

## TASMAN'S LANDING PLACE.

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With One Text Figure.

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According to his Journal, Abel Janszoon Tasman planted his flag and took formal possession of the land, now called Tasmania, on the 3rd of December, 1642.

Unfortunately, the exact position of his anchorage was not fixed by bearings to, or angles between the various headlands, islands, or prominent features in the vicinity, but in other respects the journal is so complete and is so clearly written that the historic spot at which the flag was planted can, I think, be located within a few yards. The matter has already been investigated, mainly through the indefatigable exertions of Mr. Moore-Robinson, Mr. John Kennedy, and Captain Bowerman, who decided that the great navigator had landed at the head of Prince of Wales Bay, an indentation immediately adjoining Cape Lamanon, on Forestier's Peninsula. A very substantial and appropriate monument has been erected at the site chosen, on which the following inscription appears:—

At this spot the expedition under  
Abel Jansz Tasman,  
being the first white people  
to set foot on Tasmanian soil,  
planted the Dutch flag  
on December 3rd, 1642.

As a memorial to posterity and to the inhabitants of this country  
this stone was erected by the Royal Society of Tasmania,  
1923.

Some doubts, however, arose amongst certain members of this Society, and a discussion of the matter took place at the rooms on the 17th December, 1923 (see Papers and Proceedings, 1923, p. 166). It was then decided that, in view of the indefinite nature of the evidence, the words of the inscription "At this spot" should be altered to "Near this spot."

During the discussion I expressed the opinion that the landing took place near the south-east corner of North Bay, about 2 miles south-east of the monument, but as I had not visited the site and there might possibly be local objections, such as unfavourable land configuration or the existence of shoal water or foul bottom at the position of anchorage, I have refrained from writing on the subject until I could find time to further investigate.

Owing mainly to my absence from Tasmania, I have only lately been able to examine the locality in detail, and now desire to place before the Members of this Society the result of my inquiry.

To enable us to follow Tasman's movements, I here reproduce copies of his journal of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of December, 1642, as edited by J. E. Heeres. The translation has been carefully compared with the original in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

#### EXTRACTS FROM TASMAN'S JOURNAL.

Ed. by J. E. Heeres.

1st December, 1642.

"At noon lat. observed 43 deg. 10 min., long. 167 deg. 55 min.; course kept N.N.W., sailed 8 miles (32 Eng. miles), it having fallen a calm; in the afternoon we hoisted the white flag, upon which our friends of the *Zeehaen* came on board of us, with whom we resolved that it would be best and most expedient, wind and weather permitting, to touch at the land the sooner the better; both to get better acquainted with its condition, and to attempt to procure refreshments for our own behalf; all of which may be more amply seen from this day's resolution. We then got a breeze from the eastward and made for the coast to ascertain whether it would afford a fitting anchorage; about 1 hour after sunset we dropped anchor in a good harbour in 22 fathoms (21.65 English fathoms), white and grey fine sand, a naturally drying bottom; for all which it behoves us to thank God Almighty with grateful hearts.

2nd December, 1642.

"Early in the morning we sent out Pilot-Major Jacobsz . . . . to a bay situated N.W. of us, at upwards of a mile distance (4 Eng. miles), in order to ascertain what facilities (as regards fresh water, refreshments, timber and the like may be available there). About three hours before night-fall the boats came back. . . . This day we had variable winds from the eastward, but for the greater part of the day a stiff steady breeze from the S.E.

3rd December, 1642.

"We went to the S.E. side of this bay in the same boats as yesterday . . . . here we found water, it is true, but the land is so low-lying that the fresh water was made salt and brackish by the surf, while the soil is too rocky to allow of wells being dug; we therefore returned on board and convened the councils of our two ships, with which we have resolved and determined what is set forth *in extenso* in to-day's resolution, to which for brevity's sake we refer.

"In the afternoon we went to the S.E. side of this bay in the boats aforesaid, having with us Pilot-Major Francois Jacobsz, Skipper Gerrit Jansz, Isack Gilsemans, supercargo on board the *Zeehaen*, sub-cargo Abraham Coomans, and our master carpenter, Pieter Jacobsz; we carried with us a pole with the Company's mark carved into it, and a Prince-flag, to be set up there, that those who shall come after us may become aware that we have been here, and have taken possession of the said land as our lawful property. When we had moved about half-way with our boats it began to blow very stiffly, and the sea ran so high that the cock-boat of the *Zeehaen*, in which were seated the Pilot-Major and Mr. Gilsemans, was compelled to pull back to the ships, while we ran on with our pinnace. When we had come close inshore in a small inlet which bore W.S.W. of the ships, the surf ran so high that we could not get near the shore without running the risk of having our pinnace dashed to pieces. We then ordered the carpenter aforesaid to swim to the shore alone, with the pole and flag, and kept by the wind with our pinnace; we made him plant the said pole with the flag at top into the earth at the centre of the bay near four tall trees, easily recognisable, and standing in the form of a crescent, exactly before the one standing lowest . . . . the carpenter aforesaid therefore swam back to the pinnace though the surf . . . . During the whole of the day the wind blew chiefly from the north; in the evening we took the sun's azimuth and found 3 deg. N.E. variation of the compass; at sunset we got a strong gale from the north, which by and by rose to so violent a storm from the N.N.W. that we were compelled to get both our yards in and drop our small bower anchor."

Although not of importance to our present purpose, it is to be regretted that the "day's resolutions" referred to in this journal, which correspond to Minutes of Meetings or conferences held with the Master of the *Zeehaen*, cannot be found.

Tasman was a very wonderful navigator, and was a very observant and careful man, and before all else he was a sailor, and if his journal should appear vague at any particular

point, we must interpret it with this knowledge. He records having dropped anchor, in a good harbour, about an hour after sunset on the 1st of December, 1642. His noon observations show the ship to have been off Cape Frederick Hendrick, and the weather to be calm, but in the afternoon they got a breeze from the eastward, which enabled him to make the anchorage he desired, and for which he was so thankful. If we remember that it was getting on towards nightfall, he was on a totally unknown coast, and he was under sail only and was making for a lee shore, we will naturally conclude that his sailor instinct would not allow him to go further into North Bay than would ensure safe anchorage. He would be perfectly safe if anchored in the position shown on the chart (see Text Figure), and would have been able to beat out if the wind had suddenly shifted northwardly, as he had every reason to expect. Had he gone further west he would have been embayed, or in a position no sailor would willingly get.

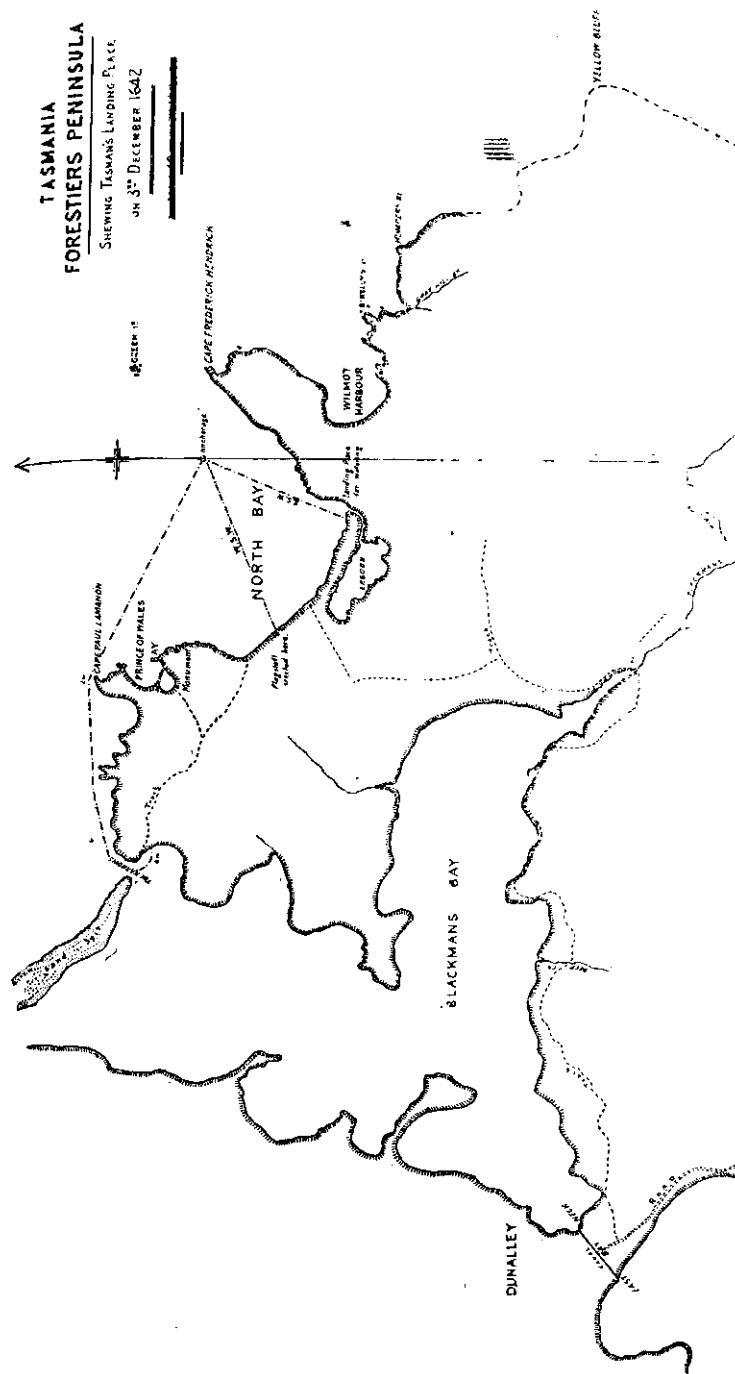
The law of storms was not very well understood in Tasman's day, but it was well known to mariners that the wind in the southern hemisphere always veers from south to north through east, so that Tasman would be on the look-out for easterly, north-easterly, and then northerly winds, which would be one very strong reason for his choosing an anchorage from which he could get away as soon as possible.

On the 2nd of December Tasman sent his Pilot-Major "to a bay situated north-west of us, at upwards of a mile "distance (4 English miles)" to spy out the land, and we find on referring to the Lands Department plan, that the distance from the supposed anchorage to the entrance to Blackman's Bay is just on 4 miles, in a north-westerly direction. It will also be noted that had Tasman been anchored off Prince of Wales Bay, as supposed by Mr. Moore-Robinson, there would be no bay 4 miles to the north-west of him.

On the 2nd of December Tasman records: "This day we "had variable winds from the eastward, but for the greater "part of the day a stiff steady breeze from the south-east."

We now come to the eventful day of the landing, and the journal states:—"We went to the south-east side of this "bay in the same boats as yesterday. . . . Here we found "water, it is true, but the land is so low lying that the fresh "water was made salt and brackish by the surf, while the soil "is too rocky to allow of wells being dug."

At the south-east corner of North Bay the present-day chart shows a creek connecting with a small lagoon about 250 yards from the sandy beach. The water in this creek and in the lagoon is brackish, and the soil on the eastern side is rough and stony, exactly as described in the journal.



The journal continues: "In the afternoon we went to the south-east side of this bay in the boats aforesaid," and then goes on to describe how one boat had to turn back on account of the rough sea, but the pinnace went on. To quote further from the journal: "When we had come close inshore in a small inlet which bore west-south-west from the ships, the surf ran so high that we could not get near the shore without running the risk of having the pinnace dashed to pieces." This is the small inlet, or creek entrance, before referred to, which bears west-south-west from the assumed anchorage, and as the wind during the day blew chiefly from the north, the locality would be the best that could be chosen by a sailor under the circumstances. It is difficult to understand why Tasman delayed the planting of the flag to the afternoon when the ceremony could have been carried out when he landed at the same spot in the morning to search for water, but the possible explanation is, that the pole "with the Company's mark carved into it" was not ready. It had, of course, to be prepared and rigged from spare spars carried on board.

As would, I think, naturally be expected, there are no signs of the four large trees referred to in Tasman's journal. These have long ago, by the effects of bush fires and natural decay, been reduced to dust and ashes, and nothing tangible remains to mark the notable spot where the illustrious navigator landed.

On the occasion of my visit to the locality a hard south-west gale was blowing, with blinding rain, so that it was impossible to get to the assumed anchorage in a boat to take soundings. It will be interesting to know if the depth of 22 fathoms (21.62 English fathoms) still exists at the anchorage shown. The exact figures are not, of course, important, as the bottom is "white and grey fine sand," and the depth liable to vary a fathom or two, according to the weather.

Quite apart from the extracts from Tasman's journal and the deductions here given, I have made some calculations to ascertain the time and height of the tide on the date of the landing, with the object of confirming or invalidating the results arrived at.

In order to make these matters quite clear to those members who have not studied the subject very closely, it will be necessary to state, in as few words as possible, some of the elementary facts of the science of chronology.

The Egyptians knew that a year contained between 365 and 366 days, but the Romans did not profit by this information, for Romulus made a year consist of 304 days; this was altered by Numa to one of 355 days—extra months being occasionally intercalated, so that the seasons might recur at

about the same period of the year. This naturally resulted in much confusion in calculating intervals of time, and in 45 B.C. Julius Cæsar decreed that thenceforth the year should contain 365 days, except that in every fourth or leap year one additional day should be introduced. He ordered this rule to come into force on 1st January, 45 B.C.

The Julian Calendar made the year (on the average) contain 365.25 days. The actual value is 365.2422419 days. Hence the Julian year is too long by about 11 $\frac{1}{4}$  minutes, and this produces an error of nearly one day in 128 years. This error gradually accumulated, until in the sixteenth century the seasons arrived some ten days earlier than they should have done. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII. corrected this by omitting ten days from that year (which therefore contained only 355 days), and decreeing that henceforth every year which was a multiple of a century should be or not be a leap year, according as the multiple was or was not divisible by four. The work of framing the new Calendar was entrusted to Clavius, who believed the year to contain 365.2425432 days, but omitted the last three decimals in his assumption of the average length of the year. As we now know the actual value to be 365.2422419 days, there is still an error of one day in about 3,600 years in the Gregorian Calendar.

The change was adopted immediately in all Catholic countries, but more slowly in Protestant. In Scotland the change was made in 1600. In the German Lutheran States it was made in 1700. In England a bill to carry out the reform was introduced in 1584, but was withdrawn after being read a second time; and the change was not effected finally until the 2nd September, 1752, eleven nominal days being then struck out, so that the last day of the "Old Style" being the 2nd, the first day of the "New Style" (the next day) was called the 14th instead of the 3rd. By this it will be seen that the year 1752, in England, contained only 355 days instead of 366 days, it being a leap year. Now a knowledge of this fact is necessary when calculating the time of high water on the East Coast of Tasmania on the 3rd of December, 1642, the date of Tasman's landing.

We know that, at intervals of 18 years and 11 days, the moon returns to the same relative position with regard to the earth, and full and new moon fall on the same day of the month. On the 14th May, 1913, the moon would have been in the same relative position with regard to the earth as it was on the 3rd December, 1642, assuming that no variation in the length of any intermediate year had been made in the interval. There had, however, been a change when the Dutch Government adopted the Gregorian Calendar in the year 1700, when 11 days were taken out of that year to allow for the

accumulated error due to the Julian year being too long by about 11½ minutes. It was therefore high water at North Bay on the 3rd December, 1642, at the same time as it was on Saturday, the 3rd May, 1913.

From the nautical Almanac we learn that the moon was new on the latter date, and it was therefore high water at North Bay at 8 hours, and low water at about 2 hours 50 minutes, or, say, 10 minutes to 3 in the afternoon of the 3rd December, 1642.

As the moon was in Apogee on the 29th November, was on the Equator on the 2nd December, and the movement of the wind from the 29th November to the 4th December, 1642, indicated a barometer a very little above normal, the tide on the afternoon of the day of Tasman's landing probably fell to within six inches of low water springs level. Under these circumstances it would be very risky, if not impossible, to have crossed the reef at the entrance to Prince of Wales Bay in a pinnace drawing at least twelve inches of water in a strong northerly breeze, and even if the crossing of the reef had been successfully accomplished, the water inside would have been comparatively smooth, and there would have been no necessity for the carpenter to swim ashore to plant the flag.

In any case, it is almost certain that some reference to the reef would have been made in Tasman's journal if it had to be crossed in order to effect a landing.

On the other hand, the journal distinctly states that Tasman went to the south-east side of the bay in which he was anchored, and the carpenter swam ashore and planted the flag near a small inlet which bore west-south-west of the ship. There is no other place except that shown on the accompanying chart, which corresponds to that very lucid and concise description, and the landing could have been effected there as well at one state of the tide as another.

It might also be interesting to state that the 3rd of December, 1642, was a Saturday.

[Note.—For other articles concerning Tasman's landing place, see—

Gell, the Tasmanian Journal, Vol. II., p. 321 (1845).

Walker, Pap. and Proc. Roy. Soc. Tas., 1890, pp. 269-284.

Mault, Report Aust. Assocn. Ad. Sc., 1892, pp. 408-412.

Moore-Robinson, *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22nd January, 1923.

Discussion and Report, Pap. and Proc. Roy. Soc. Tas., 1923, pp. 166 and 180.

Lord, Report Easter Camp Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club, 1923. Editor.]