

ON THE PLANTING OF THE DUTCH FLAG IN
TASMANIA IN 1642.

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Plates I.-III. and two Text figures.

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The exact location of the landing place of Tasman's carpenter has excited considerable interest of late years. This has been due, mainly, to the erection of the Tasman Memorial, a work which will ever be to the credit of those responsible for it.

The site of the landing has been the subject of several discussions at meetings of the Society, but it was not until the last meeting of the 1925 session that a paper (Halligan, 1925, pp. 195-202) was read on the subject.

Previous to this Gell (1845, pp. 321-328), Walker (1890, pp. 266-284), and Mault (1892, pp. 408-412) had discussed the matter to a certain degree. In January, 1923, Mr. J. Moore-Robinson contributed an article to the daily press upon the subject, and stated his intention of publishing a paper, but this has not appeared.

TASMAN'S ANCHORAGE.

As a prelude to any discussion concerning the site of the landing it is essential to pay attention to the anchorage of the ships.

Gell (1845, p. 326) discussed this question, and considered that he was enabled to "fix the spot with the utmost accuracy." Walker (1890, p. 278) refers to the anchorage as being to the north-west of Green Island.

In the newspaper article referred to previously (Moore-Robinson, *The Mercury*, 22nd January, 1923), the anchorage site is given as:—

South-east extremity of Maria Island N. 36 E.

North-east corner of Green Island S. 76 E.

Most northerly point of Cape Paul Lamanon S. 84 W.

Centre of pebbly beach, Prince of Wales Bay (the landing place) W.S.W.

Captain Bowerman in a report furnished to the Society states: "I might mention that when on the position that I considered *approximately* Tasman's anchorage I took the following bearings:—

- "S.E. extremity of Maria Island N.E.½N. (N. 37° E.).
- "N.E. extremity of Green Island E. x S½S (S 76° E.).
- "Most northerly part of Cape Paul Lamanon W.½S. (S. 84° W.).

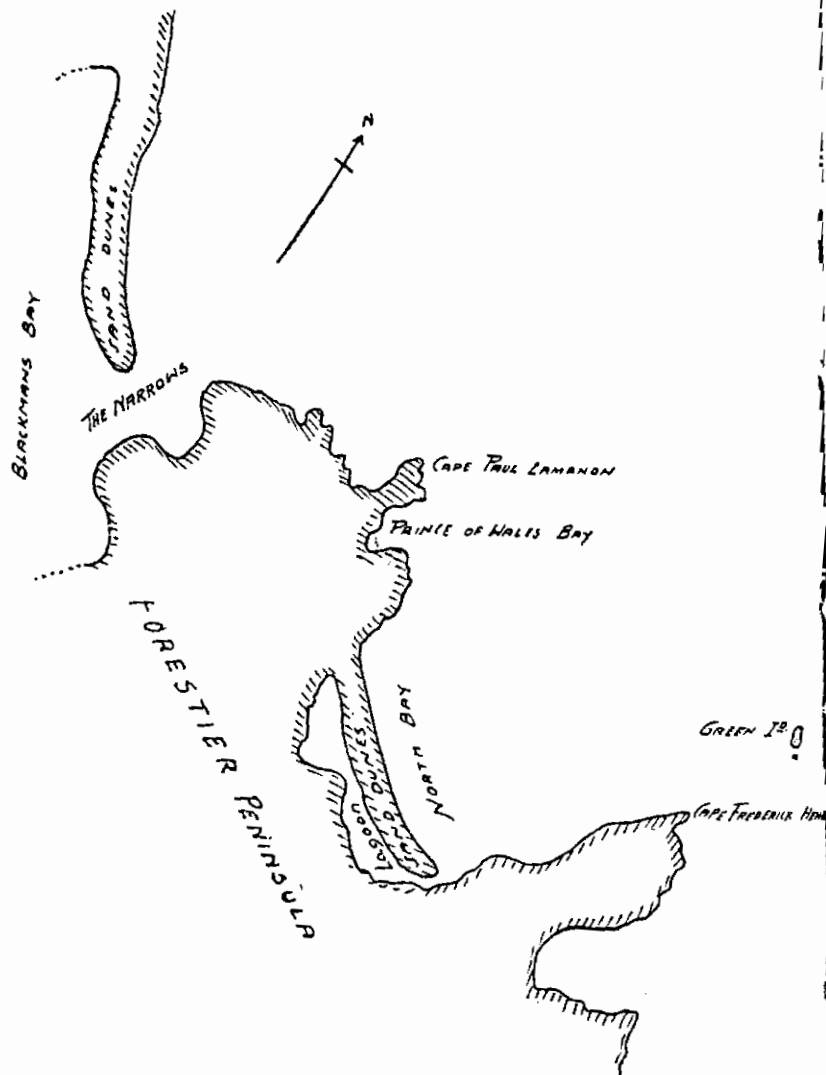


Fig. 1.—Sketch showing Locality of Tasman's Anchorage.

"These bearings were read only to the nearest ¼ point with the eye from a position on the yacht that was "as far as possible from any local attraction, to reduce the "deviation. The reason I took them was in case anyone ever "wished to check the work the bearings would be handy as "a guide. These bearings do not make a good fix on the "Admiralty Chart, at which I am not surprised, seeing the "coast there is not accurately surveyed."

Mr. Moore-Robinson mentions in his article:—"It was "found that Tasman's bearings, like his observations, were "accurate only in a general sense. He records his variation "as being 3 degrees. It should have been 9 degrees." I am unable to find any authority for this last statement, unless the present compass variation has been accepted as applying to 1642. In comparison, however, with the records of other early navigators, Tasman's variation of 3 degrees appears to be approximately correct. (See also "Isogonic map for the Indian and Pacific Oceans for the epoch 1640." By W. van Belleman.) In addition, other data have to be taken into consideration, including the various charts, which differ in many details, the interpretation of them, as well as the wording of the Journal. (1)

There is one point worthy of mention which the examination of the charts and sketches discloses, namely, that the *Zeehaen* (2) was anchored nearer to Green Island than the *Heemskirk*, and as observations were made on both vessels this fact may be of service in the interpretation of several items.

Mr. Halligan (1925) has totally disregarded charts and soundings, and assumed Tasman's anchorage as being well inside Green Island. His reasons for this are unconvincing, especially so when he refers to Tasman's skill as a sailor and the law of storms (page 198). The anchorage shown on the plan accompanying his paper (page 199) would have left the Dutch ships on a lee shore in the event of a northerly breeze, which was to be expected, and, as shown by the Journal, did occur later. It is far more probable that Tasman anchored out beyond Green Island near where Marion did in 1772, and, in fact, all evidence seems to support this view, although, in the absence of a detailed marine survey, the position can be fixed in an approximate manner only.

(1) Apparently Messrs. Kennedy and Moore-Robinson's party worked from Woide's translation, but the later translation by Professor Heeres is generally accepted by historical authorities as being the more accurate and complete.

(2) Tasman's ships were (1) the small war yacht *Heemskirk* (Flag Ship), of 60 tons, and having a crew of 60. (2) The *Flute Zeehaen*, of 100 tons, and a crew of 50 (Flutes were long, narrow ships, quick sailers of shallow draft, and with a good deal of ship room). *Vide* Heeres.

THE LOCATION OF THE SITE WHERE TASMAN'S CARPENTER SWAM ASHORE.

In order to arrive at the correct interpretation of the available data concerning the landing place it is necessary to review certain sections of the account given in Tasman's Journal. Tasman brought his ships to anchor on the evening of the 1st December, 1642. On the following day he sent his pilot major "to a bay situated to the north-west of us" to examine the land, and further gives the distance as "upwards of one mile," which distance is equal to four English miles. Mr. Halligan (p. 198) claims that had Tasman been anchored east-north-east of Prince of Wales Bay there would have been no bay to the north-west of him, but examining Tasman's log and chart there can be no doubt that the bay which he referred to was the general direction of the present Marion Bay, the curving beach of which would be situated in a north-westerly direction at a distance of about four miles, and no doubt it was the general direction of the outer bay, and not the inner bay, to which Tasman referred. The boats under the command of the pilot major examined the inner bay and reported on it.

As far as we have record, therefore, the small bay inside "The Narrows" marks the spot where the first white people landed on Tasmanian shores.

The explorers returned to the ship, and, among other matters, stated that the land was inhabited probably by giants, owing to the distance apart certain climbing notches were cut in some of the trees. They had also seen smoke from fires in the distance, and heard a sound like a trumpet or small gong. This latter sound was probably the note of the black Bell-magpie (*Strepera fuliginosa*), which occurs in this locality, and has a note that has been likened by Gould to the sound of "a hammer on anvil," and by Littler to that of "a tramway gong." As regards the giants, there was a fixed idea, antedating even the voyage of Quiros, that the great unknown lands of the south were inhabited by giants.

Coming to Tasman's description of the doings on the 3rd December, he states that "we went to the south-east side of this bay in the same boats as yesterday." Gell (1845) considered that the bay referred to was the south-east side of the present Blackman's Bay. Walker (1890) considered it was the south-east side of the present North Bay. Halli-

gan (1925) is of the same opinion as Walker. The available evidence undoubtedly proves the correctness of Gell's opinion in this respect. (3)

Throughout Tasman's account of his stay on the coast his reference to "the bay" may be taken to mean the bay to the north-west of his anchorage, inside of which was a further bay examined by the ship's boats, the entrance to which may have been in a slightly different position from what it is to-day owing to the shifting nature of the channel through the sandspit. Moreover, Tasman's references to the rocky soil, etc., agree far better with the land inside "The Narrows" than with the land at the entrance of the lagoon at the lower end of North Bay, where the land is sandy, except on the ridge running out towards Cape Frederick Hendrick, which is of rocky formation. The outstanding piece of evidence, however, is given by the charts themselves, for whilst the outline of the inner bay is given in detail, and most of the creeks running into it are shown, yet the shores of North Bay are shown in outline only, and there is not the slightest trace of the lagoon or its outlet. Had Tasman's men been ashore at the outlet and examined the lagoon, there is no doubt that they would have left a description of it and shown it on their charts. The locality visited by the boats in the morning has a bearing on the location where the flag was planted, for the same afternoon the boats attempted to return to the place visited in the morning. Similar words occur in Tasman's Journal as regards the direction taken both in the morning and the afternoon, namely, "we went to the South East side of this bay." Now, assuming that the boats were making for the entrance to "The Narrows," everything in Tasman's Journal and his descriptions can be reconciled with the present topography of the country, but if, on the other hand, the boats had been making for the outlet of the lagoon at the lower end of North Bay, none of Tasman's statements can be made to agree with the configuration of the coast.

Taking the second case first, if the anchorage as shown on Mr. Halligan's map is correct and we follow the descriptions given by Tasman, it is clear that he would have been half-way from the anchorage to the entrance to the

(3) On another aspect, it is of interest to note that Gell considered that the true Frederick Henry Bay of Tasman was the small cove now known as Prince of Wales Bay. It is generally accepted that the bay referred to was meant for the inlet now known as Blackman's Bay, though there is some evidence that Tasman meant the name to cover the outer as well as the inner bay.

lagoon before it came on to blow strongly from the north, and this would have given a fair breeze into the lagoon; but Tasman refers to one boat pulling back to the ships while the pinnace ran on to an inlet which bore west-south-west of the ships. Mr. Halligan assumes that Tasman landed in the centre of North Bay, and has marked on his map "flag-staff erected here." It is difficult to understand how Mr. Halligan could arrive at this conclusion. Had the boat gone to the lagoon they would have carried on to the lower end, and not made up to the centre of the beach. Moreover, there is no small inlet as mentioned by Tasman in this position. Further, with a northerly breeze a heavy sea with a big break runs in and meets the sandy shore of North Bay. Anyone who has seen the locality in a northerly breeze would recognise immediately that it would be quite impossible for the carpenter to have swum ashore with a staff in such a locality—much more to have ever got back to the boats through the heavy surf and the undertow which sets along the shore. Moreover, there is no sloping ground clothed with giant eucalypts near to these moving sand dunes.

Taking the other case, and assuming Tasman's anchorage as being outside Green Island in the position shown on his chart, the true facts of the case are plain for all to see if a little care and attention are paid to the Journal and the charts and sketches accompanying same (*vide Heeres' Tasman*).

The two boats leaving this anchorage commenced their journey towards "The Narrows," but when half-way, that is, in the vicinity of Cape Paul Lamanon, a northerly breeze came down very strongly, forcing the smaller boat back to the ship, whilst the pinnace was run inshore to where one would anticipate a sailor would make for, namely, under the lee of the high land forming the cape. There appears to be no question that the bay now known as Prince of Wales Bay was the inlet referred to by Tasman as bearing west-south-west of his ships, as it meets with all the conditions as described in his Journal. Moreover, if the sketches accompanying his Journal are compared with the present topography of the land, almost the exact spot where the flag-staff was erected can be easily arrived at, for it is plainly shown as being the north-west shore of the bay.

Prince of Wales Bay is situated at the foot of a steep ridge, one arm of which runs out towards Cape Paul

Lamanon. The bay is quite a small inlet, and towards its head there exists a bar of stone upon which from both sides of the bay there jut out reefs of stones which serve to form an inner cove to the bay. In rough weather the sea breaks upon this with relentless force. It has been said that the reef was formed by the "bay whalers" in order to make a boat harbour, but there can be no doubt as to its natural formation, although the "bay whalers" may have added to it in some degree. It would need an immense amount of labour to make any material difference to the reef, and in the absence of any direct proof the legend that the "bay whalers" built the reef must be viewed with grave doubts. The main part of it is most certainly of natural origin, and it is only a small portion of the superstructure which admits of discussion on this point. A change of structure in the rocks is very noticeable here, and may be largely responsible for the shelf-like reef. A fault can be seen plainly at the base of Cape Paul Lamanon, particularly on the exposed cliff section on the northern face.

Personally, after an exhaustive examination of all available documents, obtaining opinions from authorities in Europe as to charts, etc., and two extended visits to the site, I am of the opinion that the party who made the original selection for the site of the monument (*vide Mercury*, 22/1/1923) failed to locate the correct position on the landing place of Tasman's carpenter, and also that the position as marked by Mr. Halligan is equally at variance with the evidence.

Considering that the wind was blowing strongly from the north (not from the east as some authorities have stated), there would be a great break on the reef, particularly as, according to certain calculations, the tide was low. (Halligan, p. 202.) Tasman refers to the surf, so that it is extremely unlikely that his boats would have crossed the bar, especially as the northern shore of the bay would be more sheltered. Moreover, the sketch in Tasman's Journal definitely shows the flag on the northern shore of the bay, and the description of the sloping ground agrees far better with this position than with that at the head of the inner cove. It is questionable if there are any traces left of the original trees noted by Tasman, but it is easy to find four stumps in either position. A comparison of a recent survey of the bay with one made over half a century ago shows a fair amount of erosion of the inner northern shore of the

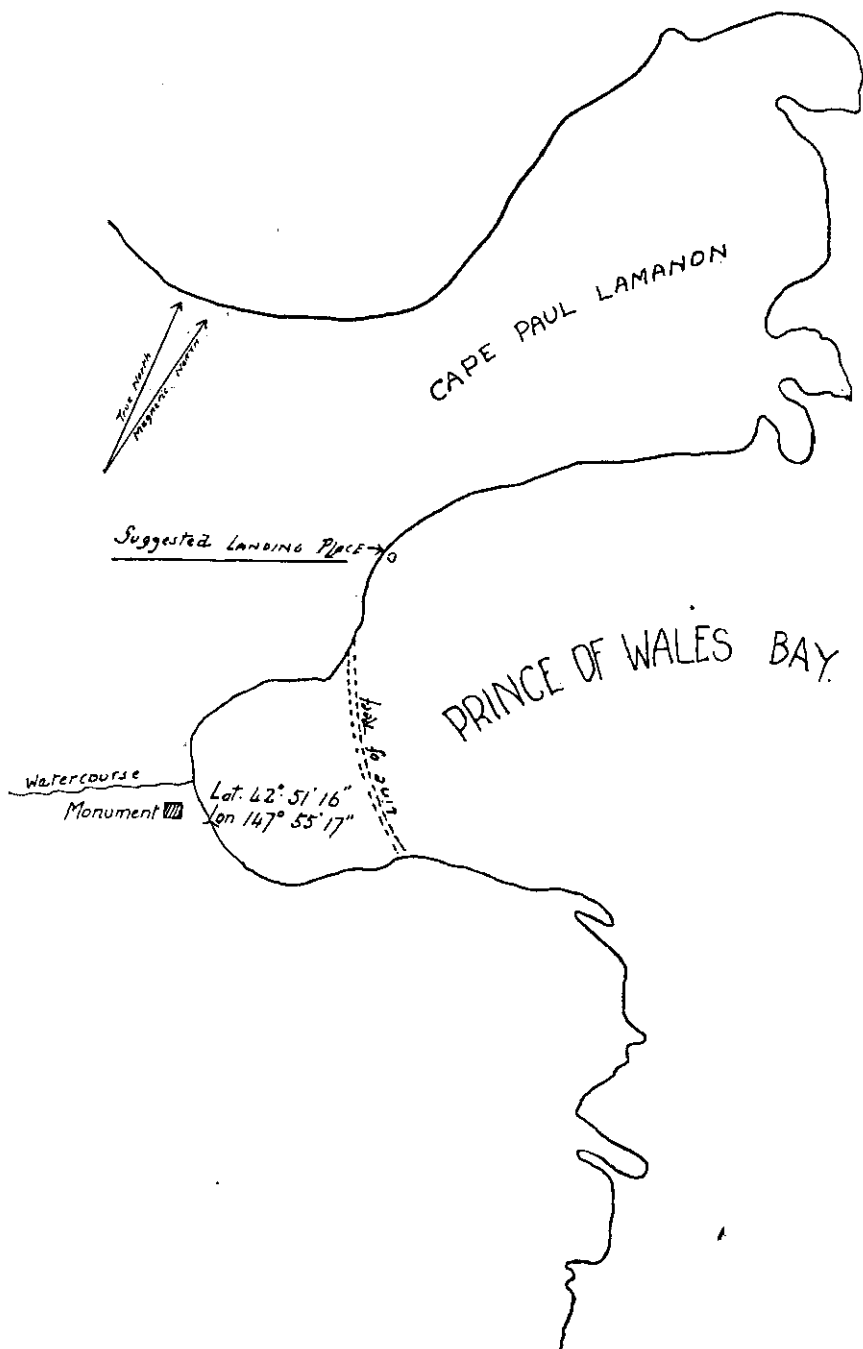


Fig. 2.—Sketch of Prince of Wales Bay.



Fig. 1.—Outer Cove, Prince of Wales Bay, in Northerly breeze, showing calmer water under lee of Cape Paul Lamanon.



Fig. 2.—The suggested site of the landing on the Northern shore of Prince of Wales Bay.



Fig. 3.—The Reef, Inner Cove, Prince of Wales Bay. Green Island in distance.

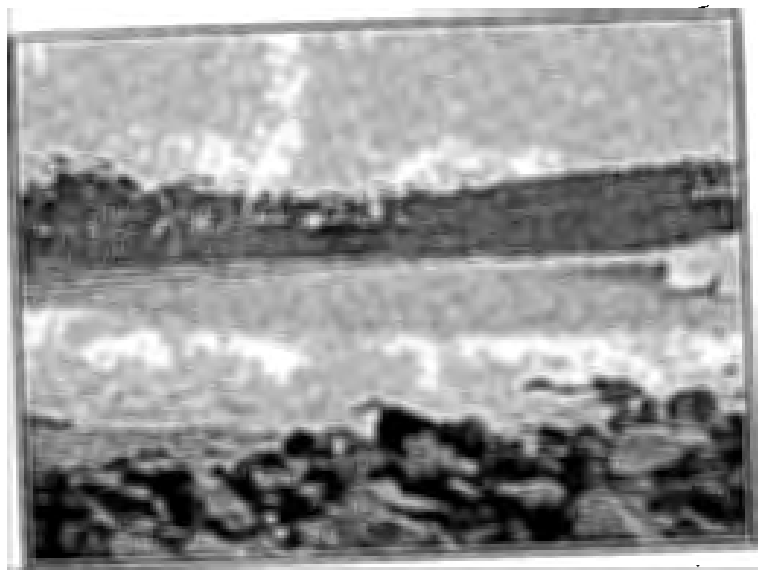


Fig. 4.—Looking North across the Bay, showing break on Reef.

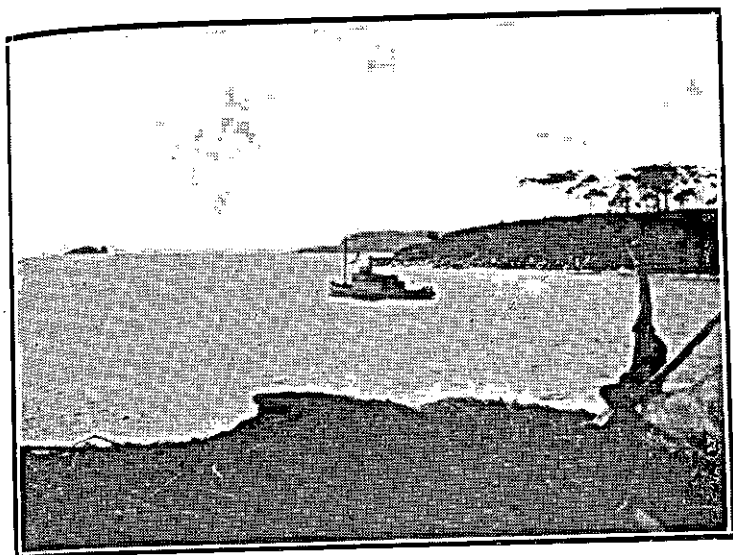


Fig. 5.—Prince of Wales Bay, looking South-East. Green Island and Cape Frederick Hendrick in distance.

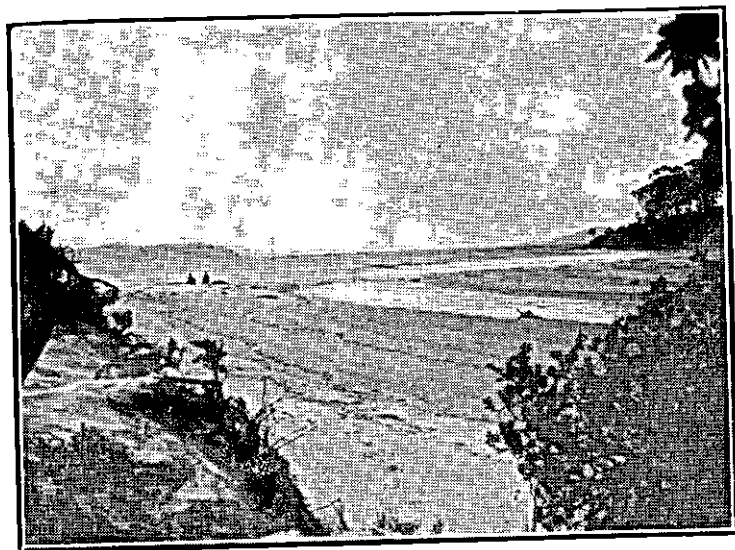


Fig. 6.—The Entrance to the lagoon, North Bay.
Clive Lord, Photos.

bay, and down among the shingle on the beach just outside the reef remains the enormous stump of a very old eucalypt. If any tree might have a claim as being Tasman's tree, I think that this one might well be considered, for, so far as I can gather from the available evidence, it occurs just at the spot where the carpenter apparently swam ashore. Moreover, it is just as easy to find four stumps here as in the position at the head of the bay, but considering the lapse of time too much reliance should not be placed on trees.

It is of interest to note that Gell (p. 326), in describing the cove now known as Prince of Wales Bay, wrote as follows:—"Nearer its northern than southern extremity the sea has cast up a key of large grey rounded ironstones which interrupts the curve of the beach, and doubtless marks the very spot where the carpenter swam ashore."

Walker wrote:—"Standing just outside the shingle bar at the entrance to this inner cove it needs no great effort of imagination to call up the scene on that 3rd December, 1642."

Taking these opinions, together with the sketches in Tasman's Journal, into consideration, it is difficult to understand how many of the statements made in regard to the landing came to be written.

The discussions in regard to the site have been of value, and should assist in enhancing interest in the early history of our island State. Too much credit cannot be given to those who made the erection of the Tasman Memorial possible, and any criticisms in regard to the interpretation of historical or scientific data are quite apart from the erection of the memorial. It is to be hoped that other memorials will be erected in the near future. The visits of such navigators as Furneaux, Cook, Bligh, D'Entrecasteaux, and Baudin are well worthy of commemoration.

EXPLANATION OF PLATES.

PLATE I.

- Fig. 1.—Outer Cove, Prince of Wales Bay, in northerly breeze, showing calmer water under lee of Cape Paul Lamanon.
- Fig. 2.—The suggested site of the landing on the northern shore of Prince of Wales Bay.

PLATE II.

- Fig. 3.—The Reef, inner cove, Prince of Wales Bay. Green Island in distance.
- Fig. 4.—Looking North across the Bay, showing break on Reef.

PLATE III.

- Fig. 5.—Prince of Wales Bay, looking East. Green Island and Cape Frederick Hendrick in distance.
- Fig. 6.—The entrance to the lagoon, North Bay. Cape Bernier and Maria Island in distance.

Clive Lord, Photos.

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