazed with intense pleasure on the rich green spreading leaf of the banana and other tropical fruit-trees, above which towered the graceful coconut. Stokes mused on the fact that Timor and Australia, so different in the character of their scenery, could be such near neighbours. They learned from the Resident that the *Zelee* and *Astrolabe* were laid on their beam ends for twenty-four hours in the hurricane of the previous November, when the *Pelorus* was lost at Port Essington.

The observations for latitude, longitude, etc. were made in Fort Concordia, near the flagstaff. They were surprised to find this fort so much out of repair; the only guns fit to be fired were two brass six-pounders. On them Stokes noticed the same mark as found at Houtman's Abrolhos: two sides of a triangle bisecting two small circles. Their disrepair reminded him of Darwin's humorous account of his visit to Valdivia. In relation to health he followed the Victorian delusion that diseases such as malaria were caused by a miasma of the swamp and he suggested that winds blowing over rice paddies gave rise to the insidious fevers which were so prevalent at Coepang, as well as dysentery, from which indeed the crew of the *Beagle* afterwards suffered.

Stokes related sometimes blood-curdling tales he had heard from the Resident about the Dayaks and made observations on the local people. It seemed that nearly all of the Timorese in Coepang were slaves sold by the Rajahs of the different districts, the value of a young man being £50. Stokes gives a long account of his adventures in Timor, to which the reader is referred. On 5 August the *Mangles* arrived from Sydney by the outer route through Torres Strait, having lost all her anchors, and been nearly wrecked in a south-east gale near Halfway Island. She was commanded by the same master, Mr Carr, who gave the first information concerning the survivors of the crew of the *Charles Eaton*.⁴⁷

Dampier Archipelago. They sailed from Rottee and made soundings from the 9th to the 14th. On 15 August they were in latitude 16 degrees. After one of those stagnant calms so frequently met with near the equator, they got a light westerly breeze on the morning of the 18th. These winds prevented them from making the coast on the eastward of Depuch Island; and as they had failed in getting a supply of provisions at Timor, they were compelled

to relinquish the plan of continuing the examination of that part of the coast between the Turtle Islands and Roebuck Bay. The *Beagle* was consequently anchored under Bezout Island, one of the eastern isles of Dampier's Archipelago and boats were sent to examine the coast on the southward of Cape Lambert. Bezout Island was of the same formation as Depuch. On 26 August they noted very unsettled weather over the previous four days. The material for the chart collected in this part consisted of the mainland from below Picard Island to nearly twenty miles west of Cape Lambert, with the neighbouring islands, an extent of nearly forty-five miles. The part near Picard Island was carefully examined by Forsyth. He reported the mainland to the south-south-west of that island, forming the head of the bay between Cape Lambert and Depuch, to be extensive flats of mud and sand cut up by mangrove creeks. On a hill up one of these, several small kangaroos were seen. Near the Cape, Forsyth saw twenty-seven Aborigines, seven of whom were children, in one party.



The Dampier Archipelago and Bezout Island. Western Australian Government

On 27 August they crossed over to Delambre Island, on which a large party landed in the afternoon. A few turtles were taken, of a different kind from any they had seen before, and apparently intermediate between the Hawk's Bill and the Green Turtle; several nests were also found, in one of which

were 138 eggs. This island terminated, like Bezout Island to the northward, in cliffs about 90 feet high, with deep water close by. On the east and west sides it was fronted by a reef nearly a mile in extent; but they could see no traces of the reefs charted by Captain King. The passage between Huiy Island and Delambre was five miles wide.



Montebello Islands. Wikipedia

Montebello Islands. From Delambre the *Beagle* sailed to the Montebello Islands, principally in order to set at rest two points of great interest, namely, the position of Ritchie's Reef, and of the long lost Tryal Rocks. Neither of these was convincingly demonstrated. They found the Montebello Group to be confined by a coral reef encircling it. The two principal islands were Tremouille and Hermite islands. The fact that these and their neighbours were not separated in the charts confirmed the necessity of their visit. On 31 August, in the afternoon, they anchored on the eastern side of the cliffy Tremouille Island. Leaving a boat to examine the islands, the ship proceeded towards the northern end of Barrow Island, being anxious to avoid the southerly winds to which the anchorage off Tremouille was exposed. On their way to Barrow Island the winds were so violent as to cause the ship to drive with two anchors ahead, there appearing to be no holding ground. Near that island, Stokes shot (from the quarter-boat) the largest sea-snake ever killed. It was figured and described in the Appendix, by Mr J.E. Gray, as

Hydrus major, and measured eight feet one inch in length, by three inches broad; the colour was a dark yellow. ⁴⁷

Barrow Island was named after the Secretary to the Admiralty, who had just retired from office after a period of service of nearly half a century. On this large island, about twelve miles broad and twenty long, they failed to find any surface water, everything wearing a dry parched appearance, nor traces of Aborigines except some charred pieces of wood from their fires. They did however find new kinds of kangaroo and wallaby. On leaving they took away seven tons of turtles. Many of them were given to friends at Swan River on arrival. They then returned to Tremouille Island where Fitzmaurice joined them, having completed the examination of the Montebello Group, with a large amount of chart material, in a very short space of time, considering the number of small islands. ⁸

The Montebello Islands are now known to be an archipelago of around 174 small islands lying 12 miles north of Barrow Island and 81 miles off the Pilbara coast. They were the site of three nuclear weapons tests by the British military in the 1950s, events of which the Australian population at large was kept remarkably ignorant for more than a decade though prominently shown on newsreels in England.

Fitzmaurice having seen plenty of wallaby on the larger Montebello islands, a party went on shore in the evening after securing observations for the rates of the chronometers on a small islet called Flag Islet. This lay near the centre of the rocky cluster fronting the eastern side of Hermite Island, in latitude a little over 20 degrees where the tide rose fourteen feet. They found that Tremouille Island was as scantily supplied with vegetation as Barrow Island but in one or two places was growing a stunted kind of wood, sufficient for fuel for a small-sized ship. There was no sign of water and the wallabies, which were very numerous, must have got their supply of moisture from the copious dews. Regrettably, by modern standards, they were found to afford:

excellent sport, quite equal to any rabbit shooting; among three guns they managed, in a couple of hours, to bag nearly twenty.

These were later identified as *Lagorchestes conspicillata*.

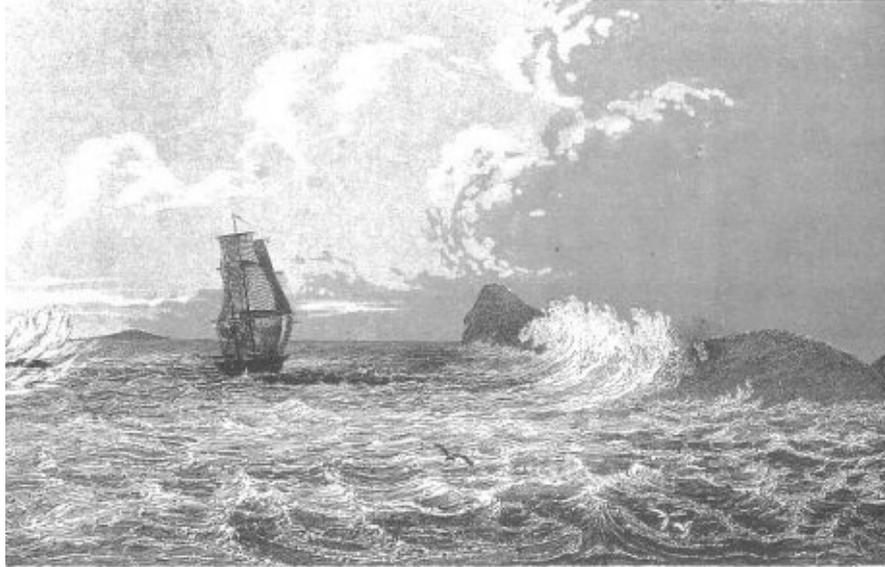
The glimpse they got of the string of islands between Barrow Island and the North-west Cape, was quite unexpected, as the next land they had expected to see was Swan River. After rounding the North-west Cape, they anchored under the east end of Rottneest Island.

Swan River revisited. While revisiting Swan River a considerable English-Aboriginal lexicon was developed for that location and Port Essington. On 11 October the *Beagle* revisited Rottneest Island, accompanied

by Lieutenant Roe, the Surveyor-General, for the purpose of erecting beacons on the rocks lying off the points of Thomson's Bay, for guidance eastward of the Champion Rock. They were happy to have an opportunity of rendering this important service to the colonists, who acknowledged it in a very handsome manner. Stokes acquired a puppy of a native dog which he gave to a relative on his return to England. He discussed the characteristics of the dogs at length. Bynoe gave a summary of the geology of the region.⁴⁷ The ship must have had a considerable menagerie.

From the very debilitated state of some of the crew, from 'dysenteric affections' contracted at Timor, the *Beagle* was not able to leave Swan River before 25 October. At noon on the 28th, they passed Cape Naturaliste which they calculated as being four miles further south than it had been placed in the charts, though in longitude it appeared pretty correct. They passed along a few miles from the coast towards Cape Leeuwin, in the neighbourhood of which they looked in vain for a rock called the Rambler. Passing along the south coast they charted the white-topped rocks near Cape Chatham which were not only remarkable in themselves but, like the Eclipse Islands, were admirably situated for showing a ship's position when near the coast.

King George's Sound. They entered King George's Sound on 2 November. Bald Head was observed to be connected with the mainland by a low piece of land, in the centre of which stood a small peak, giving it the appearance of an island. A conspicuous headland called Peaked Hill was seen about five miles south-west of Bald Head. Proceeding up the Sound they anchored in Princess Royal Harbour, in view of Mount Clarence and the south end of Michaelmas Island just open of Point Possession. The entrance to this great basin was by a narrow channel but although the passage was contracted the *Beagle* was worked through both ways. Inside, there was water sufficient for the largest ship in the navy; but only for a short distance within the entrance.



Beagle passing between Bald Head and Vancouver Reef. By Lieutenant Gore

47

Albany. Just above a dazzling white sandy beach, a straggling village pointed out the township of Albany. Mount Clarence and Mount Melville reared their bare granitic heads on either side and huge fantastically-shaped boulders were strewn over their slopes. The settlement was first planned, in consequence of a report that the French were about to establish themselves there. This turned out to be true, for they had actually formed and abandoned a settlement before Major Lockyer arrived from Sydney in 1825. The gang of convicts he brought with him was withdrawn when Albany became part of the government of Western Australia. Among the few improvements that had taken place since their visit in 1836 were a jetty and a government storehouse. It was regretted that the infant town of Albany had made so little progress, especially as it possessed by far the finest harbour in Western Australia.⁴⁷



Albany, Western Australia, in 1874. Still poorly developed. By Sir Whately Eliot

Aborigines control fire. Stokes' party left Albany and reached the foot of a large clear piece of land called the Great Plain, about fifteen miles distant and a little off the Swan River road. He paid tribute to the Aborigines' ability to control fire that is relevant to the present day. On their way they met a party of them engaged in burning the bush, which they did in sections every year. The dexterity with which they managed so proverbially dangerous an agent as fire was astonishing. Those to whom this duty was especially entrusted, and who guided or stopped the running flame, were armed with large green boughs with which, if it moved in a wrong direction, they beat it out. Their object in these periodical conflagrations seemed to be the destruction of the various snakes, lizards and wallabies, which with shouts and yells they thus forced from their covert, to be despatched by the spears or throwing-sticks of the hunting division [and, we presume, control of vegetation]. The whole scene was a most animated one and the eager men, every muscle in action and every faculty called forth, then appeared to the utmost advantage. Stokes could conceive no finer subject for a picture than a party of these beings engaged in kindling, moderating, and directing the destructive element, which under their care seemed almost to change its nature, acquiring, as it were, complete docility, instead of the ungovernable

fury one was accustomed to ascribe to it. Dashing through the thick underwood, amidst volumes of smoke - their dark active limbs and excited features burnished by the fierce glow of the fire - they presented a spectacle which it rarely fell to one's lot to behold and of which it was impossible to convey any adequate idea by words.

While themselves coursing kangaroos, the visitors observed several short trenches, cut by the aborigines for pit-falling kangaroos. They were dug across the runs of the animal and covered with a slight layer of brush or grass, and were very narrow at the bottom, so that the prey could get no footing to bound out. They took an excursion to Lady Spencer's farms but by 15 December joined the *Beagle* as it sailed out of King George's Sound.

47

South Australia to Sydney. It was resolved that they should touch at South Australia to secure a good meridian [longitude] distance by short stages between Swan River and Sydney. Accordingly, on the morning of 27 December they entered Investigator Strait, having been detained by strong easterly winds about a hundred and fifty miles to the westward of Kangaroo Island. They discovered a small high rocky island the summit of which was in latitude 34 degrees 49 minutes South and longitude 19 degrees 4 minutes East of Swan River; it was nine miles from the high peak on Greenly's Island. The name of the *Beagle* was bestowed upon it. However, this name was also conferred on an island in Bass Strait. At noon, as they entered the Strait, they sadly committed to the deep the body of Nicholas Lewis, seaman, who died of sickness contracted at Timor.

The *Beagle* kept close to the Neptune Isles, a low rocky group, the southernmost of which they determined to lie in latitude 35 degrees 22 minutes South. There was a strong indraught of a knot an hour into Spencer's Gulf. Kangaroo Island had no remarkable features; whilst Althorpe and Quoin islands were sufficiently striking to be recognized by anyone who has once seen them. On the morning of 29 December they anchored in Holdfast Road, in sight of Mount Lofty, a flagstaff at a straggling village under it pointed out Glenelg township. At the foot of this they made their observations. Landing at Glenelg, they sailed towards Adelaide, which lay about six miles to the northward, in the centre of a rich plain, stretching from the foot of Mount Lofty to the sea, and contracting gradually to the southward. Beyond Glenelg it rose into downs, increasing in height as they approached Cape Jervis, ultimately blending with spurs thrown off from Mount Lofty Range. Adelaide itself was situated on the banks of the Torrens, a very insignificant stream, or rather series of pools, in the dry season. They found Adelaide a noble city which had in the course of four

years sprung, as if by magic, from the ground, wearing such an appearance of prosperity and wealth that it seemed almost incredible that it could have existed for so short a time. They considered that this was mainly owing to the liberal expenditure of its second Governor, Colonel George Gawler, who saw the policy at the earliest possible opportunity of making adequate preparation for the stream of population that was so rapidly flowing in. Stokes visited the port and also witnessed the departure of Eyre and of Sturt on expeditions to the interior. They visited Mount Lofty where to their surprise they found a comfortable inn.

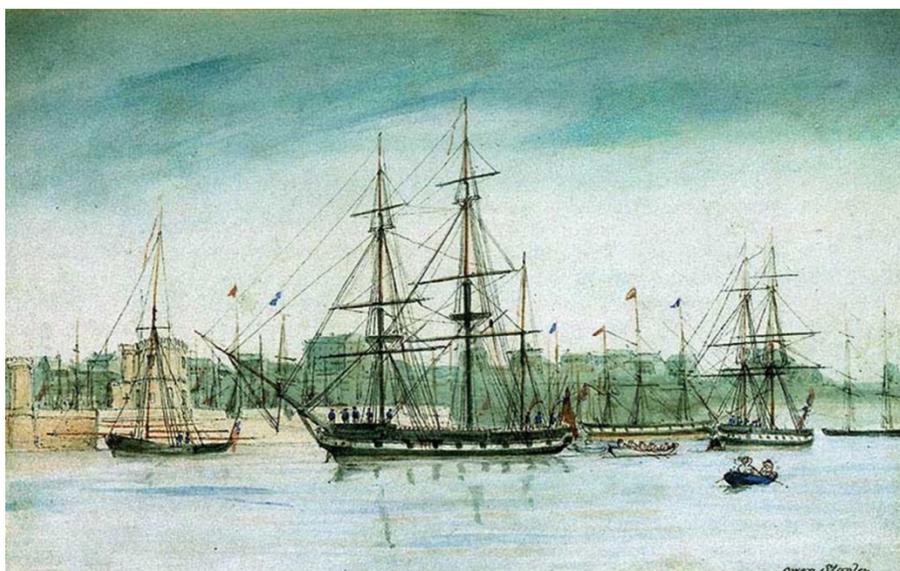
The *Beagle* sailed from Holdfast Road on 7 December but because of light winds, with occasional very heavy squalls, it was not until the afternoon of the 10th that they got out to sea by Backstairs Passage between Cape Jervis and Kangaroo Island. Easterly winds prevented them from entering Bass Strait until the 16th. Wickham made a chart correction for the coast seven or eight miles west of Cape Otway as they found that it projected three or four miles too much on the charts. In Bass Strait unusually light winds detained them till the 21st, when they got a kick out of the eastern entrance from a strong south-wester, and afterwards had a good run up to Sydney, where they arrived on the 23 December 1840.⁴⁷

Wickham retires from the Navy

The *Beagle* was refitted in early 1841. Wickham retired from the Navy on half pay^{5 71} and returned briefly to England. His retirement was supposedly because of failing health, having not fully recovered from the attack of dysentery of late 1837 when he had first arrived at Swan River^{8 58}. But it is perhaps more likely that his approaching marriage to Anna Macarthur was dependent on his ceasing to be a sailor.⁴ John Lort Stokes was promoted to the vacancy thus created.⁴⁷ Stokes later published the two volume work, *Discoveries in Australia*, an account of the voyages of the *Beagle* from 1837-1843, from which much of this account is drawn. Stokes retired in 1877, with the rank of admiral, to his estate, Scotchwell, at Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, and died on 11 June 1885.^{10 58} It is considered by some that he took more of the credit for the third *Beagle* voyage than was warranted. Nevertheless, Stokes was well-loved by the *Beagle*'s officers and crew and his kindly disposition is seen in that, like Wickham, he never permitted firearms to be used against Aborigines.¹⁰ Darwin mentioned Wickham only once in *The Voyage of the Beagle*¹⁹ and he was sparsely mentioned by Fitz-Roy¹⁸ and Stokes^{8,47}, despite his enormous contributions to the success of all three *Beagle* voyages.

The almost total change in the arrangements of the ship, on the retirement of Wickham, necessitated some delay, and the season for passing through Torres Strait, moreover, not having commenced, it was 3 June 1841, before the *Beagle* again rounded Breaksea Spit, on Fraser Island, having touched on the way for a longitude bearing at Port Stephens.⁴⁶

Owen Stanley sketched the *Beagle* in Sydney Harbour before her departure.



The *Beagle*, in Sydney Harbour, 1841. Watercolour by Owen Stanley

Although it was not mentioned in *'Discoveries'*, in 1841 John Stokes married Fanny Jane, daughter of Major Marlay of the Port Phillip district. She returned to England with him and their Australian-born son in 1843. When Stokes had to leave his young wife in Sydney for long months while he was away in the north, the King family drew her into their social circle and looked after her with kindness.¹⁰

We can only surmise Wickham's intentions towards the Aborigines of Australia but the from records of the encounters of himself and Stokes with them recounted above it appears there was no ill will. It was certainly the intention of the British to colonise the great land but co-existence with the Aborigines was envisaged by our navigators, though it might prove impracticable and was not desired by many of the settlers. Recapitulating, neither Wickham nor Stokes ever used fire arms against the native people but in his early letter to the admiralty, in 1837, we have seen that Wickham considered that the natives might show a disposition to be 'troublesome' and

therefore requested harmless signalling rockets to deter them. He softened this by requesting, as gifts for the natives, articles which were not mere baubles but would be useful to them.

By 1838, at Point Swan, the good intentions of the officers were seen when they reluctantly parted from a dignified aboriginal, filling his basket with bread and giving him as much water as he could drink.

They expressed admiration for the navigational skills of their Aboriginal passenger, Miago, and found Aborigines employed as servants at York, north of Perth, 'sharp and intelligent lads'.

In 1838, on Walker Island the navigators recognized, without adverse comment, intermarriage between whites and Aborigines.

At Port Stephens they admired the 'fairy boats' of the Aborigines. Later, at the Adelaide River, they praised a very pretty bark canoe, sewn together with much neatness, and altogether the most artistic piece of workmanship they had seen among the Aborigines. In contrast with these favourable impressions, at Boydan Island they were aware of the brutal massacre by islanders of the crew of the *Charles Eaton*.

Admiration for Aborigines was again expressed at Shoal Bay where a party of Aborigines evinced the most friendly disposition and the visitors admired their superiority over Europeans in their ability to find water.

The inevitable incompatibility between the two peoples was later seen when Stokes was speared in the shoulder, only to be rescued by marines.

The subjugation of Aborigines manifested itself in the existence of a penal settlement for them on Rottneest Island. There they evoked the admiration of the visitors by showing with great pride the nice cottages which they had built. They had perhaps been interned for crimes into which they had been driven by the treatment they received from those who have deprived them both of their land and of their liberty.

At Depuch Island near Port Headland Wickham admired and drew aboriginal rock drawings among which were many recognizable animals, an Aborigine with spear and shield, and a native gathering or corroboree.

They later showed their constructive interest in the Aborigines by developing a considerable English-Aboriginal lexicon and recorded their great admiration for the ability of Aborigines in controlling fire and their demeanour in so doing. They also observed the ingenuity of the people in trapping kangaroos in pit-falls.

After Wickham took up residence, first as Police Magistrate and later as Government Resident, the reality of Aborigines and Europeans living together underwent a great test as will be apparent in the following account of his life in Brisbane. Nothing indicates any prejudice on his part against

Aborigines. He attempted to apply the law justly on both communities but it was English Law and Aborigines affected had lived for millennia under their own, albeit diverse, system and were now subject to an alien people who were usurping their living space. His concern for the welfare of aborigines is seen in June 1848 in letters reporting distribution of 50 blankets to aged and sick women and old men of a tribe encamped about Brisbane. He took on the role of 'Protector of Aborigines' and distribution of blankets in winter continued under his supervision. There were some 4000 blacks in the District, with 200 encamped within quarter of a mile of Brisbane. This is a valuable insight into numbers of Aborigines still living in the vicinity of Brisbane.

5. Sydney, Marriage and Moreton Bay, 1842 to 1864

Wickham returned to New South Wales and in October 1842 married Anna MacArthur. Anna's sister, Emmeline Maria de Falbe, in her memoirs declared that Wickham's decision to retire from the Navy was for reasons other than ill health. This was further supported by Ellen Susan Comber, daughter of Captain Wickham and Anna MacArthur and widow of Admiral Henry Wandesford Comber. Writing from Exmouth in 1927, she stated:

I do not think he left H.M.S. Beagle from ill health but because his wife's family would not allow the marriage until he retired from Naval Service on account of the long separations and so he sent in his papers and got a government appointment at Moreton Bay.⁴

The Register of Marriages in the Parish of St. John, Parramatta recorded that

John Clements Wickham of this Parish Bachelor and Anna McArthur of this Parish Spinster were married in this church by License this twenty seventh day of October in the year 1842.

The marriage was solemnised by H.H. Bobart in the presence of H.H. McArthur of the Vineyard, Parramatta; A.J. King; F.P. Blackwood; Philip G. King; Emeline McArthur; George F. McArthur; and Emma McArthur. Note the ambivalent rendering of the name MacArthur.



Anna Wickham. State Library of Queensland

By marrying into the Macarthur family, Wickham obtained influential relationships. Hannibal Macarthur, born in Plymouth, Devon, in 1788, was a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales for many years, was a pastoralist and businessman and, despite transient insolvency, Police Magistrate for Ipswich. In 1812 he married Maria King, daughter of Governor Philip Gidley King. Among his other daughters Catherine Macarthur, Anna's younger sister, married Patrick Leslie, of whom more later, and Emmeline married Patrick's brother George Farquhar Leslie. Hannibal also had five sons. He died at Norwood, England, in 1861.⁷² Wickham, and Charles Darwin, visited his stately home, *The Vineyard*, in Paramatta, during the second voyage of the *Beagle* when Charles commented on the attractive young ladies who professed no knowledge of England. It seems likely that Hannibal was influential in obtaining the

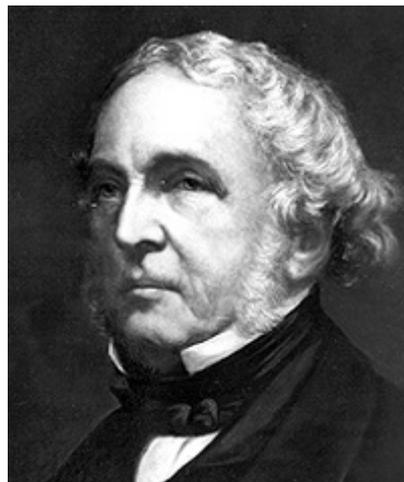
position of Police Magistrate, Moreton Bay for Wickham. Indeed, Wickham was staying at *The Vineyard* when he received the letter, on 13 November 1842, from the Colonial Secretary affirming his appointment to which he responded on the 21st.



The Vineyard, Paramatta. Home of Hannibal Macathur. This stately home was demolished in the 1960s by Rheem for a car park



Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur as a young man. Unknown artist. Mitchell Library



Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur in later age

A Boat Race. The good relationship between Wickham and Hannibal Macarthur was evident in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of Monday 3 November 1842 that reported a boat race on Sydney Harbour. On the previous Saturday afternoon, a race came off between Hannibal Macarthur's pleasure boat *Avon*, steered by Wickham, and the cutter and

pinnacle belonging to HMS *Fly*. The distance sailed was from the *Fly*, round Shark Island and back. The wind blew strongly from E.N.E which made it a dead beat down. The *Avon* rounded the island about twelve minutes before her antagonist, the cutter. Unfortunately the person steering the cutter mistook Clark's for Shark Island, or she would have stood a very good chance. In coming back the cutter gained somewhat on the *Avon*, but the latter won the race cleverly by several minutes. The success of Wickham's boat was ascribed to his knowledge of the set of the tides in the harbour. As the weather was boisterous, the paddle steamer *Kangaroo* accompanied the boats for fear of any accident.

1842 was memorable for the arrival, on 27 January, of the first steamer of the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company's fleet, the first vessel to enter Moreton Bay without the Governor's permit.¹¹

The penal settlement at Moreton Bay had been established in 1825 by order of Governor Brisbane and 1826 saw the arrival of the infamously brutal 'fell tyrant' Patrick Logan as Commandant. He was violently and mysteriously murdered four years later to the acclaim of the suffering convicts.⁷³ His name lives on as the unfortunately named Brisbane suburb of Logan.

On 10 February 1842, a proclamation was issued by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir George Gipps, that Moreton Bay was no longer a penal settlement, that free persons might use the district just like any other part of Australia and that ships might come to and go from the port without a written permit of the Governor.¹¹ In a despatch to Lord John Russell, he had reported that the land of Moreton Bay was good and that he awaited orders before offering portions for sale, though strenuously arguing the disadvantages of settlement.

On 24 March 1842 Governor Gipps reached Brisbane on the iron paddle steamer *Shamrock*, after a disastrous visit to Cleveland (a contender for the capital) where his party was obliged to wade ashore. Even at Brisbane a huge tree trunk six feet in diameter, laid parallel with the river bank, served as a substitute for a wharf. It was not until near the end of 1845 that the steamship company built its first wharf, which was on the south side of the river.⁷⁴

On this visit, Gipps personally supervised the final preparations and the survey of the town. He ordered the surveyor to make the street only one and a half chains (33 yards or 30 metres) wide. As a result, the street and the city did not become imposing until reconstructed. The three surveyors sent by Gipps to do the initial work were Robert Dixon, James Warner and Granville Stapylton. Warner continued for many years in Brisbane as the

surveyor and eventually became the well-liked and congenial Master at Arms. Among the early settlers in Wickham's time was Andrew Petrie who had arrived on the *James Watt* in 1837, when Moreton Bay was still a penal colony. Robert Little was among the earliest lawyers and when, in 1857, Judge Samuel Milford established the Supreme Court, with Mr Ratcliffe Pring as Crown Prosecutor, Little was appointed Crown Solicitor.¹¹

The Governor General further emancipated the settlement, in April 1842, by declaring, following Wickham's requests, that Brisbane was a town in which spirits as well and wine and beer could be sold wholesale. He also took the opportunity to approve the appointment of Lieutenant Patrick Johnstone as an additional magistrate and to suggest that the best blocks for sale should be in Anne, Adelaide, Russell, Grey and Glenelg Streets but not to exceed about 40 small allotments. By 12 October 1842, the Chief Constable was to be Inspector of Distilleries.⁷⁵

6. Police Magistrate

A letter dated 21 November 1842, written by Wickham from *The Vineyard* to the Colonial Secretary, acknowledged his appointment as Police Magistrate, Moreton Bay. On 12 December 1842 Wickham, still writing from Sydney, recommended the appointment of William Fitzpatrick from the Police Force in Sydney as Chief Constable at the Bay. By 31 December, the Governor General endorsed his request for four police constables to be sent there. Salaries were laid down as £300 for the Police Magistrate, £150 for the Clerk to the Bench and £80 for the Chief Constable. In 1845 the Chief Constable's salary was reduced to £70 but an ordinary constable received the miniscule sum of 2/6 per annum.⁷⁵ When the designation of the captain's office was changed to that of Government Resident, on 1 January 1853, his salary became £500.⁷¹

His appointment a Police Magistrate was gazetted on Tuesday 15 November 1842. His letter of appointment stated:

His Excellency [George Gibbs] thinks it right to point out to you that the Police Magistrate especially in a remote one like Moreton Bay [is] charged with the general supervision of all the interests of government within it...He is regarded as the representative of the Governor...All officers are to treat you with respect and deference...You are not to interfere with the duties of these officers...You are to bring to my knowledge any irregularities in attention to their duties which may fall under your observation or anything which you may think detrimental to the general interest of Her Majesty to the good of the Colony.⁵³

In a minute dated 11 January 1843, Captain Wickham's duties as Police Magistrate were set out. He was to be the representative of the Governor within the District and was charged with the general supervision of all the interests of Government within it. Late in January Wickham and his wife of three months arrived in Brisbane. They had travelled from Sydney on the *Shamrock*, a paddlewheel steamer belonging to the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company and commanded by Captain George Gilmore. Aboard with them was an Anglican clergyman, the Rev. John Gregor, who was accompanied by his wife.^{4, 76} (The *Shamrock* was sold in 1857 to China where it was wrecked in 1860.⁷⁷)

The *Government Gazette* of 1st May, 1846, contained a proclamation dated 30 April, 1846, extending the provisions of the Town Police Act (2 Vict., No. 2, 10th August, 1838) to Brisbane. Governor Gipps accordingly gave an intriguing delineation of the boundaries of Brisbane which included a small gully opposite Kangaroo Point and a line from the centre of the Windmill.⁷⁸

It was in 1842, the year of Wickham's appointment, that the treadmill adjacent to the windmill was demolished on introduction of free settlement. It had been used to grind corn when the sails of the windmill were not in operation and to punish convicts. The mill was the oldest building in Queensland, having been built by convicts in 1828. It was first offered for sale on the 6 December 1849 and was knocked down to a government official for approximately £30. It was subsequently disposed of by tender at an advance of £10. The investors commenced pulling it down but fortunately a flaw was discovered in the documents and it reverted to the Crown who a few years later converted it into a signal tower.



The Windmill on Wickham Terrace. Photo Barrie Jamieson

Two Aboriginal prisoners had been hanged from a high window on the Windmill, in public view, for the murder of the surveyor Granville Stapylton and his convict assistant William Tuck in 1840 in the coastal area south of Brisbane. Tuck was buried on the spot and Stapylton in Brisbane's first burial ground adjacent to the present William Jolly Bridge.

On 16 July 1842 the first sale of Brisbane town lots was held in Sydney. In December the machinery of free government was started. The days of 'commandants' were ended by the appointment on November 1842, as

signalled in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for Saturday 8 October, as police magistrate, of Captain Wickham, R.N., an officer recognized as having done excellent service in coastal explorations by sea. At the same time, Dr Stephen Simpson was appointed crown lands commissioner of Moreton Bay and Mr Christopher Rolleston to the same post in the frontier district of Darling Downs.⁷⁹ By August 1842 lots at Kangaroo Point were being sold⁷⁵. In June 1843 Wickham listed land sales made by William Fitzpatrick, Chief Constable, in the absence of the Licensed Auctioneer.⁷⁵ Many land sales were subsequently overseen by Wickham.⁷⁵ He purchased two blocks at Kangaroo Point which he subsequently donated for a church which Petrie built for £80, in John Street which later became Rotherham Street.⁸⁰ The church, Saint Mary's, a small wooden structure was opened in July 1849. The Reverend T. W. Bodenham, who lived at Kangaroo Point, took services for congregations of about 40 persons. In 1873 a more substantial stone-built church which replaced it was consecrated on an adjacent site in Main Street.

On 13 March 1845 Wickham wrote by the steamer *Sovereign*, to the Colonial Storekeeper, on the authority of the Colonial Secretary, requesting missing store indexes for binding, another example of his watchful eye.

In April and May 1847 there was considerable correspondence from Wickham with the Colonial Secretary, Harbour Master and others concerning recovery of buoys and with the recommendation that stronger moorings be laid down. Construction of a vessel or hire of the ketch *Aurora* of Brisbane for their maintenance was recommended.

By 19 October 1847, the expected *Rattlesnake* had not yet arrived and Wickham mentioned Owen Stanley and assistance with the survey of the Bay as far as Cleveland Point. The buoys had arrived and would be laid down as soon as the vessel was available. When Owen Stanley arrived they laid buoys to guide shipping through the North Channel, north of Moreton Island, and the dangerous South Channel, between Stradbroke Island and Moreton Island, which had seen the demise of the *Sovereign* was closed. Earlier, as shown in the Moreton Bay Courier for 24 April 1847, Wickham had issued sailing directions for the North Channel into Moreton Bay. A short excerpt from his account of more than a thousand words will serve to show his intimate knowledge of the area that he had charted so carefully and the nautical precision of his directions:

CAPE MORETON is the north-eastern point of Moreton Island, and is visible from a ship's deck at the distance of eight leagues. When first seen from the southward, it appears to be detached, as the land-between it and the higher parts of the island is very low. With the exception of Flinders'

Rocks, which lie N.N.E., distant three miles from the north projection of the cape, there does not appear to be any out-lying danger. Vessels entering Moreton Bay by the North Channel should, in coming from the southward, pass about a mile to the northward of the cape, and steer W. half N., until the N.W. extreme of the bushes at Cumboyuro Point bears S. by E., and the north extreme of Cape Moreton E. by S half S. ; the depth will then be 7 1/2 fathoms (L.W.), and the outer buoy, at A, will bear S. W. half W. about a mile and a third distant. The Glass House Hills will be seen (in clear weather)... with the highest (Beerwa) bearing W. 4 deg. S.; from this point, a course about a degree to the southward of W. S. W., will carry a ship a third of a mile to the northward of the buoy at A.; stand on this course until the buoys at B and C. are on with Mount Tempest, bearing S. 38 deg. E., and the North extreme of Cape Moreton. E. 1/4 S, you will then be to the westward of the East Banks, and may steer for Moreton Island, by keeping the buoys and Mount Tempest a quarter of a point open on the port bow. A direct course to an anchorage off the Brisbane may be steered from Cowan Cowan Point by passing to the westward of the middle bank off TangaloomaThere is good anchorage inside it, under TangaloomaAlthough the buoys may not be laid down for a few weeks after the publication of these directions, still, by taking the bearings of the different points named, with accuracy, and paying proper attention to the set of the tide, a vessel may be conducted through the channels with perfect safety, J. C. W.

At the same time he recommended Robert Little's application for appointment as Clerk of the Peace for Moreton Bay and discussed the incompetence of a Mr Slade who was only able to attend to Post Master duties.

In November 1848 Wickham proposed that that lessees provide sufficient ferry boats and punt; sales advertised to be held on the 5th December and in Government Gazette on the 10th. He also suggested that constables on duty be conveyed free of expense.

A long article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for 26 January 1843 from an unnamed correspondent at Moreton Bay provides much insight into the rudimentary state of the fledgling Moreton Bay (Brisbane) settlement:

The steamer *Shamrock* has again visited us, bringing a bumper cargo and passengers; amongst the latter the long expected police magistrate, with a new chief constable and four subs: as a matter of course they have not as yet entered into their regular course of duties, but Captain Wickham takes his seat in the magisterial chair for the first time here on Monday. A further

benefit has also been conferred upon us in the person of the Rev. Mr. Gregor, who joined the steamer at Newcastle, which gentleman will officiate here in the room of the Rev. Mr. Handt, attached to the Mission, who it is understood will proceed to Port Stephens. As a regular clergyman has now been located amongst us, there is every reason to hope that a suitable place for Divine worship will be erected, in furtherance of which laudable object I am sure there is scarcely one in our little community, but would subscribe their mite towards it; at the same time, steps ought to be immediately taken for the formation of a school, as at present we are lamentably deficient in that respect, there not being a single place where the numerous children rattling about the settlement receive instruction.

Recognition in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales:

It will no doubt afford much gratification to the settlers in this part of the country to find, that by a recent notice in the Government Gazette their interests will not be overlooked in the newly constituted Legislative Assembly, the district of Stanley (Moreton Bay) having been added by his Excellency Sir George Gipps to the other electoral districts in conjunction with those of Gloucester and Macquarie.

A butchering establishment, probably at Kangaroo Point, and exporting meat:

A butchering establishment on an extensive scale is about to commence here, thus affording another outlet to the stock owners for the disposal of their surplus stock of fat cattle and wethers; at the same time it is to be hoped the graziers have not overlooked the several excellent articles which have from time to time appeared in the columns of your valuable journal relative to the salting of beef for exportation; particularly as the winter season down here is admirably adapted for curing meat; in fact there can be but little doubt that with the tried capabilities of the soil and the splendid back country which we possess, both for sheep farming and as a grazing district for cattle, that we must ere long find some profitable vent for our surplus stock of every description; it therefore behoves every person not to let slip any opportunity that may offer of procuring for themselves an export trade. If it can only be managed to get the meat up in a proper manner (and I can see no difficulty in that respect) we shall soon make it worth a vessel's while to call at the Bay on her way to India or the Mauritius, via Torres' Straits, for a few hundred tierces [1 Tierce = 160 litres] for those markets.

Shipments of wool on the *Shamrock*:

The wool still continues to arrive daily, and 17 teams are reported as being on their road down for shipment. The *Shamrock*, I am sorry to say, in consequence of another vessel taking the wool at a less freight lately, goes

up this time with half a cargo; but as the company have authorised their agents here to take the wool at or under the prices charged in sailing vessels, there can be but little doubt that next trip she will have a full cargo waiting her arrival, as an expeditious communication with the metropolis is a desideratum to be wished at all times, and which cannot be depended upon in sailing vessels. I trust the settlers will, for their own interests, give employment to the steamer in preference to the other craft.

Rumoured wreck of the *Nancy*:

A report has reached here that the schooner *Nancy*, bound hither with a cargo of flour, & c., was wrecked on the McLeay river bar: if such is the case it will entail a serious loss on several parties connected with the settlement; but I trust the rumour will not be confirmed, and that her speedy arrival will dispel all doubts on that head. [The wreck occurred on 18 February 1843].

Various businesses and requirements:

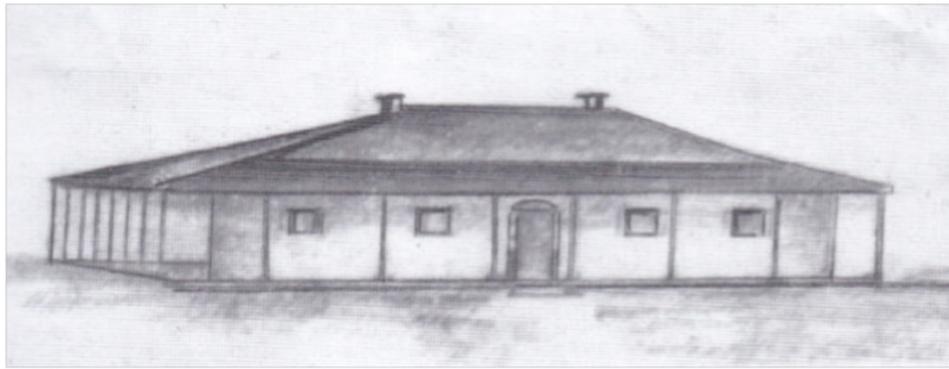
A Mr. Bow has commenced business as a licensed victualler in his lately erected premises in South Brisbane, under the sign of the 'Victoria', where, no doubt, gentlemen settlers and others can find, on their visiting the township, ample accommodation. We still want shepherds and farm servants; we want a watchmaker, a sober tailor or two, a druggist's shop, a good dairy establishment, where butter, cheese, fowls, eggs, & c., can be had at all times, and for which articles of daily consumption there is a fair demand at very remunerating prices: butter, none of the best, being 3s per lb; cheese, none in the market, fowls, not at all times procurable, 7s per pair, eggs, 2s. 6d. to 3s. per dozen; and as some of the lately sold Eagle Farm allotments are admirably adapted for that branch of farm produce, those who purchased should lose no time in making the most of their bargains. We shall soon have plenty of maize to fatten pigs with, feed horses, fowls, &c, and I hope a few hundred bushels to send to Sydney to balance in some measure our importation of flour.

Superiority of steam over sail:

The schooner *John Pirie* has been detained at the bar from contrary winds longer than was expected, thus adding another illustration of steam power against rude Boreas.⁷⁶

Prior to Wickham's arrival, Dr Simpson had acted as Police Magistrate in Brisbane Town on the discontinuance of the Penal Settlement at Moreton Bay in 1842. Lieutenant Owen Gorman, the last Military Commandant, had left Brisbane in March 1842. 4 Police of the convict era generally had performed good and useful service to the Crown. The last of its Chief Constables was a free man, William Whyte, who for a time also combined

that office with the duties of Clerk of the Bench and Postmaster. Simpson wisely allowed the matter of a local police force to await the appointment of a Police Magistrate. With the arrival at Brisbane in January 1843 of Wickham to take over those duties, the post-penal settlement force of a Chief Constable and four ordinary constables commenced its service. On 21 January 1843 Wickham approved payment of their passage money, varying from £2.10 to £4.00. The business of Wickham, first as Police Magistrate and later as Government Resident, was governed by the Towns Police Act. It covered subjects of legislation, regulations, ordinances and by-laws. Included in these were Local Authority matters and those relating to Police, Traffic, Vagrants, Health, Shops, Sunday Observances and Court procedure.⁸¹



The Commandant's Cottage in William Street, Brisbane, where Wickham resided before moving to *Newstead House*.⁸²

The Commandant's Cottage from the old regime was available as a residence for Wickham as Police Magistrate. It stood on the ridge above the Commissariat Stores and the Queen's Wharf, approximately at the site where the Government Printing Office was later built. The building had not been occupied since the Commandant, Owen Gorman, had left and it was now in a dilapidated condition, unsuitable, as a long-time residence for the District's leading citizen but he would not leave it until 1847. Wickham wrote to the Colonial Secretary on 21 January 1843 requesting repairs to the fences enclosing the house and garden.⁷⁵ Here on 1 November 1843 the first of Wickham's three children was born. The boy was baptised by the Reverend John Gregor and given the names Charles Brenton.⁴



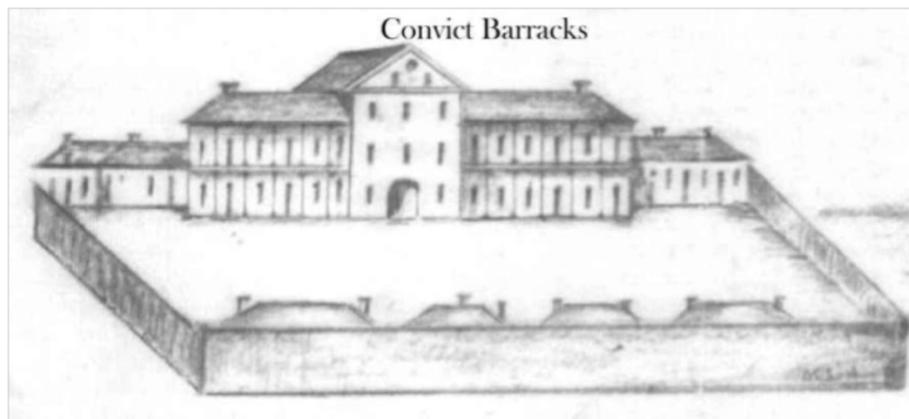
The old Commissariat Store. Brisbane

The Commissariat Store was the second oldest building in Queensland, the original two storey building having been completed in 1829 with convict labour. In his letter of 22 November 1847 in which Wickham reported the dilapidated state of the government cottage, he had stated the outhouses were not so decayed. He therefore requested permission to use them as an office for transaction of Treasury business. A sentry would be kept on the premises. He also requested one of offices attached to the Commissariat for receipt of land sale money, ferry rents etc. The sentry could be removed to the Commissariat office. £12-£15 was needed for fitting doors etc. for proper security. Things moved slowly for on 27 June 1848, several letters approved fitting up an office in the Commissariat Store for receipt of land sale money etc. at a cost of £12.⁷⁵ In 1913 the brick upper storey was added but the existing roof reused. Major renovations were carried out in 1979.



The Commissariat Store at the end of the 20th century. Note the additional upper storey. Photo Barrie Jamieson

On 14 November 1843 Wickham wrote to the Colonial secretary arranging transfer of furniture from the Convict Barracks in Queen Street to the Court House.⁷⁵ He arranged for the first council meeting of the Municipality of Brisbane to take place in a room at the Barracks on 6 September 1859.⁸⁰



The old Convict Barracks, Brisbane

Anna Wickham entered into the life of the community. Mrs Gregor held Sunday School at 10 a.m. each Sunday, being assisted by Mrs Jones, the wife of Mr Richard Jones, member for Stanley Division in the New South Wales Parliament. Mrs Wickham also taught in the school. Whenever the

Reverend Gregor was absent from Brisbane, the services were conducted by Wickham.⁴ From 1845 Gregor, often at odds with the community, lived out of Brisbane at the German station at Nundah, and this further estranged him from his flock. He drowned while swimming in a waterhole at Nundah on 22 January 1848.⁸³ Tragically, his brother Andrew Gregor, a settler at Pine River, thirty five miles from Brisbane, had been killed by blackfellows in October 1846.⁸⁴ An undeclared and unequal war existed between many Aborigines and settlers, with killings on both sides, including the most lamentable poisoning of many Aborigines at Kilcoy and the formation of a 'Blackline' by Colonel George Arthur, with concomitant extermination, in Tasmania. Among the last few 'full blood' Tasmanian aborigines was Truganini who died in 1876.

Before Wickham's arrival as Police Magistrate, the few free residents in Brisbane were left to the tender mercies of 'ticket-of-leave' constables; men who having served a portion of their time in the then penal settlement were considered by the military authorities quite capable of maintaining 'her Majesty's peace.' A chief constable (Fitzpatrick) and a small posse comitatus arrived with the captain, and the vigilance of the new regime soon made Brisbane too hot to hold many of the loose characters by whom it had been infested. A marked change soon became apparent; courts of petty session, courts of request and other necessary details were brought into successful operation by the Police Magistrate, and the then embryo city became a model of good order, and the abode of a thriving and industrious community of free settlers.^{71 85}

Establishment of the Court system had got off to a slow start as the *Sydney Morning Herald* for Saturday 4 November 1843 reported:

The maiden sitting of our Court of Requests had been postponed until further notice, in consequence of the Commissioner, Captain Wickham, not having received all the necessary instructions from the Colonial Secretary, to enable him to carry the measure into effect.⁸⁶

Court Cases

The vital role of Wickham in maintaining order in the Moreton Bay settlement, and the community's appreciation of his administration, are clearly seen in an article in *Sydney Morning Herald* for Tuesday 27 August 1844 which referred to the second sittings of the Court of Requests for the district that took place on the 5th. No less than 59 cases were gone through. There had been some doubts expressed about the continuation of this very useful court, as no item had appeared in the Estimates for 1845 for its

maintenance. The article demonstrated that the working of the court was performed without expense to the government. The fees collected from the suitors amounted, since the opening of the court, to £33.14, while the salaries paid the Registrar and Bailiff, amounted to only £22 18s 4d., leaving an excess in favour of the government of £10 15s. 8d. Captain Wickham who presided as Commissioner, received no salary for this extra service and it was suggested that as it was more than probable the business of the court would continue to increase, as the district increased in population, the government might well afford to give some remuneration to the Police Magistrate for his services and attention in a court which gave so much and general satisfaction to all branches of the community, without touching the colonial revenue.⁸⁷

On Wednesday 19 April 1848, the *Sydney Morning Herald* recorded a case heard on 14 April regarding the ‘most diabolical murder’ of the daughter of a Mr Moore at Limestone [Ipswich]. The evidence given by concerned Aborigines was that two of their tribe, Jackey Jackey (the terror to his tribe) and Peter, had perpetrated the crime. On their examination before Wickham, they both (through an interpreter) denied seeing the child at all. Although there was ample evidence from their own people to fix the crime upon them, there was not sufficient legal evidence to send them to Sydney for trial. Further evidence was needed. It was hoped that his Excellency (Sir George Gipps) would not lose sight of the conduct of the prisoner constables,

who upon the occasion of their capture showed much courage and tact in apprehending these fellows from the midst of their tribe, and bringing them into the settlement’.

We will not concern ourselves here with several other murder cases which Wickham tried.

The *Moreton Bay Courier* for Saturday 12 February 1848 recorded several cases of petty financial claims, presided over by Wickham and Lieutenant George Jean de Winton⁸⁸ and on 9 December gave extensive details of cases and proceedings on 4 December in the Small Debts Court presided over by Wickham with Dr Ballow. There were no less than 23 cases that day. The claims were for amounts of less than £5 and almost all were settled in favour of the plaintiff. Most of the cases were for failure to pay for goods received but a more complex case was that in which the wife of the deceased Thomas Grenier had auctioned off furniture lent to him by Colin Campell. Again, they found for the plaintiff. On several occasions Ballow presided with Wickham in the Small Debts Court.⁸⁸ Ballow had been recommended by Wickham to the Commission of the Peace on 3 November 1848 together

with John McConnel and would serve the community loyally until his untimely death.

The amended affidavit of the proprietor and publisher of the *Moreton Bay Courier* was noted by Wickham in letters in August 1848 recognizing transfer of the paper from Arthur Sidney Lyon to James Swan of Brisbane.⁷⁵

On 16 October 1848 Wickham discussed the return of arms, accoutrements, and ammunition for the service of the constabulary, in the District of Moreton Bay. The police establishment was given as 1 Chief Constable, 1 Watch-house Keeper, 1 District Constable, 1 Ordinary Constable, and 6 Scourgers. It is clear from the last entry that corporal punishment was still being meted out. On another occasion Wickham requested stone from Ipswich for breaking up by convicts on hard labour.⁷⁵

Other duties

Among his numerous other tasks, Wickham was the Returning Officer for the legislative election. The *Sydney Morning Herald* for Thursday 6 July 1843 gave a light hearted, somewhat Pickwickian account of the nominations:

Brisbane was all alive on the 29th instant, that day being fixed by the Returning Officer (Captain Wickham) to receive the votes for the candidates in nomination to represent the two adjoining counties in the new legislature. The few who possessed the qualification to vote were brought to the poll by the generalship of Arthur Hodgson, Esq., for Mr. McLeay, there being only one little exception for Mr. Windeyer; everything was conducted in real good humour, and in the evening, about forty gentlemen sat down to a most substantial spread, at the Victoria, (A. Hodgson, Esq. J.P., in the chair), and although the muster was considered as the friends and supporters of Mr. McLeay, still Mr. Windeyer's partizans were cordially welcomed, all political differences being drowned in the circulating glass. The tars of the *Sovereign* steamer paraded in the evening, before the Victoria, with the colours of Mr. Windeyer, but sailor like, were nothing loth on the bottle being sent out, to shout Mr. McLeay for ever. After the gents inside had taken their feed, the usual loyal toasts were given from the chair and responded to heartily by all present - the health of Alexander McLeay Esq. the popular candidate for the county of Stanley, was drunk with nine times nine, and one cheer more. The health of Mr. Windeyer was afterwards drunk, with all the honours, and although the latter gentleman was in the

minority here, Captain Cape of the *Sovereign* convinced a few of Mr. McLeay's supporters that they had not a leg to stand upon; the greater portion of the party retired with our worthy Police Magistrate, before twelve o'clock, but a few of the die-hards kept it up till day-light did appear and so ended the first electioneering movements in Brisbane.⁸⁹

Weather Forecaster

The Moreton Bay district was fortunate in having, in Wickham, a man of scientific and observant mind. For some time he contributed what he termed a 'weather journal,' to the *Courier*. His observations comprised the period from 1840 to April 1850 inclusive. They formed a valuable contribution to meteorological facts for that period.⁹⁰

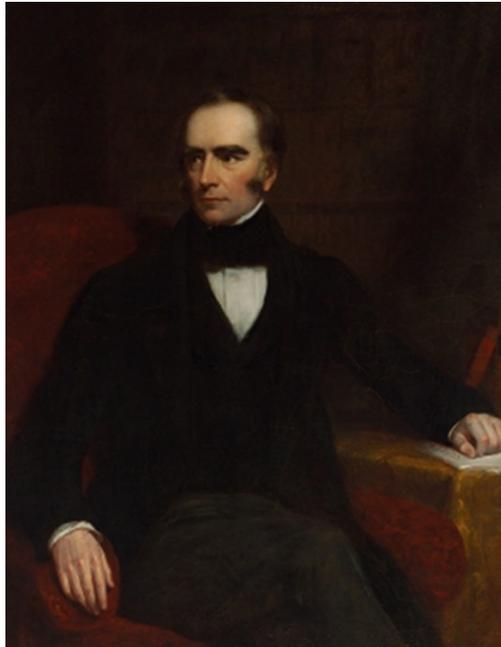
Letter of Appreciation

As reported in the Swan River Extract of the *Sydney Morning Herald* of Thursday 13 July 1843, from the *Gazette*,⁹¹ while the *Beagle* was in Gage's Road, Swan River, Captain Stokes received a letter of appreciation from the Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth, from the colonists dated 27 April 1843, for the surveying work that the *Beagle* had done. This was repeated to Captain Wickham retired from the navy:

Sir,-On the occasion of H.M.S. *Beagle* touching here on her way to England, after having completed the survey for the purpose of which she visited Australia, His Excellency Governor Hutt, and the Members of The Executive Council of Western Australia, feel that they cannot allow her to depart, without expressing the warm thanks of the Local Government for the many important and valuable services which have been rendered by Captain Wickham, in the first instance, and subsequently by yourself [Stokes] and the officers and crew of that vessel, to this colony, as well the uniform readiness which has always been evinced to answer its interests whilst employed on these coasts. I have been instructed to convey these sentiments to you, and to request you to communicate them to the officers and crew under your command. I have the honour to be, Sir, Your most obedient servant, Peter Brown, Colonial Secretary.

Departure of Governor Gipps

In June 1846 Governor Gipps left for England. Overworked and reeling from the invective of settlers whose labour force had been reduced by his cessation of transportation, this conscientious but maligned administrator died from a heart attack in 1847.



Sir George Gipps. Governor of New South Wales

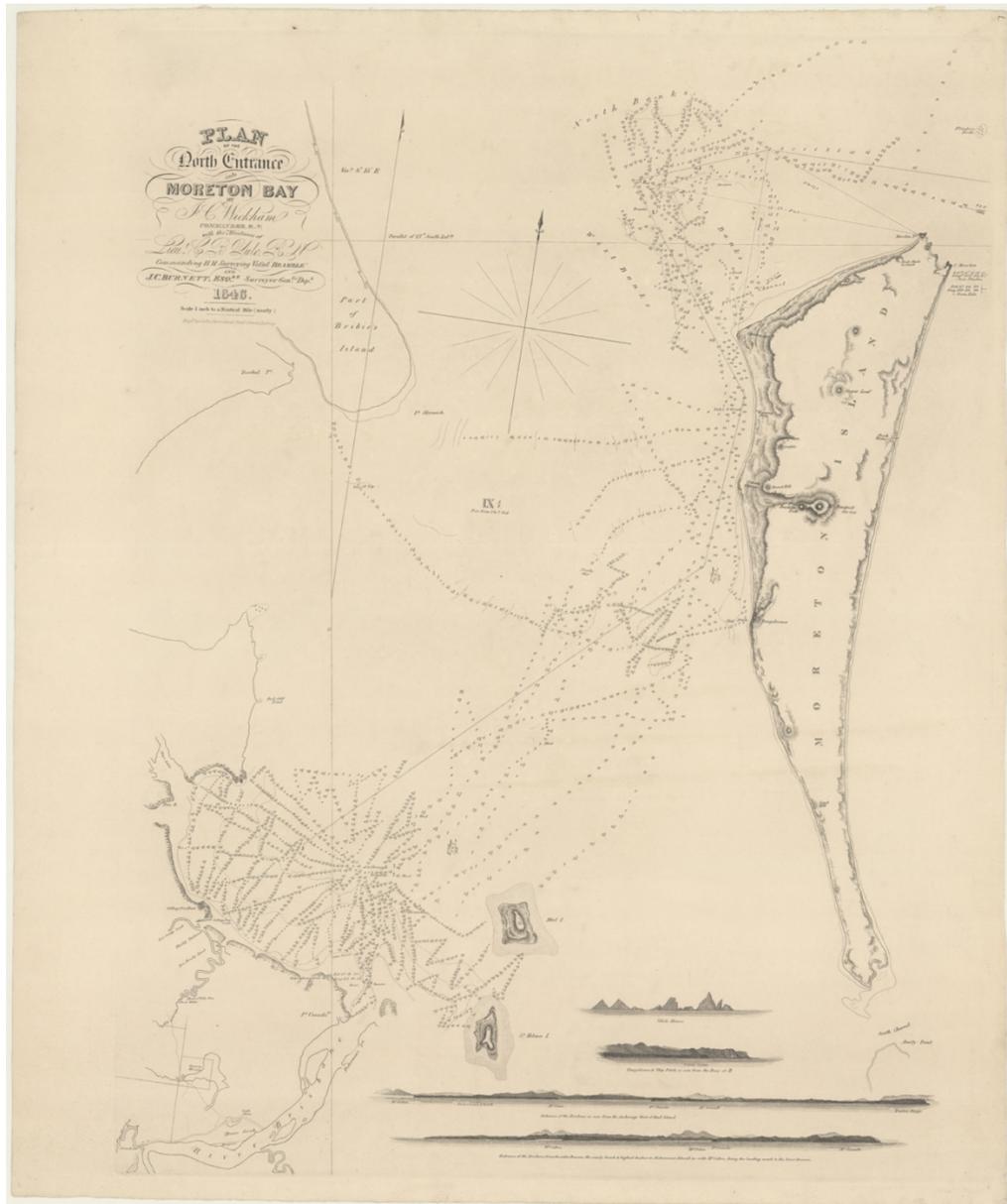
Surveying Moreton Bay

In 1846, Captain Wickham undertook the survey of Moreton Bay, a work for which the Queensland government gave no assistance. Steamers and coasters trading to the port were compelled to make use of the southern entrance, the dangerous character of which was later demonstrated, in 1847, by the loss of the schooner-rigged paddle-steamer *Sovereign*. This distressing event occurred because both engines broke down while attempting to go over the bar en route to Sydney. She broke up a few minutes after striking on the spit outside Amity Point, and the boats were destroyed at the same time. Forty-four lives were lost and only ten persons, including Captain Cape, were saved by local indigenous people.^{71 92} They were Aboriginal men from Quandamooka (Moreton Bay) who put their own lives

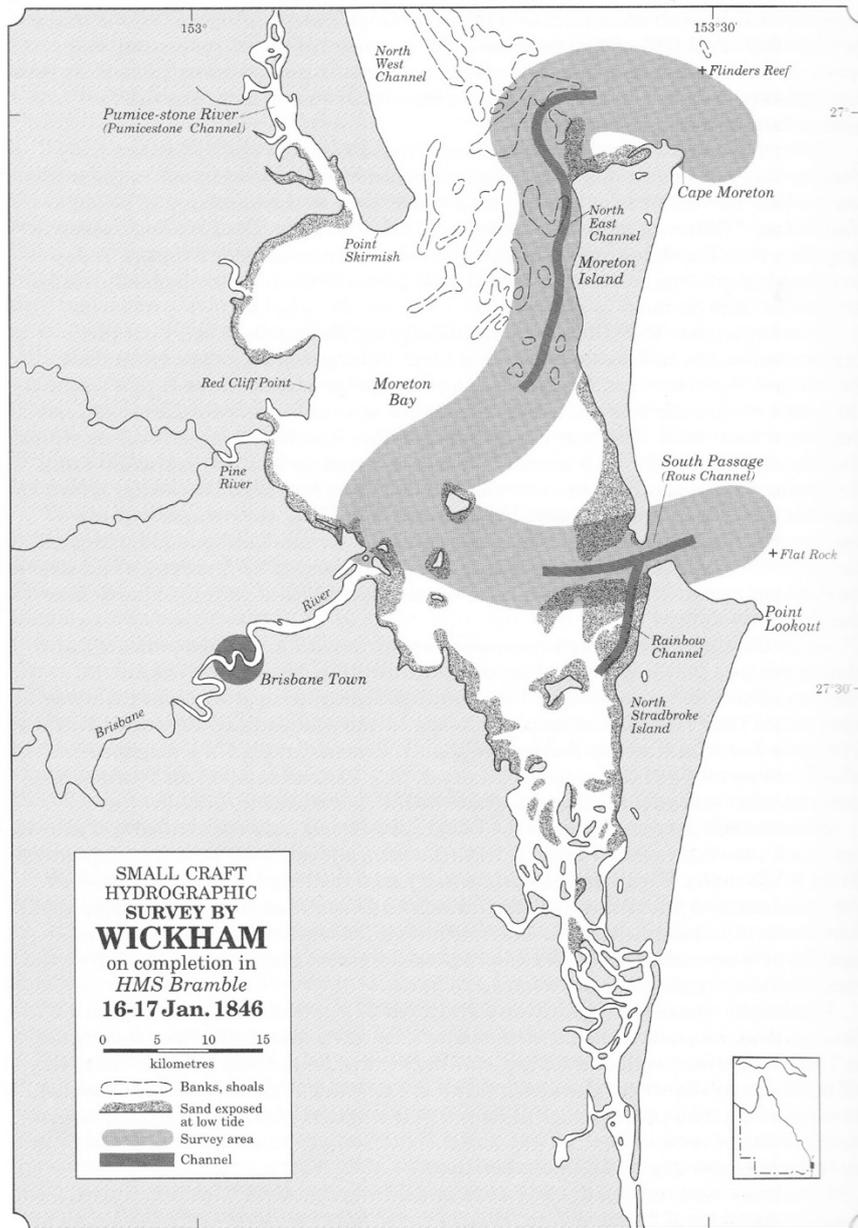
at risk in extremely dangerous conditions to swim out to the wreck and pull the survivors back to shore.⁹³ The *Moreton Bay Courier* reported that Captain Wickham attempted to read the ensuing burial service but was so overpowered by his feelings that he was utterly unable to do so. One survivor was under sentence of imprisonment in Sydney. The Police Magistrate remarked that under the peculiar circumstances he should be released immediately.⁸⁰

The inhabitants of Brisbane, upset by the disaster, importuned Wickham to undertake the survey of the bay. He consented and spent several weeks in the performance of this task which was quite beyond his legitimate sphere of duty the expense of which was defrayed by a body then in existence, the 'Moreton Bay District Association'.⁷¹ In the same year Captain Charles Yule made HMS *Bramble* available to Wickham to enable him to take various bearings which could not be made from the small boat he had been using.⁵⁸ The *Bramble* had had an inauspicious start. It became becalmed and then ran aground temporarily but was brought to the mouth of the Brisbane River. John Sweatman, from the ship, accompanied Yule and the doctor in a small boat (the gig) through tortuous shoals to Kangaroo Point and thence to the government wharf at William Street. Yule presented his compliments to Wickham and returned in the gig to his ship. Several days were spent in small boats to take angles. Sweatman gathered the provisions he had negotiated for the *Bramble* and its tender, the *Castlereagh*, and Wickham provided a flat-bottomed boat rowed by convicts to carry the provisions, stopping off at Fletcher's farm near Newstead to gather vegetables. After running aground on a sandbank they reached the *Bramble* in the evening. Further work produced a valuable chart which was sent to Sydney to be redrawn and printed.⁹⁴

The plan of the north entrance into Moreton Bay showed depth soundings and coastal profiles such as the Glass House mountains; Tangalooma and the Ship Patch. The innumerable depth soundings testify to the effort which Wickham put into preparing this chart which lay well outside his remit as Police Magistrate. One senses the pleasure he must have felt in returning to the life of a navigator.



Plan of the north entrance into Moreton Bay by J. C Wickham Commander R.N. with the assistance of Lieut. C. B. Yule R.N., commanding HMS Surveying vessel *Bramble* and J. C. Burnett Esq., Surveyor General's Department. 1846. Australian National Library

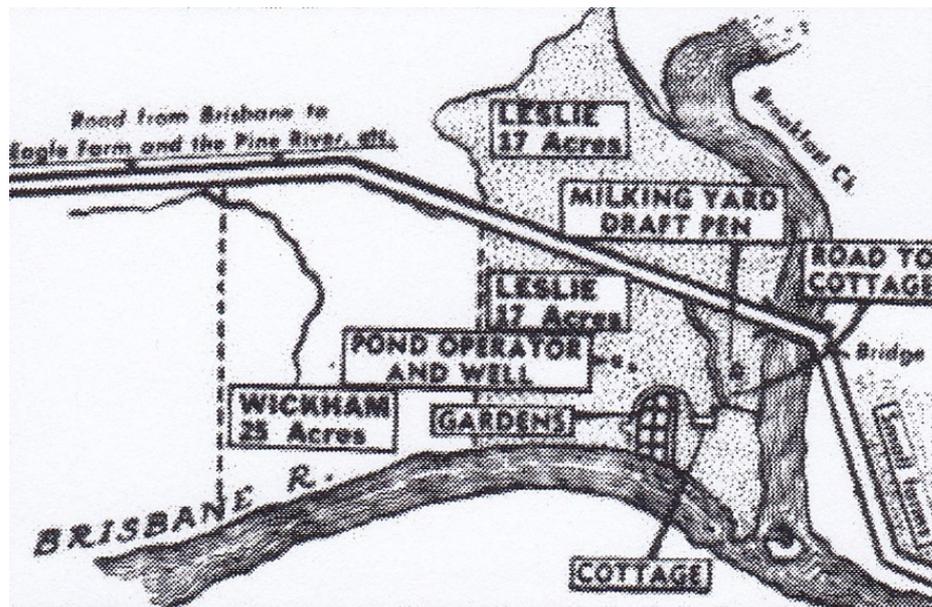


Survey by Wickham in *HMS Bramble* 16-17 January 1846. From Gill 1988 ⁵⁷

Newstead House

After five years in the hot and cramped commandant's cottage, on 22 November 1847 Wickham wrote to the Colonial Secretary reporting the dilapidated state of the cottage: it was not safe as a residence and he would therefore move out. He had long intended to build a house more in keeping

with his social and official status. At a land sale, held on 9 April 1845 at the Police Office in the Old Convict Barracks, he and Patrick Leslie (through his father, William Leslie of Warhill) had already bought contiguous blocks of land which fronted onto the Brisbane River. Leslie's block of seventeen acres was bounded on the north by Breakfast Creek whilst Wickham's 25 acre lot, costing £37, 10 shillings, spread up river from Leslie's southern boundary. ⁴ The Title Deeds recorded for John Clements Wickham, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 April 1843 show that Wickham made extensive additional purchases of land: 52 acres, 1 perch, lot 5; 22.56 acres, 1 rood, 27 perches, lot C; and 23. 30 acres, 2 roods, and 1-5 perches, Stanley, lot 7. ⁹⁵ Patrick sketched his property. ⁹⁶



Patrick Leslie's Plan of Newstead

The Eagle Farm Road (now Kingsford Smith Drive) defined their western limits. On the northern end of his land on the high ground overlooking the junction of Breakfast Creek and the Brisbane River, Patrick Leslie proceeded to build a cottage which he named Newstead. ⁴ The architect and builder was Andrew Petrie.

Whether Patrick Leslie or Wickham introduced the name Newstead has been debated. In favour of Wickham was the view that Newstead was named after Newstead Abbey in Northamptonshire, the property of the Byron family, of whom the poet, George Gordon Byron, was the sixth baron. The evidence for this connection is that the Rectory of Newstead early in the

nineteenth century was held by a Reverend John Wickham. Any relationship between the Reverend John Wickham and Captain John Clements Wickham is not definitely known, however. There is an obscure reference that he was the Captain's uncle but the detailed family tree given by Drury Clarke provides no evidence of this. The residence in Sydney of a descendant of John Clements also bears the name Newstead.⁹⁷

More direct evidence that Leslie originated the name Newstead is a letter headed Newstead to his father on 25 August 1846 in which he wrote:

We called this place 'Newstead' on account of Watty's liking it so much.

Watty (Walter) was his younger brother. Further evidence is, perhaps, that Newstead is a small and ancient Scottish border village overlooking the Tweed River, though it is distant from the Leslie seat at Warthill in Aberdeenshire.

The present writer shares Patrick's sentiments when he went on to write:

In the whole world I know no place I would sooner live at than Moreton Bay or the Downs,

but one can no longer agree that

in no country could any man live so well and so cheaply.

It is an insight into the times that he was able to have:

Fletcher working in the garden and at anything and everything such as milking, bringing wood, water, etc. A woman servant at £18 per annum. A boy and a girl for their food and clothes. The boy waits at table and does all house servants' work, cleans saddles and bridles, etc.

At that time, and until well after the Separation of Queensland from New South Wales, Breakfast Creek was bordered by magnificent jungle, in which pines, cedar, silky oak, tulip-wood, and giant fig trees abounded, much admired by Oxley on his exploration of the Brisbane River when, it is believed, Breakfast Creek was named.

On 5 January 1846 when HMS *Bramble* came up the river it was noted that building was in progress there. However, Patrick now divided his time between the Darling Downs and Brisbane where he was welcomed at the Commandant's Cottage by the Wickhams. On 12 September 1846, while still at the cottage, Anna Wickham gave birth to a second child, a daughter. She was baptized as Ellen Susan by the Reverend Gregor on 4 October.

Patrick and Catherine Leslie lived for only a short while at Newstead but they achieved much in that time. The land had been used as a government farm in penal times. Some further clearing and culling was done and they set about developing a garden. Patrick described the house and its gardens in some detail in his letters home to Scotland and listed a great variety of trees, fruits, vegetables and flowering plants growing there.⁴

As Patrick Leslie was planning to move to the Downs, in 1847 Wickham made him a successful offer of £1000 for *Newstead*. Leslie obtained his father's consent to the sale and used the money towards the purchase of *Toolburra* from the Dalrymple Estate on the Downs. As the *Newstead* house was destined to become the hub of the district's social activity, Wickham embarked on a program of extensions that formed the basis, though with later alterations, of the stately home that we see today.⁴ The house as built by Petrie was a small two storey cottage but Wickham greatly extended it into an eleven room mansion with wide verandahs. The land that he acquired with it increased his holding to 60 acres.⁸⁰ In a watercolour by Lord Henry Scott (Henry John Douglas-Scott-Montagu of Beaulieu, Baron), a figure in the doorway may well have been Wickham.⁸² The title of the painting 'Newstead', wrongly referred to Wickham as Governor. The young Lord was accompanied by Lord Schomberg Kerr and their tutor Reverend Henry Stobart. The party took lodgings with a fruiterer in Queen Street from July to September 1853 but were frequent guests at *Newstead*. Other guests included the Governor and his entourage, Bishop Tyrrell of Newcastle, Wickham's Leslie relatives, other squatters, and the newly married Reverend Edward Kelson Yeatman and his wife. It has been suggested that, with limited room in the main house, these guests may have been accommodated in the building to the side of the house which can be seen in Scott's watercolour.^{81 98} This no longer exists but a substantial annexe, still extant, was subsequently built.

A second water colour by Lord Henry, from across the creek, shows *Newstead* Cottage with high woodland to its North, enveloped in shrubs and trees and lying within a low fence.

In a letter to her sister Elizabeth, wife of P. G. King, 'Banksia,' Double Bay, Mrs Wickham wrote of the lovely flora of Moreton Bay and described a vessel that left the settlement:

laden with specimens for the New South Wales Government, of every wild animal, bird, or plant that could be collected in the Moreton Bay settlement. A reward was given: either to black or white men who brought a new variety of any natural feature into the town, the consequence being that the wharf and the vessel presented the appearance of a combined botanical and zoological gardens.¹¹



'Newstead cottage Brisbane July 1853 Captn Wickham'. Watercolour by Lord Henry Scott. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales



Newstead cottage from across Breakfast Creek. Watercolour by Lord Henry Scott. 1853. National Library of Australia

In 1848 Captain Owen Stanley visited *Newstead House* and painted a watercolour of it. ⁹⁸ In 1838 Stanley had been given command of HMS *Britomart* and sailed to Australia and New Zealand, returning to England in 1843. In 1846 he commanded HMS *Rattlesnake*, with the naturalists Thomas Henry Huxley [later to be called ‘Darwin’s Bulldog’] and John MacGillivray on board, accompanied by HMS *Bramble*. In November 1847 he arrived at Port Curtis on the Australian coast and, after surveying the harbor, described it as a very good anchorage. In 1848 he continued further north to survey New Guinea, and in June of that year offered protection and assistance to Edmund Kennedy's expedition to Cape York Peninsula. The great Owen Stanley Range of New Guinea was named after him. In 1849 he fell ill, and died in March 1850 after returning to Sydney. ⁹⁹



Newstead House in 1935. State Library of Queensland



Newstead House in 2018 Park view. Photo Barrie Jamieson



Newstead House in 2018 Front view. Photo Barrie Jamieson



The drawing room, Newstead House in 2018. Photo Barrie Jamieson

Newstead House, according to businessman Nehemiah Bartley, was ‘built on the lines of the original house at Canning Downs.’¹⁰⁰ The remains of cellars below the house are still to be seen. The original structure was composed of stone, but the walls are now of plaster-faced brick, and subsequently the Brisbane City Council replaced the old roof with tiles. The veranda, which runs the entire length of the long front of the building, is almost level with the ground. There are ten rooms at Newstead. It became the headquarters of the Historical Society before this moved to the Commissariat Building in William Street. The fittings in the rooms are all of cedar, and some of the mantelpieces are of marble.

Captain Wickham entertained the social elite of early Brisbane in royal fashion.

Many a night, when the lamp of the summer moon bathed the river in a golden radiance, and a myriad crickets chirped in the thickets near-by, the great house echoed to the merry scraping of violins and the tap of dancing feet on the polished floors. Under the soft glow of the chandeliers, beauty and gallantry met in the gay rendezvous of cotillon and quadrille . . . fair maids sweeping by with a frou-frou of voluminous skirts on the arms of their partners . . . dashing officers of the garrison of Brisbane Town, or young squatters from the Darling Downs enjoying a week-end among the

civilised amenities of the 'settlement,' before returning to the lonely life of the stations. ¹⁰¹



Captain John Clements Wickham at Newstead

Bartley recorded that Wickham:

gave good dinners and balls ... and his household menage was methodical, and a caution to vermin. All stores were kept in zinc-lined bins — peas, flour, sugar, &c, and no rat ever got a feed or a footing there for a moment. Snakes were summarily dealt with by well-aimed jugs of scalding water— an infallible remedy— and snakes and rats were once far too plentiful at Newstead.¹⁰⁰

It is rumoured that when Sir Charles Fitz-Roy, Governor of New South Wales, stayed at Newstead, the inevitable black snake was found between the sheets of his bed.



Ancient Fig Tree, *Ficus virens*, at Newstead 2018. Photo Barrie Jamieson

At the back of Newstead House stood a magnificent fig tree [Cunningham's Fig, *Ficus virens*, a native of the West Indies; synonym *F. infectoria*], still to be seen. Its wide-spreading branches carried such an expanse of foliage that it made an ideal parking site for motorcars. Even in Wickham's time it must have been of considerable dimensions, for his coachman, Lane, used to wash his master's gig under its branches.^{101 102} This gig was said to be the first privately owned vehicle of its kind in Brisbane. In his daily rides on horseback to and from the settlement [and his office near the Commissariat Building] the Government Resident in the early 1850s established a beaten track along the route now traversed by Wickham Street.¹⁰¹

A Grandson's Visit



Commemorative plaque at *Newstead House*. Photo Barrie Jamieson

In 1933, Lieutenant Colonel John Charles Wickham, Grandson of Captain John Clements Wickham, visited Newstead House and presented a brass plaque, unveiled by Governor Sir Leslie Wilson.⁹⁸ This gives us an opportunity for a brief glimpse at the military descendants of Wickham of the *Beagle*. His son Charles Brenton, who afterwards became a Colonel in the British Army, spent the first 18 years of his life in Brisbane though being educated in Sydney, subsequently leaving for the army gunnery school at Woolwich (England), never to return to his native land. His son, Lieutenant Colonel John Charles Wickham, here referred to, having eight months' leave from his regiment (Royal Engineers) stationed in Kohat, India, visited Brisbane so that he might obtain information relative to his father and his grandfather and their association with the early life of Queensland. He served in the Great War, and was severely wounded early in 1915. He received the D.S.O. for distinguished service but was incapacitated for further service at the front. He married and had one son. His wife was a sister of Commander Haggard (retired), who, while Lieutenant Commander, was aboard the famous Australian submarine

A.E.2, which made history by penetrating the Dardanelles during the Great War and was decorated with a DSC for his-part in that daring exploit. Sir William Haggard, of Buenos Aires, and Sir Rider Haggard, the well-known author [of King Solomon's Mines fame], were uncles to Mrs. J. C. Wickham.¹⁰³

Building Bridges

In the 1840s a small narrow footbridge with a handrail had been erected over Breakfast Creek. A traffic bridge was subsequently built in August 1848 but one of the piles which had been insecurely driven collapsed in May 1849. The tidal waters finally washed away the remains by December of that year. Bartley tells us that a rickety wooden bridge fell into the water in 1856, and was replaced by 'a wretched punt.' The punt carried only passengers, and vehicular traffic and horsemen desiring to go to Eagle Farm had to cross at a ford at Kelvin Grove or the Three Mile Scrub, as it was called.¹⁰¹

Several settlers petitioned Wickham, as the Government Resident, to find ways of providing a new bridge. They were Dr David K. Ballow, Dr Wm. Hobbs, W. A. Duncan, J. Richardson, Ambrose Aldridge, James Gibbon, James Swan, J. Powers, G. F. Poole, Dr J. Kearsy Cannan, Richard Coley and George Edmonstone, some of them familiar Brisbane names to this day.

The meeting was held in the old Court House in Queen Street, Brisbane, which then stood about thirty yards from the corner of Albert Street. A proposal was put forward that a dam be built with a roadway thereon but the bridge plan was adopted. The successful tenderer was a contractor named Atkinson and the bridge was erected under the supervision of David F. Longland (hence Longland Street) who was Chief Foreman in the Roads and Bridges Department.



The 1858 ironbark Breakfast Creek Bridge viewed in 1875. State Library of Queensland

The bridge, built of ironbark, was of three arches 176 feet long, 15 feet wide, and was opened on 21 August 1858. Some damage occurred due to subsidence but the bridge was considered safe and suitable for traffic until the early part of 1887. A new, metal bridge was opened, after a number of false starts, on 24 May 1889¹⁰⁴ but it was replaced in 1958 by the existing concrete bridge of similar design.



The 1889 metal Breakfast Creek Bridge. State Library of Queensland



The 1958 concrete Breakfast Creek Bridge viewed in 2018. Photo Barrie Jamieson

Archibald Meston [Protector of Aborigines for Southern Queensland 1897-1904] found that Newstead Point, as it became known, was called by the Aborigines Garranbinbilla, from 'garran' a supple scrub vine. According to Meston, the aboriginal name for Breakfast Creek was Uoggera, mutated by the Sydney Government offices to Enoggera although that name was given to a district remote from Breakfast Creek, to which it rightly belonged.

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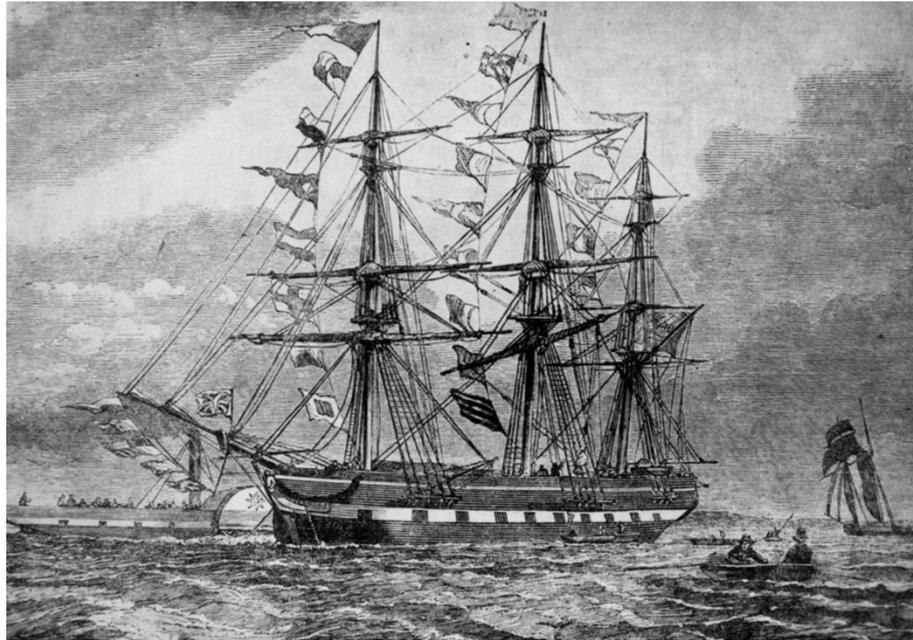
Immigrant ships

A series of vessels brought immigrants to Brisbane when it had ceased to be a penal settlement. The intake soon increased its population by more than thirty times. Most notable were the *Artemisia*, *Fortitude* and *Emigrant*.

In November 1848 Wickham made arrangements for landing immigrants arriving from Plymouth at Moreton Bay in the Government ship *Artemisia*, a ship of 492 tons, on her maiden voyage with 209 immigrants, the first of the immigrant ships.¹⁰⁶ He recommended hiring the river steamer, *Raven* to land them at Government Wharf Brisbane with charges for the service. He suggested accommodation in part of the Prisoners' Barrack, with temporary cook house and wash house, also that the Committee of Hospital would provide accommodation with a view to establishment of a depot to receive emigrants. Plans were sent to Mr Merewether (Immigration Officer, Sydney) with an estimate of expense. On 14 November a requisition was required for the use of the Immigration Depot of articles including bedsteads, beds, tents, lamps, lamp oil and lamp cotton, with details, again showing the detailed overview of affairs characteristic of Wickham.⁷⁵

In January, the immigrant ship *Fortitude* arrived in Moreton Bay. It was the first of three ships dispatched with emigrants in a private arrangement from London to Moreton Bay, by Dr John Dunmore Lang of Sydney, in the year 1849.¹⁰⁶ The Harbour master, going alongside the ship, while at anchored off Moreton Island, boarded her on receiving the assurance that there was no infectious or contagious disease thereon. He afterwards returned to Brisbane and reported to that effect. Dr Ballou, however, acting as health officer and proceeding to the Bay with the Customs officer two days later, found that two cases of typhus fever had occurred during the voyage. A formal report was made to Wickham, as Police Magistrate, who ordered the ship to be placed in quarantine, and obtained from Lieutenant Cameron a guard of six soldiers, who left Brisbane on the following Thursday in the schooner *Susan*. After this delay of nearly a week, the people were landed at what was known as 'The Ship Patch,' Moreton Island,

and tents for their accommodation were supplied with difficulty by Wickham but very inadequate. Fresh provisions, vegetables etc. were also forwarded for the use of the immigrants, and, as was stated at the time, it was hoped that a few days' enjoyment of fresh air, accompanied by a wholesome change of diet, would eradicate all symptoms of disease from the passengers. The report failed to mention that no such symptoms had been in evidence for some considerable time. Thus people who had paid large amounts to come by the *Fortitude*, found themselves inadequately accommodated on a sandy patch on a lonely island, guarded by soldiers as if they were criminals.



The *Fortitude*. John Oxley Library. State Library of Queensland. Note the paddle steamer behind



Migrants dining on the *Fortitude*. Circa 1848. Queensland State Archives.

There they remained for nearly a fortnight, when the *Susan* again went down to the bay and, after being delayed for four days owing to strong southerly winds, returned to Brisbane with 64 of the *Fortitude* passengers.
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Having dealt with the *Artemisia*, Wickham now faced the problem of what to do with a large number of immigrants of whose arrival on the *Fortitude* he had had no warning. The flurry of correspondence concerning the arrival and settlement of the *Fortitude* immigrants has been ably documented from the Archives Authority of New South Wales by J.V. Bryant. 108

Wickham's distress, and kindly disposition, at finding himself the custodian of the *Fortitude* immigrants is shown in the following private letter written to Francis Merewether, Immigration Agent, on 22 January 1849:

I am glad to find that the papers relative to the 'Artemisia' are correct. I fancy myself now in a speck of trouble. Dr Lang's ship the 'Fortitude' has just arrived with 270 immigrants on board. From what I hear, they are not a description of persons to engage as shepherds or hut keepers. They appear to be under the delusion that land has been selected and laid out for them, that every arrangement has been made for their accommodation, and it only remained for them to commence operations. Poor people, I do not know what can be done for them. The ship is only to remain 10 days after arrival, therefore they must be landed as soon as possible and I must give them what accommodation the Government Buildings afford and I fancy that if they

have not the means of procuring food, I must cause the Contractors to supply. I scarcely know anything of them yet, have only heard from the Harbor Master that the ship is in the Bay and that enquiries have been made by the immigrants respecting Lang. Of all wild schemes this seems to be one of the wildest sending 270 people to a strange Country without having made the slightest arrangements for their reception, indeed it was only through a newspaper report that we had any idea of such a Ship being on the way to Moreton Bay.

The Immigrants are in a manner consigned to Mr Richardson, a Storekeeper in Brisbane, but he has no funds, and is at a loss what to do in the matter.

Shall I be justified in lending Tents, Iron Bedsteads and utensils which have been supplied to this Depot. You will oblige me by giving your advice in this matter. If these people have not the means of providing for themselves it appears to me that I shall have to consider them in the light of distressed British Subjects and provide for them as for Shipwrecked Seamen and others. Of course under those circumstances I should consider the parties bound to accept any offers of employment that might be made to them or be struck off the ration list.

I shall write officially to the Colonial Secretary reporting the arrival of the Ship and ask for instructions as to how far I may be authorised to assist the immigrants.

A very long letter addressed to Mr Richardson by Dr Lang has been placed in my hands but owing to the press of business as the Steamer starts at 4 tomorrow morning, I have not time to understand it. He calls on Dr Simpson and myself for assistance but what can we do? No doubt something must be done but at present I am quite at a loss. I have requested Mr Richardson to go on board the ship and learn from the immigrants themselves what their expectations are and what they are fit for. In the event of their being unable to provide for themselves and being willing to take any employment that offers, can they be put on the footing of Government immigrants and provided for accordingly?

This investment may ultimately benefit us, but I fear it will entail a vast degree of distress to the poor people.

I trust you will excuse my troubling you with this long story but I really foresee so much disappointment to these people that I am anxious to see how far the Government will go in assisting them. I shall probably know more of the scheme tomorrow but then the Steamer will have sailed for Sydney.

Very sincerely yours

John. C. Wickham

I am glad to say that with the exception of one or two sick persons the whole of the 'Artemisia's' are off my hands.

You ask how Mullholland gets on. She entered my service when she arrived here but I turned her away for improper conduct, indeed the majority of that lot has turned out badly.

By 22 January 1849, Richardson wrote to the Secretary of State: I have the honour to report to you the arrival on the 21st Inst. of the Ship "Fortitude", 640 Tons, with 270 Emigrants and must apologize for thus troubling the Government on the ground of the unusual circumstances under which this Ship has arrived.

It appears by Letters received from Dr. Lang that this is only the first of a long series of vessels that are to be despatched to this port direct and he states in the most positive manner that all future Ships will be under the orders of the Commissioners, and that this one was not dispatched by them, in consequence of arrangements not being mature and the Dr. therefore did not like to delay the departure of those who had agreed to defray their own passage.

The ship has been duly consigned to me, but I would respectfully [sic] request to waive my agency as it must be obvious I am not individually in a position to attend to their wants as the officials duly appointed and considering that a valuable body of Emigrants are now on our shores without any expense to the colony, I trust that the usual system may be adopted.

On 28 January 1849, Wickham received a letter from Captain John Christmas, Master of the *Fortitude*, concerning the request that he had received to remove the ship to Moreton Island, as the health officer considered that contact with the Brisbane settlement would thus be prevented. Richardson had refused in a letter to Wickham on 22 January to act as agent. It referred to an agreement between Dr. Lang and the Owners to pay £15 per day demurrage while the vessel was required to wait for £10 per day at Moreton Bay before disembarking its passengers.

Dr Ballow stated in a letter of 1 February to Wickham and the Colonial Secretary that he had on that day visited the immigrant ship and found no new cases of typhus and that the passengers could be landed at Brisbane but that any already landed on Moreton Island should be directly transported to Brisbane on a Government vessel.

Next day, Wickham wrote to the Surgeon Superintendent of Immigration, Moreton Island:

I trust that nothing has occurred since yesterday to cause the necessity of altering the arrangements which were then made, and that a portion of the Emigrants may be forwarded to Brisbane on Monday the 5th instant and others to follow as soon as the 'Susan' can return for them.

I think it will be advisable that the Emigrants should each provide themselves with one days rations at least cooked, as the conveniences for cooking are very limited on board.

Mr Watson will give every assistance by supplying rations in advance, and the Master of the 'Susan' will give ample time for embarking in order that no part of a tide may be lost, as with a fair wind it will require a whole tide to reach Brisbane.

I have given the Master of the 'Susan' directions to bring the personal baggage of each Emigrant, but all beyond that, particularly investments of goods, agricultural implements etc. must be removed from the ship at the expense of the shippers, with regard to which I have no doubt that the parties themselves will be able to make an arrangement with the master of the 'Susan' after he has completed his Contract with the Government.

On the same day Wickham wrote to Captain Christmas, on the *Fortitude*:
As a portion of the Emigrants will be removed from Moreton Island to Brisbane on Monday Next (the 15th instant) should the surgeon Superintendent see no cause to advise the Alteration of the arrangements made for that purpose of course there can no longer be any objection to your ship returning to an anchorage off the mouth of the river or of your communication with Brisbane.

But as it will most probably be immaterial to you where the ship lies while waiting for advice from your correspondents in Sydney - I shall feel extremely obliged to you if you will allow her to remain at her present anchorage until the last of the Emigrants have embarked in the 'Susan' or until no more remain on shore than the Tents can comfortably contain, as in the event of rain setting in before that, the ship would afford a shelter to those who might have no other covering than the temporary huts which they have erected.

The immigrants had been carefully selected by Dr. Lang and *The Moreton Bay Courier* of Saturday 3 February 1849 stated that:

Taking into consideration the very peculiar circumstances under which these immigrants have come out to the colony, a very excellent resolution has been adopted by the Police Magistrate, at present on his own responsibility. It would be a cruel thing, and an everlasting disgrace to the colony, if these confiding strangers, who have come here in the full belief

that they would have opportunities of bettering their condition, should be forced by the apathy of the Government into modes of life incompatible with their habits, and foreign to their reasonable expectations. Pending, therefore, the instructions of his Excellency the Governor upon this subject, the immigrants will be permitted to form a temporary village on some of the slopes running parallel to the chains of water-holes in the neighbourhood of York's Hollow.

The paper showed some exasperation with Merewether when it wrote: it would be exceedingly advisable that Mr. Merewether should be shaken by the shoulder, or some other means adopted in order, if possible to awaken him to a sense of the absolute necessity for the erection of an Immigrant Depot without further delay.

On 6 February Wickham wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Sydney, in an attempt to obtain land for the immigrants:

- (1) I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 1st Instant, containing instructions for my guidance, with respect to supplying the Emigrants by the Ship 'Fortitude' with Provisions.
- (2) With reference to the 7th paragraph of your letter I beg to inform you that I had previously applied to the master of the Ship for a copy of the Charter Party, as well as of any documents which he might have, respecting the Emigrants, and now enclose his reply (dated 28 Jan 49) to my communication.
- (3) With regard to my letter of the 24 Ultimo No. 49/3 forwarded to Sydney by the Schooner "Aimllary" reporting to you that I had been under the necessity of placing the "Fortitude" under Quarantine. I now do myself the honor to inform you that in consequence of a representation from the acting health Officer (a copy of whose letter is here with enclosed - No. 2/49 dated - 1 Feb. 49) I have commenced the removal of the Emigrants to Brisbane, and expect the first division to arrive by this days tide.
- (4) As I have reason to believe that a great proportion of the Emigrants are in a position to provide for themselves, and will therefore not stand in need of aid from the Government on that score, still it is utterly impossible for them to procure lodgings, as there is barely sufficient accommodation at present for the inhabitants. I have therefore told them that they will be permitted to erect slab huts on a portion of Crown Lands which will be pointed out to them, and where they will probably be allowed to remain until such time as instructions are received regarding the Land for which their money has been paid in England.
- (5) I have been induced to take this step in consequence of the uncertainty as to the length of time which may elapse, before any definite arrangements

can be made for them and the probability that the Government Buildings may soon be wanted for other Emigrants.

(6) I am aware that it is contrary to the Land regulations to permit persons to locate themselves on Crown Lands unless by license - still I have considered these Emigrants to be very peculiarly situated and that until some arrangement is made with regard to the Land for which many of them deposited the money before leaving England, it would be almost unjust towards them to insist upon their either purchasing or renting land, when it appears they were under the impression that all necessary arrangements were made, and they had only to take possession of the portions of land allotted to them.

(7) The great distance from Sydney is the only apology I can offer for taking so much upon myself in this matter - at the same time I fear that if immediate provision were not made for these people, serious results might follow, as the rainy season (which is later than usual) may be daily expected to commence, and in the event of their not having ample room and fresh air, sickness might breakout and prove disastrous to the whole community. I therefore trust that His Excellency will favourably consider the view I have taken and be pleased to sanction the arrangements I have made. At the same time I have clearly explained to the Emigrants that their being allowed a temporary occupation of the land, will in no wise entitle them to any right in it, but that, they must remove as soon as the Government shall desire.

(8) I beg to enclose copies of my letters to the Surgeon Superintendent and master of the "Fortitude", which were forwarded to them (dated 2 Feb, 49) on receipt of the Health Officers letter to me respecting the propriety of removing the Emigrants to Brisbane.

Unfortunately, a note in the margin showed that the Colonial Secretary rescinded the arrangements reported by the Police Magistrate in the 4th Paragraph. Slab huts upon Crown Land could not be allowed. Wickham had already allowed the immigrants to form a temporary village on the slopes of York's Hollow, in the vicinity of what is now Gregory Terrace.

The Surveyor General, Thomas Mitchell, supported a request from the Assistant Surveyor to allow the purchase, rather than free supply, of lots when he wrote on 2 April 1849 to the Colonial Secretary:

Having on the evening of the receipt of your letter of the 21st ultimo No. 49/127, wherein you informed me that application having been made by the Immigrants who recently arrived at Moreton Bay by the Ship "Fortitude", for certain land as described at that place to be brought forward for Sale, and requested that a Report on the subject from the Surveyor of the District

might be obtained, given instruction to Mr. Assistant Surveyor Warner to report accordingly.

I have this day received from him a communication on the subject of which I take leave to enclose a Copy.

I may add that in accordance with the suggestions contained in the fifth paragraph of Mr. Warner's letter I shall instruct him by tomorrow's post to lay out the land in question in areas of from 80 to 200 acres, making reservation for Village allotments in the neighbourhood of the permanent fresh water.

Despite setbacks, settlement by the immigrants did occur. Fortitude Valley was so named by a Mr Roper, who had been a passenger on the ship *Fortitude*, the first of three ships dispatched with emigrants from London to Moreton Bay, by Dr Lang of Sydney, in the year 1849. Roper having purchased the only dwelling then erected in that part of the eastern suburbs of Brisbane, named the locality in honour of the ship which carried him to the colony, and settling down with his large and respectable family, commenced to enlarge his home and cultivate his ground in the valley. The valley became comparatively populous, despite gold rushes to other places, and Fortitude Valley soon contained 113 houses, of stone, brick, or wood. Of these 113 householders, 80 were freeholders.¹⁰⁸ The "Fortitude" immigrants were soon absorbed in useful employment, and no fewer than four who came out under Lang's Land Scheme became representatives in Parliament – one in the Legislative Council and three in the Legislative Assembly.¹⁰⁹ Amongst the passengers were the Reverend Charles Stewart, who for many years afterwards ministered at Ipswich, Mrs Stewart, Mr (afterwards the Hon. William) Pettigrew, surveyor, subsequently Mayor of Brisbane, who erected the first sawmills in what is now Queensland. Pettigrew was also for many years a member of the Legislative Council. Dr Henry Challinor was the surgeon superintendent. He settled at Ipswich, and became a member of Queensland's first parliament as representative of West Moreton. Robert Cribb came in the *Fortitude* with his family of 10 adults. He was a baker by trade, and when the promised grant of land was not forthcoming he opened up business in Queen Street. By his own efforts he acquired a considerable amount of land in the best part of Brisbane, became member for East Moreton in the Parliament of New South Wales, and afterwards sat in Queensland's first and second parliaments.¹⁰⁸

In March 1849 the first Wesleyan church was built in Albert Street.

The *Emigrant* sailed from Plymouth on 17 April 1850 chartered by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, bound for Moreton Bay, where

it arrived on 8 August 1850, with 276 passengers on board. There was typhus on the ship, with 19 deaths on board and 26 passengers buried on Stradbroke Island where the vessel was put into quarantine. The tragic fate of the medical doctors who attended testifies to the devotion of these men, and Wickham, to their duties.

As reported by the *Moreton Bay Courier* for Saturday 17 August, Dr. Mitchell, the surgeon-superintendent, was also seized with the fever. Dr. Malton then went down to the quarantine ground to take charge of the sick during the illness of Dr. Mitchell. The crew of the vessel were all well. Wickham, as Police Magistrate, gave the necessary directions for preparing places of shelter for the passengers at the quarantine ground, Dunwich. He was personally on the spot before the immigrants were landed, and pointed out (subject to the approval of the surgeon) the sites for the different classes of persons to be located. The *Courier* on 23 September reported that Dr. Mitchell had died and by 29 September 1850 Dr. Ballow had also passed away. Both were buried at Dunwich cemetery. Dr Malton was infected but survived.

Dr. John Dunmore Lang's initiative on bringing immigrants to Brisbane without governmental approval bore bitter fruit for him. The "Fortitude" immigrants had paid £2,000 passage money on the understanding that they would receive land grants on arrival. Earl Grey (British Secretary of State for the Colonies) accused Lang of deliberately deceiving the immigrants but it was Lang who footed the bill from his own estate¹¹ and his personal loss was £1,300. His conduct in dispatching the "Fortitude" without receiving an absolute guarantee from the Home Government with regard to land grants for the immigrants was open to serious criticism. On 7 August 1850 his political enemies in the New South Wales Parliament, after a long debate, passed a resolution of censure on his conduct in bringing the *Fortitude* immigrants to Moreton Bay Settlement without first obtaining a guarantee from the authorities concerning the issue of land grants.¹⁰⁹ However, a flood of immigrants did occur and the population of Brisbane, numbering 812 residents in 1845, swelled to 25,520 in the census of 1859.¹¹

The Moreton Bay Settlement was largely dependent on pastoral production for its survival and in 1853, as Government Resident, Wickham became concerned that immigration was failing to supply the needed labour while putting a strain on the community. Immigrant ships were arriving every month. In a long letter to the Colonial Secretary he listed the composition of the arrivals on a recent ship: married couples, 126; children under 14, 99; Infants, 17; single women, 74; totalling 316; and a disproportionately small number of single men, 37; bringing the grand total

from the vessel to 353. He wrote that employers of labour were reluctant to engage families comprising three, four or sometimes six ‘useless’ children. The families supplied were generally of the worst description of labour that had ever come to this port. He advocated that a means be found for allocating families to places such as the Wide Bay and Burnett districts and that if authority were given to forward large families, and a proportion of the single females, to Sydney by the first opportunity after the ship was inspected, considerable expense might be saved. A considerable correspondence ensued and in a letter from the Immigration Agent in Sydney to the Colonial Secretary it was shown that nine vessels had arrived in Moreton Bay in the 12 months ending June 1853, with not dissimilar proportions of individuals.¹¹⁰

Wickham on Leave

In 1851 Wickham, exhausted from his many duties, went on leave of absence to Sydney for two months shortly after the sitting of the Circuit Court. He carried with him the best wishes of the inhabitants that he might derive benefit from the relaxation which he had so well earned by long and unremitting attention to his numerous and responsible duties.¹¹¹

On his return by steamer to his duties as Police Magistrate, the *Moreton Bay Courier* for Saturday 11 October trusted that he was improved in health by the relaxation which a long and close application to his many duties had rendered necessary. In his absence Mr. Ferrier had acted as magistrate and on all occasions evinced a most commendable inclination to give satisfaction to the public.¹¹²

Death of Anna Wickham

Anna Wickham died in 1852, at her residence in Glebe Street, leaving Wickham two sons and a daughter. Anna, in failing health (believed to have been consumption), had gone to Sydney for medical treatment and change of air. With her were her three children, Charles Brenton, nine-and-a-half, Ellen Susan five-and-a-half and Alfred William two-and-a-half. She was there for eight months and Wickham was on his voyage to Sydney to take her back in improved health, when she suddenly took ill and died after a fortnight’s severe and painful illness. Wickham arrived in expectation of a happy meeting with her but on reaching the house he was only in time to see her in her coffin before it was closed and to follow her remains to the grave. Mrs King had nursed her through her illness and closed her eyes.⁴ A

tablet to her memory was placed in the Church of St. John the Evangelist, and transferred to Saint John's Cathedral when the old church was demolished.¹¹³ It read:

In Memory of Anna, the wife of Commander J. C. Wickham, who departed this life 23rd June, 1852; aged 35 years.

However, this, with other tablets, was reverently placed in the basement of Saint Martin's House, a former hospital, opened in 1922, in the grounds of the cathedral.¹¹⁴



St Martin's House, in the grounds of St John's Cathedral, 2019. Photo Courtesy of Adrian Gibb

After Anna's death, Wickham's sister-in-law Emma Jane Master who was another daughter of Hannibal Macarthur, acted as hostess at Newstead House. Emmeline, also a daughter of Hannibal, who had married George Leslie, took charge of Wickham's daughter Ellen and travelled with her and George to England. Ellen was never to see Australia again.⁸¹ Wickham's eldest son, Brenton, born in the Commandant's cottage, stayed with his father and was 16 when Wickham left Brisbane in 1860. He appears to have continued his education in Sydney before leaving for a military career in England, rising to the rank of Colonel in the Royal Horse Artillery. Alfred William Wickham, the first of the family to have been born at Newstead, later migrated to South America and settling in Montevideo, Uruguay. He died there about 1924.⁴

Wickham's duties did not cease, however, and he wrote in support of placement of a new wharf adjacent to the Customs House which, unlike other locations, was based on solid rock. Other activities are detailed below.

7. Government Resident

The *Moreton Bay Courier* for Saturday 1 January 1853 recorded the proposed appointment of Wickham to the position of Government Resident at length and with much approbation: ¹¹⁵

The Council ... has voted the necessary salary for a "Government Resident". Captain Wickham therefore only awaits the formal commission of the Governor General to assume his new title.

This officer has now been for a period of ten years acting as the chief functionary of the Government here, having arrived in Brisbane in the month of January 1843; and there are but few in the colony who have given such general satisfaction, in so responsible an office, during so long a period. The delays that have frequently taken place in effecting local improvements and reform have chiefly to be attributed to the limited authority heretofore possessed by Captain Wickham, and the complete subserviency of the highest officers of the Government here to the Sydney departments. The popularity which he has generally enjoyed, is to be mainly traced to a habit, founded upon the surest and best principles of government, of making himself acquainted with the opinions and wishes of the inhabitants before pronouncing upon subjects submitted for his consideration; and if the matters in question have not been always decided in accordance with such wishes and opinions, that fact has more frequently been caused by opposition in Sydney than by any arbitrary advice on the part of the local officer. The nearest approach which the residents in this part of the colony can at present make to self-government, is by frequently and openly expressing their opinions upon matters affecting local interests so that the wise and prudent custom of benefitting by their advice and experience may be encouraged in the Executive officer of the Crown. This custom we hope to see continued, and even extended under the new commission of Captain Wickham. A public officer sacrifices none of his dignity by such a course, which must always have a tendency to insure for his acts the stamp of public approbation.

We are not in a position to state how far the authority of the Government Resident will extend; but it is reasonable to expect that the new arrangement will afford increased facilities for the local administration of affairs, and thus be a stepping stone to the greater freedom anticipated from the concession of separation.

It was not until Saturday 14 May, that *Freeman's Journal*, Sydney, reported that:

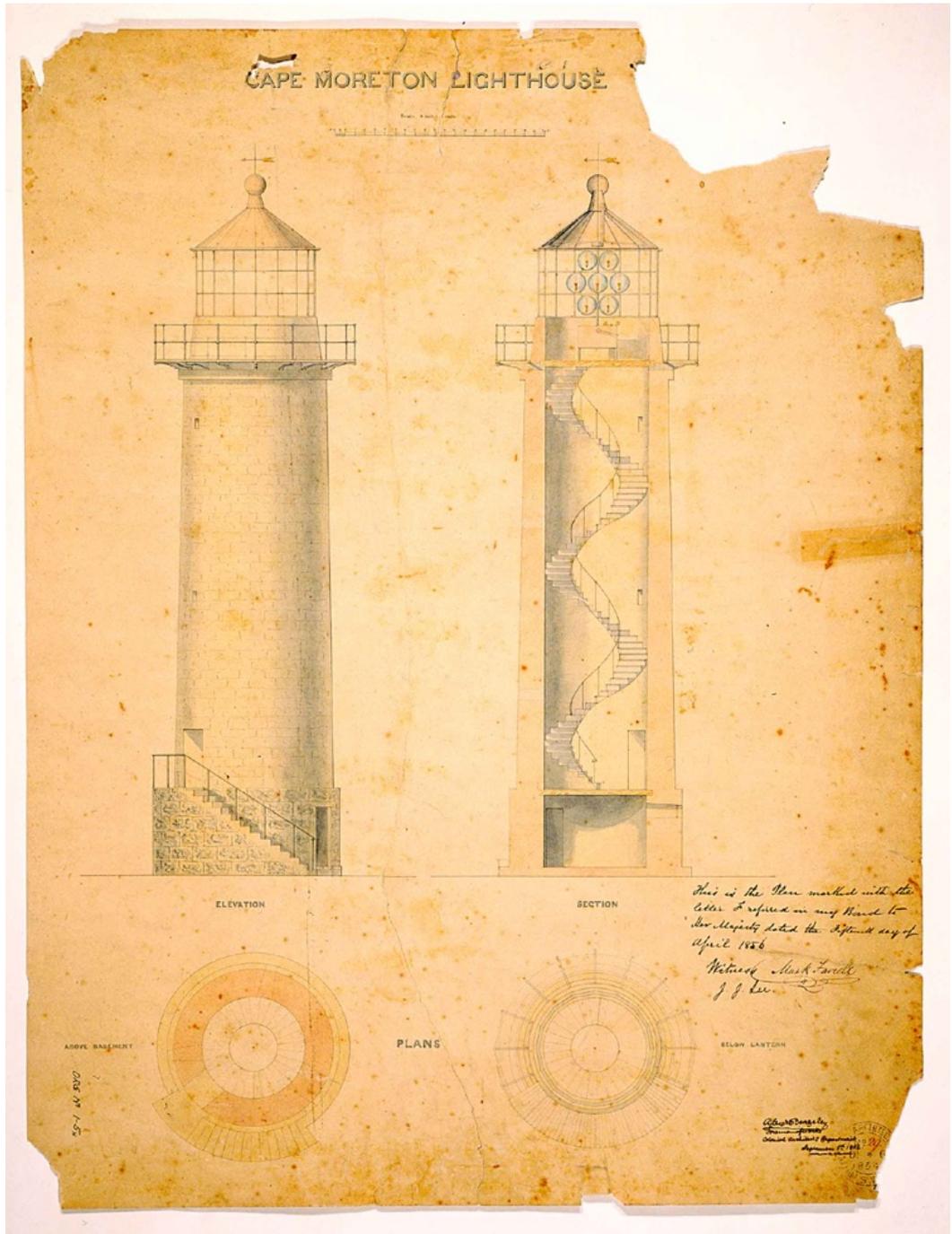
His Excellency the Governor-General has appointed John Clements Wickham, Esq., R. N., to be Government Resident at Moreton Bay.

On 23 May 1853, Wickham reported on the friendly conduct of Captain Wakeman, Commander, American Steam Ship *New Orleans*, in endeavouring to capture Norfolk Island runaways who had been plundering the Moreton Bay Pilot Station a second time while the pilot was conducting *New Orleans* to anchorage. Two boats were sent in pursuit. Their efforts did not lead to apprehension of the pirates, but Captain Wakeman and all concerned were entitled to special acclaim and were given a letter of thanks.

Moreton Island Lighthouse

Plans for a lighthouse to be erected at Cape Moreton on Moreton Island were drawn up in 1854 and the lighthouse, built of local sandstone by convict labour, was functional by 1857.

In a letter of 8 September 1856, passing over an application by C. H. Greenwood, Wickham supported an application by Samuel Sneyd (Chief Constable of the District) for appointment as Superintendent of the Light House, as he had had for some years opportunities of noticing Mr Sneyd, and considered him from his steadiness and general respectability to be well qualified for appointment: nearly 30 years in service of his country, as in an enclosed memorandum. He trusted the desire Sneyd had always evinced to perform his duty satisfactorily during this long period.⁷⁵ When the lighthouse became operative, the pilot station was moved to Bulwer and new sailing directions were issued by Wickham.¹¹⁶



Drawing for the Cape Moreton Lighthouse, signed by Alexander Beazeley

Visit of Sir Charles Fitz-Roy, Governor



Sir Charles Fitz-Roy brother of Robert Fitz-Roy. About 1855. By Henry Robinson Smith

On 20 March 1854, the Governor General, Sir Charles Fitz-Roy, as reported by the *Illustrated Sydney News* for 1 April 1854, arrived in Moreton Bay in the *Calliope*, a man-of-war. After anchoring in the bay for the night it crossed to the mouth of the river. Then the Governor, accompanied by his Private Secretary, Mr George Fitz Roy, and Captain John Gennys, of the

Calliope, arrived at Newstead where the Governor took up his abode as a guest of Captain Wickham, on the Wednesday afternoon. He did not make his official entry into Brisbane until 23 March. ¹¹⁷

Preparations were made to receive him in a manner consistent with the respect due to his high office. On all hands the utmost eagerness and activity were displayed, and the desire to do honour to the occasion was unanimous. The most gratifying part of all was the evident fact that this desire sprang from a settled and well-considered determination to show the Governor-General of Australia the real character of the people amongst whom he came for the first time. As the hour of noon approached, when his Excellency was to arrive in town, the road to Newstead presented an appearance of unusual liveliness, from the number of gentlemen who were riding out to form an escort. At least a hundred and twenty horsemen, amongst whom were the most influential and respected inhabitants of Brisbane, assembled at Newstead and falling in a single file on each side of the road formed a lane through which the Governor passed, baring his head to the salutations that met him riding down the lines. The cavalcade then fell in, two and two, in the rear, and formed a train that presented a picturesque effect in winding round some of the angles of the road on the way to Brisbane. A large number of pedestrians accompanied the escort, and the utmost good order was preserved. His Excellency was attended by Captain Wickham, as Government Resident, and by Captain Gennys, and the Private Secretary. On the arrival of the procession at Mr Windmell's land, at Fortitude Valley, the first flags appeared. The Valley was liberally decorated with flags and improvised decorations, and in the evening some of the houses were illuminated with lanterns worked into the letters "V.R.". The Towns Police Act was utterly ignored, and guns and other firearms were let off ad lib. All along the principal street of Fortitude Valley numbers of well-dressed persons were scattered, who saluted and were cordially responded to by his Excellency. At Kangaroo Point Ferry, at the Custom House, and at Mr. Andrew Petrie's house, flags were displayed; and Mr. Petrie's verandah was crowded with people who had assembled there to give the Governor a hearty welcome to town. He was loudly cheered in passing, and acknowledged the compliment with the utmost courtesy. On arriving at the Court House, where the greatest number of people were assembled, the cheering was long and vociferous. Instead of alighting here, as was expected, his Excellency rode on to the end of Queen Street, passing under a banner on which was inscribed *Cead Mille Failte* [Irish for a hundred thousand welcomes], *Sir Charles Fitz Roy, to Brisbane*. Turning past the Immigration Depot and Saint John's Church, he halted at the Government Resident's Office. Here it

was announced that his Excellency would attend at the Court House in a few minutes, for the purpose of receiving the address of the inhabitants, and any gentlemen who might be presented to him. Here, with three rousing cheers and one cheer more, the greater part of the cavalcade turned back towards the Court House, whilst his Excellency, attended by a few gentlemen, turned up George Street, and arrived at the Court House a few minutes later. The body of the Court and the gallery were crowded with people, who received the Governor on his entrance with general and prolonged applause, Henry Buckley, Esq., J.P., was now presented for the purpose of reading the address, to which his Excellency returned thanks. His Excellency then received a large number of the inhabitants, who were presented by Mr. Buckley and the Government Resident. The deputation recently appointed for the purpose, then waited upon his Excellency in the name of the inhabitants, for the purpose of inviting him to a public dinner in Brisbane. The invitation was accepted, and Friday, 7 April, fixed for the event. After leaving the Court House, his Excellency visited most of the public buildings, and returned to Newstead at about 4 o'clock. It was no exaggeration that the visit of his Excellency to Brisbane was a complete ovation. His reception evidently made a strong impression upon the distinguished visitor. Despite forecasts in a leading Sydney journal, the inhabitants had acquitted themselves as sensible men and loyal subjects.¹¹⁷

In the days before motorcars even Governors-General had to travel on horseback if a coach were not available. Sir Charles left Brisbane on horseback for Ipswich, accompanied by the private secretary, Captain Wickham and Captain Gennys. His Excellency and suite lunched at Woogaroo [now Goodna] at the residence of Dr Simpson, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Moreton district. Wickham then returned to Brisbane and the Governor went on to Ipswich, where addresses of welcome were presented to him by Mr R. J. Smith (member for the Wide Bay Burnett, and Maranoa) and Mr Hy Kilner. There was a ball in the evening. Instead of the short stay formerly contemplated, his Excellency remained the guest of Captain Wickham until the following Monday. Sir Charles then left for Franklyn Vale, proceeding thence to Drayton, and thence to Warwick, returning by way of Cunningham's Gap and Mount Flinders. After nearly three weeks' stay in the district he went north on the *Calliope* [hence that name for a Rockhampton suburb] to Port Curtis and, after a short inspection, returned to Sydney.¹¹⁸

There were festivities on the arrival at Moreton Bay of the steamer *Boomerang* a vessel of 360 tons register, and 100 horse-power, under the command of Captain Henry O'Reilly. The ship had come out from Glasgow

under the command of Captain James Munro, arriving at Sydney in August 1854.⁷⁷

A large number of the inhabitants were entertained at luncheon on board the *Boomerang*. The chair was taken by Mr. Henry Buckley, having on his right Captain Wickham, as Government Resident, and on his left Mr. Duncan (Sub-collector of Customs). Captain Wickham, in proposing the health of Captain O'Reilly, said:

Long may he be spared to throw his Boomerang between Sydney and Moreton Bay.

He also said that they were under some obligation to the Australian Steam Navigation Company for sending them so fine a steamer, but the company also sent them to command the vessel an officer who was most acceptable to the residents of Moreton Bay. (Cheers.) Captain O'Reilly declared that he knew no man with whom he would sooner sail. The champagne was plentiful and the utmost good humour and hilarity prevailed. Many toasts were made, commencing with The Queen, Prince Albert and the Royal Family, Army and Navy, and the Government Resident.¹¹⁹ Nehemiah Bartley mentioned that news of the fall of Sebastopol, in the Crimean war, was brought to Brisbane by the *Boomerang*, which came up the river lavishly bedecked with bunting, and that a gun was fired from the ship in token of the general jubilation.⁷⁷

Moreton Bay Hospital

As early as September 1843 maintenance of a hospital at Moreton Bay had been discussed between Wickham, the Colonial Secretary and the Governor General and it had been agreed that no patients should be admitted without paying. However, the Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals had given directions to close the Moreton Bay Hospital on 31 March 1843. Wickham argued for retention of prisoners with fever, including those coming from 'Limestone' in what appeared to be an epidemic, until they, and sick soldiers, were cured as they could not be sent to Sydney in their present condition. Assigned servants were to be returned to their masters.⁷⁵ Owing to his efforts the hospital remained open.

Among his many duties, Wickham presided over the annual meeting of the Brisbane Hospital which had been founded in 1849. At that time its total reserves were £80. After the first year the sum was only some £67. But in 1854, after five years' trial, the hospital had treated more than 600 patients, besides outpatients, and the balance in hand was over £350¹²⁰, a contrast with the billions of dollars expended today.

Religious Duties

On 1 March 1844 Wickham suggested the laying out of a burial ground at Ipswich, approved by the Governor.

Wickham was present in a meeting in the Church of England school house presided over by the Bishop of Newcastle for the purpose of establishing in Brisbane a district association in connection with the Newcastle Church Society. The association was formed and the officers chosen included: President, the Bishop of Newcastle; vice-president and treasurer, Captain Wickham, R.N.; and several others.

On another occasion in 1854 Wickham chaired a well-attended meeting of all religious dominations represented in Brisbane, though curiously excepting the Roman Catholic and English Churches. A hymn having been sung and a prayer offered, the Chairman opened the business of the meeting, stating that the object was one of the most important of any that could have called them together, being no less than the spreading of the word of God through every part of the world (Cheers). A long discussion of dissemination of the bible, in different languages, ensued.¹²¹

On 6 March and 15 May 1848, a letter requested that the house occupied by the Commissariat Officer, Mr Kent, who was about to be removed, should be appropriated for the residence of a Church of England clergyman to be appointed by Lord Bishop of Newcastle (originally built for Chaplain and Commissariat Officer). Recommended quarters of the Commissariat Officer at Brisbane were on a Terrace above the Commissariat Store, a very desirable part of Brisbane. He suggested, unsuccessfully, that the Lord Bishop purchase the building and ground as the site for a protestant church.

In February 1857 Wickham chaired a meeting of the Auxilliary Bible Society of Moreton Bay which had been founded on 2 October 1854. The Reverend Mr. Piddington proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was carried by acclamation. Captain Wickham in returning thanks said he thought it was a great honour as well as a great privilege to preside at such a meeting and that he would be glad to give the Society all the aid in his power. He had alluded at the commencement of the proceedings to the scanty attendance, but he was happy to see that the audience had since been considerably augmented. The doxology was then sung, and the meeting separated.¹²²

His dedication to the Anglican church has been shown above in his donation of land for St. Mary's church and his contribution to the building expenses.

Mercy, Vagrancy and Lunacy

A letter of 4 October 1856 proposed mitigation of sentence passed on Philip O'Reilly convicted of repeated drunkenness and profanity before Magistrates at Brisbane and by them sentenced to 12 months imprisonment in Brisbane goal. The petitioner was a tradesman (a cooper) and a married man, having a wife and child dependent upon him for support. The prisoner brought to light a case of indecent assault in prison by reporting the same, fearlessly giving evidence in the matter. Offences in gaol were rendered difficult to investigate because of unwillingness (through fear or other cause) of prisoners to report them. The present case appeared a good opportunity of evincing that such a service as that rendered by O'Reilly is appreciated by Government. Wickham recommended (with concurrence of convicting Magistrate) that the unexpired portion of the prisoner's sentence be remitted in consideration of his rendering the service alluded to.⁷⁵

A considerable correspondence from Wickham to the Colonial Secretary concerned the gaol and included a letter about rations for the gaol establishment and of tea, sugar and tobacco for the constables.

In late November 1854 commissioners were appointed to investigate charges against Frederick Walker of the Native Police, and they commenced their sittings in Brisbane, when the nature of the accusations, which were of an entirely general character, were made known to Mr. Walker. The commissioners were Captain Wickham, Colonel Gray and Dr. Simpson. They sat with closed doors, and upon rising adjourned for a month.¹²³

The vagrancy act was not repealed in Queensland until 2004. It was normal, therefore, in the mid-19th century, for vagrants to be treated harshly by modern standards.

Joseph Antonio, a recent immigrant, having endured 111 days in the voyage from Southampton, was charged at the Brisbane Police Office with vagrancy. Only the day before he had been released from gaol where he had served three months, under sentence by the Ipswich Bench, with hard labour, for begging in the streets. On the same day, he was arrested by Constable Wright for drunkenness. He promised that he would mend his ways but Captain Wickham reminded him that while he was in gaol he was constantly undergoing extra punishment for misconduct. He was sentenced to six months' hard labour on the roads or public works.¹²⁴ One wonders what later happened to this unfortunate man. Wickham nevertheless showed sympathy for the less fortunate in arranging for a pauper, Daniel Long, to be admitted to hospital on the advice of Dr Simpson and Mr Ballow. He also

recommended that prisoners suffering fever be retained in hospital until cured as it was unsafe to forward them to Sydney.⁷⁵

Hard labour was, again, the punishment for Patrick Philpott committed to Brisbane gaol for one calendar month by the Bench at Brisbane under the Vagrant Act, mentioned in Wickham's letter of 29 September 1856. On several occasions during this term of imprisonment the vagrant exhibited signs of being of unsound mind, as reported to Wickham by the gaoler. Two legally qualified medical practitioners certified to his being of unsound mind and unfit to be at large. A warrant was made out for his further detention in gaol. Wickham requested the necessary authority for his removal to Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum. Patrick Philpott had no family or connections in Colony.⁷⁵

There were other referrals to the asylum: on 9 October 1844 Wickham sent documents to the Colonial Secretary recommending that Mary Ann Clark, certified by Dr Ballow and another doctor, be removed to the Lunatic Asylum.

A letter on 30 June 1859, showed Wickham's concern for the less fortunate in the community: the case of a poor child (deserted by father) with a view to procuring her admittance to the Orphan Asylum or a benevolent institution. Her name was Mary Massey, aged 14 years, her mother was dead, her father an immigrant by the *Florentia* in 1853 who went to diggings shortly after arrival, and had not since returned. He left three children in distress of whom Mary was the eldest, hitherto provided for by a labouring man no longer able to support her. The circumstance of being deserted by her father appeared to have affected her mind. In a further letter Wickham issued a warrant for the apprehension of the man for desertion of his children but no tidings of him could be obtained. The girl was admitted to the Benevolent Asylum.

Murders

An official report by Captain Wickham is alleged by Captain Coley, when giving evidence before a select committee of the Queensland Parliament, to have stated that the number of white men killed by blacks from the time when he took charge of the settlement in 1842 up to 1852-53 was 174 and Captain Coley estimated the number up to 1861 as 250.¹²⁵ In the Darling Downs District, between January and October 1844, 13 white persons had been killed by Aborigines.⁷⁵ These killings were counteracted by many deaths of Aborigines at the hands of settlers in the Northern colony.

The Empire, Sydney, for Friday 20 November 1857, recorded in relation to the brutal killing of the Fraser family, known as the Hornet Bank massacre, and others by Aborigines in the Upper Dawson District that Captain Wickham reported to the Legislative Assembly that he had given instruction that all necessary steps possible should be taken. Lieutenant Ross, who it appeared had been guilty of some neglect in supervision of the native police, had been suspended, and steps taken to secure for the future greater efficiency in the native police corps.¹²⁶

Miscellaneous Matters

Wickham's continuing dependence on the Colonial Services, despite the efforts of the Board, and his concern for the welfare of his 'subjects', is revealed by a letter requesting reimbursement to a pilot in the port.

The Government Resident, Brisbane, to the Colonial Secretary.

Brisbane, 15th March, 1855.

SIR-I have the honour to transmit to you the enclosed letter from Mr. Wishart, late a pilot for this port, shewing a statement of expenses incurred by him while employed in bringing the schooner *Tearl*, to Moreton Bay.

Mr. Wishart has assured me that the amount stated was paid by him, and such expenses would not have been incurred if he had remained at the pilot station. Under these circumstances I think he is entitled to some remuneration, particularly for board and lodging in Sydney, and boat hire.

¹²⁷

On 10 February 1844, clearance of vessels at Moreton Bay was becoming an issue in the absence of a Customs House officer. Smuggling of spirituous liquors was suspected, the Master of the *Piscator* had a large load of sugar under suspicion of being used in distilling and contraband landed at Logan and Pine Rivers. It was suggested that a trustworthy person be stationed at Amity Point to accompany the pilot guiding the vessels.

There was a need for wharves on the river and on 24 October 1844 Wickham forwarded to the Colonial Secretary a request from inhabitants of South Brisbane for construction of a wharf and ferry landing at Stanley Quay near Russell Street, followed on 13 January 1845 by maps; he also mentioned a proposed wharf to be built by public subscription at North Brisbane, opposite Kangaroo Point. Further applications for wharves, in Brisbane and Ipswich, were approved.

The rapid development of all the facilities expected in a basically British society was evident in the granting of licences to a proliferation of hotels. At the annual licensing meeting, before Wickham and Messrs Duncan and

Forritter, the following certificates were granted for twelve months: Thomas Grenier, Brisbane Hotel; W. Melville, Caledonian Hotel, and John Campbell. Commercial Hotel; all of South Brisbane; Patrick Munsell, Queen's Head Hotel; G. M'Adam, Sovereign Hotel; James Greenwood, Victorian Hotel; Jeremian Scanlan, St. Patrick's Tavern; J. Colins, Sawyer's Arms; Edward Bond, North Brisbane (late Donnybrook), all of North Brisbane. W. John Loudon, Freemason Hotel, Fortitude Valley; some of which still exist. Several licenses were refused. Mr. Thomas Alford and Mr. Alexander Thomas Speer were each granted an auctioneer's district license.¹²⁸ A letter of 13 January 1845 supplied an hotel licence in favour of William Holman Berry.⁷⁵

Even amusements had to be approved by Wickham when in April 1847 he certified a licence to hold public exhibitions at George Thorne's "Queens Arms" in Ipswich and Andrew Graham's "Harp of Erin" in South Brisbane for the purpose of performing a series of feats viz light and slack rope dancing, horsemanship and other amusements of the stage.⁷⁵

In February 1843 Wickham discussed building licences and in November the working of coal at Moreton Bay and Maitland. The breadth of his jurisdiction is seen in his request for the employment of immigrants for the repair to wharf and government buildings, requiring carpenters, bricklayers and blacksmiths but a chief demand for shepherds, hut keepers and shearers, about 50 to 60 in all.

On 29 March 1843 Wickham wrote to the Colonial Secretary about leasing government buildings; the Governor General stated that rents were to be renewed for one year at the current rent, payable in advance. This exemplifies the constant interest that the Governor General took in the minutiae of administration. Though worthy, this clipped Wickham's independence of action while Police Magistrate. When he was Government Resident there was little direct input from the Governor General but the Colonial Secretary's advice was frequently received.

In August Wickham observed that Petrie's building used for slaughtering, salting and boiling down, at Kangaroo Point encroached on Crown land but that its removal would have serious consequences; the Governor approved annual licences. William Fitzpatrick was made Inspector of Slaughter Houses. In December 1843 the arrival of immigrants by sea, with useful trades, was noted.

Wickham's attention for fine detail was seen when in October 1848 he enquired whether materials of the buildings on land authorized for the Wesleyans were to be included in the Grant: namely, 3 allotments on which part of the Prisoners Barrack now stood: buildings of brick and including

the old Bakehouse, another building built for the overseers quarter and cookhouse, and part of the dilapidated wall enclosing the barracks, the bricks of which might realize £15.

On 13 November 1848 he submitted an estimate of expense for alterations to Court House at Brisbane, with a view to holding Circuit Court or Court of Quarter Sessions, by Andrew Petrie, builder, at £220, originally £150. Correspondence followed.

Wickham wrote on 13 June 1853 concerning a petition from Brisbane residents requesting that a portion of Elizabeth Street between the Church of England grant and an enclosure attached to the Immigration Depot be opened to public access and obstructions removed. Estimates for the work were given by John Petrie, following. It was considered necessary to prevent constant ingress of persons who had no business in the Depot, to detriment of good order.

On the same day a memo from John Petrie to Wickham gave these estimates for opening a "lane" extension at Elizabeth Street connecting George and William Street; to take down the present retaining wall, excavate and cart away stuff from the roadway and rebuild the wall to the lines of the lane; take down the present fence and re-erect it behind the retaining wall, for £56. Then to take down three sides of the old fence enclosing Military Barrack Square and put up the fence to the line of the streets, provide and hang a pair of strong hardwood gates in Queen street for dray entrance and a small gate in William Street £27.

Nothing seemed beyond Wickham's care and on 1 Dec 1851 he gave an authorization to clean drains leading from the swamp, North Brisbane, to the River and requested a report re outlay. The drains passed through alluvial soil and an annual outlay was required to keep drains open. Existing drains did not correspond with streets as set out in the town map, passing through allotments which could be sold. He passed on two estimates: one for cleaning and providing flood gates, the other for making stone drains in the direction of the streets. Expenditure of a sum not exceeding £200 was authorized for cleaning out drains and placing flood gates at the mouth of the Creek.

Wickham's Income

Wickham's income was not confined to his stipend as Resident. Commissions obtained in arranging sales of land in 1854 amounted to £973 which was £473 more than his salary and a very large amount at that time. Colonel Gray also benefited from sales commissions. It was said that the

public justly thought that those gentlemen would have been well remunerated by much smaller sums for attending, two or three hours half a dozen times of the year, and that the balance might have been devoted to some of the local wants which pressed so heavily upon them. During the period, from 31 July 1854 to 30 June 1855, eleven months, the commissions paid to the officers managing the sales at the two places, were, to Captain Wickham, £1,156 8s. 1d, and to Colonel Gray, £851 15s. 7d. Thus, the income of the then Government Resident at Moreton Bay, in 1854, was more than that of the Premier of Queensland in 1882.⁹⁰

Wickham's income was in stark contrast to that of domestic staff, as was normal in the nineteenth century. An interesting account with insights into Brisbane at that time is that of an immigrant who was picked up from the immigrant depot and taken in a dogcart (a light horse drawn vehicle, the only one in Brisbane) to Newstead House. He was engaged for 12 months as a 'general', the wages being £35 all found, with an additional £12 passage money. He lived there for about four years and often looked at the old landmark of a native fig tree, where he put in his first hour's work, washing the first dogcart in Brisbane. The other staff consisted of a butler and his wife and a laundress and gardener. The gardener was a ticket of leave man who had been sent there, and his time had expired. He did no more work, and left the colony. Wickham, being the Government Resident, was called to Sydney on government business, and the man went to town to take the dogcart home. That was on 5 January, 1855. That morning the black fellow Dundallie was hanged for the murder of Andrew Gregor and William Boller. The hanging took place opposite the Royal Hotel where the post office soon stood.

The Beginning of Nundah

The captain left by steamer that morning, 5 January. At that time a trip to Sydney and back occupied a month. The man's duty in Wickham's absence was, with the assistance of an old servant, to muster his cattle running at Eagle Farm and around the coast. He became lost and was rescued by Father Hanley, the first Catholic priest in Brisbane. At the time there were only about five houses, the principal being that of the Westaway family. Opposite their residence was the penal establishment, for convict women, and some of the old ruins stood for many years. He visited German Station, and found the missionaries living in small cottages in a half chain street. Their names were Rhoddie, Zillman, Gerler, Franz, Housmann, Knickie, and Wagner.

The place had since been named Nundah. There were no bridges in those days, and one had to wade the creek.

Horticulture

The gardener was evidently a proficient horticulturist as we see that in the Horticultural Society's Show prizes were awarded to Captain Wickham (R. N. S. Vincent, gardener), for best collection of oranges, £3 and best collection of flowers, £3. Coffee berries were shown by Captain Wickham, and cotton by Mr. Eldridge.¹²⁹

Commissioner of Crown Lands

In 1855 Wickham added to his portfolio as quoted in the *Government Gazette* in the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* of Wednesday 19 September:

His Excellency the Governor General has been pleased to appoint John Clements Wickham, Esq., Government Resident at Brisbane, Moreton Bay, to be a Commissioner of Crown Lands, and to act in and for the settled districts of Moreton Bay.

Pension Payments

Banking matters loomed large and on 28 May 1853 a letter referred to the Colonial Secretary's letter concerning payment of pensioners residing in Moreton Bay and requesting to undertake payments in consequence of discounts they were subjected to in cashing their papers at the bank. No objection was made by him to paying pensioners if funds were available for this purpose but, excepting at the quarterly sales of land, there was seldom any public money and objective would not be reached by Wickham's paying pensions from private funds at the same discounts charged by Brisbane Bank on cheques drawn on the Bank of Australasia in Sydney or as on Pension Papers. Wickham suggested that an arrangement be made with the Collector of Customs as that Department was in everyday receipt of public money.

Hostile Criticism of Wickham

Despite Wickham's constant efforts to administer justly, Ipswich levelled further accusations against Brisbane, even hinting at removal of Wickham from his position of Government Resident. It claimed that:

acting upon some gross misrepresentations from Brisbane that a railway should be formed between Darling Downs and Maitland, the Governor-General some time ago had sent down railway-engineer and staff of assistants to survey this line. What is expected from such a railway by our Brisbane friends it is difficult to conjecture. ...When upon the subject of communication with Brisbane, we shall be glad if any of our readers will inform us what has been done with respect to the promised removal of the obstructions to the navigation [apparently in the river, at 17-Mile Rocks]. It is now nearly six years since the first application was made to the Government on the subject; and, so far as we can learn, the obstructions are still as palpable as ever. What has Captain Wickham been about! and what do we pay a Government Resident for, if it is not to see that justice is done to us? Has he really any influence with the Government? or does it ever act on his reports, for so long as we have been in this district we have no recollection of any public work that has ever been projected by him? Should these obstructions to our advancement be continued much longer, we shall be obliged to make application to his Excellency for the removal of another obstruction greater than them all [Evidently meaning Wickham].¹³⁰

This newspaper levelled further scurrilous and unfounded accusations against Wickham.

It is evident from the antagonistic articles emanating from Ipswich that there was a strongly competitive attitude, at least in some quarters, between that town and Brisbane and that Wickham was held in low esteem because of supposed neglect.

In contrast, on 25 November 1844 he wrote to the Colonial Secretary with concern regarding robberies in Ipswich and its neighbourhood and problems involving convicts and recommended employment of a District Constable and a resident magistrate.

Some further, animosity towards him was evident in the attempts of some members of the Legislative Council, notably Mr Charles Richardson, to reduce his salary on the basis that as Government Resident he no longer had to perform the duties of Police Magistrate, despite the fact that he was also Commissioner of Lands. Mr Piddington proposed a reduction in the Government Resident's salary to £500 but the final motion endorsing a

salary of £900, with £80 for contingencies, was carried by a strong majority.
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Police Brutality and Robberies

As Resident, Wickham showed characteristic sound judgment in a case of police brutality brought before the Brisbane Bench by the Reverend W.J.K. Piddington. One evening, the Reverend gentleman, a Wesleyan minister, was passing near the watch-house, when his attention was attracted by a low moaning sound, as if proceeding from a man in pain, and also by the noise of blows. From motives of humanity he stepped aside to ascertain the cause, and found two constables cruelly maltreating a man in a state of intoxication, by bumping his head against the ground, one of the constables remarking to his associate, according to the evidence of a witness, that this was a ready way to make a man quiet. The Reverend remonstrated against such a proceeding, whereupon the two constables abused him, and pushed and kicked him into the street. Subsequently Mr. Piddington brought the constables concerned in the outrage before the Bench on a charge of gross misconduct and assault, when the above facts were proved on the evidence of the complainant and two witnesses. Greatly, however, to the public surprise and indignation, the two Justices who heard the case fined the defendants the sum of only one pound each for each offence. However, Wickham, as Government Resident dismissed the two policemen.¹³²

In July 1859 an increase in robberies in Brisbane prompted Wickham to write to the Colonial Secretary to request that one of the Detective Police of Sydney be sent to Brisbane for a short period. The detective was sent by the next steamer.⁷⁵

Death of Phillip Parker King

The year 1856 saw the death of Phillip Parker King, then a Rear Admiral, aged 64. Wickham had lost a good friend.



The funeral of Rear Admiral Phillip Parker King, on Sydney Harbour. By Conrad Martens

Marriage to Ellen Deering

After five years as a widower, in 1857 Wickham married Miss Ellen Deering of Ipswich, aged 30, who bore him two sons. She was the daughter of a deceased Calcutta barrister.⁷¹ On 1 October his marriage to Miss Ellen Deering took place in the Church of St. John the Evangelist. The witnesses were Charles George Gray and J. Leith-Hay. Wickham gave his mother's maiden name as Ellen Susan Naylor [not Elionore Susannah Taylor, as in his death certificate issued in Biarritz]. Ellen's mother's name was given as Rebecca Rose. It is believed that Ellen came to Brisbane from England as late as 1856. Nehemiah Bartley regarded Ellen as a protégé of Colonel Charles George Gray, Police Magistrate at Ipswich, a veteran of Waterloo, with whom she used to stay before her marriage. She was also a friend of the Leith-Hays.⁴

After Wickham's position was up-graded to Government Resident and he had been automatically relieved of his duties as Police Magistrate⁴, he came to expect that he would be given the position of Governor of Queensland on its anticipated separation from New South Wales. On the occasion of the

visit of Sir Charles Fitzroy to Brisbane, when a public dinner was given to His Excellency and the subject of separation had begun to fasten itself upon the minds of the people there, the health of Captain Wickham, accompanied by a wish that he might be "*the first Governor of Moreton Bay*" was received with such cordiality and enthusiasm that the object of the compliment could scarcely command his feelings sufficiently to acknowledge it.⁷¹

John Harold Wickham was born at Newstead on 25 November 1858. He was second and last of the Wickhams to be born there. Two days before Christmas he was baptized in the Church of St John the Evangelist, North Brisbane.⁴ His short life ended in 1869 when travelling with his mother and brother in Germany but his brother, born in 1860, died at the age of 76 in Manly NSW. He had returned to Queensland with his mother when he was about 10 years old.^{4 80}



Ellen Wickham, nee Deering). Wickham's second wife

A New Board of Works and Hostile Criticism

An important development in terms of what is now termed infrastructure was the creation in 1857, by the Executive, of a Local Board of Works for the Northern Districts, consisting of Captain Wickham, Mr. Roberts (the Surveyor of Roads) and Mr. Beazley (the Clerk of Roads). The ‘*constant and absurd references to Sydney were now to cease*’.¹³³

It was feared, however, that the Board had not made a very satisfactory commencement. The bitter and probably unfair diatribe against the Board, and therefore Wickham, is evident in the following paragraphs from the *Northern Australian*. The first sentence in fact shows the quandary the Board was in owing to the demand for improved conditions in the city.

Notwithstanding the bridgeless state of the creeks, and the absolute impassability of the main thoroughfares for the conveyance of produce from the interior, and the impossibility of transmitting supplies to our starving fellow colonists in the interior, now struggling with the energy of despair against the consequences of one of the worst seasons the district has ever suffered, we do not hear of any steps having been taken to remedy this deplorable state of things with the requisite promptitude. We are informed, it is true, that the repairs of the roads, and the construction of the bridges mentioned in the Act, will be proceeded with as soon as the plans are arranged and tenders accepted but, as usual, the improvements have been commenced at the wrong end. Instead of the available labour of the district being concentrated where it is most urgently — most imperatively — required, the Board, acting we presume on the principle that 'charity should begin at home,' have brought their great minds to bear upon the contemplated additions to the Immigration Depot at Brisbane, which might reasonably have been delayed, considering the scarcity of labour, for another year at all events, without any serious inconvenience to the immigrants on their arrival. But this delay, for obvious reasons, would not answer the purpose of these gentlemen, so we shall have to put up with the effects of their disordered judgment, and of their supercilious haste in the matter. By taking this course, it really seems as if the Board invited censure, and sought a conflict of opinion with the producers in the country districts.

The peculiar animosity of the Ipswich press toward Wickham and his team is seen here:

The proverb about men first going mad in order to accomplish their own destruction, seems likely, in a short time, to receive a new verification in the

persons who constitute this Board, unless they adopt a very different course of proceeding for the future. It would have been far more satisfactory to us, at the commencement of the duties of the Board, to have alluded to it in the language of panegyric; but a sense of public duty forbids this, and we are firmly persuaded that, beyond the immediate vicinity of Brisbane, it is the general opinion that the improvement of the main thoroughfares ought to be the very first thing that should occupy its attention, and that all other works, and more particularly those of third-rate importance, such as that so absurdly proposed to be carried out in the first instance, ought to remain in abeyance. We might canvas the respective merits of other works of greater importance than the additions to the Immigration Depot, such as the improvement of the navigation at the Seventeen-Mile Rocks ; but for the present we refrain, and content ourselves with the remark that the Board would act wisely by retracing its steps, and devote their best energies to the accomplishment of those public works which are the most urgently required by the producing portion of the community; for it is only by this course the public will give them credit for the honourable discharge of duties, and the conscientious and disinterested use of their power. ¹³³

In the meantime, Wickham and the Clerk of Works received instructions to prepare the necessary plan and specifications for a building to contain about one hundred prisoners, with separate cells for each, and yards attached for gang-works, in such a way as to be capable of being enlarged so as to hold an additional number of one hundred and fifty; and when the plans were prepared tenders were to be immediately invited. Since the Colonial Architect received his instructions from the Government, he had been waited upon by Mr. Richardson and Mr. Buckley with the object of inducing him to make all haste possible with the preparation of the plans, and from what transpired at the interview, no delay was likely to occur in the department of the above named officer. Having succeeded so well with regard to the gaol it was the intention of the representatives immediately to commence a vigorous agitation for the removal of the river bar. Mr. Beazley resigned the office of Clerk of Works, and was succeeded by Mr. Toppin who arrived in the *Yarra Yarra*. ¹³⁴

Naturalizations

It was in keeping with Wickham's position as Government Resident that he arranged many of immigrants, mostly recent arrivals. Even in these cases he had to obtain approval by the Governor of New South Wales and

Governor-General, who from 1855 to 1861 was Sir William Thomas Denison.⁷⁵



Sir William Thomas Denison. Governor of New South Wales

Eligibility for Governorship

A 'Sydney man', writing in the Moreton Bay Courier, on 15 September 1858 speculated favourably on the likelihood of Captain Wickham

becoming Governor of the Northern colony in an article which gives us insights into the perceived character and functioning of Wickham:

The name of Captain Wickham had at last been introduced, and the writer had been surprised that the notion never occurred before. He firmly believed that Captain Wickham, with a good Executive Council would make a good Governor. Years ago that officer had taken the wise course of consulting the inhabitants generally upon local matters, and the result had been that he became highly popular, and gave general satisfaction;

It is uncertain why the commentator went on to say:

but when he abandoned this course, and took to subtle councillors whose views and objects still lay deep he fell into an error.

This seems to have been more a criticism of his councillors than of himself and the respect in which he was held by the community is evident. It proceeded to endorse him as a potential Governor:

If, however, Responsible Government were conceded to Moreton Bay, the inhabitants themselves would elect the Governor's councillors, and it might be difficult to get anybody who would better suit those circumstances than Captain Wickham. Could one not imagine three or four Executive Councillors who, with the present Government Resident to follow their advice, and a Parliament to be responsible to, would carry on the government more to the satisfaction of all? He would make a very bad Colonial Secretary but might be a very good Governor. An intimate knowledge of one's wants and integrity of purpose, were strong recommendations. As to mere ability, it is quite possible to have a Governor too clever by half [a doubtful recommendation]. At all events it was not easy to see any superior advantages that would be gained by having an old Sydney Government House attaché, or even Captain Sturt.¹³³

Despite awaiting news of his elevation to the governorship, Wickham was endorsed in 1858, to much approbation, as a candidate for the parliament of New South Wales.¹³⁵

8. Retirement

Contemplating the effects of Separation of Queensland on his position, Wickham wrote a plaintive letter, on 21 November 1859, to the Colonial Secretary:

As the Separation of this part of the Colony from New South Wales will affect me very differently from all other Officers of the Government, in these Districts, inasmuch as the Office which I now fill will be abolished while all others will be placed on a more permanent footing, I do myself the honour most respectfully, to bring my case under the notice of the Government, in the hope that it may meet with favourable consideration and that a Pension for past services may be awarded to me.

In November 1842 I received the appointment of Police Magistrate in this District, the duties of which office I performed until 1st January 1853 when I was appointed Govt Resident during the whole of which time (seventeen years) I have conscientiously performed the various duties imposed upon me, to the utmost of my ability, and in furtherance of the instructions which I have from time to time received, as well as in all cases of emergency, when, when I have had. occasion to act on my own responsibility, I have done so for the public benefit, and with the strictest regard to economy, and can safely say that on no occasion has any act of mine called for censure from the Government. On the contrary, I have more than once received flattering testimonials that my services have been appreciated.

I trust that the Government will see the justness of my request - and as the loss of my office is not occasioned by any neglect, or mal practice on my part, but by a Political change, over which I have no control, that I may be placed on a footing with other offices of the Government of New South Wales, who have been deprived of office under similar circumstances.

I have only to refer to every public office in Sydney for records of my unceasing attention to my duties, and especially to the Treasury and Audit Office, as well as to that, over which you now immediately preside.

Knowing that Wickham would not be granted the governorship, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Newcastle [Henry Pelham-Clinton, 5th Duke of Newcastle] wrote on 18 August 1859 a letter not received by the Colonial Office until 2 December, advocating that Wickham should receive a pension for his present position [Government Resident]:

The office of TREASURER can only be filled subject to the chance of resignation without Pension. It would be a very satisfactory arrangement if the Office were accepted on those terms, by Capt WICKHAM, whose long services at Moreton By have rendered him familiar with the character of the

community and who has been mentioned by yourself as possessing such high claims to the consideration of Her Majesty's Government, Mr. Wickham, however, appears to be at present in the enjoyment of a permanent office of equal value, and his interests must of course be protected. I leave it therefore to yourself and Sir Geo Bowen to consider what arrangement can be made either *by way of Pension* [my italics] for his present office or otherwise, to obtain Cart Wickham's services for the new Government on terms which shall be acceptable to himself.

Despite this endorsement by so senior a person as Newcastle, an unsympathetic comment was appended on 5 December by Governor Denison to Wickham's letter:

The position of Capt Wickham as regards the Govt of NSW seems be analagous [with] that [of] the officers of the latter who were deprived of their offices by responsible Govt. In that case the burden of compensation was laid upon New South Wales and not upon the Imperial Govt. But the case is still stronger against Queensland by the circumstances of Separation. If Capt Wickham have any claims they are not valid against New South Wales It seems to be unjust that the latter should have to pay in both instances.

This rejection was further compounded in an addendum on 12 December, confirmed on 19 December by Denison, to Wickham's letter by Edward C Merewether, Clerk of the Executive Council, with whom Wickham had previously clashed:

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL are quite willing to admit Capt Wickham's long and faithful services and are aware that he has not been removed from his office for any neglect or impropriety of his own but they cannot in any way recognise the validity of his claim for a Pension from this colony, in as much as he has not been deprived of his Office by any act of the Government of New South Wales, and they regret therefore that they cannot advise a compliance with his application.

As Wickham had worked dutifully for 17 years for the government of New South Wales whereas the Colony of Queensland was only incipient, these comments were manifestly unfair.

It must have been a bitter pill for Wickham, in 1859, to be among the welcoming committee to greet Sir George Bowen at Brisbane as the first Governor of Queensland. Others present included Mr. Ratcliffe Pring, Crown Solicitor, later that day appointed as Attorney General, and Colonel Gray, Police Magistrate at Ipswich.⁸¹ Separation Day was 10 December 1859.



Sir George Ferguson Bowen. First Governor of Queensland

Governor Bowen arrived in Brisbane, with his wife Lady Diamantina Bowen, on 9 December 1859. He disembarked at the City Botanic Gardens and with his party travelled along George St and Queen St to Adelaide House, the first Governor's residence, overlooking the Brisbane River at Petrie Bight. It was built by Andrew Petrie for Dr Hobbs and was to become the temporary residence while the Government House at Gardens Point was

under construction. It was from the balcony of Adelaide House that Queensland was proclaimed.

It has been said that Wickham retired in straitened circumstances but the evidence is that he had holdings in Hamilton and many other parts of Brisbane. He had also taken out a squatters licence on the Darling Downs where the Commissioner for Crown Lands listed him as having a block of land 12 miles by two miles.⁹⁸ After his death, as late as 1890 his estate was drawing rents for the Shakespeare Hotel and shops in Roma Street and still paying rates for land at Eagle Farm. He was also a private money lender, with debtors among the elite of Brisbane making repayments of interest, mortgages, loans and rents and Newstead House was sold to George Harris, a Brisbane merchant, from his estate for £4000. The opulence of the newly acquired items which were auctioned off on his departure indicate that he had considerable financial resources.¹³⁵

An advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier* for Saturday 31 December 1859 announced a public auction of effects from Newstead to occur at the house in January 1860. It was prefaced with the remark that Captain Wickham was leaving the colony for a short period. From the completeness of the sale and the fact that many of the effects had recently been received from England one might deduce that Wickham had imported the items in anticipation of elevation to the Governorship of the new colony of Queensland and the intention to return to Brisbane might be questioned. Certainly the effects to be auctioned indicate the opulent life at Newstead, particularly a dinner service of more than 180 pieces. The effects for auction were: the whole of the household furniture, plate, glass, china, linen, &c, comprising drawing room, dining room, and bedroom suites; a beautifully toned piano forte, lately received from England, direct from the eminent makers Collard and Collard, in rich rosewood case possessing all the latest improvements, with registered key board, &c, and a carved rosewood music stool with a Canterbury to match; the whole to be sold together. A great variety of china included the large dinner service in a marble pattern consisting of one hundred and eighty-eight pieces; also, a beautiful breakfast set of white porcelain. There was also a large assortment of the very best cut glass, the greater portion of which had very lately arrived from England, and a great variety of kitchen furniture, including a patent mangle, together with a dog cart, a chestnut mare and other horses and a variety of saddlery, pigs and poultry. Further particulars were to appear in a future advertisement and catalogues to be issued. Instructions were also obtained from Captain Wickham to sell at his residence, Newstead, on Thursday, January 12th, about 35 head of cattle, consisting of good milking cows and calves, steers

and yearlings, to be sold in lots to suit purchasers; also 3 well known ponies, broken to bridle, and perfectly quiet. ¹³⁶

It is not clear why Wickham was not offered the position of Governor of the new colony of Queensland. It may have been merely that the advancement of a Sydney person, namely Sir George Bowen, was preferred in government quarters but other forces may have been at work against him. The strong animosity to him by the Ipswich press may have taken effect but one might speculate that his wide financial dealings were frowned upon. These included acquisition of large land holdings in Brisbane but, perhaps more to his detriment, his becoming a money lender to major citizens, including some in the Legislative Assembly. The earlier Governors General, Gipps (1838-1846) and FitzRoy (1846-1855), and the Colonial Secretary, appeared well disposed to him in their letters as was the new Queensland Governor, Bowen, as evidenced by his offer of the important position of Treasurer. However, it seems possible that Denison, the Governor-General from 1855 to 1861, would not have looked kindly on Wickham's association with Charles Darwin. *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859. Denison was an Anglican fundamentalist and to him Darwinism was anathema.

Wickham's declining the Treasury may also have been the result of pique at not being given the Governorship, a reward hinted at by Charles Fitz-Roy when he had served both Britain and Australia so well and loyally throughout his life.

In 1860, Wickham determined to return to England. The affection of Brisbane society for him was evidenced by a valedictory address by a deputation signed by 120 people and consisting of Messrs. G. Raff, R. R. Mackenzie, R. Little, W. Brookes, S. Smith, R. Cribb, J. Gibbon, and J. F. MacDougall. They waited upon Captain Wickham on the evening of Monday 23 January 1860, at the residence of Dr. Fullerton, and presented the following address, as reported by the *Brisbane Courier* on the following Thursday:

To John Clements Wickham, Esq., Captain in the Royal Navy, late Government Resident, Moreton Bay.

DEAR SIR,—As you are now about to take your departure from amongst us, on a voyage to England, after a residence of seventeen years in this district, we beg to address you for the purpose of testifying our high sense of the value of your public services in this portion of Australia, as well as our own regard for your private worth.

Although the advent of separation, which is the immediate cause of your departure, is a source of congratulation to us, we at the same time regret that it has led to the loss to this colony of a faithful and efficient public officer.

We are aware of the difficulties that surrounded your position as Government Resident at Moreton Bay, having to carry out the economical views of the New South Wales Government on the one hand, and meet the wishes of the inhabitants on the other, your well known popularity may be taken as a fair criterion of your success.

In now taking leave of you, we would express a hope, that at no distant day you may return to take up your residence amongst us, invigorated by the bracing climate of your native land, and willing again to give us the benefit of your services.

Hoping that you, Mrs. Wickham, and family, may have a safe and pleasant voyage, and with every wish for your united happiness

We are, dear Sir, yours &c, (Signed by 120 inhabitants of Brisbane.)

To this Captain Wickham made the following reply, and evinced, whilst doing so, how deeply he felt the kindness of those who had not permitted him to pass from amongst them unrewarded by their sympathy and kind remembrance.

Gentlemen, I thank you most sincerely for the kind and flattering address which you have presented to me. I do assure you that I fully appreciate the good feeling therein expressed; and it is no trifling gratification, on my departure for England, where private affairs urgently demand my presence, to know that I am carrying with me the good will of those amongst whom I have so long resided, and from all classes of whom I have invariably received marked attention and kindness.

It has been my unceasing endeavour, at all times, to perform the various duties of my office in an upright and impartial manner, and it is with great satisfaction that I now receive your testimony of having been in some degree successful.

The difficulties which perpetually attended the advancement of these districts, whilst forming a portion of New South Wales, (and which, though a constant source of regret to me were beyond my control,) are now happily removed; and I earnestly trust that by a judicious management of your own affairs, this may become a flourishing and happy colony.

I beg you to accept my cordial thanks for your good wishes on behalf of myself and family. Should it please God, it is my intention after a short sojourn in my native country, again to take, up my residence amongst you in this delightful climate, where I have already spent so many of the happiest years of my life. It is therefore with the hope of being privileged to witness your prosperity, socially and politically, I now bid you a temporary farewell, wishing you in the meanwhile, every happiness which the divine blessing

can bestow,—and the most complete success in all efforts for the advancement of Queensland.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Faithfully yours,

J. C. WICKHAM.

Brisbane, 23rd January, 1860.

On 24 January 1860 Captain and Mrs. Wickham and Master Wickham and two servants left Brisbane for Sydney on the steamer *Yarra Yarra* and on 2 February the family departed for England on the *Duncan Dunbar*. Ellen was again pregnant. On 11 March 1860, when the *Duncan Dunbar* was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, the Captain hove to whilst Henry Falkland was being born, his second name echoing the locality of his birth.

The family went to stay at Elgin in Scotland with Benjamin Wickham, R.N., one of John Clements's younger brothers. Benjamin was Paymaster-in-Chief of the Navy.⁴ Wickham's earlier request for a pension to the Secretary of State for the Colonies was passed on to the Queensland Government. Despite strong support from the new Governor of Queensland, Sir George Bowen, the request was refused.

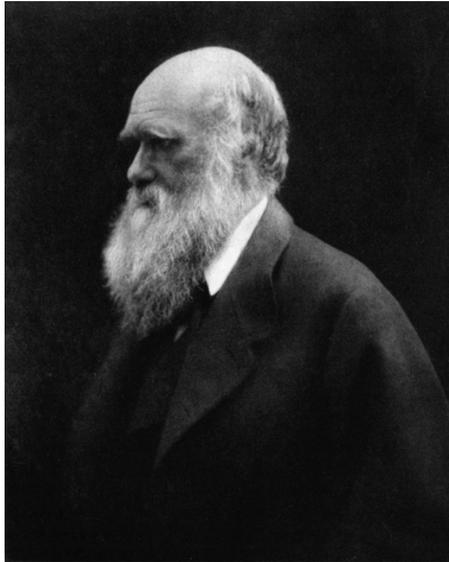
In regard to the pension, the issue was still alive when, on 21 June 1861, Mr. R. Cribb moved a resolution in the House of Assembly which had for its object the bestowal of a pension of £300 a-year upon Captain Wickham, as compensation for loss of office. Mr. Mackenzie (who was then Treasurer) moved an amendment for giving a lump sum of £2000, but both propositions were ultimately defeated by the casting vote of the Speaker, the division list showing 11 to 11. During the debate, full credit was given to the gallant captain for his services, but it was considered objectionable to commence a system of pensions.⁷¹ The objection possibly also sprang from pique that Wickham had declined to remain and help the new colony.¹¹⁴

When Sullivan and Wickham visited Down House on 21 October 1862 for a *Beagle* reunion, they found the philosopher inundated in orchids, sundews, and interminable trays of seeds, with farmyard bones everywhere, and dead ornamentals brewing in foul-smelling spirits. The old dyspeptic himself had aged badly.



Down House, in the twenty first century, much as it appeared when Charles Darwin was in residence. Photo Barrie Jamieson

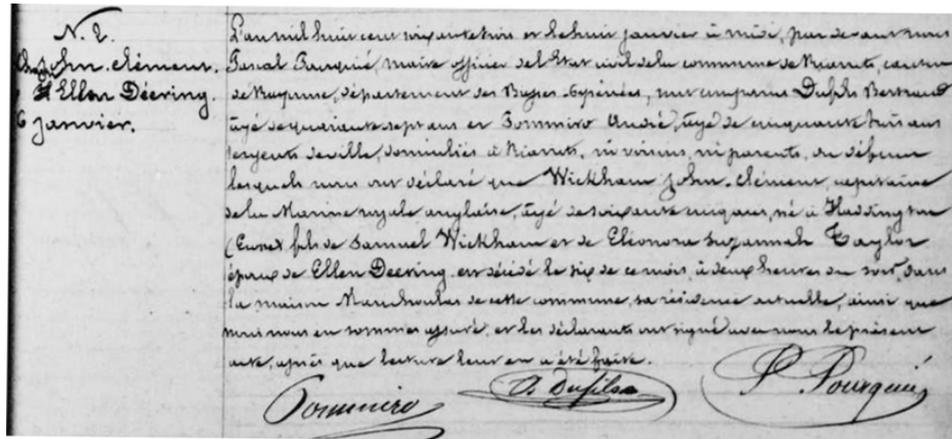
They had caught Darwin at a low moment, after Emma's and Lenny's scarlet fever attack in the summer, typically sipping the latest quack remedy, 'Condy's Ozonized Water Cure.'²⁷



Charles Darwin in 1868, about six years after Wickham's visit and four years after his death

9. Death of Captain Wickham

In 1864 Wickham died on 6 January at Biarritz, France. He was said to have been buried at St. Jean de Luz but his daughter Mrs. Comber informed Miss de Stokar of Dalby that her father was buried at Biarritz.¹¹³ It has now been possible, with the aid of Professeur Danièle Guinot (Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris), to establish that the church was Église Saint-Martin, Biarritz, in the Parish of Notre Dame du Rocher.



Death certificate of John Clements Wickham



The churchyard and Wickham's grave at Biarritz in 1926. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland ¹¹³



Église Saint-Martin, graveyard today. Note the church architecture identical with the previous illustration which showed Wickham's grave

The *Brisbane Courier* reprinted a detailed obituary of Wickham on Saturday 19 March 1864 received from the *Home News*. The obituary testified to the high esteem in which Wickham was held by the public.

January 6, at Biarritz, France, Captain John Clements Wickham, Royal Navy, formerly Government Resident at Brisbane, New South Wales.

The death of a gentleman so intimately connected with the early history of this colony, calls for something more than a mere passing record of the event. In the year 1839, Captain Wickham was engaged as commander of H.M.S. Beagle, in making a survey of the north-western and other portions of the Australian coast, the particulars of which survey were published some years since by Lieutenant Stokes, (Captain Wickham's subordinate officer) *who is said by some to have claimed the credit which was justly due to his superior* [my italics]. It was during this trip that the gallant captain discovered the Adelaide and Victoria Rivers, and furnished several other particulars of the coast of Arnhem Land and thereabouts, to the hydrographers of the Admiralty. The estuary now known to be the embouchure of the Burdekin, in Upstart Bay, was named after him, and there are many points along the coast which were carefully and accurately laid down by him. It was while engaged in the survey of the coast, we

believe, that Captain Wickham wooed and married a daughter of Hannibal Macarthur, Esq., but it was not until the year 1842 that he became identified more particularly with this district. In the month of January, in that year, the pioneer steamer of the A.S.N. Company paid a visit to this port and brought the intelligence that Moreton Bay was no longer a penal settlement, the government having determined to throw it open to free immigrants. Two months afterwards, Lieutenant Gorman, the last of the old regime of commandants, handed over the control of affairs to Dr. Simpson, who was appointed acting Police Magistrate for the district; and on the 14th of November in the same year, that gentleman was succeeded by the subject of the present memoir. The worthy captain was thus placed at the head of affairs in this district at a time when much tact and judgment were required. The "convict era" was at an end, and the influx of a class of free immigrants was about to effect a radical change in the position and circumstances of the district. The official designation of Captain Wickham's office was as follows: 'Police Magistrate of the district of Moreton Bay, charged with the general interests of government within it, and the Representative of the Governor within its limits'. Soon after becoming Government Resident in 1853, or about that time, Captain Wickham had to suffer the loss of his partner in life, who had been removed to Sydney for change of air and medical treatment. Previous to separation, the worthy captain was relieved from the performance of the duties pertaining to the office of Police Magistrate, and was succeeded by the late William Anthony Brown, Esq., who had for several years acted in the capacity of Clerk of Petty Sessions. At the date of separation, the 10th December, 1859, Captain Wickham's rule ceased, the arrival of the first Governor of the new colony being the signal for his retirement. The well-known and comfortable-looking "sociable" ceased its daily trips from Newstead (the captain's residence) to the present Colonial Secretary's office, and after sixteen years of a somewhat humdrum kind of official life, the deceased gentleman found his "occupation gone." Sir George Bowen performed what was but an act of grace and courtesy by inviting Captain Wickham to take the office of Colonial Treasurer. The public had anticipated that the late Government Resident would be one of the first ministry, but Captain Wickham declined the office. The reasons urged for his thus declining the proffered honor were not known until some time afterward, when a letter addressed by him to the Secretary of State for the Colonies was laid before the local parliament, and a claim for a pension founded thereupon. In that letter Captain Wickham stated that he declined the Treasurership because "the expenses of a contested election were beyond his means, more especially as a change of government might any

day throw him again out of employment." The friends of the gallant officer regretted this statement, because his election as one of the members for Brisbane would have been almost a matter of certainty, and the expense would not have exceeded £5, at the most. During the debate [on his pension], full credit was given to the gallant captain for his services, but it was considered objectionable to commence a system of pensions. From that time we have heard nothing of Captain Wickham—saving occasional reports as to his state of health—until we yesterday received the melancholy intelligence of his death. The disease of which the gallant captain died was apoplexy—a complaint he always dreaded, from the fact of his father having been taken off by it; and his death was sudden in the extreme. He was sixty-two years of age, and leaves a rather numerous family to mourn their loss. As a public officer, the deceased has been blamed for maintaining a merely negative position, but the charge is hardly just. It must be recollected that, while his office was one of honor and responsibility, he acted merely as the servant of the New South Wales government. Though nominally rated as representative of her Majesty's vice-regent in these districts, his powers were limited to the mere carrying out of the instructions he received from headquarters. In fact, he was often placed in a rather painful position, for, while he invariably manifested a desire to further the wishes and interests of the inhabitants, his representations were received in the most frigid style of official rigidity, and we can remember more than one instance in which he bewailed to us the apathy of the government, and lamented the limited range of his own authority. In private life he was a worthy and estimable gentleman, keeping himself very much to himself, and charged oftentimes with acts which people chose to consider mean, but to which he was doubtless impelled by his anxiety to provide for a rising family. On the whole, however, he was held in the highest respect by the inhabitants, and when he left Brisbane for Europe in the early part of 1860, an address was presented to him couched in highly complementary language. As a magistrate, he was inflexibly just and honorable; as a public officer, he was strictly punctual, mathematically exact, and always industrious. We had hoped to see his kindly face amongst us once again, and that he would have been spared to compare the Brisbane of 1864 with the "settlement" of 1843, but inexorable Death has laid him low upon a foreign soil.⁷¹

In the year of Wickham's death two events relevant to our story had occurred: John Lort Stokes had become (in 1863) a Rear Admiral and a great fire destroyed much of Queen Street.



John Lort Stokes as Rear Admiral in 1864. National Library of Australia



The great fire in Queen Street, Brisbane 1864. Fire broke out on Queen Street between George Street and Albert Street on the east side.

Ellen Wickham's Return

Wickham's second wife, Ellen Deering, returned to London where a fire destroyed all of his records and effects. She returned to Queensland and lived in Brisbane until her death in 1896, aged 75, at Sandgate. She had been staying there for two months for her health but her usual abode was Bayswater. Henry Falkland Wickham, her only son, was with her at the end. She was buried at Bald Hills in northern Brisbane.¹³⁷ The edge of the marble gravestone is inscribed with the name of Andrew Petrie, presumably the son of the pioneering builder who had died in 1872.



The grave of Ellen Wickham (née Deering), Wickham's second wife, at Bald Hills cemetery, north Brisbane. Photo Barrie Jamieson

10. In memoriam. Captain John Clements Wickham

Wickham's name lives on in major thoroughfares of Brisbane, the city that he served so devotedly for 18 years as Police Magistrate and Government Resident, but is also seen in many other places in Australia and overseas. Foreign governments have continued to recognize his contributions in this way. His name was also given to Australian flowering plants. These commemorations follow:

Wickham Island, Chile
Wickham Island, Falkland Islands
Wickham Heights and Mount Wickham, Falkland Islands
Mount Wickham, Peru
Wickham Island in Solomon Islands
Cape Wickham on King Island, Tasmania
Wickham Lighthouse, Bass Strait
Wickham River, Northern Territory, Australia
Mount Wickham, (two locations) Northern Territory, Australia
Wickham Street, Brisbane, Ayr, Queensland; East Perth and Wyndham Vale, Victoria
Wickham Terrace and Park, Brisbane
Wickham a suburb of Newcastle, including Wickham Park, NSW
The town of Wickham, Western Australia
Wickham island off Bernoulli Island (Timor sea)
Wickham island in the Recherche Archipelago off Western Australia
Electoral district of Wickham in NSW and in Queensland, both defunct.

Acacia wickhamii (Wickham's wattle) Fabaceae

Alloxylon wickhamii (A red-flowering rain-forest tree, Tree Waratah)
Proteaceae

Grevillea wickhamii (Wickham's Grevillea, Holly-leaved Grevillea)
Proteaceae



Grevillea wickhamii, Holly-leaved Grevillea.
Alloxylon wickhamii, Tree Waratah
Watercolours by the author

A Granddaughter's Commemoration

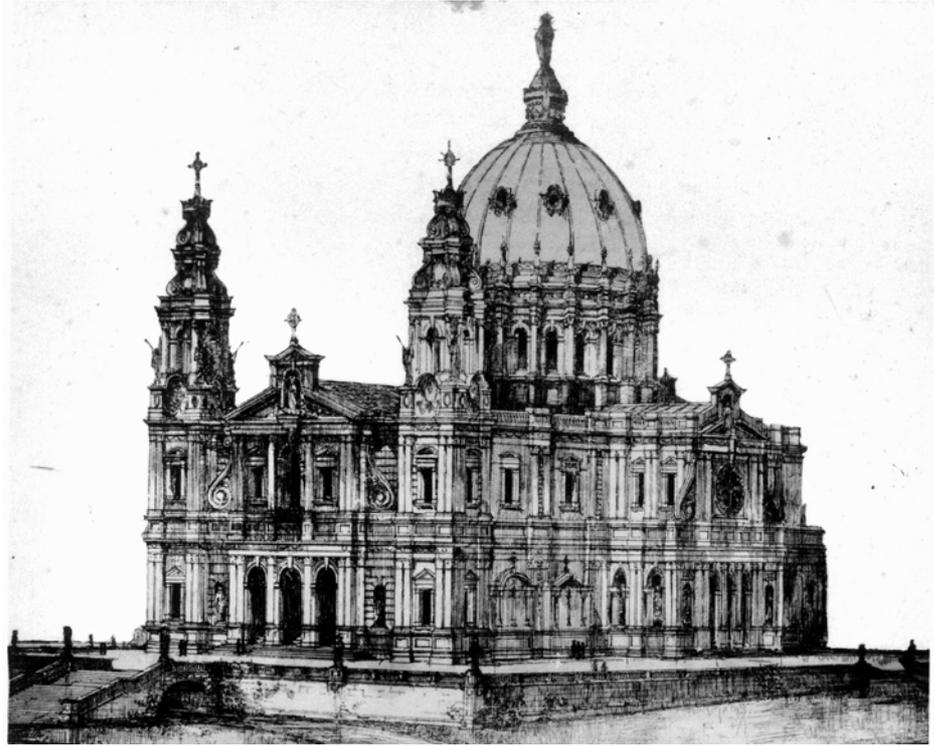
In 1928, Anna J. Wickham, daughter of Alfred William Wickham, second son of Captain John Clements Wickham, R.N., and of his wife, Anna Macarthur, and granddaughter of the Captain, sent a coin from Uruguay commemorating Captain Wickham. His Grace the Roman Catholic Archbishop Duhig received the letter from Anna Wickham, dated Calle Monte Video, Uruguay, June 23, 1928. It was a large gold coin to be placed under the foundation stone of the proposed Holy Name Cathedral. Although the crypt was constructed, the cathedral was never built, because of financial difficulties. The coin bore on one side the Uruguay Republic coat of arms, and on the other the following inscription:

In Memoriam Captain Wickham, R.N., First Resident Governor of Queensland,¹³⁸ [more correctly Government Resident].



The Wickham medal, retrieved by Father Martin

Sixty years later, in 1989, when it was clear that for financial and other reasons the cathedral would never be built, Fr Denis Martin, the Archdiocesan archivist, retrieved the coin, actually of silver, from underneath the foundation stone. He has most kindly made photographs of it and the proposed cathedral available for the present work.



The Holy Name Cathedral that was never built. Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Brisbane

Miss Wickham continued:

My father was born in Brisbane on the second of November, 1849. On the death of his father he came to Monte Video, where he married my mother, the late Isabel Irene Fernandez, of this city.

She concluded by saying that although her late father had left Australia as a boy, he always cherished a great love for it, and had communicated that love to his children. ¹¹³

Conclusion

Thus, in John Clements Wickham we have seen a man who was an outstanding navigator of the *Beagle* in the most difficult circumstances, an exacting but fair naval officer, an esteemed friend of Charles Darwin, a surveyor of South American and Australian waters, a magistrate who was inflexibly just and honorable, a public officer who was strictly punctual,

mathematically exact, and always industrious and a husband and father. He deserves a prominent place in the history of world exploration and the foundation of Australia.

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