THE EARLY CHARTING OF VICTORIA’S COASTLINE:
WITH COMMENTS ON VICTORIA’S MARITIME BOUNDARIES

COMPILED BY

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If any errors are noticed, please advise Greg Eccleston at eccleston37@bigpond.com
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WITH COMMENTS ON VICTORIA’S MARITIME BOUNDARIES

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INTRODUCTION:

The following, taken from *Victorian Year Book 1973* (Centenary Edition), gives a good summary of the discovery and exploration of Victoria’s coast:

The main purpose of Tasman’s voyage of 1642 was to discover the extent of “The Great South Land”. However, he touched only the southern half of Tasmania (Van Diemen’s Land), and therefore believed that this formed part of the continent’s southern coast. In 1770 Captain James Cook, on his first voyage to the South Seas in the *Endeavour* to observe the transit of Venus at Tahiti, explored and charted New Zealand and then ran west towards New Holland, by which name Australia was then known. At 6 a.m. on 19 April by nautical reckoning [as recorded in the log of the *Endeavour*], Lieutenant Hicks sighted land which Cook named Point Hicks.\(^1\) By noon on the same day a round hillock was sighted further east, and Cook named this Ram Head. He proceeded easterly to Cape Howe, which he named, and then continued northwards, charting the coast as he sailed.

In February 1797 the *Sydney Cove*, under the command of Guy Hamilton, ran ashore on Preservation Island in the Furneaux Group. Hamilton sent a long boat under Hugh Thompson, the mate, with sixteen others to Port Jackson for help. Reaching the Victorian coast Thompson was cast ashore and the boat broke up approximately 20 miles west of the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes. Although only three survivors reached the Sydney settlement, they were the first Europeans to traverse the east Gippsland coast. In October 1797 fourteen convicts, having heard news of the wreck, left Port Jackson in a stolen boat, hoping to float the ship or claim the cargo. They reached an island to the west of Wilson’s Promontory, where seven deserted their companions, returned to Sydney and surrendered.

In December 1797 George Bass, who was surgeon on the *Reliance* and had explored along part of the New South Wales coast, received permission from Governor Hunter to sail a whale-boat along the unexplored section south of Botany Bay. This voyage led to the discovery of Wilson’s Promontory and Western Port, the latter so named because of its situation relative to every other known harbour on the coast at that time. Eventually, Bass found the remaining seven convicts and took two of them aboard his boat. As far as the existence of a strait was concerned, Bass only knew that Van Diemen’s Land was not connected to the mainland as far west as Western Port, and he also observed the ebbing tide towards the east and the swell from the south-west. Bass returned to Port Jackson, reaching there on 24 February 1798. Later in the same year Bass and Flinders in the *Norfolk* circumnavigated Van Diemen’s Land, and the strait was named after Bass at the instance\(^2\) of Governor Hunter.

As a result official instructions were sent from London to James Grant, in command of the *Lady Nelson* at the Cape of Good Hope and on his way to the Colony, to survey the newly found strait. He reached the western shores of Victoria on 3-4 December 1800, and from Cape Bridgewater examined the coast eastward to Cape Patton. From there the coast ran northward and Grant, presuming he had found another bay, named the area between Cape Patton and Cape Liptrap after Governor King, successor to Governor Hunter. Although he had not sighted the coast continuously in the vicinity of Port Fairy and Warrnambool, the western part of Victoria became known as Grant’s Land. At the time it was popularly believed that the interior of Australia was a vast inland sea stretching from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the Southern Ocean, and King, interested in the depth and size of Portland Bay, again sent Grant to investigate. However, he sailed no further than Western Port.

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\(^1\) This is not a correct statement. See later.
\(^2\) at the instance: at the suggestion.
By 1800 the whole coast of Victoria had virtually been discovered, apart from the gap known to Captain Grant as Governor King’s Bay. Lieutenant John Murray in the *Lady Nelson* was ordered to explore the Bass Strait area, and on 4 January 1802 he sailed west from Cape Schanck, on the western side of the entrance to Western Port, and bore 12 miles along the coast to the mouth of a bay. He did not enter, but made for Cape Otway and King Island, returning later to Western Port, where he anchored. A launch was sent on 31 January to explore, and it returned on 4 February to report that the bay was larger than Western Port, and that there were probably several rivers. Murray then sailed the *Lady Nelson* into the new harbour on 15 February and named it after Governor King, who later altered the name to Port Phillip, honouring the first Governor of New South Wales.

A French expedition under Nicolas Baudin also made extensive explorations of the Australian coast, and, travelling from east to west, passed the entrance to Port Phillip Bay on 30 March 1802. Following the coast closely to Cape Otway, Baudin completed its discovery, as well as the Port Fairy-Warrnambool area which had not been seen earlier by Grant. Meanwhile fears of French conquest prompted further exploration, and on 18 July 1801 Matthew Flinders left England in the naval vessel *Investigator*. On his way to Port Jackson he traversed the southern coast from west to east, making an inspection of Port Phillip in May 1802. He climbed Station Peak in the You Yangs and reported on the good soil of the surrounding country. Baudin, having spent several weeks in Port Jackson, had met Flinders at Encounter Bay, and raised further suspicion about the intentions of the French Government. An account of his voyages was published later. French presence hastened a further investigation of Port Phillip in 1803 by Charles Grimes, Acting Surveyor-General. In the schooner *Cumberland* under the command of Lieutenant Robbins he surveyed the shores of the bay, and, discovering the Yarra River, followed it upstream by boat to its fresh water reaches.

It was unfortunate that reports of this survey had not reached England by the time Lieutenant-Colonel Collins left with the first settlers on the *Calcutta* and the *Ocean*. Landing on the Nepean Peninsula near the site of the future Sorrento in October 1803, Collins found the fresh water supply inadequate for 400 persons, and no better site could be found on an excursion to Western Port. Fearing the Yarra Aboriginals if he moved the settlement further round the bay, he remained for four months, then left for Hobart. However one of the 299 convicts, William Buckley, escaped on 27 December 1803 and travelled round the bay to the Geelong area where he remained with the tribes for thirty-two years. When John Batman arrived in 1835, Buckley’s experiences furthered knowledge of the Port Phillip area.4

The facts contained in the following pages could have been compressed into a much smaller space, by merely giving the substance of the documents set out, with references to where they may be found; but then the work would be without its chief value as an authority, whereby the navigators speak in their own language. History would be more accurate had those who made it been allowed to state, in their own way, how they did so, instead of other people attempting to tell their story better for them.5 Nevertheless, footnotes have been employed to explain the meanings of obsolete words and expressions, as well as nautical terms used in the days of sailing ships. Only where the original documents have been lost has recourse been made to secondary sources.

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3 Spelt variously ‘Schank’ and ‘Schanck’ by Grant, and ‘Shank’ and ‘Shanks’ by Murray!
LIEUT. JAMES COOK R.N. (H. M. BARK ENDEAVOUR):

The following brief introduction to Cook’s arrival on the coastline of New Holland is taken from The Victorians: Making their Mark:

There have been claims based largely on sixteenth century maps drawn in Dieppe that a Portuguese expedition charted part of the Victorian coastline between 1522 and 1524. Such claims would be greatly strengthened if the hulk of what has become known as the Mahogany Ship, which was seen by nineteenth-century settlers in the sandhills west of Warrnambool, could be rediscovered beneath the drifting sand and identified as Portuguese.

The first certain European sighting was on 20 April 1770 when James Cook’s H. M. barque Endeavour, which had set a westward course after leaving New Zealand, was being driven north by a strong wind.⁷

Cook, writing in his journal, takes up the story:

‘Thursday 19th,⁸ …at 5 Set the Topsails Close reef’d and at 6 saw land extending from NE to West at the distance of 5 or 6 Leagues⁹ having 80 fathom¹⁰ water a fine sandy

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⁶ barque: It is now generally accepted that the Endeavour should be described as a bark. When the Admiralty purchased the ship [then known as the Earl of Pembroke] she was just four years old and the Navy Board referred to her as a ‘cat-built bark’ (Reference: Antonia Macarthur, His Majesty’s Bark Endeavour, p. 21); the qualifying term ‘cat’ meant it was blunt-bowed – and therefore rather slow (Reference: Graham Blackburn, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Ship Boats Vessels and other water-borne Craft, p. 90).


⁸ For a discussion of ship’s time, see Appendix I.

⁹ To convert from imperial to metric units, see Appendix III.

¹⁰ See Appendix III.
bottom. We continued Standing to the westward\textsuperscript{11} with the wind at ssw / untill 8 oClock at which time we got topg' yards aCross, made all sail and bore away along shore ne for the Eastermost land we had in sight, being at this time in the Latitude of 37º58's and Long\textsuperscript{d} of 210º39' West [= 149º21'e]. The Southermost Point of land we had in sight which bore from us w\!/4s I judged to lay in the Latitude of 38º0's and in the Longitude of 211º07'w [= 148º53'e] from the Meridon of Greenwich. I have Named it Point Hicks, because Leut' Hicks was the first who discover'd this land.\textsuperscript{12} …

…At Noon we were in the Lat\textsuperscript{d} of 37º50' and Long\textsuperscript{d} of 210º29'w [= 149º31'e], the extremes of the land extending from NW to ENE, a remarkable Point bore N20º East distant 4 Leagues. This point rises to a round hillick, very much like the Ram head going into Plymouth Sound on which account I called it by the same name.\textsuperscript{13} Lat\textsuperscript{d} 37º39', Longitude 210º22'w [= 149º38'e]. The Variation by an Azimuth\textsuperscript{14} taken this morning was 8º7'e…

…FRIDAY 20th. At 6 oClock shortend sail and brought too for the night having 56 fathom water a fine sandy bottom, the Northermost land in sight bore N20ºE at ENE and a small Island\textsuperscript{15} lying close to a point on the Main\textsuperscript{16} bore west distant 2 Leagues. This point I have named Cape Howe\textsuperscript{17}, it may be known by the Trending of the Coast which is north on the one side and sw on the other (Latitude 37º28's, Long\textsuperscript{d} 210º3' West [= 149º57'e]) it may likewise be known by some round hills upon the Main just within it…\textsuperscript{18}

Over the years there was much dispute about the exact location of Point Hicks, the first significant feature named after Cook’s landfall in Australia. Many believed that it was the headland known for many years as Cape Everard\textsuperscript{19}, while others claimed that what Cook saw was a cloud. In preparing for the bicentenary of Cook’s voyage along the eastern coast of Australia, a case was presented to have Cape Everard re-named Point Hicks. In the meantime, the names of the features previously known as Ram Head and Little Ram Head were registered by the Place Names Committee as Rame Head and Little Rame Head respectively, on 2 May 1966, this being the date on which the \textit{Register of Place Names in Victoria} was published.

\textsuperscript{11} We continued Standing to the westward: We continued our course to the westward (Reference: \textit{S.O.E.D.} II, 1984, entry for ‘Stand’ (verb), II, 16, p. 2106).

\textsuperscript{12} Beagleshole emphasises that Cook did not assign the name Point Hicks to the land first seen.

\textsuperscript{13} But the feature at the entrance to Plymouth Sound is actually called Rame Head (and the name of the nearby Cornish village is spelt Rame) so modern Australian maps show Rame Head – and Little Rame Head further east.

\textsuperscript{14} For a discussion on magnetic observations, see Appendix II.

\textsuperscript{15} Gabo Island, whose name is said to be an Australian Aboriginal rendering of Cape Howe. See \textit{HRNSW} I, part 1, pp. 10 (note 6), 160.

\textsuperscript{16} Mainland.

\textsuperscript{17} Richard Howe. Earl Howe (1726-1799) was a lord of the Admiralty when the \textit{Endeavour} left England. In 1759, at the age of thirty-three, he had been the captain of the leading ship at Edward Hawke’s great victory over the French at the Battle of Quiberon Bay. He became rear-admiral and Treasurer of the Navy in 1770, vice-admiral in 1775, and admiral in 1782. He won his principal fame in the public eye after Cook’s death, as the man who relieved Gibraltar and the victor of ‘the glorious first of June’ (1794) – the battle off Brest, in which Matthew Flinders took part.


\textsuperscript{19} Cape Everard was named, according to the historian Scott, by Commander John Lort Stokes and officers of H.M.S. \textit{Beagle} during their voyage of 1843, after Captain Sir Everard Home, Bart., ‘then the admiral of the Australian station’ (Reference: Ernest Scott, ‘English and French Navigators on the Victorian Coast’, \textit{VHM} II (1912) pp. 146-51). But in subsequent correspondence in \textit{VHM}, it was suggested that a more likely candidate was Mr John Everard, a prominent member of the colonial parliament for North Gippsland (Reference: \textit{VHM} III (1914), p. 176). The nearby peak is known as Mount Everard (345 m above sea level).
The controversial issue of the true location of Point Hicks was thought to have been resolved when, during the Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Celebrations in April 1970, the Victorian Premier declared that the headland known for many years as Cape Everard would thenceforth be known as Point Hicks. In fact, some months earlier, the Governor of Victoria had officially made the name change, by proclamation dated 11 November 1969\textsuperscript{20}.

But in 1971, Brigadier L. FitzGerald, an expert in surveying and cartography, published a paper in The Victorian Historical Magazine which demolished the arguments put forward to the Victorian government regarding Point Hicks, and appears to have convincingly resolved once and for all the true location not only of Point Hicks but of the other two features along the Victorian coastline named by Cook.\textsuperscript{21} FitzGerald has identified Cook’s ‘Point Hicks’ as present-day Mount Raymond (37º43′S, 148º36′E), Cook’s ‘Ram Head’ as present-day Little Rame Head (37º42′S, 149º41′E), and Cook’s ‘Cape Howe’ as present-day Telegraph Point (37º32′S, 149º54′E).

The present writer is unaware of anyone in the past 40 years refuting Brigadier FitzGerald’s findings. However, many recent writers seem to be unaware of the existence of FitzGerald’s paper, and continue to misunderstand how to correctly interpret Cook’s log and the charts drawn by the crew of the Endeavour. See, for instance, the route of the Endeavour depicted in the chart on page 162 of Parkin’s otherwise excellent book, and compare with the route given in FitzGerald’s chart on page 589 of VHM 42 (3). Parkin concedes, however, that the point Cook named Cape Howe would appear to be what is now known as Telegraph Point.\textsuperscript{22}

Independently of FitzGerald’s work, the present writer has made a comparison of the charts drawn by the crew of the Endeavour in 1770 and modern maps, and comparing the distance from Cape Howe to Mount Dromedary (on the southern New South Wales coast) with distances from Cape Howe to

\textsuperscript{21} See Appendix IV.
points along the East Gippsland coast, that Cook’s ‘Ram Head’ coincides with present-day Little Rame Head. He also has had access to oblique photographs of England’s Rame Head to confirm the similarity in appearance between it and Victoria’s Little Rame Head.

Fig. 3. Title Page of Guard Book of Cook’s Charts etc. (BL Add MS 7085.)

Fig. 4. Cook’s Chart of Whole of East Coast of New Holland. (BM Add MS 7085 f 34.)

References:

[Charts] Lieut. Jam. Cook Commander, Charts, Plans, Views and Drawings taken on board His Majestys Bark Endeavour in the Years, 1768, 1769, and 1770, British Museum, Additional MS 7085, 1773; facsimiles are reproduced in Historical Records of New South Wales. Cook. 1762-1780.

23 See T. M. Perry, The Discovery of Australia: The Charts and Maps of the Navigators and Explorers, Nelson, Melbourne, 1982, Plate 33, p. 68 UniM ERC MAPS f 994 PERR for a clear image of part of William Whitchurch’s copper plate engraving of ‘A Chart of New South Wales, or the East Coast of New Holland…’; in John Hawkesworth, An Account of the Voyages…, London, 1773, showing the coast from Cook’s ‘Ram Head’ and ‘Cape Howe’ to Sandy Cape.
Facsimiles of Charts, To accompany Vol. I, Part 1., Government Printer, Sydney, 1893 UniM Bail SpC/AX f 994.402 HIST charts. Those relevant to Victoria are: Cook’s Charts. - No. 1. = Title Page of Charts, Plans, Views and Drawings…; Cook’s Charts. - No. 3. = A Chart of Part of the Sea Coast of New South Wales on the East Coast of New Holland From Point Hickes (sic) to Smoaky Cape, By Lieu' J. Cook Commander of His Majestys Bark the Endeavour. 1770.; Cook’s Charts. - No. 9. = A Mercators Chart of the East Coast of New Holland Discover’d by His Majesty’s Bark Endeavour 1770 R². Pickersgill which bears, in smaller lettering, the following: A Mercator’s Chart of Part of the East coast of New-Holland discover’d in his Maj². Bark Endeavour in 1770 by Rich². Pickersgill; together with the last chart, entitled: Chart of the East Coast of New-Holland by James Cook. 1770. Plate ⁴. [showing coastline from Point Hickes (sic) to North Head of Bustard Bay].


Brigadier L. FitzGerald O.B.E., ‘Point Hicks to Cape Howe’, The Victorian Historical Magazine, issue 165, vol. 42 (3), August 1971, pp. 579-96; the same article subsequently appeared in Traverse, 36 (March 1972), pp. 11-15; 38 (September 1972), pp. 4-6, but without references. The article is reproduced in Appendix IV.

William Clark (Supercargo) and Crew of Merchant Ship Sydney Cove:

Travelling from Calcutta around the southern shores of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania) towards Port Jackson, the merchant ship Sydney Cove, under the command of Gavin (Guy) Hamilton and with a burthen of stores, livestock and Bengal rum, became beached and wrecked between Preservation Island and Rum Island in the Furneaux Group off the north-east corner of Tasmania on 9 February 1797.

![Preservation Island Historic Features](image)

Fig. 5. Aerial Photograph of Rum Island and Preservation Island, Tasmania.
(Mike Nash, The Sydney Cove Shipwreck Survivors Camp, 2006, p. 15.)

On about 28 February 1797 the longboat departed for the dangerous 800 km voyage northwards to Port Jackson; it was manned by chief mate Hugh Thompson, who was assisted by supercargo William Clark. The ship’s carpenter, two of the European seamen and twelve of the healthiest ‘lascars’ (Indian seamen) made up the remainder of the longboat’s complement of seventeen. The longboat suffered irreparable damage by the surf when on 2 March 1797 it reached the mainland at the north-eastern end of what is now known as the Ninety Mile Beach, forcing the men to make an arduous overland trek of nearly 600 kilometres back along the coast towards Port Jackson. On 16 April nine of the weakened men were left behind, while the stronger ones, being Thompson, supercargo William Clark, the ship’s carpenter, one of the European seamen and four lascars, continued their trek. But only three survivors, William Clark, John Bennet and a lascar, reached Port Jackson, late on 16 May. When the rescue ships finally reached Preservation Island, the other wrecked sailors had some news to impart: from observing the sea-swells and tides, they were certain that a strait existed to the west. Clark eventually returned to India where his narrative of the wreck, and the fate of its survivors, appeared in a Calcutta newspaper. The island south of Cape Barren Island was named Clarke [sic] Island, after him.

References:

William Clark’s narrative of the voyage in the longboat appeared in Asiatic Mirror, Calcutta, 27 December 1797 to 10 January 1798; reprinted in HRNSW 3, pp. 760-8 UniM Bail SpC/GRIM 994.402 HIST v. 3.
David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement, in January 1788, to August 1801: with remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners, &c. of the Native Inhabitants of that Country*. To which are added, some particulars of New Zealand; compiled, by permission, from the MSS. of Lieutenant-Governor King; and an account of a voyage performed by Captain Flinders and Mr. Bass; by which the existence of a strait separating Van Dieman’s Land from the continent of New Holland was ascertained. Abstracted from the Journal of Mr. Bass. By Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, of the Royal Marines, late Judge-Advocate and Secretary of the Colony, T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, London, 1802, Vol. II, pp. 35-7. Ferguson 350 UniM Bail SpC/GRIM f 919.44 COLL or UniM Bail SpC/AX f 994.4 C712.

SHIPS SURGEON GEORGE BASS R.N. (WHALE-BOAT):

George Bass was the surgeon on the Reliance, which, together with the Supply, brought Governor John Hunter to New South Wales, arriving in Sydney on 7 September 1795. On the trip, Bass made friends with Matthew Flinders, the Master’s Mate on the Reliance. The two, together with a boy named Martin, then made various exploratory expeditions up and down the coast of New South Wales.

Some years earlier, Hunter, who had come out with the First Fleet as captain of H.M.S. Sirius, had been sent from Sydney in command of the Sirius to the Cape for supplies, departing from Port Jackson on 2 October 1788 and returning on 8 May 1789. On his return voyage Hunter made the following observation:

“In passing (at a distance from the coast) between the islands of Schooten and Furneaux, and Point Hicks; the former being the northermost of Captain Furneaux’s observations here, and the latter being the southermost part, which Captain Cook saw when he sailed along the coast, there has been no land seen, and from our having felt an easterly set of current, when the wind was from that quarter (north-west), we had an uncommon large sea, there is reason thence to believe, that there is in that space either a very deep gulf, or a strait, which may separate Van Diemen’s Land from New Holland: there have no discoveries been made on the western side of this land in the parallel I allude to, between 39º00’ and 42º00’ south, the land there having never been seen.”

24 Schouten Island – named by Abel Tasman in late 1642 in honour of the experienced navigator Willem Corneliszoon Schouten from the Dutch town of Hoorn. Forbidden by the Dutch East India Company from reaching the Pacific via the Magellan Strait, in 1615 Schouten in the Eendracht discovered a more southerly route around the southern tip of South America, and in the process discovered and named Cape Hoorn [Cape Horn].

[The Frenchman Louis Freycinet acknowledged Hunter’s prescience concerning the existence of a strait between Van Diemen’s Land and New Holland in *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres Australes*.26]

On 3 December 1797, Bass, having been granted permission from Governor Hunter to take six experienced naval volunteers and six weeks’ provisions, departed in a whale-boat from Port Jackson to explore and map the coast southwards. A whale-boat was chosen as it enabled them to keep close to the shore. This particular whale-boat had been built in Sydney, of native timber, banksia wood lined with cedar. She was 28 feet long, rather flat floored, with a somewhat curved keel, and double-bowed (i.e., with head and stern alike) as was the case with all whale-boats.27

Of the six men accompanying Bass, we know the name of only one: John Thistle, who subsequently with seven others, drowned in an accident to the cutter28 of Flinders’ *Investigator* at Memory Cove, Cape Catastrophe at the entrance to Spencer’s Gulf on 22nd February 1802.29

Bass’ whaleboat crew first set foot on Victorian soil on Thursday 21 December 1797 at 5 pm30, landing ‘in a little bight’31 upon the end of a little beach about a mile north of the Ram Head’32, intending merely to refill their water-casks, but bad weather kept the men there for ten days. When they put to sea again – having had to abandon their anchor which had got stuck in the sand - they continued tracing the unknown coast westwards, reaching Wilson’s Promontory (which Bass mistakenly thought was Furneaux’s Land) on 2 January 1798. When Bass later realised that this was not land that Captain Tobias Furneaux has sighted in 1773, Governor John Hunter, on the recommendation of Bass and Flinders, named it Wilson’s Promontory, after Flinders’ friend Thomas Wilson Esq. of London, according to Flinders.33 (But the successor to Governor Hunter, Governor Philip Gidley King, in his instructions to Lieutenant Grant to survey Bass’s Straits, says that the southern promontory of New Holland was named Wilson’s Promontory by Lieut. Flinders!34 And Grant says ‘Wilson’s Promontory was so named by Mr. George Bass, of his Majesty’s ship Reliance, who was the first navigator that ascertained the real existence of a Strait separating Van Dieman’s Land from New Holland, in his voyage in a whale boat, from Sydney to Western Port.’!35)

The night of 2 January was wild and perilous. Waves frequently washed aboard and threatened to swamp them as they were driven on in the darkness through the unknown sea, and to add to their danger the whale-boat was leaking. Water was gushing in through the boat’s side “pretty plentifully near the water line abaft”. The situation was so serious that Bass decided to turn the boat back and run for the shore they had left. They spent that night struggling back towards the Victorian coast with strong winds and heavy seas opposing them; but the excellent qualities of the boat and superlative seamanship brought them through.36

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28 cutter: boat belonging to a ship of war, fitted for rowing and sailing.
30 Like other seamen of the period, Bass quoted times of the nautical day, which was reckoned from noon to noon. See *Appendix I*.
31 ‘Doubtless that now known as Wingan Inlet’, according to *HRNSW* 3, p. 319 (note).
32 Bass, in *HRNSW* 3, p. 319.
33 Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, vol. 1, p. cxv (note); *HRNSW* 3, p. 326 (note).
34 King to Grant, 5 March 1801, *HRNSW* 4, p. 305.
35 Grant, *The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery*, p. 78. Grant repeats this assertion on p. 146.
36 Bowden, loc. cit. p. 151.
Early the next day, 3 January 1798, Bass observed a small group of Europeans on a small island (one of the Glennies) not far from the main coast, to the west of Wilson’s Promontory. These were the seven convicts who, with others, had escaped with a boat from the Sydney settlement, with the intention of plundering the wreck of the Sydney Cove. Not being able to locate the wreck, their companions, thinking their number too great, had treacherously left them upon this island, whilst asleep. During the five weeks they had been on this deserted spot, they had subsisted on petrels and an occasional seal. Bass promised to call at the island, on his return trip. (When he did return, later that month, Bass was able to set down on the mainland five of the men, equipping them with a musket, half his ammunition, some hooks and lines, a light cooking kettle and directions on how to proceed back to Port Jackson. Bass and his little crew took the other two men – one old, the other diseased – back to Sydney with them.)

The crew proceeded a further 100 kilometres to the west and on 5 January 1798 entered a very extensive harbour which, from its relative situation to every other known harbour on the coast, Bass named it Western Port. They remained there for nearly two weeks, during which time they explored the island (subsequently named Phillip Island) sheltering the port, and the adjoining mainland (including discovering the western passage), as well as obtaining water from Bass River. Cape Woolamai was named because of the supposed likeness between it and the head of the snapper Pagrus auratus (formerly Chrysophrys auratus), a large marine fish found in Port Jackson and elsewhere in southern waters (from Coral Bay in Western Australia to the Capricorn Group in Queensland), which the aborigines from the Dharuk tribe near Sydney called walamay, usually spelt Wollamai.  

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On his return voyage to Port Jackson, Bass sought shelter on 18 January 1798 behind a cape (subsequently named Cape Liptrap by James Grant). Later, Bass was detained in the vicinity of Wilson’s Promontory by gales for some days. He noticed four small, barren islands lying about eight miles to the north-east from Sealers Cove (which Bass named), and visited the northernmost of them (which Bass named Seal Island), measuring its perimeter of about 1½ miles [2½ km]. Later Bass described a shoal inlet (Corner Inlet), and met the five convicts making their way back to Sydney. Sadly, they were never seen again, and it is assumed that they perished before reaching Port Jackson.

Continuing their passage along the Victorian coast – part of which Bass called the long beach (and which Flinders later referred to as Long Beach) Bass and his men passed Cape Howe late in the evening of 14 February 1798.

Governor John Hunter retained the manuscript of Bass’ journal of his whale-boat voyage, covering the period from 3 December 1797 to 25 February 1798. Bass did not publish an account of his voyage but David Collins gave a brief account and Matthew Flinders published parts of his journal.

The first document to mark down Victoria’s shoreline from the eastern entrance of Bass Strait across to Western Port (based on Bass’ whaleboat voyage) is Matthew Flinders’ 1798 manuscript sketch (held at UK Hydrographic Office, chart y65 X), entitled *Sketch of the Parts between Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales…* This sketch is unusual in having north at the foot of the page.

Based on a manuscript chart (held at UK Hydrographic Office, chart y49/1 Xr) by Matthew Flinders, Aaron Arrowsmith published on 16 June 1800 a chart of Bass Strait between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. It includes the route taken by Bass’ whaleboat voyage. This chart appeared in two states and the title on the first state differs from the title on the second state.

In 1801 Matthew Flinders published a slim volume *Observations on the Coasts of Van Diemen’s Land…* (Ferguson 329) which contained matter drawn from Flinders’ own and Bass’ journals, some of which was afterwards embodied in the larger *Voyage to Terra Australis.* A reprint of this little volume, with the imprint of A. Arrowsmith, was published accompanied by three sheets of charts.

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One of the sheets included a chart entitled: Western Port on the S. Coast of N”. South Wales from Mr. Bass’s Eye-Sketch 1798. The chart is within a five-sided border (on the east, south, west, north and north-east sides), being one of four charts on a single sheet (the others concerning Port Dalrymple; the Southernmost of Furneaux’s Islands; and Twofold Bay).

A re-drawn version of Arrowsmith’s chart taken from Bass’ eye-sketch appeared in the Victorian Year Book and The Victorian Historical Magazine, 1917. These differ by having the scale much closer to the coast, the north arrowhead having a long spine, and the soundings being in larger and more legible figures. Like Arrowsmith’s chart, the re-drawn version has a serious printing error for the latitude of the east entrance to Western Port.

In 1878 the historian Labilliere regretted that he could not narrate the story of Bass’ remarkable expedition in the words of the explorer himself; but after seeking vain in all quarters in England, where there seemed any chance of Bass’s original journal being found, and writing to Sydney about it, he was obliged to give the facts of the expedition second-hand, as stated by Matthew Flinders in his book Terra Australis. Mr Flinders Petrie, grandson of the distinguished navigator, wrote to Labilliere in reply to his enquiries “As to Bass’ journal, I am as much in the dark as you are.” That this brave explorer made copious notes of his voyage in the whale-boat there can be no doubt, judging from the fact that, when he afterwards sailed round Van Diemen’s Land with Flinders, he amply recorded his observations. Colonel Collins, in his book Account of the English Colony in New South Wales published in 1802, said that he was able to enter, “with some degree of minuteness, into the particulars” of the cruise around Van Diemen’s Land. “being enabled to do this from the accurate and pleasing journal of Mr Bass, with the perusal and use of which he has been favoured.”

The principal hope of Bass’ journals being in existence is that they may be located amongst the early official papers in Sydney. The one relating to the Western Port expedition would be of much greater value than the other which describes the voyage round Tasmania; for of that we have the account of Flinders, the joint hero with Bass of the enterprise. The letter dated 1 March 1798 from Governor Hunter to the Duke of Portland (quoted in full in HRNSW 3, pp. 363-5), seems to dispel any possibility that a copy of Bass’ journal of his whale-boat expedition to Western Port was despatched to England.⁴¹

The reputed contents of Bass’ journal were eventually published in HRNSW 3, pp. 312-31. Perhaps surprisingly, Bass makes no allusion in his journal to the seven escaped convicts he found on an island, as described in Collins’ book (1st edn, vol. II, p. 94).

References:


[Manuscript Sketch] Matthew Flinders, Sketch of the Parts between Van Diemens Land and New South Wales Seen in the Francis Schooner 1798. By M. Flinders 2 Lieut. of H. M. Ship Reliance. The Part of New South Wales was coasted by Mr. Bass, Surgeon of the Reliance in a whale Boat & where not seen in the Francis is taken from him. UK Hydrographic Office, chart y65 X. Shows the coastline as far west as Western Port.

opp. p. 769, was copied from this chart. It is entitled *Chart of Van Diemen’s Land and Part of the Southern Coast of Australia.*

[Chart] (first state) *A chart of Basses Strait between New South Wales and Van Dieman’s Land: surveyed by Lieut. Flinders of His Majesty’s Ship Reliance. By order of his Excellency Governor Hunter. 1798-9. London Published June 16th 1800 by A. Arrowsmith No. 21 Rathbone Place;* (second, revised, state) *A Chart of Bass’s Strait between New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land: explored by Mattw. Flinders 2nd. Lieut. of His Majesty’s Ship Reliance. By order of His Excellency Governor Hunter. 1798-9. London Published June 16th 1800 by A. Arrowsmith No. 21 Rathbone Place.*

[Chart] *Southern coast of New South Wales, Bass Strait, and Van Diemen’s Land showing the tracks of the Francis 1798 and the Norfolk 1798-9 from Port Jackson by Flinders, and the track of the whale-boat by G. Bass, British Museum, Additional MS 21593.*


George Bass, ‘Voyage in a Whale-boat’, *HRNSW* 3, pp. 312-31 (the note on p. 313 together with the text on pp. 319-29 cover the Victorian section) UniM Bail SpC/GRIM 994.402 HIST v. 3.

Captain John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island: with the Discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean, since the publication of Phillip’s Voyage..., John Stockdale, London, 1793, 4to, pp. 125-6.* Ferguson 152 UniM Bail SpC/AX f 994.402 HUNT

Matthew Flinders, *Observations on the Coasts of Van Diemen’s Land, on Bass’s Strait and its Islands, and on part of the coasts of New South Wales; intended to accompany the Charts of the Late Discoveries in those countries, by Matthew Flinders, Second Lieutenat [sic] of His Majesty’s Ship Reliance, John Nichols, Earls’ Court, Little Newport Street, Soho, London, 1801.* Ferguson 329 SLV has a copy: 919.46 F 640. [Copies of a variant of this pamphlet are at UniM Bail SpC/AX 994.008 A938 v. 2 and UniM ERC AB 910.0916576 FLIN, being reprints of the 1910 edition published by G. Mackaness, Sydney. Another copy at UniM, having no apparent call number, is a facsimile reprint by the Libraries Boards of South Australia 1965.]

David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first settlement, in January 1788, to August 1801: with remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners, &c. of the Native Inhabitants of that Country. To which are added, some particulars of New Zealand; compiled, by permission, from the MSS. of Lieutenant-Governor King; and an account of a voyage performed by Captain Flinders and Mr. Bass; by which the existence of a strait separating Van Dieman’s Land from the continent of New Holland was ascertained. Abstracted from the Journal of Mr. Bass. By Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, of the Royal Marines, late Judge-Advocate and Secretary of the Colony, vol. II, T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, London, 1802, pp. 93-4 give a brief account of Bass’ whale-boat voyage, including the seven escaped convicts discovered on a small island.* Ferguson 350 UniM Bail SpC/GRIM f 919.44 COLL;

James Grant, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, *The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery, Performed in His Majesty’s Vessel the Lady Nelson, of sixty tons burthen, with sliding keels, in the years 1800, 1801, and 1802, to New South Wales: Including Remarks on the Cape de Verdis Islands, Cape of Good Hope, the hitherto Unknown Parts of New Holland, discovered by him in his Passage (the first ever attempted from Europe) through the Streight separating that Island from the Land discovered by Van Dieman: Together with Various Details of his Interviews with the Natives of New South Wales;*
David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first Settlement in January 1788, to August 1801: with remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners, &c. of the Native Inhabitants of that Country. To which are added, some particulars of New Zealand; compiled, by permission, from the MSS. of Lieutenant-Governor King; and an account of a Voyage performed by Captain Flinders and Mr. Bass; by which the existence of a Strait separating Van Diemen’s Land from the Continent of New Holland was ascertained. Abstracted from the Journal of Mr. Bass. By Lieutenant-Colonel Collins, of the Royal Marines; several years Judge Advocate and Secretary of the Colony, and now Lieutenant-Governor of Port Philip*, 2nd [abridged] edn, T. Cadell and W. Davies, London, 1804, pp. 443-44 give an even briefer account than the 1st edn, of Bass’ voyage. Ferguson 390 UniM Bail SpC/AX f 919.44 COLL;

Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis; undertaken for the purpose of completing the discovery of that vast country, and prosecuted in the years 1801, 1802, and 1803, in His Majesty’s Ship the Investigator, and subsequently in the armed vessel Porpoise and Cumberland Schooner. With an Account of the Shipwreck of the Porpoise, arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and imprisonment of the Commander during six years and a half in that island*, G. & W. Nicol, London, 1814, vol. 1, Introduction to Volume 1 (Introduction. Prior Discoveries in Terra Australis. Section IV. East Coast, with Van Diemen’s Land. Part II. Preliminary Information. Boat Expeditions of Bass and Flinders. Discoveries of Bass to the southward of Port Jackson), pp. cvi-cxx, chapter IX pp. 211, 213, 220, chapter X pp. 221-3. Ferguson 576 UniM ERC MAPS zf 919.4042 FLIN (v. 1);

LIEUT. JAMES GRANT R.N. (H. M. BRIG LADY NELSON) – VOYAGE OUT:

‘In the early history of Victoria the Lady Nelson occupies a niche somewhat similar to that which the Endeavour fills in the annals of New South Wales, but while Cook and the Endeavour discovered the east coast and then left it, the Lady Nelson, after charting the bare coast-line of Victoria, returned again and again to explore its inlets and to penetrate its rivers, her boats discovering the spacious harbour at the head of which Melbourne now stands.’

The 60-ton Lady Nelson was essentially an Australian discovery ship and during her successive commissions she was employed exclusively in Australian waters. She was built at Deptford [Royal Naval Yard] in 1799, and differed from other exploring vessels in having a centre-board keel, the invention of Captain John Schanck, R.N. She was chosen for exploration because her three sliding centre-boards enabled her draught to be lessened in shallow waters, for when her sliding keels were up, she drew no more than six feet.

Fig. 9. View of the Lady Nelson in the Thames. (James Grant, The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery..., 1803, plate opposite p. 1; Samuel John Neele (1758-1824), engraver.)

In 1800 a Scottish seaman, James Grant (1772-1833), was promoted lieutenant. In the same year he was given command of the Lady Nelson and instructed to sail her to Sydney where it was intended he would hand her over to Matthew Flinders. While the Lady Nelson was at the Cape of Good Hope, en route to Sydney, a ship arrived from England with despatches from the Admiralty. The instructions brought to Grant from the Duke of Portland dated 8 April 1800 directed him to sail to Port Jackson through Bass Strait, instead of sailing around the South Cape of Van Diemen’s Land. No ship had yet sailed through this strait, which had been discovered only a little more than a year before by Dr. George Bass. Grant was also instructed to take particular notice of the Australian coast, and especially of the headlands visible on either side of the strait.

43 Ida Lee, p. vii.
In his book published in 1803, Grant makes a comment distinguishing between nautical reckoning of the time, using the ‘nautical day’, and civil time, using the civil or calendar day: ‘On Sunday the 22d [March], or according to our sea account the 23d, it being past twelve o’clock at noon, …’.\(^{45}\) This suggests that Grant converted nautical dates in his ship’s log to civil dates for publication. The time in logbooks was according to nautical reckoning, i.e., the day beginning at noon before the civil reckoning.\(^{46}\)

On 3 December 1800 Grant reached the South Australian coast, near Cape Northumberland, and proceeded south-easterly, charting the coastline. Due to bad weather and heavy seas (swells), Grant was unable to chart the whole of the coastline to Western Port - east of which George Bass had already explored. Grant managed to chart the coastline eastwards to about modern-day Cape Reamur (near Port Fairy), from about modern-day Moonlight Head eastwards to beyond Cape Patton, and from near Cape Liptrap to the southern tip of Wilson’s Promontory.

The features along Victoria’s coastline that Grant named on this voyage were:

*Cape Bridgewater* ‘in honour of the Duke of that title’\(^{47}\);
*Cape Nelson* ‘after the vessel [Lady Nelson]’\(^{48}\);
*Cape Sir William Grant* [no explanation given]\(^{49}\);
*Lawrence’s Islands* ‘after Captain Lawrence, one of the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House’\(^{50}\);
*Lady Julia Percy’s Island* ‘in honour of Lady Julia Percy’\(^{51}\);
*Portland Bay* ‘in honour of his Grace the Duke of Portland’\(^{52}\);
*Cape Albany Otway* ‘in honour of William Albany Otway, Esq. Captain in the Royal Navy, and one of the Commissioners of the Transport Board’\(^{53}\);
*Cape Patton* [no explanation given]\(^{54}\);
*Cape Danger* [c. 2 miles ENE of Cape Patton] ‘heavy breakers at least six miles from the shore’\(^{55}\);
*Wight’s Land* [ENE of Cape Danger] ‘This beautiful spot resembles the Isle of Wight… I therefore called this part of the coast Wight’s Land, in honour of Captain Wight of the Royal Navy, son-in-law to Commissioner Schank’\(^{56}\);
*Governor King’s Bay* ‘I named this Bay after Governor King’\(^{57}\);
*Cape Liptrap* ‘after my friend John Liptrap, Esq. of London’\(^{58}\);
*King George’s Sound*, ‘I called that space between Cape Liptrap and the South Cape [Wilson’s Promontory], King George’s Sound’\(^{59}\); and
*Glennie’s Islands* ‘after Mr. George Glennie, a particular friend of Captain Schank’s, to whom I was under personal obligations’\(^{60}\).

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\(^{46}\) Ida Lee, p. 127. See Appendix I.

\(^{47}\) Grant, p. 69: 4 December 1800.

\(^{48}\) Grant, p. 70: 4 December 1800.

\(^{49}\) Grant, p. 70: 5 December 1800. Governor King referred to this feature as Cape Solicitor in a letter to Sir George Murray dated 31 October 1801. The note in HRNSW says that Grant called it Cape Solicitor or Cape Sir William Grant, and that the former name had been discarded. Governor King’s “Eye-Copy”, enclosed with his letter to Sir Joseph Banks, shows Cape Solicitor (Sir William Grant). Reference: HRNSW 4, p. 603.

\(^{50}\) Grant, pp. 70–71: 5 December 1800. Spelt Laurence’s Islands in the Contents to his book.

\(^{51}\) Grant, p. 72: 6 December 1800.

\(^{52}\) Grant, p. 72: 7 December 1800.

\(^{53}\) Grant, p. 72: 7 December 1800.

\(^{54}\) Grant, p. 72: 7 December 1800.

\(^{55}\) Grant, p. 73: 7 December 1800.

\(^{56}\) Grant, p. 73: 7 December 1800.

\(^{57}\) Grant, p. 75: 8 December 1800.

\(^{58}\) Grant, p. 75: 9 December 1800.

\(^{59}\) Grant, p. 76: 11 December 1800.

\(^{60}\) Grant, p. 79: 10 December 1800.
According to Flinders, Grant also named Cape Schanck, but Grant does not say so in his book.

Grant reached Sydney late in the afternoon of Tuesday 16 December 1800 [by nautical reckoning],\(^{61}\) only to discover that Flinders had departed for England and that the *Supply*, which he was due to take over, had been condemned.

In his book, James Grant includes a list of ‘encouragers’, including the Duke of Northumberland, Captain Schanck, George Glennie Esq., Captain Lawrence, and John Liptrap Esq. – whose names Grant perpetuated along the southern coast of Australia.

References:

Grant to King, 16 December 1800, *HRNSW* 4, pp. 268-70. UniM Bail SpC/GRIM 994.402 HIST v. 4.

James Grant, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, *The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery, Performed in His Majesty’s Vessel the Lady Nelson, of sixty tons burthen, with sliding keels, in the years 1800, 1801, and 1802, to New South Wales: Including Remarks on the Cape de Verd Islands, Cape of Good Hope, the hitherto Unknown Parts of New Holland, discovered by him in his Passage (the first ever attempted from Europe) through the Streight separating that Island from the Land discovered by Van Dieman: Together with Various Details of his Interviews with the Natives of New South Wales; Observations on the Soil, Natural Productions, &c. not known or very slightly treated of by former Navigators; with his Voyage home…. T. Egerton, Military Library, London, 1803, pp. 68-79: ‘Remarks made on board the Lady Nelson, coming in with the Land of New Holland’. Includes Chart of North & West Parts of Bass’s Straits. Ferguson 375 UniM Bail SpC/GRIM f 910.45 GRAN;


Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis; undertaken for the purpose of completing the discovery of that vast country, and prosecuted in the years 1801, 1802, and 1803, in His Majesty’s Ship the Investigator, and subsequently in the armed vessel Porpoise and Cumberland Schooner. With an Account of the Shipwreck of the Porpoise, arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and imprisonment of the Commander during six years and a half in that island*, G. & W. Nicol, London, 1814, vol. 1, chapter IX pp. 200-1, 203-4, 209-10, chapter X pp. 222-3. Ferguson 576 UniM ERC MAPS zf 919.4042 FLIN (v. 1).

[See also Jonathan Wantrup, *Australian Rare Books 1788-1900*, Hordern House, Potts Point, 1987, pp. 149-53, 365.]

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\(^{61}\) Ida Lee, p. 28.
CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK (BRIG HARBINGER):

Captain John Black, commander of the small (56 ton, 6-gun) merchant brig *Harbinger*, reached the coast near Cape Albany Otway and Cape Danger on 1 January 1801 on a speculative voyage from the Cape of Good Hope through Bass Strait to Port Jackson. He then veered sharply south-west, reached the north-western tip of Governor King’s Island in the vicinity of Harbinger Rocks, then proceeded easterly towards Wilson’s Promontory, whose latitude Black measured to be 39º07’S. Black then proceeded around the tip of the Promontory, discovering the Hogan Group in Bass Strait. The *Harbinger* arrived in Port Jackson on 12 January 1801. Black was subsequently described as ‘a person of good abilities as a surveyor and navigator’.  

Captain Black named the Hogan Group after the owner of the *Harbinger*, Michael Hogan (died March 1833), merchant and shipowner, a colourful character who lived variously in Sydney, Cape Town, and New York.  

The Hogan Group is a small group of islands straddling the northern boundary of Tasmania (defined as latitude 39º12’S). According to the latest 1:250 000 map, Seal Rock falls within Victorian waters and Boundary Islet (shown on older hydrographic charts as N.E. Islet) straddles the border. However, the 1:25 000 nautical chart Aus 148 shows Boundary Island (and Seal Rock) clearly north of latitude 39º12’ and therefore entirely in Victoria. Whatever the finally accepted location of the parallel of latitude 39º12’s, it is obvious that at least part of the Hogan Group will be found to lie within Victorian waters, and for this reason Captain John Black’s name is added to the list of discoverers of the Victorian coastline.  

The brig *Harbinger* (Captain John Black) was the first merchant ship to pass through Bass Strait. Less than a month later a second merchant ship, the 121 ton (10-gun) brig *Margaret* (Captain John Buyers), also from the Cape of Good Hope, passed through the centre of the strait. Early charts of Bass Strait usually showed the routes of both vessels. But the *Margaret* barely entered Victorian waters and made no discoveries north of the parallel of latitude 39º12’s, so no further reference to it is made here.

[Governor King purchased the *Harbinger* for £700 in mid-1801 and re-named her the *Norfolk*, to replace the old *Norfolk*, the vessel in which Flinders and Bass had circumnavigated Van Diemen’s Land, but which had subsequently been seized by convicts in November 1800. King employed the replacement vessel in carrying despatches, stores, etc., to Norfolk Island. In November 1801 she was sent to Otaheite for pork, and while there was wrecked.]

References:

[Chart] Philip Gidley King, *This being an Eye-Copy from the Charts made by Lieut. Grant, in the Lady Nelson, M’. Black, in the Harbinger, and M’. Buyers, in the Margaret, it is no otherwise correct than to give an idea of those Vessels tracks through the Straits. No conclusive Chart can be made* 

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62 Governor King’s Island was named, but not discovered, by Captain John Black. The island is now known as King Island, and belongs to Tasmania.
64 Michael Hogan, as master of the convict transport *Marquis Cornwallis*, had brought convicts to Sydney in 1795-6; on a later voyage, in 1798, he had imported live cattle and sold them to the Government in Sydney. He was also involved in some shady activities with the slave trade off the coast of Mozambique. His son William Hogan (1792-1874) became a congressman and judge in the United States of America. Reference: ADB, volume 1: 1788-1850 A-H, p. 548.
65 Warragul Special SJ55-10, with horizontal datum based on the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94), ‘equivalent to WGS84’.
66 Plans in Bass Strait Aus 148, with positions related to World Geodetic System 1984 datum (WGS84).
67 The name is spelt either Buyers or Byers in early records and charts.
until the Lady Nelson’s return; the intent of her present voyage being to ascertain the depth of King’s Bay, and the Island named by the Masters of the Margaret and Harbinger Gov’t King’s Island. P.G.K. 1801. Enclosure with Letter from Governor King to Sir Joseph Banks, Sydney, 10 March, 1801. Banks Papers. Chart reproduced in HRNSW 4, opposite p. 311 UniM Bail SpC/GRIM f 994.402 HIST v. 4;

Correspondence of the Governor-General of India, Richard Colley Wellesley, 1st Marquis of Wellesley, to Governor Philip Gidley King, thanking him for Captain John Black’s map of Bass Strait, 31 March 1802, British Museum, Additional MS 13710, ff 134-5.

Ida Lee [Mrs. Charles Bruce Marriott], The Logbooks of the ‘Lady Nelson’, with the journal of her first commander, Lieutenant James Grant, R.N., Grafton & Co., London, 1915, pp. 30-31, 123, 214, plus chart opp. p. 56 from the original in the Admiralty Library, namely ‘Chart of Bass’s Straits Shewing the Tracks and Discoveries of different Vessels…between the 28th. Sep’t. 1800 and 9th. March 1802, Including Lieu’t. M. Flinders’ Track, Survey & Discoveries in 1798 Combined by Ensign Barrallier of the New South Wales Corps Under the Direction of Cap’t. P. G. King Gov’t of N. S. Wales’. UniM Bail SpC/AX 910.4 L478. [This chart differs from the following in numerous respects. The longitudes along the top edge range from 139° to 150°, and the Admiralty Library call no. is y68, not y68x.]

Francis Barrallier, Observations upon the Chart of Bass’s Straits, Combined under the direction of Capt. P. G. King, Governor of New South Wales, by Ensign Barrallier, broadside [= broadsheet], c. 1802; facsimile of British Museum, Additional MS 11803e* by Aust. Institute of Cartographers, A.C.T. Division, [1984?] UniM Bail ERC MAPS M 820.1 n 1803 (notes).
Matthew Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis; undertaken for the purpose of completing the discovery of that vast country, and prosecuted in the years 1801, 1802, and 1803, in His Majesty’s Ship the Investigator, and subsequently in the armed vessel Porpoise and Cumberland Schooner. With an Account of the Shipwreck of the Porpoise, arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and imprisonment of the Commander during six years and a half in that island*, G. & W. Nicol, London, 1814, vol. 1, chapter IX, p. 205, chapter X, p. 224 UniM ERC MAPS zf 919.4042 FLIN (v. 1).

The Lady Nelson’s arrival at Sydney on the evening of 16 December 1800 gave great satisfaction to the colony, and Colonel Collins remarked that a few such vessels were much needed there in order to obtain a necessary knowledge of the coast. Governor King naturally was most interested in Grant’s description of his passage through Bass Strait, and the news that the Lady Nelson had passed deep indentations with beautifully wooded shores and rocky islands lying off them pleased everybody. But King did not conceal his disappointment that her commander had been unable to land anywhere or to penetrate the deep bay called Governor King’s Bay. King wished particularly to ascertain the depth of Governor King’s Bay which Grant had described as 100 miles deep, because of local conjecture in the colony that it linked with the Gulf of Carpentaria, thus making New South Wales insular.

In instructions Governor King had received earlier from the Duke of Portland, Principal Secretary of State, it was explained that the Lady Nelson had been constructed and fitted for the purpose of prosecuting the discovery and survey of the unknown parts of New Holland, and of ascertaining as far as was practicable the hydrography of that part of the globe.

The Admiralty having instructed the Governor to have the whole of the south coast properly charted, he determined that Grant should return in the Lady Nelson and thoroughly survey it. King also made an “Eye-Copy” of the land, for he saw that Grant’s chart was imperfect. For that reason he sent Ensign Barrallier, of the New South Wales Corps, who was a competent surveyor, in the brig. It is, chiefly, to Barrallier whom we are indebted for our earliest and most authentic charts of the places which the Lady Nelson visited in the second voyage.

Grant, however, had to contend with many difficulties in both voyages. First and foremost he had to face the dangers of an entirely new coast, and this without a companion ship. King was aware of this, for he wrote to Sir Joseph Banks:

“It is my intention to despatch the Lady Nelson (to complete the orders he [sic] first sailed with)... I also hope...to spare a small vessel of her own size to go with her, which will make up for a very great defect in the Lady Nelson, which is the utter impossibility of her ever being able to beat off a lee shore.”

It is, therefore, well to remember that although Grant did not enter Port Phillip he was the first to see the indentation in the coast within which Port Phillip lay hidden.

Grant had been instructed by the Admiralty to join the H.M.S. Supply at Sydney. On his arrival he found this ship laid up as a hulk and unfit for sea. He wrote that he felt completely adrift until Governor King invited him to continue in his position as commander of the Lady Nelson but, in the colonial service and on less pay. As there was no one in the colony then fitted for the post, and as he did not wish the service to suffer from delay, he accepted the offer. Matters being thus arranged he was re-appointed to the Lady Nelson, his new commission dating from 1 January, 1801.

The Lady Nelson was then refitted, caulked and provisioned for six months in preparation for a return trip to Bass Strait.

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69 Governor King’s Bay, or King’s Bay, was the name given tentatively by Grant to the expanse of water between Cape Patton and Cape Liptrap. The name fell into disuse when Port Phillip was discovered.
70 King to Secretary Nepean, 5 January 1801; HRNSW 4, pp. 286-7.
71 Ida Lee, pp. 29-30. Governor King’s Instructions to Lieutenant Grant are contained in HRNSW 4, pp. 305-9.
Governor King issued detailed instructions to Lieutenant Grant on 5 March, 1801, the day before sailing out from Port Jackson. The instructions presupposed that the sloop *Bee* would accompany the *Lady Nelson*, but the sloop was quickly found to be unseaworthy and, soon after the commencement of the voyage, was forced to return to Sydney.

In the Governor’s instructions, Grant was directed to proceed without loss of time to Wilson’s Promontory, and after having very exactly ascertained the latitude and longitude of that point, and also the islands lying off it as far south as the Two Sisters, he was to examine how much shelter could be afforded by two coves described to be in the Kent’s Group. After that, and without making any delay, Grant was to proceed to Western Port - as described in the sketch and manuscript narrative of Bass (with which Grant was furnished) - to determine whether it could be of practical access and provide shelter. Having ascertained this point, Grant was then to proceed to the two bays [shown on King’s “Eye-Copy” as King’s Bay and Portland Bay] to the westward of Wilson’s Promontory, and explore them thoroughly. If either of these bays should turn out to be the entrance of a large river or deep gulf – or indeed if he was to discover any considerable river or deep gulf - Grant was to navigate up the same as far as he could proceed with safety. Following this, Grant was to survey King Island and then, if provisions and the weather allowed, he was to proceed to King George the Third’s Sound and survey the southern coast all the way back to Wilson’s Promontory. If, on the other hand, the weather was continually bad, Grant was to simply ascertain the extent of, and explore, the land seen by the *Harbinger* and the *Margaret*, and also the two bays to the westward of Wilson’s Promontory.

Governor King then elaborated on particular aspects in his instructions, expanding on the need for the accurate delineation of any harbours discovered, and shoals and other dangers encountered; the determination of the geographical co-ordinates of remarkable headlands, bays and harbours by astronomical observation; the observation of deviations of magnetic declination; and the recording of the direction and course of tides and currents. Grant was also to take soundings up all navigable rivers and to report on the fertility of the soils, and especially the probable utility of soils deemed important to Great Britain. Grant was to plant such seeds of fruit trees and useful vegetables as he was supplied with, near to such landing places as he may discover in which a safe and commodious anchorage and easy landing render it likely that ships thereafter may frequent, and where the soil appeared most fertile and productive. He was also to collect in all places such seeds of trees, shrubs, plants and grasses judged to be worthy of notice, either for their beauty, their particularity, or possible utility, together with specimens of vegetables, animals and minerals, and such dresses and arms of the natives deemed to be worthy of collection.

The governor provided Grant with the services of the botanist George Caley (1770-1829) (employed by Sir Joseph Banks to collect plants in New South Wales) and Ensign Francis Louis Barrallier (1773-1853) of the New South Wales Corps, the latter to assist Grant in the execution of the survey. In addition to a number of conditionally emancipated convicts and four privates of the New South Wales Corps, Grant was accompanied by two natives from Sydney: Euranabie and his wife Worogan.

Grant believed that the original intention had been for the *Lady Nelson* to be used for the discovery of the extent of New South Wales, and to leave it for others in the future to carry out a detailed survey of its coastline in a more seaworthy vessel.

Grant set out from Port Jackson in the *Lady Nelson* on 6 March 1801, accompanied briefly by the sloop or decked-boat *Bee*, which soon proved unseaworthy and was sent back to Port Jackson.

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72 Two Sisters: West Sister Island and East Sister Island, just off the northern coast of Flinders Island.
73 Euranabie’s wife’s name was spelt variously as Worogan and Worrogan by Grant.
Immediately after the departure of the Lady Nelson, on the 10 March, Governor King sent a letter to Sir Joseph Banks, enclosing his own “Eye-Copy” from the charts made by Grant (Lady Nelson’s outward voyage), Black (Harbinger) and Byers (Margaret).74

While off the south coast of New South Wales, Grant went ashore and found bones which the local natives said were of a white man who had come in a canoe from the southward, where the ship had been wrecked [i.e., the Sydney Cove]. Grant subsequently had the bones returned to England for identification by a respected surgeon, but the result was inconclusive.

The Lady Nelson reached Cape Howe on 15 March 1801, and by 20 March Grant had sighted Wilson’s Promontory, ‘or South Cape of New Holland’. The Lady Nelson passed close to the rock Grant had named Rodondo75 on his passage out76, lying nearly off the end of the promontory. Grant measured the latitude of the southernmost point of New Holland to be 39°04′S77 – this compared with a determination of 38°56′S by George Bass, and 39°10′S by the French navigators. The modern value for the latitude of South Point of Wilson’s Promontory is about 39°08′20″S.78

The features along Victoria’s coastline that Grant named on this voyage were:

Cape Paterson ‘in compliment to Colonel Paterson of the New South Wales Corps’79;

Snapper Island [Phillip Island] ‘having the likeness of a snapper’s head, or horseman’s helmet …From its likeness, as above-mentioned, to a snapper’s head, I named it Snapper Island’80;

Seal Islands [Seal Rocks and the Nobbies] ‘I judged [the seals thereon] to be of that species of the seal called by the fishermen Sea Elephants, accordingly I named these, Seal Islands’81,

Lady Nelson’s Point [a sandy point on Phillip Island] ‘as a memorial of the vessel, as she was the first decked one that ever entered this port [Western Port]’82;

Churchill’s Island ‘after a generous and public spirited Gentleman, John Churchill, Esq. of Dawleish, in the county of Devon, who, on my leaving England, supplied me with a variety of seeds of useful vegetables, together with the stones of peaches, nectarines, and the pepins [pippins] or kernels of several sorts of apples, with an injunction to plant them for the future benefit of our fellow-men, be they Countrymen, Europeans or Savages’83.

74 HRNSW 4, p. 311.
75 Rodondo Island, though close to and visible from Wilson’s Promontory, is south of latitude 39°12′S and is therefore in Tasmania. It was named by Grant due to its resemblance to Redonda Island, an uninhabited lump of rock approximately 1½ square kilometres in area in the Antigua and Barbuda group of the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean. Reference: Grant, The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery, pp. 76-7. Redonda Island was sighted by Christopher Columbus in November 1493 on his second voyage, and named by him Nuestra Señora de la Redonda [or Santa Maria la Redonda, according to other sources]. Redonda is the Spanish adjective for ‘round’ and the Spanish adverb for ‘around’ meaning ‘on all sides’.
76 Grant, p. 121.
77 But Governor King in his “Eye-Copy” wrote that the latitude was 39°7′S by both the Lady Nelson and Harbinger.
79 Grant, p. 122; William Paterson (1755-1810) was Ensign Barrallier’s superior officer in the New South Wales Corps. It is noteworthy that the French named a bay further to the east after the same gentleman just twelve months later. That bay is now known as Waratah Bay.
80 Snapper Island. Grant, pp. 122-123. The naming of Phillip Island has had a chequered history. HRNSW stated that even in Grant’s time it was called Phillip Island; its eastern extremity, however, was known as Snapper Head. In his published account Grant said that he named the island Snapper Island but made no allusion to Bass’s having noted [i.e., named] it, nearly four years earlier. References: HRNSW 4, p. 482 (note); Ida Lee, p. 46 (note). In the French maps following the visit in 1802 to Western Port of boats from the Naturaliste, the island was called Île des Anglais – in contradistinction to Île des Français (French Island) which they had circumnavigated and therefore had a first claim to nomenclature. Phillip Island was named as such in Flinders’ charts, as it was in Dumont d’Urville’s Atlas after his visit in November 1826, and in Captain Wetherall’s chart of 1827. However in 1839 John Lort Stokes called it Grant Island! Eventually the name Phillip Island prevailed.
81 Grant, p. 123.
82 Grant, p. 124.
83 Grant, p. 125. An area on Churchill Island was cleared for growing food plants (Grant, p. 131), and later seeds were planted, and a block-house of 24 feet by 12 feet erected, on Churchill Island (Grant, pp. 136-8).
Margaret’s Island [on the south-east coast of French Island, but at the time thought to be a peninsula of the mainland] ‘in honour of Mrs. Schank, to whom I am indebted for several articles, useful on board my little vessel, but too numerous to be mentioned here’. The island was described by Grant as a small island, in general flat, but well covered with wood, in one of the extensive arms branching out to the northward 84;

Elizabeth Cove or Bay [one of the small nooks or bays on the north-west coast of Phillip Island] ‘in honour of Miss Elizabeth King, daughter of Governor King, then at Sydney’ 85.

Other incidents while surveying Western Port included:

- Mr. Caley’s botanical researches on Snapper [Phillip] Island;
- the capturing by the Second Mate [Mr. Bowen] of a brace of live cygnets – one of which became tame and was later presented to Governor King;
- an excursion by Mr. Murray, accompanied by Messrs Barrallier and Caley, to explore a fresh water stream that had been discovered by the Second Mate;
- the shooting by Mr. Barrallier near Bass River of a cockatoo then unknown to science [Psittacus fimbriatus. 86 Grant, 1803 – now known as the Gang-gang Cockatoo 87, Callocephalon fimbriatum];
- ascending a hill, covered with large trees (up to 60 or 70 feet in height) which appeared to have been shattered by storms, causing the hill to be named Mount Rugged; and
- the finding and stealing by Mr. Bowen of part of a native canoe, two paddles and some fishing line from near the mouth of the fresh water river, and later presented to Governor King.

Fig. 10. Gang-gang Cockatoo (Callocephalon fimbriatum). (James Grant (1772-1833), The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery…, 1803, plate opposite p. 134; Samuel John Neele (1758-1824), engraver.)

84 Grant, pp. 139-141.
85 Grant, pp. 142-143.
86 Grant, pp. 134-5, illustration opposite p. 134. Psittacus comes from the Greek ψιττακός meaning parrot, while the medieval Latin fimbriatus means fringed, referring to the bird’s wispy, fine-plumed crest. A point near the mouth of the Bass River was named by Grant as Crown Head, in all likelihood after these cockatoos (which in his journal entry for 3 January 1802 he calls ‘the crowned birds’).
87 Gang-gang, the common name for this cockatoo, comes from the Aboriginal gan-gan, so-called from its note. Reference: Edward E. Morris, Austral English: A Dictionary of Australasian Words, Phrases and Usages, Macmillan, London, 1898. UniM Bail SpC/AX 427.994 MORR. The common name seems to have been first used in print by the explorer Charles Sturt, Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia, Smith, Elder & Co., 1833, vol. 1, p. xxxviii, as ‘gangan’. Ferguson 1704 UniM Bail 919.4042 S 936.
Having completed to his satisfaction a survey for a chart of Western Port, Grant departed early on 29 April 1801 and proceeded ‘to the Southern Point of New Holland, named by Mr. Bass, Wilson’s Promontory.’ He again visited a rock, near the Glennie Group, which he named Hole in the Wall: ‘…an immense rock, on one side perfectly round, with a large hole in the other, in the form of an arch, with a breast-work rising high enough above the level of the sea to preclude the water from getting into it: the hollow appeared as if scooped out by Art instead of Nature.’

Because of the onset of winter, Grant resolved to return to Sydney. Rounding the promontory, he remarked on ‘three small sandy beaches [Waterloo, Refuge and Sealer’s], the middle one forming a little bay, which a small craft might anchor in, should she meet with northerly or westerly winds.’ Grant compared them with the better shelter under Cape Liptrap, and the bight – which he had named King George’s Sound on the passage out, but now scarcely thought it deserved that appellation. Grant also mentioned a ‘small inlet, which had received the name of Shoal Inlet from Mr. Bass.’

Grant stated that ‘Governor Hunter, in his printed Journal’ pages 124 and 125…was the first who ever suggested such an idea [of strait existing between latitudes 39º and 42ºS] and, no doubt, encouraged the search for it, which the enterprising spirit of Mr. Bass effected, giving his own name very deservedly and justly to the Strait.’

The Lady Nelson then made its way back to Port Jackson, arriving on 14 May 1801. As mentioned earlier, it is, chiefly, to Ensign Francis Barrallier we are indebted for our earliest and most authentic charts of the places which the Lady Nelson visited in this second voyage.

References:

P. G. King to Grant, 27 December 1800, HRNSW 4, p. 275. UniM ERC AB 994.4 H 673 Vol. 4.

P. G. King to Grant, 5 March 1801, HRNSW 4, pp. 305-9. UniM ERC AB 994.4 H 673 Vol. 4.

[Chart] P. G. King, This being an Eye-Copy from the Charts made by Lieut. Grant, in the Lady Nelson, M’ Black, in the Harbinger, and M’ Buyers, in the Margaret, it is no otherwise correct than to give an idea of those Vessels tracks through the Straits. No conclusive Chart can be made until the Lady Nelson’s return; the intent of her present voyage being to ascertain the depth of King’s Bay, and the Island named by the Masters of the Margaret and Harbinger Gov’. King’s Island. P.G.K. 1801.

[Chart] Rough map of Bass Strait signed by [Lieut.] J. G[rant], British Museum, Additional MS 27392.

88 Grant, pp. 78, 121. Grant’s “Hole in the Wall” is a spectacular rock near Cleft Island in the Anser Group. It acquired its modern name of Skull Rock from a huge cave on one side, giving the impression of a human skull. Reference: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1park_print.cfm?park=273
89 Shoal Inlet: It is possible that Grant is here referring to the entrance to Corner Inlet, rather than to either entrance to the shallow stretch of water now known as Shoal Inlet, a little further to the north-east, behind Clonmel Island. Reference: Place Names Committee, Register of Place Names in Victoria, 4th edn, 1983, p. 170.
90 The published journal by Captain John Hunter was printed for John Stockdale, Piccadilly on 1 January 1793, in two formats: 4to and 8vo; Grant is referring to a passage in the fuller 4vo version, which is entitled An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, with the Discoveries which have been made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean since the publication of Phillip’s Voyage, compiled from the Official Papers, Including the Journals of Governors Phillip and King, and of Lieut. Ball, and the Voyages From the first Sailing of the Sirius in 1787, to the Return of that Ship’s Company to England in 1792. By John Hunter, Esq’. Post Captain in His Majesty’s Navy. Illustrated with seventeen Maps, Charts, Views, & other embellishments, Drawn on the Spot by Captains Hunter, & Bradley, Lieutenant Dawes, & Governor King. London. [1793] On pp. 125-6 Hunter suggests the existence of a strait between Van Diemen’s Land and New Holland. Ferguson 152 UniM Bail SpC/AX I 994.402 HUNT.
91 Grant, p. 147.
Francis Barrallier, Observations upon the Chart of Bass’s Straits, Combined under the direction of Capt. P. G. King, Governour of New South Wales, by Ensign Barrallier, broadside [= broadsheet], London, c. 1802; facsimile of British Museum, Additional MS 11803e* by Aust. Institute of Cartographers, A.C.T. Division, [184?] UniM Bail ERC MAPS M 820.1 n 1803 (notes).

James Grant, Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, The Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery, Performed in His Majesty’s Vessel the Lady Nelson, of sixty tons burthen, with sliding keels, in the years 1800, 1801 and 1802, to New South Wales: Including Remarks on the Cape de Verd Islands, Cape of Good Hope, the hitherto Unknown Parts of New Holland, discovered by him in his Passage (the first ever attempted from Europe) through the Streight separating that Island from the Land discovered by Van Dieman: Together with Various Details of his Interviews with the Natives of New South Wales; Observations on the Soil, Natural Productions, &c. not known or very slightly treated of by former Navigators; with his Voyage home..., T. Egerton, Military Library, London, 1803, pp. 99-101, 120-48. Includes Chart of North & West Parts of Bass’s Straits. Ferguson 375 UniM Bail SpC/AX f 910.45 GRAN. [On p. 144 Grant says: ‘I need not enlarge upon the explanation here given, as there is no doubt but the Chart of this place, which is in the hands of Government, will appear in due time.’]

Grant to King [undated], HRNSW 4, pp. 477-88. UniM ERC AB 994.4 H 673 Vol. 4.


[See also Jonathan Wantrup, Australian Rare Books 1788-1900, Hordern House, Potts Point, 1987, pp. 152-3, 365.]