

# THE DISCOVERY AND OCCUPATION OF PORT DALRYMPLE.

BY JAMES BACKHOUSE WALKER.

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## 1. THE DISCOVERY.

It is a fact, often forgotten, that an interval of a century and a half separated the discovery of the eastern coast of Australia from that of her western shores. The western coast was visited by the Dutch in the early part of the 17th century. It was not until the last half of the 18th that the eastern coast was first seen by European eyes. The discovery of Southern Tasmania belongs to the old period—to the days of the Dutch East India Company, and of Tasman's search for the Great South Land—to the days when New Holland had an evil reputation as the most forbidding and inhospitable country on the face of the earth. The discovery of our northern coast was one of the last of the modern epoch, when English navigators had laid open to the world the rich promise of the fertile lands of Eastern Australia, and when the first of the great English southern colonies had already been planted at Port Jackson.

A short sketch of the exploration of the Straits, and particularly Port Dalrymple, although it may traverse some ground already touched upon in former papers, may prove of interest as an introduction to the story of the settlement of Northern Tasmania. Such a sketch will serve to bring into due prominence the achievements of two men, whose names should be held in honour by every Tasmanian, as practically the discoverers of our island home and the pioneers who opened it for English colonisation. These two men were George Bass and Matthew Flinders.

I trust, therefore, that my readers will forgive my detaining them for a time from the settlement of Port Dalrymple by a prefatory history of the events which led to its discovery.

The existence of a great southern continent surrounding the antarctic pole and pushing itself northward far into the Pacific Ocean was a fixed belief of the old geographers. The hope of discovering such a continent



Cook's First  
Voyage, ii.,  
282.

*Ibid.*, ii., 433.

*Ibid.*, ii., 483.

prompted not only the voyage of Abel Tasman towards the unknown South Land in 1642, when he discovered the southern coast of Van Diemen's Land, but many another expedition of the old navigators. As is well known, Captain Cook's first voyage in the *Endeavour*, in 1768, was undertaken for the purpose of observing the transit of Venus from a station in the South Seas. But when the observations had been made, Cook, in accordance with his instructions, headed the *Endeavour* from Tahiti to the far south, to make one more effort to solve the old geographical problem. After reaching lat. 40° S. without seeing any sign of land, he turned north and then west until he sighted what he at first took for the long-sought Terra Australis Incognita. It is scarcely necessary to say that this was the east coast of New Zealand. After circumnavigating the islands, in March, 1770, the question arose as to the homeward route. Cook himself had a strong desire to return by Cape Horn in order finally to determine whether there was or was not a continent in that direction. As, however, winter was approaching, it was thought inadvisable to venture into the stormy seas of those high latitudes. It was resolved, therefore, to return by the East Indies, and with this view to sail westward until they should fall in with the undiscovered east coast of New Holland, and then follow that coast to its northern extremity. The *Endeavour* took her departure from Cape Farewell, and on 19th April, 1770, sighted land at Point Hicks, about 60 miles westward of Cape Howe. Cook had expected to see the coast of Tasman's Van Diemen's Land to the south, and from the sudden falling of the sea concluded that it was not far off, but was not able to determine whether it was joined to New Holland or not. From Point Hicks he sailed north, exploring the whole length of the eastern coast, which he named New South Wales, until he reached its northern extremity at Cape York, and returned home by Torres Straits.

Two years later, Cook sailed on his second voyage in the *Resolution*. He was accompanied by the *Adventure*, commanded by Capt. Tobias Furneaux. The ships were separated in a fog in 56° S. lat., between the Cape and New Zealand, and Furneaux shaped his course for the land marked on the charts as Van Diemen's Land, which he sighted on 5th March, 1773. After a short stay he sailed out of Adventure Bay with the intention of exploring the east coast as far as Point Hicks, Cook's most southern point, in order to discover whether the coast of



Van Diemen's Land was joined to that of New Holland. The *Adventure* sailed northwards till land was lost sight of a little to the north of the Furneaux Group, but continuing a northerly course Furneaux saw, or fancied he saw, land again in about lat. 39°. Here the soundings indicated the presence of shoals, and thinking the navigation too dangerous, he stood away for New Zealand. His conclusion is thus expressed:—"It is my opinion that there is no strait between New Holland and Van Diemen's Land, but a very deep bay."

Cook's Second  
Voyage, i.,  
115.

No further exploration in that direction took place before the settlement of Port Jackson in 1788, and for years subsequently the resources of the new colony were too limited to allow of more than boat expeditions to short distances from the Sydney Heads.

In June 1797, however, the wreck of a vessel named the *Sydney Cove*, on Cape Barren Island in the Furneaux Group, led to the despatch of the colonial schooner *Francis* to the scene of the wreck. The trips of the *Francis* not only extended geographical knowledge, but aroused a keen interest in the locality, as the seat of a most lucrative seal fishery.

Flinders'  
Voyage, Intro.  
104.  
Hunter to  
Portland,  
6 July, 1797.

Just at this time H. M. S. *Reliance* arrived at Port Jackson from the Cape of Good Hope, with a cargo of cattle. She was in a very leaky condition, and had to be detained for extensive repairs. Amongst her officers were two eager and adventurous spirits, her Second Lieut., Matthew Flinders and her Surgeon, George Bass. They were both young—Flinders was 23—both ardent and full of zeal for exploration. On a previous voyage of the *Reliance* they had made a daring expedition down the coast in a boat only 8 feet long, and Bass had travelled inland to try to cross the Blue Mountains. On this occasion Flinders could not leave his ship, but Bass, tired of inaction, prevailed on Governor Hunter to lend him a whaleboat for a more extended voyage. The Governor gave him a boat, six weeks' provisions, and a crew of six seamen from the King's ships. In this whaleboat Bass made his way down the coast, examining the inlets and harbours, and battling with head winds and gales, for a distance of more than 600 miles. Rounding Cape Howe, and passing Cook's furthest point (Cape Hicks), he sighted the high land afterwards known as Wilson's Promontory, but the contrary winds preventing him from reaching it, he stood across for the Furneaux Islands, where he hoped to replenish his stock of provisions. The wind, however, now drove him to the south-west, and as

26 June, 1797,  
Collins' New  
South Wales,  
ii., 318.

Flinders'  
Voyage,  
Intro., 106.



Flinders'  
Voyage,  
Intro., 117.

the gale and sea increased, the water rushed in fast through the boat's side, and he was obliged to go on the other tack. After a time of considerable danger he once more reached the Promontory, this time on the west side, and proceeding along the coast, discovered and entered Western Port. He was detained in the Port for a fortnight by contrary gales, and as the seventh week of absence from Port Jackson had expired, want of provisions forced him very reluctantly to turn the boat's head homeward. On his way back he examined Wilson's Promontory, and came to the conclusion from various indications that there must be a strait between Van Diemen's Land and the mainland. He found that the flood tide swept westward past the Promontory at the rate of two or three miles an hour, the ebb setting to the eastward. "Whenever it shall be decided," he says in his journal, "that the opening between this and Van Diemen's Land is a *strait*, this rapidity of tide, and the long south-west swell that seems to be continually rolling in upon the coast to the westward, will then be accounted for." Strong contrary gales delayed Bass on his homeward voyage, and it was not until after an absence of 12 weeks, during a great part of which he and his crew had subsisted chiefly on mutton-birds, that he returned to Port Jackson, and reported his discoveries to Governor Hunter.

1 March, 1798.

The Governor, in his despatch to the Duke of Portland, says that Bass "found an open ocean westward, and, by the mountainous sea which rolled from that quarter, and no land discoverable in that direction, we have much reason to conclude that there is an open strait through, between the latitude of 39° and 40° 12' S., a circumstance which, from many observations made upon tides and currents, I had long conjectured . . . I presume it will appear that the land called Van Diemen's, and generally supposed to be the southern promontory of this colony, is a group of islands separated from its southern coast by a strait, which it is probable may not be of narrow limits, but may perhaps be divided into two or more channels by the islands near that on which the *Sydney Cove* was wrecked."

Flinders'  
Voyage,  
Intro., 120.

*Ibid.*, 126.

During Bass' absence in the whaleboat the *Francis* was again sent to the wreck, and this time Flinders accompanied her. The schooner went as far south as the entrance of Banks' Strait, and Flinders got his first sight of the north coast of Van Diemen's Land. The smoke rising from the land showed that there were inhabitants



on it, and as there were none on the adjoining islands, Flinders was shaken in his belief in the existence of a strait, for he could not understand how, unless by a connecting isthmus, men could have reached the more distant Van Diemen's Land and yet failed to have attained the intervening islands, more especially as those islands were so abundantly supplied with birds and other food.

When Flinders met Bass in Sydney and heard of his observations at Wilson's Promontory, he declared that there wanted no other proof of the existence of a strait than that of sailing positively through it; and this the two friends now anxiously waited for an opportunity to do. Their professional duties, however, delayed the execution of the project, but six months later when the *Reliance* returned from her voyage to Norfolk Island, Flinders explained his views to Governor Hunter, and the Governor gave him the *Norfolk*, a sloop of 25 tons, with a crew of eight volunteers, to attempt the circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land. This voyage was briefly mentioned in a former paper, and it is not now necessary to follow it in detail, except so far as concerns our immediate subject, the discovery of Port Dalrymple.

On the 7th October 1798, Flinders and Bass sailed in their tiny vessel on their now famous voyage. Their first point was Cape Barren Island, and thence they sailed through Banks' Strait and proceeded along the north coast of Tasmania. On the 3rd November, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Flinders saw with great interest indications of an opening in the land, and bore up for it. The vessel advanced rapidly with the flood tide, and, rounding a low head, entered a broad inlet. Sailing up this inlet some three miles, they passed a low green island, when suddenly the sloop grounded. Fortunately the ground was soft, the strong flood dragged the sloop over into deep water, and drove her rapidly onward till the harbour suddenly expanded into a broad and beautiful basin, on which swam numbers of black swans, duck, and wild fowl. Its shores were broken into points and projections, covered with wood and grass down to the water's edge,—a strong contrast to the rocky and sterile banks observed in sailing up Port Jackson. There appeared to be three arms or rivers discharging themselves into this extensive basin, and, as evening was coming on, the sloop was anchored near to the mouth of the western arm. Flinders was greatly pleased with his discovery, to which Governor Hunter gave the name of

Flinders' Voyage, Intro., 138.

*Ibid.*, 152.



Port Dalrymple, in compliment to Alexander Dalrymple, the well known Hydrographer to the Admiralty. He employed 16 days in examining the place, explored Western and Middle Arms, worked his way up Whirlpool Reach, and got as far as Shoal Point and Crescent Shore, when, although he believed that half the river was still unexplored, the limited time allowed him compelled his return. The *Norfolk* took her departure from Low Head, and, sailing along the north coast, rounded Cape Grim, her commander finally settling the problem of the insularity of Van Diemen's Land by his circumnavigation.

The importance of the discovery was at once recognised in England; and early in 1800 the *Lady Nelson*, a brig of 60 tons, was fitted out and despatched under Lieut. Grant to examine the new strait. It was, however, left to Flinders himself in the *Investigator* two years later, to complete his own work by making the first reliable survey of its northern shores.

King's  
Despatch,  
21 May, 1802.

King to  
Collins,  
26 Nov., 1803.

King to  
Woodriffe,  
26 Nov., 1803.

Collins to  
King,  
27 Jan., 1804.

As we have already seen, the discovery of Bass Strait, and the possible colour it might give to French claims to the island, were among the causes which prompted King's hasty occupation of the Derwent by Bowen in 1803; and it was owing to King's urgent representations of the importance of forming settlements in the Straits to assist the seal fisheries and anticipate the French that Governor Collins' expedition was despatched to Port Phillip. When Governor Collins found his position at Port Phillip untenable, he was doubtful whether he should not remove his people to Port Dalrymple rather than to the Derwent. Governor King was also, in the first instance, strongly in favour of the northern locality, considering it more advantageously situated for the principal settlement in Van Diemen's Land, chiefly on account of the protection it would afford to English sealers in the Straits from the attacks of American interlopers. His only doubt was whether the soil was as good as that on the Derwent, and whether the entrance to the port was not too dangerous. To enable Governor Collins to satisfy himself on these points, he sent the schooner *Francis* to Port Phillip to serve as a surveying vessel. She was in a very leaky condition, and though they tried to patch her up at Port Phillip, and sent her, with William Collins, Clark, the agricultural superintendent, and Humphreys, the mineralogist, to make an examination of Port Dalrymple, she proved so unseaworthy that William Collins had to send her back to



Sydney and complete his voyage in the *Lady Nelson*, which he fell in with at Kent's Group.

The *Lady Nelson* entered Port Dalrymple on New Year's Day 1804. William Collins immediately proceeded with his examination. The *Lady Nelson* anchored above Upper Island (now Pig Island), and from thence the examination of the yet unvisited portion of the river was made in a boat. William Collins was delighted with the appearance of the country about the present site of Launceston, diversified with hill and plain, with good land both for pasture and agriculture. He went some distance up the Main River (North Esk) and found excellent land. Then he entered the Cataract Gorge. Grand as its towering rocks are now, the Gorge in its natural state, when clothed with the wild beauty of its native bush, and full of wild fowl, must have been magnificent. William Collins says of it: "The beauty of the scene is probably not surpassed in the world. The great waterfall or cataract is most likely one of the greatest sources of this beautiful river, every part of which abounds with swans, ducks, and other kinds of wild fowl. On the whole I think the River Dalrymple possesses a number of local advantages requisite for a settlement."

Collins' Report,  
January, 1804.  
Clark's Report.

Collins had been 18 days in Port Dalrymple, and was anxious to get back to the Lieutenant-Governor with his good news. A fair wind carried the *Lady Nelson* across the Straits in two days, and on the 21st January Lieutenant Symons brought his ship to an anchor off the Camp, inside Port Phillip Heads. The Camp was a scene of busy activity, and when Wm. Collins landed to present his report, he found that the Lieutenant-Governor had at last made up his hesitating mind, and that the establishment was on the point of sailing to the Derwent. It so happened that Governor King had heard such a bad account from the captain of a schooner which had touched at Port Dalrymple for water, who painted such a picture of the dangers of the entrance and the hostile attitude of the blacks, that he had written advising Collins to give up all idea of the northern port. The Lieutenant-Governor, therefore, had the satisfaction before sailing of having his superior officer's approval of his final choice.

Collins to King,  
28 Feb., 1804.

King to Collins,  
30 Dec., 1803.

The reports of the explorers had now lost their immediate interest, and the Lieutenant-Governor forwarded them to King with the despatch announcing his departure.

Collins to King,  
27 Jan., 1804.



## 2.—THE OCCUPATION OF THE TAMAR.

Possibly Governor King, if left to himself, would have been contented, at least for the time, with the establishment of the Colony at the Derwent as a sufficient safeguard against French designs. But the apprehensions of the Home Government had been thoroughly aroused by the Governor's despatches pressing the urgent necessity of occupying certain points in Bass Straits and Van Diemen's Land to prevent the probable intrusion of French claims to the territory. It was the consideration of these despatches which had led to the writing of the Minute of December, 1802, quoted in a former paper, and to the sending of Governor Collins to Port Phillip with instructions to place a post on King's Island also. The Cabinet, however, was not yet satisfied with the precautions taken, and six months later Lord Hobart addressed a despatch\* (24th June, 1803, p. 429) to Governor King, in the following terms :—

“ It appears to be advisable that a part of the establishment now at Norfolk Island should be removed, together with a proportion of the settlers and convicts, to Port Dalrymple, the advantageous position of which, upon the *southern* coast of Van Diemen's Land, and near the *eastern* entrance of Bass' Straights, renders it, in a political view, peculiarly necessary that a settlement should be formed there, and as far as the reports of those who have visited that coast can be depended upon, it is strongly recommended by the nature of the soil and the goodness of the climate.”

The despatch proceeded to designate Lieutenant-Colonel Wm. Paterson of the New South Wales Corps, Lieutenant-Governor under Governor King, as the Administrator of the new Colony, at a salary of £250 a year.

Lord Hobart's despatch was very perplexing to King. The direction to occupy Port Dalrymple was too positive to be disregarded, and yet the grotesquely inaccurate description of Port Dalrymple as on the *southern*† coast of Van Diemen's Land, and near the *eastern* entrance of Bass Straits, introduced an element of uncertainty that

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\* As an instance of the roundabout way in which even important Government Despatches reached the Colony in those days, it may be mentioned that Lord Hobart's despatch was landed at Norfolk Island by the *Adornis* whaler, and brought thence to Port Jackson by the *Alexander* whaler.

† It does not seem to have struck King that “southern” was probably merely a clerical error for “northern.” In fact, this is the only possible explanation.



threw him into a difficulty as to his course of action. It was probable that Lord Hobart's directions were the result of a despatch of his own, dated 23rd November 1802, in which he had strongly urged a settlement at Storm Bay Passage, Port Phillip, or King's Island, to counteract any intention of the French intruding a claim within the limits of his government. But if so, it might be "respectfully presumed" that a mistake had been made in naming Port Dalrymple as on the south coast of Van Diemen's Land, and then the inference was that Storm Bay Passage was really intended. If this construction were right, then Colonel Collins's removal to the Derwent had anticipated the Minister's wishes. Furthermore, as Lord Hobart when writing had supposed Port Phillip to be already occupied by Collins, would his commands be best fulfilled by settling Port Dalrymple or re-settling Port Phillip? Or, if the despatch were literally obeyed, and Port Dalrymple occupied, would it not be advisable to send also a small post to Port Phillip or Western Port?

The Governor propounded these questions to his principal officers, Lieutenant-Governor Colonel Paterson and Major Johnston of the New South Wales Corps, for their consideration and advice. They were unanimously of opinion that the commands of the Secretary of State to occupy Port Dalrymple, "with a political view," were too explicit and peremptory to admit of hesitation, and that they must be immediately carried into effect. They thought that the north side of the Straits should also be occupied, and a post established either at Port Phillip or Western Port, whichever might be found the more eligible situation. They recommended that Colonel Paterson should forthwith be despatched to Port Dalrymple with a small establishment, and a guard of not less than 20 soldiers.

Opinion of  
Officers,  
18 May, 1804.

Having thus settled his course of action, the Governor lost no time in taking steps to send a force to occupy the post pending the transference of the colonists from Norfolk Island. The armed colonial cutter *Integrity*, 56 tons, was at once fitted for sea, and a small private vessel of 25 tons, called the *Contest*, was chartered to assist. The two ships were to take 20 convicts and a force of 34 soldiers, in all 56 persons. On the morning of the 7th June the New South Wales Corps was drawn up on the Government wharf as a guard of honor, and Lieutenant-Governor Paterson embarked in the pinnace to go on board his vessel. The pinnace left the

King to  
Hobart,  
15 May, 1804.

King to  
Hobart,  
14 Aug., 1804.

*Sydney*  
*Gazette*,  
10 June, 1804.



King to  
Hobart,  
14 Aug. 1804.

wharf, the battery fired a salute, and, to quote the reporter of the *Sydney Gazette*, "the most animated acclamations issued from the shore" as the new Lieutenant-Governor set out to found another British Colony—or rather to attempt to found it—for the same fate which befell the first attempt to found the Derwent Settlement attended that to the Tamar. It was now the depth of winter, and storms such as had driven back Lieutenant Bowen on his attempt to reach the Derwent just 12 months before met the ships at the entrance to Bass Straits. The *Integrity*, on rounding Cape Howe, battled in vain against the strong westerly winds which prevailed in the Straits, and had to put back to Port Jackson, which she reached on 21st June,\* her passengers all ill in consequence of being battened down in the hold. The *Contest*, after beating about for a month, had to follow her consort's example. King was much disappointed, and made offers to the masters of two East India Company's ships then in harbour to take Paterson and his people to their destination, offers which their charter parties prevented them from accepting. There was therefore no alternative but to delay the expedition until the approach of spring, when H.M.S. *Buffalo* would be available for the service required.

Paterson to  
King,  
27 Sept., 1804.

During the interval between the return of the *Integrity* and the departure of the *Buffalo* a question of some difficulty arose respecting Paterson's relations to the Lieut.-Governor at the Derwent. Colonel Collins claimed that his appointment as Lieut.-Governor extended to the whole of Van Diemen's Land, that the northern settlement was therefore within his jurisdiction, and Paterson under his command. This claim Paterson wholly repudiated. He contended that he had received an appointment from the King as Lieut.-Governor of Port Dalrymple at a time when Collins was supposed to be at Port Phillip, that consequently his command was *wholly* independent of Collins, and he absolutely refused to tolerate any interference by the Lieut.-Governor at the Derwent with him or his settlement. Governor King admitted the cogency of Paterson's argument, and issued a General Order dividing the island into two independent governments, to be known respectively as the Counties of Buckingham and Cornwall, the dividing line to be the 42nd parallel of south latitude, each government to be

23 Sept., 1804.

\* Paterson in his despatch to Lord Camden, 14th November 1805, says he arrived in Port Jackson 17th June 1804, but this is probably an error.



subordinate only to himself as Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales and its dependencies.

Governor King's instructions to the new Lieut.-Governor present curious matter for study. We may pass over the usual directions as to the treatment of the aborigines, the investigation of the products of the country, the care of clothing, stores, and live stock, the oversight of the convicts, the regulations for the occupation of lands and their cultivation, religious worship, and so forth. But there are other features in the instructions which present a very striking contrast to what would in these days be thought proper to inculcate on the founder of a new colony. It must never be forgotten that these early establishments were not colonies at all in the modern sense, but military posts, established for political purposes, in which a limited number of convicts were utilised to provide the labour necessary for their maintenance. Instead, therefore, of encouraging trade and settlement, every possible precaution was taken to ensure the most complete isolation. This had the double object of keeping out foreign intruders and guarding against the escape of the convicts. Paterson was expressly enjoined to take particular care that all communication with the East India Company's possessions, with China, or with the islands visited by any European nation should be rigorously interdicted, or only allowed on the special authorisation of the Indian Government. No craft of any sort was to be built by any private person without a written licence from the Governor in Sydney. No intercourse was to be permitted between persons arriving in any vessel and the inhabitants of the settlement without the Lieut.-Governor's special permission. The American sealers who had given so much trouble to King had been building vessels from the wrecks of the *Sydney Cove* and other ships. These, if met with, were to be seized by putting the King's mark upon them. The introduction and sale of spirits by private persons was prohibited, and any which were introduced were to be seized and destroyed.

Instructions  
to Paterson,  
1 June, 1804.

By the end of September H.M.S. *Buffalo* was fitted and ready for sea. The armed tender *Lady Nelson* and the Colonial schooners *Francis* and *Integrity* were to accompany her, and assist in conveying the people and stores to the new colony. Paterson's establishment consisted of Dr. Jacob Mountgarrett (who had come up with Lt. Bowen in the *Ocean* on 24 Aug., and on leaving Risdon had received the appointment of Surgeon);

General order,  
22 Sept., 1804.  
*Sydney*  
*Gazette*, 14 &  
30 Sept., 1804.

King to  
Hobart,  
20 Dec., 1804.



King to  
Paterson,  
11 Aug., 1804.  
King to  
Hobart,  
20 Dec., 1804.

*Sydney  
Gazette.*

Kent's Report,  
28 Nov., 1804.

Mr. Alexr. Riley, Storekeeper, at a salary of 5s. per day ; Capt. Anthony Fenn Kemp, Ensigns Hugh Piper and Anderson, 64 non-commissioned officers and privates of the N. S. Wales Corps, and 74 convicts. One settler, James Hill, accompanied the party, and possibly another. In all there were some 146 persons all told. The troops were embarked on Wednesday, 3rd October,—the music of the band, says our reporter of the *Sydney Gazette*, being “only interrupted by reiterated peals of acclamation from the spectators.” On Sunday, October 14th, the Lieut.-Governor embarked from the Government wharf, under a salute of 11 guns from the battery, the band of the N. S. Wales Corps playing “God save the King” and “Rule Britannia.” Governor King and a number of ladies and officers accompanied him on board the *Buffalo*, which saluted with 11 guns. The little squadron got clear of the Heads the next forenoon. The ships had a very rough voyage down, and a succession of heavy gales separated them. Most of the live stock died ; and it was not until the 28th—a fortnight after leaving Port Jackson—that the *Buffalo* reached Eastern Cove, Kent's Group, where she found the *Francis*. Here she lay at anchor for 6 days, while it blew a strong gale from the westward. On the 3rd November the ships left their anchorage, and next morning the *Buffalo* made the entrance of Port Dalrymple. None of her consorts were in sight to try the channel for the larger vessel ; and Captain Kent, with many misgivings, determined to make the venture ; for he says, in his report to Governor King, “I saw little probability of the Settlement ever being formed unless some risk was run. I therefore bore up, in dark cloudy weather, blowing strong at north-west right on shore, for a harbour little—very little—known, hoping, should any accident happen to the ship, I might meet with every consideration for my zeal.” After what he had heard of the strength of the tides, he was surprised to find it running only  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles per hour, and avers “that a common four-oared jolly-boat, rowed ill, could always, even in the height of the springs, head the tide between Green Island and Outer Cove, as it never exceeded 3 miles an hour.” The night coming on, the ship came to an anchor below Green Island. It blew very hard in the night, and harder in the morning, the anchor came home and the ship drove on shore on the eastern shoals. Here she lay beating for three days ; but the *Integrity*, Acting Lieut. Robbins, coming in, they lightened the ship of



part of her cargo ; and on the 4th day, after great exertions, she was got off, fortunately without damage, and came to an anchor in Outer Cove (George Town). Here the military, prisoners, and stores were landed, the tents were pitched, and on the 11th November possession was formally taken by hoisting H.M. Colours under a royal salute from the *Buffalo* and three volleys from the troops.

Paterson  
to Camden,  
14 Nov., 1805.

Paterson  
to King,  
23 Nov., 1804.

The other two ships did not arrive till the 21st, the *Lady Nelson* having suffered much damage from the storm, having had her decks swept, and having lost all her live stock. Before leaving, Captain Kent erected a flagstaff at Low Head, and other beacons for the guidance of vessels entering the port.

The day after taking possession (12th November), the camp was approached by a body of some 80 natives, under the lead of a chief. Presents were offered to the chief—a looking-glass, two handkerchiefs, and a tomahawk. Paterson says that the looking-glass puzzled them much, and that, like monkeys, on looking at it they put their hands behind it to feel if there was any one there. When they came to the boat they wanted to carry off everything they saw, but when made to understand that this could not be allowed they retired peaceably. Shortly afterwards, however, the blacks returned in greater force and made an attack on an outpost. A correspondent of the *Sydney Gazette* thus describes the incident :—“An interview took place with the natives, which began very amicably, but, unfortunately, their natural impetuosity has caused a temporary suspension of civilities, having attempted to throw a sergeant from a rock into the sea, and attacked his guard of two men, which compelled them to fire in their own defence.” One black was killed, and another wounded in this affray.

*Ibid.*

16 Dec., 1804.

The hurried landing at Outer Cove was necessitated by the accident to the *Buffalo*, and the pressing need of immediately unloading her. As there was a sufficient stream of water for present use, and about 100 acres of land that might do for cultivation, Paterson thought it best to keep his people at the spot where they had landed until he should have had time to explore the river. Captain Kemp, Dr. Mountgarrett, and Mr. Reilly, the storekeeper, were appointed the first magistrates of the settlement, Dr. Mountgarrett acting as Superintendent of Public Works. Mr. Thos. Massey was made chief constable, with three subordinates ; two overseers were appointed, and Jas. Hill, the solitary settler, was

Paterson  
to King,  
26 Nov., 1804.

General order,  
19 Nov. 1804.



put in charge of the live stock. His duties were not onerous, for only a horse, four head of cattle, three sheep, and 15 swine had survived the storms of the passage. There was no chaplain, and as Paterson was at a loss for a person to perform Divine service, he induced Captain Kent to discharge from the *Buffalo* a Mr. Edward Main, who, we may presume, had some qualifications for the office, and who was thereupon installed to attend to the spiritual wants of the little community. The prisoners were set to work to erect temporary huts for themselves, which were placed clear of the camp on the opposite side of the creek, to prevent as far as possible communication with the troops. The prisoners worked hard and cheerfully from daylight to dark every day, and in a fortnight from the time of landing the huts were completed.

Paterson  
to King,  
26 Nov., 1804.

The Governor's next care was to begin cultivation, for, with a salt meat diet, a plentiful supply of vegetables was most important to the health of his people. A gang of men was therefore set to work to break up ground. The means at hand for cultivation were limited; hardly any agricultural implements had been provided. The seeds had nearly all been destroyed by rats on the passage down, and most of the plants sent had died, though a few fruit trees and strawberry and hop plants had been saved. The Governor had to buy potatoes for seed from the master of the *Integrity*, as the authorities had not thought it worth while to send any for the use of the colony. Paterson's despatches show that in fitting out the expedition there had been the same extraordinary want of care and foresight in providing necessary things which seems to have been characteristic of official preparations for all these early settlements. He complains to Governor King that the prisoners were wholly destitute of shoes, and that he had been compelled to ask the purser of the *Buffalo* to let him have 100 pairs from the vessel's stock; while in such a vital matter as the supply of provisions, the quantity sent was so inadequate, in view of the difficulty and uncertainty of obtaining timely aid from head quarters, that he had thought it necessary to supplement his stock with salt meat from the *Buffalo's* stores.

*Ibid.*

The Lieut.-Governor had already made some short excursions from Outer Cove, and Captain Kent, of the *Buffalo*, had examined Western Arm, where he had found good streams of water, land fit for cultivation, and good timber; and from his report Paterson thought



that it appeared to be the most eligible situation for the seat of government. It had taken him three weeks to get his people fairly settled at Outer Cove, and he was now free to go up the river and thoroughly examine the country. On the 28th November, therefore, he went on board the *Lady Nelson*. He took with him Surgeon Mountgarrett; with Ensign Piper, and a corporal and 3 privates of the N. S. Wales Corps, as a guard. They ascended the river, making observations of the country and soil as they went, till they arrived at the junction of the two rivers forming the present port of Launceston; and here the vessel came to anchor. Paterson was greatly pleased with the park-like country on the present site of Launceston, and considered it better pasture land than the Seven Hills, near Parramatta. The party now proceeded up the main river (now North Esk) in the ship's boat and the Governor's wherry. The journal notes the rich plains on the river banks; and further on (near St. Leonard's) the beautiful rising ground to the left, the green hills covered to the top with trees, and on the other side of the river—which was about 20 yards wide—the plain with stately gums, great wattles 60 to 80 feet high, and dense scrub. They pushed on with difficulty, the river being blocked with drift-wood and fallen trees, and various rapids giving them much trouble, until they reached a point—apparently about the White Hills—above which they found it impossible to take the boat. Here they pitched their tent on a rising ground, and looked with delight over the rich plains, or rather meadows, covered with luxuriant herbs and pasture, and waiting for the plough. Paterson says, "From my tent there is an extent which is seen in one view of nearly three miles in length and at places one in breadth, along the banks of the river, where thousands of acres may be ploughed without falling a tree. These plains extend upwards of 10 miles along the winding banks, and everywhere equally fertile." He found good clay for bricks, abundant timber for building, reeds for thatching, with everything necessary for agricultural settlement, and considered the country superior to any yet discovered. They made excursions on foot some miles further up the river; and then, "having ascertained to a certainty that the country in general can hardly be equalled either for agricultural or pasture land," they made their way back down the river, and reached the *Lady Nelson* near the Cataract, after an absence of four days. Paterson describes the Cataract Gorge, with its stupendous

Paterson's  
Journal, 503.

*Ibid.*, 515.



Paterson's  
Journal, 525.

columns of basalt rising one above another to over 500 feet in height, as picturesque beyond description,—the effect being heightened by the number of black swans, unable to fly, in the smooth water close to the fall. Paterson named the Cataract River the South Esk; and, to the main river, including what is now known as the North Esk, he gave the name of the Tamar, out of compliment to Governor King, whose birthplace was on the English stream of that name. After an absence of a fortnight, the *Lady Nelson* got back to Western Arm, and entered that shallow inlet. Here Paterson landed to examine, for the second time, a piece of land at the head of the Arm, between two streams a quarter of a mile apart, and which he had named Kent's Burn and M'Millan's Burn. He says, "On landing, the soil is very forbidding, being a hard whitish clay mixed with quartz; but towards the hills there are patches of excellent ground, and the finest timber I ever saw (gum and wattle). Boats, at high water, can come up close to either of the runs. After much labour and attention I have paid in examining every part of the river, I have seen none so advantageously situated for a permanent settlement as this, where there is an easy communication with vessels arriving in this port as well as with settlements higher up the river. These favourable circumstances have induced me to determine upon removing the principal part of my small military force, with most of the prisoners, and commence clearing ground and erecting the necessary buildings before the winter sets in."

The question naturally arises, by what extraordinary perversity of reasoning did Paterson arrive at the conclusion that the miserable patch of land at the head of Western Arm was pre-eminently the best place for his chief settlement? He had just come back from a visit to the splendid site of Launceston and the fertile banks of the North Esk, which he described as superior to any country yet discovered either in Van Diemen's Land or New South Wales, and as possessing every possible advantage for a settlement, including approach to it by a fine river navigable for large ships. What induced him, then, after anxious thought, to pass this by, and deliberately make choice of a narrow strip of land which he describes as having a forbidding soil, and which was situated at the head of a shallow and muddy inlet not accessible even to boats except at high water? The explanation, I think, is to be found in the policy of the home



government. Founding a colony, according to modern ideas, means to open up the country as speedily as possible, to settle the lands with energetic cultivators who will develop the natural resources of the soil, to attract a population who will thrive themselves and advance the colony by the extension of an export trade. Nothing was further from the thoughts of the home authorities than any plan for colonising in this sense. New Holland was to be, not a colony, but a place for the reception of criminals,—a settlement to relieve the home country of the ever growing and overwhelming difficulty of disposing of her criminal population. The British Government not only did not encourage colonisation, they endeavoured as far as possible to prevent it, or at least to confine it within the narrowest limits, permitting it only in so far as it might be made to serve as an auxiliary to their sole object—the maintenance of a penal settlement at the smallest possible cost. The subordinate establishments at Port Phillip, the Derwent, Port Dalrymple, Newcastle, and other places were planted in the first instance as military posts, to prevent France establishing herself in spots where she might be able to harrass the great penal establishment at Port Jackson. The expeditions of Bowen, of Collins, and of Paterson were mainly precautionary measures, part of the military policy of England in her great struggle with France. Prisoners were a useful part of these early establishments, as providing labour which, by the erecting of buildings and cultivation of the soil, might make these posts as little burdensome as possible to the national exchequer. These outlying settlements, also, if favourably situated, might in course of time become valuable penal stations. Some of them, such as the Derwent and Port Dalrymple, would further serve the useful purpose of ports of refuge for the East India Company's vessels in the China trade, and form convenient posts for the protection of the whale and seal fisheries from American and other foreign intruders.

Bowen's choice of Risdon, and Collins' abandonment of Port Phillip when he could not find a suitable locality near the Heads, were not, as is too often supposed, the result of incapacity and blindness. They wanted to form a station, not to plant a colony—a station readily accessible from the sea—and the resources of the interior of the country were of little concern to them, so long as they could find in their immediate neighbourhood sufficient pasture for their cattle, and enough agricultural



land to yield a food supply for their people. It was, doubtless, considerations such as these which led Paterson deliberately to turn away from the fertile banks of the North Esk and fix his people on the little strip of forbidding soil at the head of Western Arm.

Paterson  
to King,  
27 Dec., 1804.

*Sydney  
Gazette.*

The Lieut.-Governor gave the name of York Town to the spot he had chosen for his town. He marked out the ground for erecting dwellings, and set the prisoners to work to load the *Lady Nelson* and *Francis* with a portion of the stores and with two wooden houses which he had brought with him from Port Jackson. He detained the *Lady Nelson* until after the new year in order to assist in the removal from Outer Cove, and when she sailed for Port Jackson on the 11th January, 1805, she took some tons of the iron ore which he had found in great abundance in the neighbourhood of his settlement.

From this point it is difficult to trace the history of York Town from the official papers. Paterson's despatches present a great contrast to the careful and voluminous reports sent by Governor Collins from the Derwent. Collins could give interest even to an official document, and introduced into his despatches an amount of graphic detail which not only gives us a full history of events but enables us to reconstruct the actual condition of his colony. Paterson was neither so precise nor so picturesque as Collins; his official communications are meagre, and his carelessness in supplying regular and full returns brought upon him the censure of Governor Bligh. The Lieut.-Governor's deficiencies can, however, be partly supplied from the columns of the *Sydney Gazette*, which, during the year 1805, contained many letters giving information with regard to the new settlement at Port Dalrymple.

*Sydney  
Gazette,*  
10 Mar., 1805.

In January or early in February, 1805, the schooner *Integrity* was despatched by Governor King to examine a port situated to the westward of the mouth of the Tamar—presumably Port Sorell—which had been discovered by Surgeon Mountgarrett and Ensign Piper, and by them named Supply River. On the 22nd she left, carrying a report that the country between the Supply River and York Town had been found so good that it was intended to give the first free settlers locations of land in that district. The buildings at York Town were rapidly approaching completion. The colony at Outer Cove was doing well, the gardens had flourished, and on the 18th January—ten weeks after the first landing—the Governor



and others who had cultivated small plots of ground had peas, French beans, potatoes, and turnips. Vegetables were plentiful, and it was fully expected that the cultivation of grain would be an equal success. Towards the end of March, H.M.S. *Buffalo* again sailed for the Tamar, carrying an additional military force, 50 prisoners—mostly from Norfolk Island—2 horses, 8 head of cattle, 135 sheep, and a quantity of stores. This made the total strength about 200 persons. Mrs. Paterson was a passenger by the *Buffalo*, and the transference of head-quarters to York Town was completed before the end of March.

*Sydney Gazette*,  
24 Mar., 1805.

Paterson  
to King,  
5 April, 1805.

By this time Paterson had received a welcome addition to his resources. Lord Hobart had, in 1803, directed Governor King to enter into an arrangement with Campbell & Co. of Sydney, to import cattle from India for the use of Collins's Port Phillip settlement. When Collins removed to the Derwent, King arranged with Campbell & Co. to supply these cattle to one or other of the Van Diemen's Land settlements. The directions as to the their final destination were given in a way sufficiently curious, and which illustrates the primitive methods in use in those early days. The master of the vessel bringing the stock, on his arrival at the entrance of Bass Strait, was to send a boat ashore at Sea Elephant Bay, King's Island, where he would find a shed, from the rafters of which a bottle would be suspended, and in the bottle he would find a letter with the Governor's directions as to the port at which the cattle were to be landed. The contract price was to be £25 per head for the cows landed, and £5 per head for the calves. 910 cows were put on board the ship *Sydney* at Calcutta. Of these 298 died on the passage; the remaining 612, with 10 calves, being safely landed at Port Dalrymple at the end of March. The cost to the Imperial Government of this shipment was £15,350.

Campbell  
to King,  
19 May, 1804.

King to  
Camden,  
30 April, 1805.

As York Town did not afford sufficient pasture for the stock, the Lieutenant-Governor had them landed at Outer Cove, where Ensign Piper was placed in charge of them. The change of climate and food, however, was so injurious to them that their numbers rapidly diminished, and they were removed to the less exposed western shore, where sheds were erected for their shelter. In spite of all care and the labour of a large number of men in providing them with fodder, the winter reduced them so much that the return of spring saw only 251 of the Bengal cows surviving. Paterson therefore had them removed, first to Point Rapid and then to the

Paterson  
to King,  
14 Nov., 1805.

*Ibid.*,  
30 Dec., 1805.



Paterson's  
Journal, 528.

plains on the North Esk, where they found better pasture and a more congenial climate. Although York Town was now the head quarters, Paterson still kept up an establishment at Outer Cove as his port and his depôt for stock. He also had a small post at the Low Head flagstaff and at Green Island, which formed his store depôt. This did not meet with the approval of the Governor at Sydney, who objected to the division of his forces, and thought they ought to be concentrated at his principal settlement.

There is little more to tell respecting the York Town Settlement. After a few months' trial Paterson found the site so unsuitable that in March 1806, he moved his head-quarters to the banks of the North Esk—the present site of Launceston. A small establishment was, however, maintained in the old port for upwards of a year longer, and then York Town was finally abandoned.

For long years afterwards the whole district was deserted, save for a few scattered and insignificant holdings. Towards the year 1870 (I think) attention was directed to the working of the rich iron deposits in the neighbourhood of Western Arm, and large smelting works were erected at Ilfracombe. The enterprise proved a failure.

Though the iron industry had failed, gold was destined to restore the fortunes of the district. Gold was discovered in 1870 at Cabbage-tree Hill, in the vicinity of Middle Arm, and by the development of the Tasmania Mine a considerable population has been attracted, so that in the present year we have the town of Beaconsfield a prosperous mining centre, claiming to be the third town in the Colony, within less than five miles of the spot which Lieutenant-Governor Paterson designed to make the capital of northern Tasmania.

Anyone who has the curiosity to see the ruins of this early settlement may easily reach the spot from Beaconsfield. A rough bush-track, practicable for a chaise cart, winds in a north-westerly direction through miserably poor country, covered with gum forest and a heath-like scrub intermingled with the dwarf grass-tree. After travelling for about 5 miles along this track and crossing the Anderson's Creek of Paterson, we reach M'Millan's Burn, now known as Massey's Creek, and emerge from the bush. Between this creek and a creek on the north, (called by Paterson Kent's Burn, but now known as the York Town Rivulet), just at the head of the Western



Arm, is a cleared flat of indifferent land, 300 to 400 yards wide. This is the site of Paterson's settlement. On the banks of the northern creek are some fair grass paddocks; and immediately beyond rises an abrupt, almost precipitous, wooded ridge, to which Paterson gave the name of Mount Albany. From the side of this hill the flat on which York Town stood lies spread out below us. Two little wooden cottages or huts, surrounded by neglected orchards, are the only habitations. To the left stretch the shallow waters of Western Arm, fringed with extensive mud-flats which are bare at low water. The owner of one of the huts on the desolate clearing is an old man, the son of a man who came with Paterson's first establishment. He is ready to tell the visitor of blacks and bushrangers, and of the days when there was a Government House, and York Town was busy with soldiers and prisoners.

Ruins of the original Settlement there are none. The old inhabitant points to a hole, from which the foundations have been long ago removed, as the site of Government House, and to a clump of wattles as the spot where once stood Captain Kemp's house, the birthplace of the late Mr. George A. Kemp. This is all;—except that back in the bush, where the little valley widens, are a few mounds under the gum-trees, half hidden by the low scrub, and indicating neglected and forgotten graves.