

### Australian Histories Podcast: Episode 73. Bass & Flinders part 4.

*\*Note: citations included in this transcript are used more as memory prompts for me in writing the episode than for strict academic purposes.*

Today, in our series looking at George Bass & Matthew Flinders, we're going to follow both men, after they leave England again, to embark on their separate ventures into the Southern Hemisphere. In the previous episode we learnt that Bass had decided that the life of a trader might be more lucrative than the life of an explorer, and having arranged a consortium to fund the venture, he had headed off to make his fortune.

Later in that year Flinders also left England, on the *Investigator*, ready to begin the task of circumnavigating *Terra Australis* and mapping & naming as many points as he could, before the French did so. Flinders was still devoted to the idea of becoming second only to James Cook in his charting of unknown coasts and lands.

Following directly on from the last episode, if you recall, both men had married during their short sojourns in England, and both had cast off on their latest adventures, leaving their wives at home to ponder and pine for the 2 or more years each voyage would require.

For Bass this seemed to have been part of the understanding he had with his new wife Elizabeth. For Flinders though, his separation from his wife Ann was unexpected. He had made arrangements to bring her along on the voyage, but their plan was discovered, and her presence on the ship was forbidden by Banks and the Admiralty. Flinders and his new wife were devastated by that turn of events, but the necessity for Flinders to make haste to the south, knowing the French expedition was already long underway, would at least have kept him somewhat distracted from his grief. Ann, having no such diversion, was apparently exceedingly melancholy for many, many months.

Despite the hasty nuptials, most sources suggest that Elizabeth & George Bass' short relationship was passionate and loving, mainly evidenced through the letters that survive. But Bastian has an interesting take, and I may be with her on this. She suggests a complete infatuation with George by Elizabeth. Elizabeth seemed to have developed an exceptionally strong bond, which would indeed see her grieve for him all her life, refusing later offers of marriage and so on. But she noted that Bass did not seem to reciprocate Elizabeth's devotion in such an equally affectionate and heartfelt way. He was sometimes a little aloof and judgemental of her.

Bass had married Elizabeth Waterhouse in London, in October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1800 and they had managed just 3 months together before he set sail again, leaving England January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1801. (Estensen, Miriam. 2009, p. 17) His first letter after departure was seven months in making it's way back to her in England, (Estensen, Miriam. 2009, p. 33) so it was not an easy thing to communicate this way and maintain an intimate relationship. And with his movement around the oceans, it is uncertain how many of her letters he received during his travels. Certainly they would have been many months in transit before either received the others letters.

In contrast, Flinders had married Ann Chappell in April 1801, expecting to bring her with him on the *Investigator*. But as we noted last episode, he ended up having to leave her behind in the care of family when he sailed in July, also managing just 3 month of marriage before his long departure. As might be in keeping with the personalities of the two men we have reflected on before, Flinders' letters written to Ann were voluminous, frequent and very tender and empathetic for the disappointments she must have been suffering.

Both women would find themselves pregnant after their brief marriages, but sadly both would experience early miscarriage, (Bastian, Josephine 2016, pp. 120–1) so they had that grief & sorrow to contend with; no little babies to console them in their absence from their fondly missed husbands. The long distances and unreliable correspondence was all each couple had of their partners.

Bass appears not to have taken the trouble to write at every opportunity, though his wife was desperate to hear everything she could about his world. When he did write, the letters were somewhat affectionate, intimate and teasing, but not passionate like Flinders letters to his wife. Bass could also be badgering and judgemental to poor Elizabeth too. As Bastian wrote, he would “harp on” about her required virtue – “remember my Bess you have a husband who will not forsake you, nor ever cease to love you, *as long as my Bess remains deserving of it*” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 123) .... or [he would] criticize her spelling, or pick on something else that did not please him. Even the letter intended to console her for her miscarriage, ended with a little admonishment – “Do Bess take pains with thy spelling for thou dost stick in and take out parts of thy words without law or licence.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 122) But at least Flinders might console himself after previously being criticised by Bass, to note that even his chosen wife could not live up to, and be worthy enough, for Bass at his most pompous! Bastian suggests that Bass was enjoying his sailors’ life rather than pining for a missing wife, and despite some words of encouragement in letters he wrote, he would probably not really have been keen to have her sailing about with him after all.

Flinders on the other hand, was perhaps excessively romantic and gushing, certainly we had a taste of it in the hurt letters he wrote to Bass after their slight falling out earlier. But Flinders would most certainly have enjoyed having Ann travel with him. His surviving letters to Ann were always warm hearted, loving and affectionate.

We don’t have her responses to know how well she liked the gushing love letters, but we know she was the more pragmatic of the two, coping more evenly than him when they were calling off their plans to marry, before she finally yielded to one of his desperate letters, and the promise she could accompany him. Her depression after he left seems to have delayed her writing for some time, but eventually she did so.

When Flinders did finally make it to Port Jackson, after the first leg of his circumnavigation, no letters were waiting from Ann, to his great disappointment, and he wrote “Alas, my dearest love, I am all in the dark concerning thee”. But when a couple did arrive some weeks later, they were two of the first she had sent, just as he was departing England all that time ago, as he might have expected if he’d been thinking about it, they were fretful and full of hurt - not the return missives of love he probably hoped for. Instead they contained the distress, disappointment and anger she must have felt right at that time, as he was departing to go exploring without her, that abandonment was no indication of his love, and so on. That must have stung.

The second letter though gave him the sad news of the miscarriage, and also news that she had developed a serious eye condition which may progress into blindness. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, pp. 130–1) All of this news must have been distressing and worrying for Flinders, and of course the news was nearly a year old by then. He must have worried about what had occurred in the interim and lament his absence in not being able to comfort her, which would be his natural and loving response. But it would have made him keener than ever to complete the refit and resupply of the *Investigator* in Port Jackson, and be on his way. The sooner he finished the task, the sooner he could return to England triumphant, and reunite with his poor & beloved wife.

When Flinders did arrive in Port Jackson, a place where his letters to Ann could be sent home on ships as they came and went, he settled in to writing good long letters, explaining now he was in port he could “endeavour to entertain thee ... [and recount] the story so far”. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 125) And he wrote often, letters full of news and confirmation of his desire and love for her. Bass’ to Elizabeth, as we mentioned earlier, were fewer and comparatively brief, which must have been disappointing. Her brother

and father got many more, but they were much more business orientated, and probably not very rewarding for her.

So before returning to Flinders expedition, which will be our main focus this episode, let's check in with Bass and see how his early business venture was panning out.

Making a number of stops on the journey, to buy and sell cargo, the *Venus* finally arrived at Port Jackson late in August 1801. Sadly for Bass and his investors, they were not the only ones to have cottoned on to the needs in the Pacific. Timing was everything, and recently numerous ships loaded with cargo from China, India and the Americas had also been undertaking speculative voyages to Port Jackson. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 44)

Indeed so many ships had recently brought needed cargo at last, that there was now a glut of goods, and Bass was unable to realise the high profit margins expected, writing to one of his consortium members "Glutted market, empty purses, treasure house dry. Hands full of goods, all sellers, no buyers. Distraction!" (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 119)

He wrote more expansively to his brother-in-law Waterhouse, saying "We came through Bass Strait and found a good and perfectly safe passage. Everything went on well until we arrived here, and since, all things have gone bad. This market is glutted with goods beyond all comparison. .... It issues very little or no bills. .... We can sell very little of our cargo here .... But we will endeavour to fall on our legs somehow or other ...." (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 101)

Indeed he was unable to move much of his cargo for any reasonable price, reporting that the government stores purchased some of their liquor, and some beef and pork, but at such a low price that it did "little more than pay us our own." (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 120) And so they had to consider other ways to make funds while the market settled.

Meat still being in short supply in the colony, King did offer them a *contract* to source and supply salt pork from the South Pacific, and so they decided to extend their stay and undertake that venture, while the markets "mend[ed]". The contract offered would not realise their expected fortune, but would at least bring some small return, and so they stored their imported goods in the Government bond stores, and (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 106) would try again to sell them once back in port. Off they went, to acquire the timber required for barrel building, the salt for preserving the pork, and on to the islands dotted across the Pacific, from New Zealand, to Tahiti, to Hawaii, where they might purchase the required goods and process the meat.

The *Venus*, laden with 57 tons of pork and 30,034 lbs of salt, arrived back in Port Jackson November 14<sup>th</sup> 1802. Bass was in good shape, but his business partner Bishop arrived unwell, in a very precarious mental state, and was hospitalised immediately. The residents of Port Jackson were still on short rations right through winter and had he arrived earlier, they might have been welcomed with great celebration. But he was not a man who enjoyed good timing. Despite all the effort they had put into acquiring salt pork supplies for the colony, once again, three large ships had made it to port before them, also carrying tons of meat supplies. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 179)

His business partner Bishop had succumbed to madness, and now he would struggle a second time to get a decent return on their efforts, for himself and his investors. Fortunately the government bought the amount contracted at the agreed price, and Bass was able to sell the remainder of the meat on the private market, though at less profit. After this venture they were able to send home £3700. It was hardly the fortune his investors were expecting, and further trading would be required, so instead of returning to his new wife, Bass began making plans for another voyage of speculation, that would perhaps achieve the desired returns.

Bass wrote to Waterhouse in England “The Pork voyage has been our first successful speculation ...we again go in search of pork. ... Our European goods will be left here for sale, except for those we judge necessary for buying our pork at the islands, and also some others for the purpose of a new scheme.” (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, pp. 122–3) His intention was to make for South America to gather beef to salt, and also suitable South American cattle breeds to bring back alive, for the purposes of breeding in the colony.

He had numerous potential ventures in mind, from the setting up commercial fisheries around New Zealand, to trading far and wide, including in South America as just mentioned, despite the current prohibition on doing so there. He was perhaps a more reckless and intrepid trader and entrepreneur, than he had been an explorer! The *Venus* would require a refit and resupply in preparation for his next, rather more ambitious plans.

Bass repaired and prepared the *Venus*, sending a letter off with other departing ships, advising his wife of his desire to return, but explaining the necessity of the additional delay. He hoped to somewhat encourage his investors, writing “We have I assure you great plans in our heads; but like the basket of eggs, all depends upon the success of the voyage I am now upon.” (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 120)

When Bass had arrived in Port Jackson both *Le Geographe* and *Le Naturaliste* we’re still in port there. Arriving earlier in a very poor state, the French expeditioners had been recuperating at Port Jackson and awaiting observation of the Transit of Mercury, before readying to sail again themselves. (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 113)

As they were in the process of resupply before their approaching departure, the French also purchased some of Bass’ salt pork supplies, and he spent time socialising with Baudin and his men. It was here that they heard of his adventures trying to cross the Blue Mountains, which we recounted in an earlier episode. He shared some of his experiences of exploring, which were recorded by some of the Frenchmen in

Bass was nothing if not a fertile mind and optimistic planner! His letters home were just choc full of cunning plans. When all was ready on the *Venus*, Bass was going to zigzag all around the oceans, collecting salt beef, live cattle, salt pork, seal skins and any other goods he thought saleable. He considered salvaging materials from various wrecks at sites around the Pacific, and as mentioned before, undertaking trade in South America, which was illegal at that time and would have voided his insurance at least, if not brought him worse trouble. But those dollar signs were very tempting.

The night before he departed, directly after he had been at a farewell party, he had written a letter to be mailed to Bess. He seems to have been quite inebriated while writing it, and it was not the sweet, affectionate message one might hope for under the circumstances. Indeed he reminds her, if she be good she might join him to live in Parramatta in the future, if bad, she should stay in England. He again advises, if she wished to travel with him, she must not “breed & fill my cabin full of squallers”, and in the second last letter, written in January, he once again admonishes her for her bad spelling. (Estensen, Miriam. 2009, pp. 163, 171)

All the “I love thee”s, read through the lens of his accompanying disapproval, would surely have been less pleasurable, but it did not seem to have cooled any of her ardour. Indeed she seemed only to grow more devoted to him over time. That last letter was to be a fateful missive though. She would later receive this rather disjointed and cryptic letter on their 3<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary. She had been very upset by the long separation, and sadly this would be his last letter to her, and their time apart would afterwards stretch out to eternity.

Bass left Port Jackson on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1803, for the last time, probably planning to sail to New Zealand first, then South America, and onwards to Tahiti and so on, but the *Venus* was never heard of again, and it could never be confirmed that they made landfall at any of those ports. Most likely they were all lost at sea soon after departure. His poor wife and family, his friends and investors, waited for years in vain. But

Bess' family in particular never gave up hope. Indeed they maintained rather fanciful and over optimistic hope for years.

Even 15 years later his father-in-law wrote to the Secretary of State in London telling of Bass' disappearance, Bass' mother still being alive in her 85th year and his wife still holding a forlorn hope, suggesting that he may have been taken prisoner by the Spaniards and held all these years, possibly in Peru and could the Secretary use his influence to get him liberated?... And all through these years of grief the family heard occasional whispered rumours of sightings (sometimes he was a prisoner in Barbados, or in Chile and so on). (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 129) Even if he had been captured and sent to the Silver mines as slave labour, it seems likely he would have used his ingenuity to get a more reliable message to someone during those 15 years surely?

Sadly, as the Ockham's Razor principle suggests, the most likely explanation for Bass and all others on board, and the ship itself never being seen again, was that the *Venus* was lost at sea early during that voyage in 1803. Bowden, looking at much evidence and examinations that took place in following years, suggests the *Venus* was wrecked before it even made it to its first stop in New Zealand.

Bass' official Naval documents record "Supposed to have been lost on his return from New South Wales on board the *Venus* of London – see a cert. from Capt Kent 26th Jan. 1806." (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 136) And the insurers, Lloyds of London, also declared the *Venus* & her crew "lost at sea". The Naval widows benefit of #40 annually, was granted to Elizabeth Bass after 1806. (Bowden, Keith Macrae 1952, p. 137, 139)

Bass was only 32 when he was lost, but his name remains memorialised in many Australian landmarks.

Meanwhile, Flinders had been fangling it to the west coast of Terra Australis, in the hope of charting the south coast before the French. Indeed Bass was still in Hawaii sourcing meat when Matthew afterwards reached Port Jackson in June of 1802, part way through his circumnavigation. And he left to continue his endeavour before Bass arrived back, so there was no chance of them ever meeting again.

Flinders departed England July 1801 and reached the west coast of New Holland at Cape Leewin, in December of that year, missing the favoured spring season for the scientists to observe the best of the flowering plants, but still in good time to begin his exploring & charting in detail along the southern coast.

His orders were to "*make a complete examination and survey of the said coast of New Holland-New South Wales, fixing the position of headlands, bays and harbours, locating rivers and exploring any creek or opening likely to lead to an inland sea*", all the while being mindful of the French explorers, already set out on a similar task. Banks also wanted him to "*examine any opening on the south coast likely to lead to an inland sea or strait .... And examine the Gulf of Carpentaria between 130 degrees and 140 degrees longitude where the coast of New Holland is not laid down as continuous*". (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 51)

More over, he was to "*note the productions and the comparative fertility of the soil, and the manners and the customs of the inhabitants; and to ensure the scientific gentlemen had ample opportunities for their work*." (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 103)

It was quite an ambitious enterprise. Indeed they simply would not have enough time to undertake all the desired exploration & discovery at a pace that worked for everyone. They had 37,000km (22,000 miles) of coast to explore, and attempt to investigate the vast interior that would be attached, and only one ship capable of carrying the provisions to facilitate, with no chance to reprovision once *New Holland* was reached, until they stopped again at Port Jackson on the far east coast of new South Wales. Flinders adjusted his travel plans to make the most of the time they did have, and try to travel the regions in the best seasons to work within.

The survey work he was to undertake would create more reliable, updated maps and charts, for future use, and this would necessarily need to be his priority: accuracy, detail and additional information. In the end his maps would prove to be pretty thorough and very well drawn. He included plenty of useful information, and Bastian reminds us he was the first to include on his charts “feathered arrows, which he embellished to show the strength and direction of tides, currents and winds he encountered.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 104) All very valuable for those trying to travel under sail alone, in days before a motor might get you out of trouble.

Once again, Flinders’ bothersome brother was on board, as was a young John Franklin. The very Franklin who would become Governor of Van Diemens Land in the future, and later an ill-fated Arctic explorer, who would perish looking for the fabled North West passage.

Flinders, following the successes of Cook, understood the importance of the health of his crew, and would instigate firm rules about cleanliness, physical activity and food consumption. “The ships routine ran smoothly. Four watches. The decks holystoned everyday. Grog with lemon or lime juice and sugar at noon. Dancing every night in fine weather. Sundays and Thursdays, washed shaved, wearing clean clothes; penalties for sloppiness. The men must not sleep on deck or sleep in wet clothes ; they must eat regularly and must eat what was good for them.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 98)

Along with the sailing crew, the *Investigator* housed a number of botanists, and botanical and landscape painters to help illustrate and describe the lands they might see for the first time, a gardener, an astronomer, and a miner, perhaps expected to evaluate the geology of the environments. Certainly it was a much more scientific and information gathering venture than had been attempted before, just as the French were also undertaking.

Trim the cat settled back happily into sea life once again, and apparently took up his former habit of following Flinders all over the ship, like a dog at heel. He was said to have been well accepted and loved by all aboard. Certainly if he did his job and kept the rats & mice at bay he would have been well appreciated.

Right from the start they undertook observations and experiments fitting for a scientific voyage, recording air, sea surface and deep sea temperatures, along with salinity measurements and the like. Barometer readings were recorded in relation to the breezes encountered, around land and open sea, and they undertook compass readings across the ship and recorded the deviations, which Flinders would research further, producing a scientific paper on the effects of magnetism from the ship on compass readings. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 171)

The *Investigator* was sailing well, but it’s design & construction had some defects, as it needed re-caulking twice on the journey out, and they were lucky to have found tradesman at each port to have done it, given the shortages in skilled labourer and materials exacerbated by war.

And so, the *Investigator* sighted Cape Leeuwin on the south coast of Western Australia, on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Actually some areas around the west had already been recorded by the Dutch in 1627, (hence ‘Cape Leeuwin’) but all charts the Admiralty had to date, left a lot to be desired, and Flinders set to work with great purpose. And of course, no one had recorded travelling far enough east along that south coast to identify the potential gulf that Flinders though may well divide the land mass. So it was all very exciting!

After their long journey from the northern hemisphere they travelled around to King George Sound, a little further east along the southern coast, where they laid up the ship to tend & caulk it once again, and to rest, restock and make other repairs, before resuming their exploration activities. Water & wood would have been taken on board, and Bastian suggested they spent Christmas there, where they could gather fresh seafood; a delight after months on preserved ships rations. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 106)

Morgan described the refit after the long open sea voyage as “The *Investigator* had it’s hawse cleared, casks repaired, rigging refitted and masts stripped. New planks were gathered on the shore. The

carpenters fitted them on board ship, and made garden boxes for the naturalist. Coopers brought water from the shore in rafts and stowed it in casks in the ships hold.” (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 76)

Many of the men had their first experience of a hot Western Australian summer, the smell of Australian bush and possibly even sightings of some unusual birds & animals. Sadly for the naturalists they had missed the spring flowering season of many plants, but in their short stay they were still delighted to collect over 500 specimens, many entirely new to science, and to gather 70 living specimens to carry with them.

The summer season would have seen the local Nyungar people active around the coast too, and their few encounters were generally friendly. Flinders’ reflections on their interactions with the indigenous people they encountered typically fitted the entry he recorded on December 14. “Some smoke being perceived at the head of the harbour, Mr Brown and other gentlemen directed their excursion that way, and met with several of the natives, who were shy but not afraid. One man with whom they had communication, was admired for his manly behaviour, and they gave him a bird which had been shot, and a pocket handkerchief; but like the generality of people hitherto seen in this country, these men did not seem to be desirous of communication with strangers; and they very early made signs to our gentlemen to return from whence they came.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 51)

They would have a more extensive and rewarding interactions while in King George Sound though. When they were readying to leave they put on a little show, with the marines in their red coats with white crossed belts playing fife and drum, which one crewman recorded, had the Nyungar men “absolutely scream[ing] with delight”. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 54) The military exercises and the firing of a few volleys, which they had warned them about so as not to frighten them, did not appear to scare or concern the watching men. Morgan reminds us that the Aboriginal people would, of course, have been quite familiar with the idea of communal displays of music and dancing, including vivid gestures and loud vocalisations, through their own corroborees and gatherings.

Estensen further suggests this group already decorated themselves on red ochre and used white clay on their bodies, so there would have been a weird symmetry in what they saw the white men doing. She added, they watched with intense attention, several moving their hands with the motions of the marines. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 182) The concept, though the clothing and instruments were foreign, would have been somewhat familiar, and probably quite impressive. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 78)

Indeed, Bastian claimed the martial display impressed to such an extent, that traces of it were incorporated into future Nyungar art and body decoration. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 107) Morgan continues “The aborigines appear to have interpreted the military drill as an appropriate contact ritual. In 1908, the anthropologist Daisy Bates met an elderly man near Albany, called Nebinyan. He told her that the Nyungar Aboriginals of King George Sound believed Flinders and his party were ghosts of their own dead ancestors, who had returned from Kooranup, the home of the dead across the sea. They thought the full dress parade of the Marines was a Kooranup ceremony. The ritual was considered sacred, to be handed down the generations.” (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, pp. 78–9) So that’s quite a legacy.

While travelling along the coast and meeting other groups, Flinders made a number of observations about the people he met there, noting, though the people had a great similarity in stature and looks, they appeared to have quite different customs from the First Australians he was most familiar with. “These do not, indeed, extract one of the upper front teeth at the age of puberty, as is generally practiced at Port Jackson, nor do they make use of the Womerah, or throwing stick; but their colour, the texture of their hair and personal appearance are the same; their songs run the same cadence; the manner of painting themselves is similar; their belts and fillets of hair are made in the same way, and worn in the same manner. The short skin cloak, which is of kangaroo, and worn over the shoulders, leaving the rest of the body naked, is more in the manner of the wood natives living at the back of Port Jackson, than those that inhabit the sea

coast; and everything we saw confirmed the supposition of Captain Vancouver, that they live more by hunting than fishing.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 58)

So this was an interesting reflection given how far they were from Port Jackson. Indeed on a different landmass if Flinders was right about there being a channel right through the middle. But he did note just how different the language was – completely unintelligible from the PJ language they were familiar with. And, so completely typical white man of his age was he, that he was completely shocked to discover “They seemed to have no idea of any superiority we possessed over them; on the contrary, they left us, after the first interview, with some appearance of contempt for our pusillanimity ...” [*my new word for the episode! pu-sill-an-imity It means lack of courage or determination; timidity or cowardice.*] (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 58)

Interesting the need these newcomers had to determine ‘superiority’, what ever that means! I doubt any of them could survive two weeks in that landscape living off the land, the way the locals had done for millennia. But clearly that was not part of the ‘*superiority measurement*’ applied. For the Nyungar of Western Australia, the ‘timid’ white men had nothing they needed, and were clearly ignorant of the correct manners and protocols required to mix with the locals. No wonder they failed to acknowledge any ‘superiority’ on the part of the pale skinned newcomers. Back from whence they came then!

If you recall the *Episodes 62-64, on William Buckley*, who was taken in by the Wathawurrung people and lived with them for 30 years. He seemed to be a man not intent on proving how superior he was. And they tolerated his *ignorance* by assuming he had no clue and treating him like he was a newborn, whom they had to patiently teach all things to! It wasn’t that he had no intelligence – just that he hadn’t learned important things yet, coming into their new world, which was in fact the situation. It would have been like landing on Mars for him. Every social nuance and cultural practice would have been unfamiliar.

Flinders men did record some of the language they heard and understood, comparing it to the vocabulary they had already recorded from the people of Port Jackson & Van Diemens Land. It was becoming clear to Flinders that language was vastly different across the country, because these were not people of one homogeneous clan, even if some cultural practices were somewhat similar. No doubt he would have been astounded to learn that there were well more than 500 completely distinct language groups living across Australia.

While in the sound, the botanists took the opportunity to trawl for local sea life and amongst their haul was a delightful little ‘leafy sea dragon’ seahorse, something apparently not seen before, and they were able to describe, classify, sketch and paint their little find for the first time, (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 107) before they raised anchor and continued on, on Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 1802. Flinders surveyed, corrected and augmented any existing old charts he had as they progressed.

By the 26<sup>th</sup> of January they were entering entirely uncharted waters. Any maps now would have to be drawn from scratch. They noted the vast expanses of the cliffs of the Nullarbor Plain, and during the travel through the Great Australian Bight, experienced extreme heat, with temperatures as high as 100 – 130F in the sun. That’s 38-54 Celsius, so quite shocking for those used to the northern climes.

They explored all the bays and harbours east of current day Ceduna, naming sites after their experiences there, such as *Anxious Bay*, and after friends, family and notables at home, and Flinders was greatly enjoying the experience of charting the pristine coastline.

Feb 20<sup>th</sup> they investigated a large inlet that might have provided access to the interior, perhaps even the beginning of a strait passing right through the large landmass, that Flinders had wondered about, particularly interesting because it was displaying unusual tides within.

At each landfall many specimens were collected and studied. At one point, when exploring on the mainland near Spencers Gulf, Flinders recorded “on our way up the hills, to take a commanding station for



the survey, a speckled, yellow snake lay asleep before us. By pressing the butt end of a musket upon his neck, I kept him down while Mr Thistle, with a sail needle and twine, sewed up his mouth; and he was taken on board alive, for the naturalist to examine.” Both gruesome and scary.

I have no idea what kind of snake he was describing here, though it seemed fairly passive type from that description, so not a Tiger then probably. But obviously they would not have been aware then just how many of our snakes are deadly. I wouldn't be approaching one with a needle & thread! Too much 'pusillanimity' on my part for sure! “Two others of the same species had already been killed, and one of them was seven feet nine inches in length.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 81) Later that day though, an unexpected tragedy would occur, and poor Thistle would lose his life at *Cape Catastrophe*, though not to a snake.

Was it possible there might be a huge gulf or strait dividing the east and western sides so far navigated of the Terra Australis land mass? What about a huge inland sea with rivers exiting along the northern & southern coasts? Until it was fully charted *Terra Australis* could be any shape one might imagine. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 10) The wide inlet they had encountered needed thorough investigation, and after surveying it from the height of the hill Flinders & Thistle had climbed, more detailed examination was in order.

The waters did however, contain some dangerous eddies and tides, and a boat carrying 8 men, which had been exploring around a small island, was suddenly swamped by unexpectedly difficult currents. The rip had overwhelmed the boat and thrown the men into the water. Only two could swim, but none of the men were found, and only pieces of the wrecked boat were discovered washed up on several shores.

One sailor searching for them noted “there was a possibility of them swimming on shore if they could escape the ravenous 'shirks', which were very numerous.” (Smith) (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 190) Sadly no survivors, or indeed bodies, were located, though they spent much time and effort looking. It was a devastating and shockingly unexpected tragedy, on a so far, successful voyage, and the men lost were much lamented. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, pp. 82–4)

What they had found was the wide entrance to the *Spencer Gulf*, and though it continued a long way north into the mainland, it terminated at today's Port Augusta, and was not any kind of Strait that might run through to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The New Holland – New South Wales Land mass was, after all, one land mass.

Further along, at the mouth of St Vincents Gulf, they would encounter Kangaroo Island, which they recorded as having good soil (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 94) and therefore good future prospects, before continuing on, exploring the gulf past the site of what would one day become the city of Adelaide, developing around the area where the River Torrens enters the sea.

Unfortunately, also around this time, 'someone' had failed in his duty, winding the timekeeping clocks that were essential for calculating their longitude, and indispensable for ensuring Flinders maps would be of excellent accuracy.

In the early 1800's those undertaking precise navigation would use a chronometer designed to cope and keep time, despite being on board a rolling ship. Wiki reminds us that Longitude could be determined if you know the time at a fixed known point, say Greenwich in London, and the local time where the ship currently was. “The clock would be set to the local time of a starting point whose longitude was known, and the longitude of any other place could be determined by comparing its local time with the clock time. There is a four-minute difference between locally observed noon and clock noon for each degree of longitude east or west of the initial meridian.” (*History of longitude* 2024) So keeping clock running continuously at London time meant the calculations for local time would then allow the navigator to position the ship accurately for mapping purposes.

These precious clocks had not been wound up the previous day, and they were found to have stopped running. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 97) (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 112) They could reset them by undertaking a number of complicated calculations and readings from other instruments, over a number of days, if they began again at the last place where readings and times were known, and so they had to return to Kangaroo Island, the last point the times were correct, and perform a number of complicated observations against sun and stars over a couple of days, before the clocks times could be reset with any confidence. It was a very frustrating and time consuming activity, and one might imagine Flinders would have been very unhappy at the trouble the dereliction of duty had caused them. That *someone* not doing his duty would have been Flinders' brother, Samuel, so probably even more annoying for Flinders. Three days later, they were able to resume their navigational and charting duties.

Flinders later wrote of his disappointment in Samuel not measuring up to be a competent, responsible navy man. Comparing him poorly to other keen and conscientious men in his crew, he wrote, "I wish so much could be said of my brother; the distance between us has widened considerably. He is satisfied with being as much inferior to the other officers as I would have him superior to them." (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 185)

Further along, on April 8<sup>th</sup>, rounding into a wide bay, you'll never guess what happened next.... Their lookout man advised he saw a white rock ahead. As they cautiously approached, the white rock began to look more like white sails. Flinders marked his ship with the Union Jack, and soon afterwards the other ship showed their Tricolour. Fortunately both also ran up the flags of Truce, and they cautiously approached one another.

Flinders recorded "...we cleared for action, in case of being attacked. The stranger was a heavy looking ship.....; and our colours being hoisted she showed a French ensign, and afterwards an English Jack forward, as we did a white flag. At half past five ... I hove to; and learned, as the stranger passed to the leeward with a free wind, that it was the French national ship *Le Geographe*, under the command of Captain Nicolas Baudin. We veered round as *Le Geographe* was passing, so as to keep our broadside to her, lest the flag of truce should be a deception; and having come to the wind on the other tack, a boat was hoisted out, and [Mr Brown, who could speak French, and] I, went on board the French ship...." (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 100)

Flinders was of course extremely surprised by the encounter. He knew the French expedition ships were out there somewhere, but, *of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world... you know?* Baudin must have been completely gobsmacked too. When he sailed from France, they knew of no British undertaking such a venture. Flinders passport had been approved only weeks before he departed, a year after the French had set off. Baudin would have been expecting the ship from a distance, to be *Le Naturaliste*, the sister ship they had earlier lost contact with. Certainly that would have been the more likely turn of events at this far end of the world, and so his astonishment must have been great! (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 90)

Flinders met the French Commander and asked for his passport, which he perused, and then showed Baudin his, which Baudin handed back without inspecting, seemingly much more open to a friendly meeting and exchange. Baudin told Flinders they had been some time separated from *Le Naturaliste*, and though concerned, they hoped they would meet them again in their travel. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, pp. 112–3)

While Flinders had kept excellent discipline and good health amongst his crew of volunteer naval men, and his mostly dedicated and focussed scientists, Baudin had found it harder to wrangle his large compliment of egotistical boffins, unfamiliar with the discipline required to undertake a long, isolated seafaring expedition. Morgan writes that Baudin's mission had been "riven with poor health among the crew, diminishing provisions and desertion." (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 90)

Estensen wrote “there were serious enmities within the [French] expedition, some officers denigrating their commander, and he expressing at times considerable disdain of the scientists on board, which Francois Peron reciprocated with something akin to outright hatred.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 203) After 18 months in confined quarters this must have been close to unbearable for all. Baudin did not always behave in the wisest way either. Apparently, in Il de France, where they were expected to stop for 14 days to reprovision, “disputes with the local administration, quarrels among the expedition’s officers and scientists, dissatisfaction amongst the crew, all handled tactlessly by Baudin, resulted in a 40 day stay [instead]”! (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 204) Well, a bit of a pattern here then. Ill de France, or Mauritius, as I will call it now, appears to *foster* ill temper and tactlessness, as we’ll discover when Flinders and the Governor there lock horns in the future...

Several of the French crew died from illness after their stop in Timor, and later, around the coast of Van Diemens Land, they would experience the loss of a small exploratory crew, as indeed Flinders had recently, and the relationships on the French ships were apparently quite testy.

They had, some weeks back, entirely lost communications with *Le Naturaliste* after a wild gale, and as they had all been at sea for a long time, scurvy and other conditions of poor diet and confinement were beginning to take hold. One in Flinders crew recorded “we found the [*Geographe*] poorly manned, having lost a boat and crew and several that run away – her account was, that they had parted company with the [*Naturalist*] ... in a gale of wind, and have been from France 18 months.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 201)

Although Baudin had been instructed to avoid Port Jackson, the poor condition of his crew and his vessel, and their lack of provisions now, had him thinking he would call in there anyway. Flinders encouraged him to do so. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 202) Neither of them knew yet, that a truce in the war had been called in October 1801, the official *Peace of Amiens agreement* having settled on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1802. Still, both Captains must have assumed they were still officially at war, and though they had approached each other with caution, they very soon displayed an optimistic air and much good will. It seems they had already understood and settled on an amicable and non-political approach to communications. Similar relations might be expected in Port Jackson also.

They had a few meetings over the 2 days they spent in *Encounter Bay* together, sharing information about their charting and encounters, communicating, mostly in English it seems. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 101) The French too were investigating and mapping the so far uncharted southern coast, having already explored the east coast of Van Diemens Land. They had reached Encounter Bay having followed the mainland southern coast from East to West after reaching the tip of Van Diemens Land. Having spent so much time there they were aware now they had missed their opportunity to be the first to see what Flinders had just come past.

Still, they were all men keen on the idea of discovery, and while it was assumed their countries were still officially at war, Baudin & Flinders behaved like perfect gentlemen of the age of enlightenment, sharing & discussing much of what they had discovered. Flinders and Baudin spent a good deal of time discussing the shortcomings of the maps they had been using and the corrections and alterations they had managed to achieve, sharing copies to assist the other in their ongoing travels.

Good will and sharing is all well and good, but Flinders’ journals record his glee at beating the French to most of the southern coast, and Baudin in his papers, failed to mention many things that might have been helpful to Flinders and the English later. But all in all, a very cordial and productive encounter. He noted Baudin “appeared to be somewhat mortified” to discover the English had already beaten him to much of that coast, but remained cordial and open, and pleased to be able to exchange mutually beneficial information. Both were in agreement that the prospective strait, dividing the continent north/south, did not exist. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 91)

Amazingly, within about 30 kilometres or 20 miles of their meeting place, they both missed a potentially very big prize, when they sailed past the opening to the sea, of the 2,500 km or 1600 mile long Murray River, though it also gathers water from the other massive inland waterways, carrying the water from and through Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia. Such a find would have given Flinders the premier way into exploring vast areas of the interior, but to be fair, it wasn't an obvious waterway emptying directly into the southern ocean. Sailing along Flinders recorded only a long sandy spit running for miles with "a low sandy shore, very uninteresting, nothing to be seen but the shore". (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 114) Oh Whoops.

In fact, had they explored more closely and taken their small boats in, they may have found the entrance there to the Coorong. The Department of Environment and Water in South Australia describes the Coorong as a massive saline lagoon stretching 140km, or 87 miles, hidden from the southern ocean by the sand dunes and beaches of Younghusband Peninsula. We know today it is an important breeding area for the Australian pelican, and home to ducks, swans, cormorants, terns, grebes, and around 230 migratory bird species that travel annually from Siberia, Alaska, Japan and China. Lake Alexandrina, and Lake Albert sit further inland retaining the freshwater and all form a wetland of international importance. (*Department for Environment and Water - Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray...* [no date])

The fresh water from a huge percentage of the Eastern side of Australia, known as the Murray Darling basin, flows to the south west and eventually makes it's way into the ocean via Lake Alexandrina and the Coorong wetlands. (*Murray–Darling basin* 2024) It is the explanation that Flinders was puzzling over – why not many major rivers were found to exist along the east coast given the size of the country? Instead it is gathered into that huge river system, all ending up in South Australia, well at least it did when we weren't pumping most of it out before it reached the end! Flinders would have been devastated if he'd known what he'd missed. It might have got them 100s and hundreds of miles deep inland, with some luck with the water levels, and they would have seen some spectacularly attractive land.

No doubt Flinders was little flustered after his surprising meeting with Baudin, but soon afterwards they were continuing on past areas of the coast the French had surveyed. He did manage to make his way into the vast Port Phillip Bay though, which the French must have missed. Don't quote me on that though, as I have not paid much attention to the French records of their trip, time restricting me to mostly looking at material directly related to Bass & Flinders, but if they saw it they didn't tell Flinders and it doesn't show in his record of their intelligence sharing that I could see. Indeed lack of time now also limited Flinders exploration of Port Phillip, and he failed to notice and chart one of the most significant rivers emptying into the bay at it's North Eastern corner, which we would later name the Yarra River, and which Melbourne would later develop around.

In considering how he had caught up with the French after such a long delayed start from England, Flinders learned that Baudin's ships had first arrived on the west coast of New Holland and sailed northwards to Kupang in Timor, charting and naming many sites along the North West coast, like *Cape Leveque*, and the *Bonaparte Archipelago*, names we still see on the maps today. They needed to rest and resupply in Kupang, as many aboard were already suffering from scurvy and were in poor health. But as pretty much every ship stopping there discovered, they traded one set of illnesses for another, the expeditioners becoming afflicted with dysentery, several dying from the disease, and resulting in delays which deferred their explorations for a season. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 113)

Kupang in Timor, and Batavia, later to develop into Jakarta, Indonesia, were two important resupply ports in the South, but which were both insect ridden and lacking in sanitation and often clean water. Stopping there often took a great toll on ship's crews, rather than being a place of refuge and recuperation. Unfortunately options were limited, and the need for food and water on empty ships sometimes made a visit a necessity, despite the risk.

Flinders must have congratulated himself on his health regime on the *Investigator*, which to date had spared his crew much discomfort and danger, and it was Baudin's misfortune which had allowed the English expedition to catch them, and be able to claim any part of the coast as uncharted. Baudin's party had afterwards sheltered through the winter along parts of the east coast of Van Diemens Land, and again, we note many landmarks of French origin in that region. *Recherche Bay, Bruny Island, d'Entrecasteaux Channel, Freycinet Peninsula*, and so on.

The French had much more success in forging friendly relations with the Tasmanian aboriginals, and they did a great deal of natural science work while there, so it was all valuable time spent, even though it did delay them beginning to explore the southern mainland coast.

Before taking leave and continuing on their mission, Flinders assured Baudin they would keep an eye out for the missing *Naturaliste*, and Flinders *specifically noted* that no objections were raised about the fact that he had found & named everything newly charted west of where they met. Flinders confirmed this acknowledgement again after his more refined charts were once again shown and discussed with Baudin when they later met in Port Jackson. And Baudin when in Port Jackson, was also advised that Port Phillip Bay and other areas along the Victorian coast, which had also already been earlier charted before his arrival, by Murray & Grant, so even fewer firsts could be claimed by the French than they had hoped. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, pp. 102–3) (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 108) It's worth noting that Peron & Freycinet in particular also did *not* make any objection to Baudin's complete agreement and confirmation of the data recorded by Flinders, though as we will see, their later behaviour would see this become a point of contention.

Continuing east through Bass Strait, weather forced Flinders further southward, away from the mainland, where he encountered King Island, which lies almost in the middle of the western entrance to the Bass Strait, thus adding more new discoveries to his charts after he left Baudin. Sadly he was not in a position to collect any delicious cheeses or crayfish for his onward journey, as visitors to King Island would hope to do today!

When the weather allowed, he returned to sailing close to the mainland coast, passing Cape Otway, and continuing along to the east, where he detected an entrance to Port Phillip Bay, which I mentioned earlier. At first he assumed it must have been Western Port Bay, charted by Bass in January 1798, but soon realised it was somewhat larger, and that he was still a good way to the west of that recorded entrance, and as it turns out, deceptively named bay.

Visiting Port Phillip he "congratulated myself on having made a new and useful discovery" (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 115), noting the narrowness of the heads and the navigational difficulty of entry against tides in the channel. Excited though he was at Baudin having missed it, he would later discover he'd been pipped by his own countryman. John Murray on the *Lady Nelson* had already explored it in March of 1802, while Flinders was still engaged far to the west. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 94) . (*pic 'Plan of Port Phillip from Murray's survey of 1802' Wiki*)

Though the entrance to Port Phillip is nearly 3 kilometres wide, the safest navigable channel was much narrower, moving a vast amount of water in and out with great force each tide change, and he recorded it as having "strong tide rippings", and extensive shoals. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 206)

On exploring Port Phillip Flinders recorded they saw many signs indicating local inhabitants, such as fireplaces, shell middens, burnt areas of scrub and bush, and smoke rising in places, but they saw no actual people. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 207) He observed that, should a settlement be set up in the bay, the entrance lent itself to easily being defended, (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 111) and indeed in the years to come, defences were built on Point Nepean and on the Queenscliff side, the remains of which can be visited today.

Though he spent many days exploring, Flinders really only managed a brief foray into the southern reaches of the bay, around the Mornington Peninsula, & Bellarine, so failing to discover the NE where the Yarra empties into the bay today, or the western reaches into the deep harbour at Geelong. Still, time was of the essence. Anyway, they were all tired, food and time was running low, and they couldn't wait to get to Port Jackson and tell the Governor about their encounter with the French!

So on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1802, they left Port Phillip Bay, making straight for Port Jackson, dropping anchor there on May 9<sup>th</sup> 1802, 295 days after they had departed old England. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 209) (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 96) (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 117) For the men aboard who had sailed from England for the first time, they were about to get a look at the notorious penal settlement there.

Flinders was no doubt very sorry about the men he'd lost to drowning in the Spencer Gulf, but he was rightly pleased that all the others had managed their epic voyage & explorations in good health, noting "The officers and crew were, generally speaking, in better health than on the day we sailed from Spithead, and not in less good spirits." (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xviii)

He wasted no time in making his way to Governor King to report all that had occurred, present his papers to be communicated to the Admiralty at the first opportunity, and to catch up with the news in Port Jackson and from across the world.

On arrival, he found the missing *Naturaliste* already in port, having arrived April 25<sup>th</sup>, after their separation from their sister ship. Once again relations with the French were generally very friendly, though both remained perhaps a little suspicious of the other, (some more than others actually), and not without reason, it later emerged. The French *did have ambitions* in the South Pacific, even in the recently claimed English colony at Botany Bay, it would later become apparent.

The *Geographe* arrived not too long afterwards, on June 20<sup>th</sup>. It's crew were in a very bad way, with scurvy & dysentery taking a huge toll. Only 12 of the 170 men were strong enough to operate the ship, and they needed help just to make it into Port Jackson, and drop anchor there. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 119) (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 128) (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 100) Governor King sent some British crew assist, and 23 of the Frenchmen were removed to the hospital on shore as soon as possible. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 219) They would require much time to recuperate before they might sail again.

Governor King was excessively generous, proving to be very accommodating despite his country still being at war with their country, and all kindness & camaraderie was shown to the French. They were cared for, and fed well. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 128) Flinders noted "Before their arrival, the necessity of augmenting the number of cattle in the country had prevented the governor from allowing *us* any fresh meat; but some oxen belonging to the government were now killed for the distressed strangers." (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 119) Later he even assisted in having the French ships copper sheathing cleaned and repaired, and as a bit of a Francophile himself, King hosted Baudin frequently at Government House during his stay. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 101)

King had encountered French explorers in the waters his Government had claimed a few years earlier, and had managed very cordial relations on that occasion too. King was amongst the First Fleet who had brought the very first shipment of convicts to Botany Bay, as Banks had suggested. But they found the site quite poor and after further exploration in the area, Sydney Cove in Port Jackson, the next bay up, was found to be a much more suitable situation, and they prepared to move the Fleet there within a couple of days. Amazingly, just as they were making to depart, new sails came into the bay. It was a French expedition lead by La Perouse, who had called in to take some rest at the previously charted Botany Bay.

King, as a French language speaker, spent much time communicating with La Perouse, and returned from Sydney Cove in the days following, with his charts to discuss what the British had discovered so far. La Perouse also left copies of his journals and reports for the British ships to take with them to be relayed to France when they returned to England. These documents would constitute the last communications from La

Perouse, as his expedition was never heard of again, and still no one is quite sure where and when they must have come to grief. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 220) Though as relations soured between the French & English, rumours abounded that his disappearance might have had something to do with the British in their new colony! (*Jean-François de Galaup, comte de Lapérouse* 2024)

The French were allowed many liberties in exploring the area, with some restrictions, mainly to associated with the security required in the penal colony to prevent attempted escapes by the convicts. Restrictions were placed on the movement of their boats for example, and they were not to carry any unauthorised persons aboard, with some curfews applied and so on. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 220) But otherwise the French were treated in much the same way as the British in all other matters, and relations remained apparently cordial.

Peron, who was later to become so difficult and antagonistic towards the British & their settlement, would at least acknowledge the extensive hospitality he and his shipmates were all given during their stay in Port Jackson. As a naturalist he was given more opportunities to explore than a naval officer may have been, but he did use that freedom to his country's advantage, gathering intelligence that would be of great interest to his government and potentially valuable to the war effort. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 220)

Despite all his kindness King was not totally blind to the risks. He knew it was likely that some in the French government might be harbouring ambitions to create their own settlement somewhere in the region, probably in the Bass Strait region or on Van Diemens Land, given their thorough explorations there to date. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 101) Though there seemed to be no sinister motives displayed by Baudin, King was actually wise to be suspicious, because Peron, with or without Baudin's knowledge, was indeed spying on behalf of Napoleon, and he was recording many local observations for the glory of the French Republic rather than just exploring in the apolitical pursuit of scientific knowledge. Peron's observations and thoughts would afterwards be shared with the Governor of Mauritius, to the later detriment of Flinders one might assume.

The British of course, were intent on claiming and settling themselves all over the land declared New South Wales, to keep the French out, and no doubt, now the whole landmass was confirmed as being one, to do so on the South, West, and Northern points of the continent as well! Flinders was pretty pleased with what he'd achieved so far, but he still had the second leg of the journey to undertake before his circumnavigation task was completed. Having only so far charted the southern coast here was still a great deal to discover. He showed King the orders from the Admiralty & Banks in England, that would see him refit, rest & resupply before departing once again, this time in the company of the *Lady Nelson*, to complete his assignment. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, pp. 117–8)

Now back in Port Jackson the *Investigator* would undertake its refit over the next two months. During their forced break Flinders' crew would take the opportunity to see the sites of Sydney, such as they were. All the precious plants collected to date were moved to the Governor's House at Parramatta, to be cared for while they returned to sea.

Before departure Flinders again met Baudin and his Officers, and this time showed them his newly completed charts, indicating where the surveys of Flinders had been added to existing knowledge, and where Baudin's discoveries were acknowledged. Baudin had no charts to show Flinders, as his would only be created once back in Paris, but they seem to have both agreed that the notations and descriptions Flinders had used were indeed correct.

Morgan wrote "Flinders scrupulously set out the respective claims to the discovery of the south Australian coast. He and Baudin agreed to call the south-west cape of New Holland *Cape Leeuwin*, thinking that the Dutch, who had discovered it, would not object. Flinders claimed his own area of discovery to stretch from the south coast of Nuyts Land to Encounter Bay. Baudin had vested in himself and the French Nation about 150 miles of coast from Encounter Bay (35 degrees 43 mins) to Cape Northumberland (38°3').

Grant then had priority of discovery from Cape Northumberland to Western Port, [with Murray claiming the Port Phillip Bay]. Bass first observed the coast from Western Port to Point Hicks. In setting out these claims and working hard on his charts, Flinders followed his overarching ambition to make the surveying of the Australian coast as complete as possible." (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 101)

So everything seemed to be rosy. The French were recovering and had acknowledged and agreed to the charts as Flinders had produced, and Flinders could send copies back to England with a good conscience. His Ship was being prepared for it's next epic voyage, to complete the circumnavigation and fulfil his mission, and his men were happy & healthy.

In the next episode we will take up the story again here, as Flinders readies to depart and make his name in the completion of this mammoth task.

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### Podcast Recommendation

I'm just going to mention today the Fall of Civilizations podcast, which looks at the collapse of a different civilization each episode, and asks *What did they have in common? Why did they fall? And what did it feel like to watch it happen?*

I haven't listened to them all, but I particularly liked *Episode 6* about *Easter Island*. There have been some contentious theories about the population collapse there and I think Paul's work really considers many of these and presents the best evidence and assumptions we can consider today. Check them all out, and as always, I'll provide a link on my Episode page.

<https://fallofcivilizationspodcast.com/>

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#### Music, IMAGES & other links:

- Intro/Exit music modified from: 'Grand Canyon' by David Löhstana [CCFM Music – 2018]
- Sound snippets: Sailing Ship noises – <https://freesound.org/people/Supertyv2/sounds/166753/>