

Matthew Flinders and Beating France to.....Australia – second time?

Oatley Heritage and Historical Society 2025

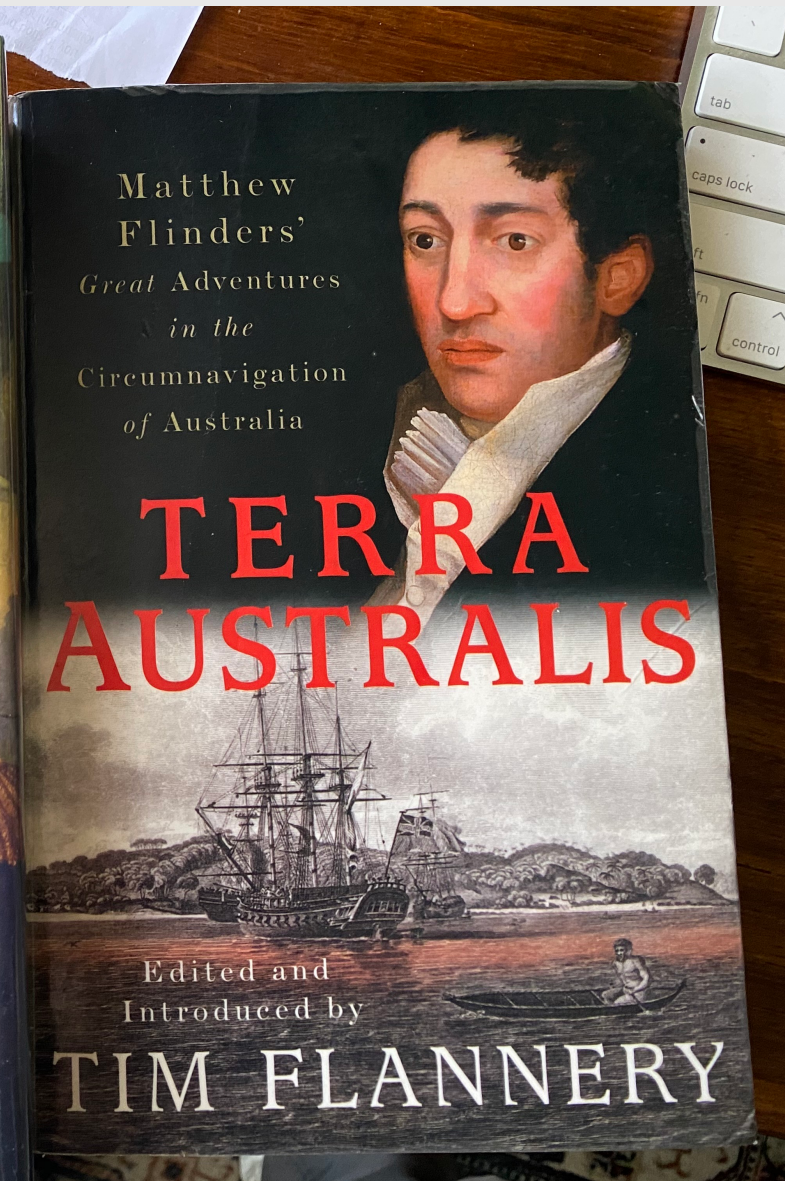
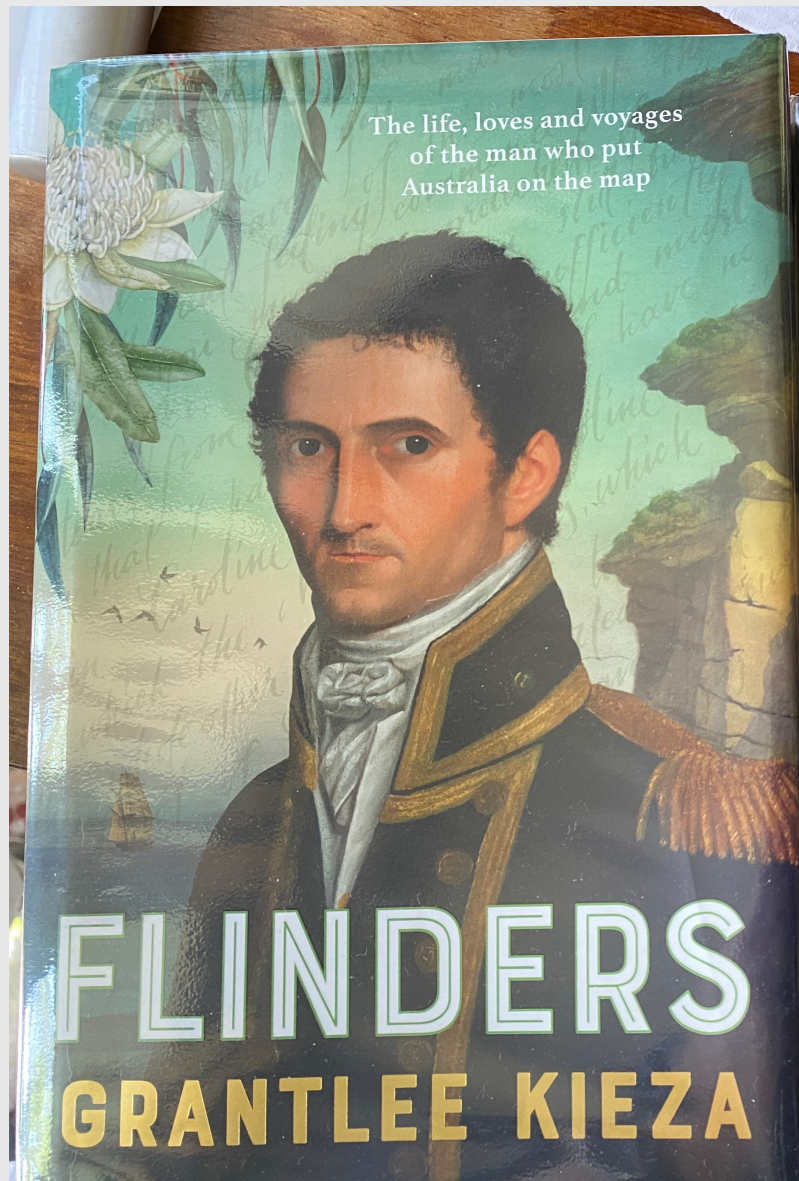
Rodger Robertson

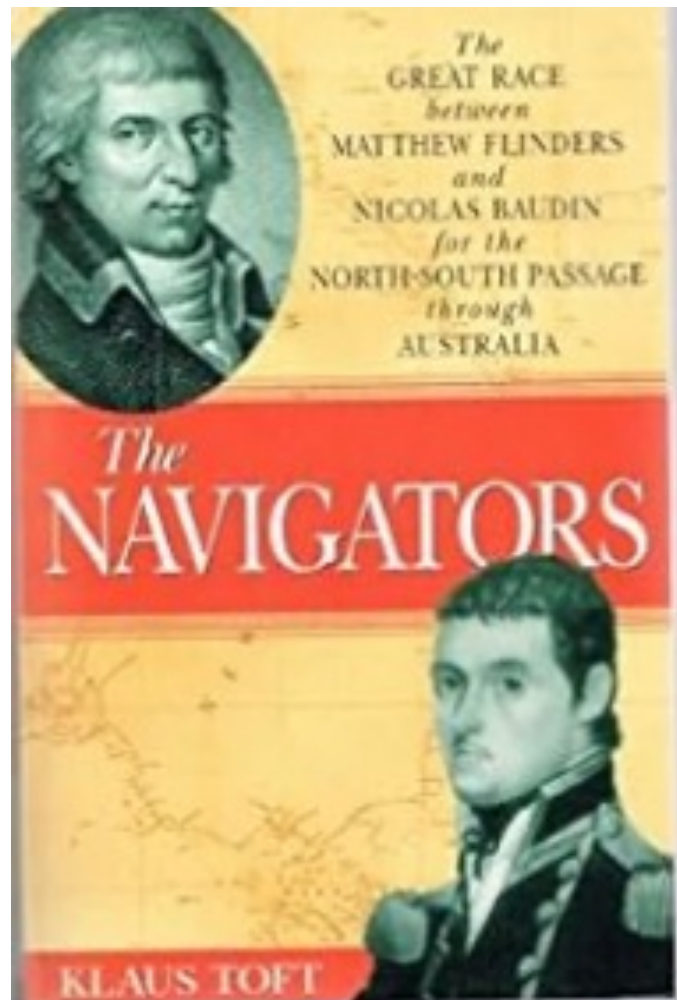
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- History of mapping of Australia
 - Flinders and Baudin- French interest in Australia
 - With Bligh 1791- Breadfruit Tahiti
 - Flinders to Australia 1794
 - Flinders voyages with Bass 1795-1799
 - Flinders circumnavigation of New Holland 1801-1803
 - Flinders return to England via Mauritius. 1803-1810
 - Flinders final years
 - Flinders Legacy
- 

GENERAL CHART
TERRA AUSTRALIS

WHO IS MATTHEW FLINDERS?











Pre 1770

After Cook

was there a
channel down
the middle of
Terra Australis?



1770 Cook claimed
the “East Coast” but
the British and Arthur
Phillip made it 135
East

New South Wales
1788



Flinders b 1774 Donington Lincolnshire

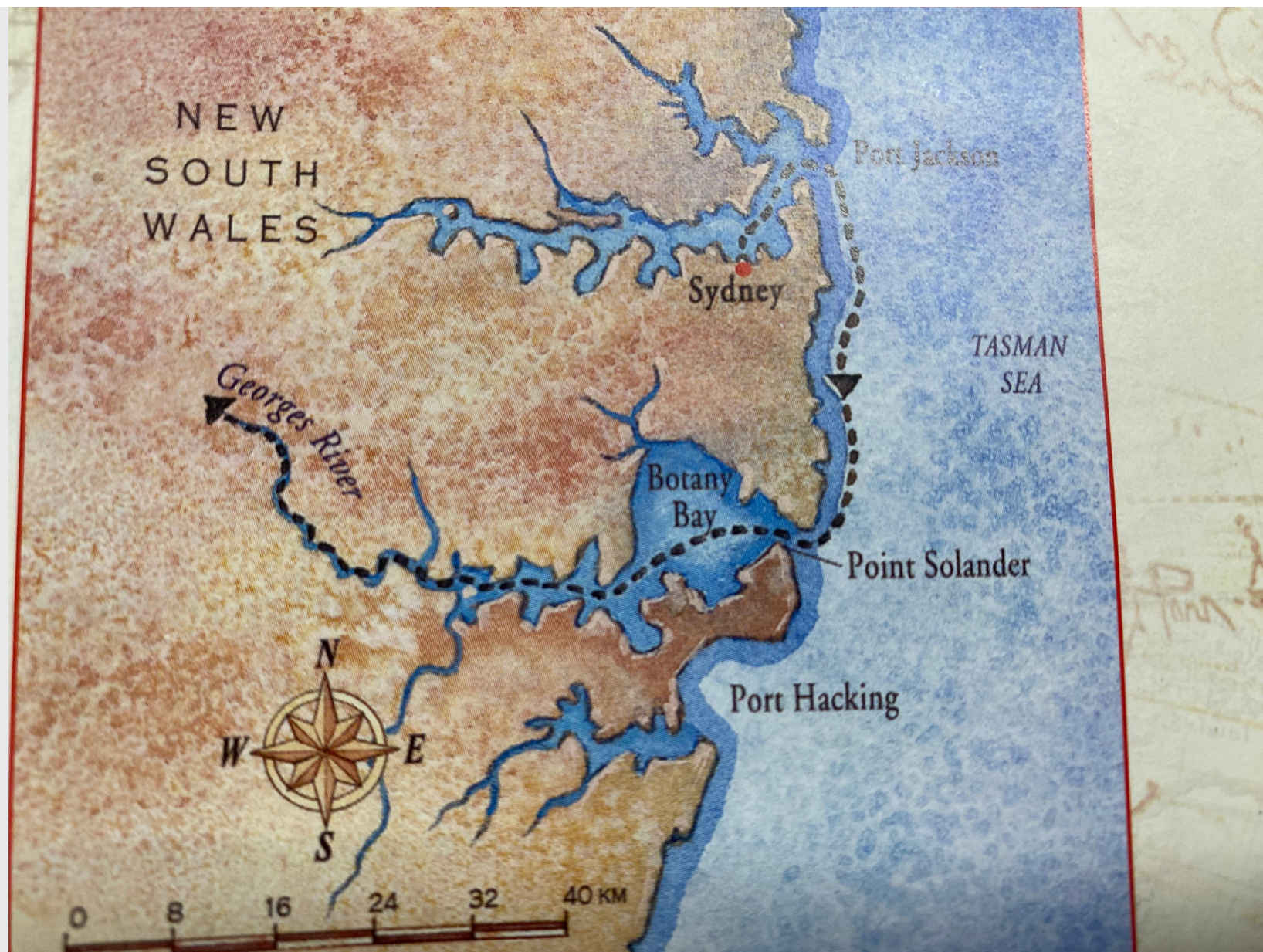
- Read Robinson Crusoe and wanted to go to sea
- 1789 on Bligh's second voyage to Pacific
- War service v French 1793
- 1794 sails with Governor Hunter to Sydney (George Bass on board) and Trim born in Indian Ocean en route)
- 1795 on *Tom Thumb* (8 foot length) 32Km up Georges River
- 1796 Port Hacking and Port Kembla with Bass
- 1798/99 on *Norfolk* to confirm the existence of a Strait between Tasmania and Mainland.
- 1799 to Queensland.

Tom Thumb



Bass and Flinders-
Georges River,
Illawarra Bass
Strait and Tasmania
1795-99





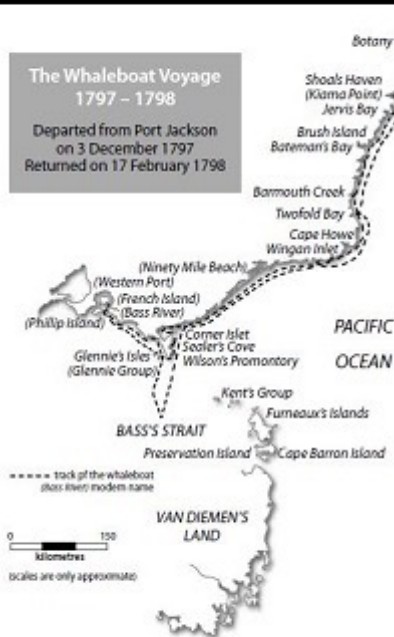


Kiama Blowhole

Kiama Blow Hole

The Whaleboat Voyage 1797 – 1798

Departed from Port Jackson
on 3 December 1797
Returned on 17 February 1798



George Bass, explorer
Courtesy of the National Archives of Australia

Bass and the Blow Hole

George Bass was a British naval surgeon who arrived in Sydney with Matthew Flinders on the *Reliance* in 1795. Their names became synonymous with the coastal exploration of Australia.

After exploring Botany Bay, Georges River and Port Hacking with Flinders, Bass captained a crew of six men and set out in an open whaleboat to explore the southeast coast of Australia. The main Kiama Blow Hole was noticed by George Bass on December 6, 1797 after anchoring his whaleboat in the sheltered bay which later became Robertson Basin.

In 1798 Bass and Flinders circumnavigated Tasmania in the sloop *Norfolk*. In 1803 Bass disappeared on a voyage to Tahiti and Chile.



The earth for a considerable distance round in the form approaching a circle seemed to have given way; it was now a green slope. Towards the centre was a deep ragged hole of about 25 or 30 feet in diameter, and on one side of it the sea washed in through a subterraneous passage with a most tremendous noise.

George Bass, Journal, 6 December 1797

'Blow-hole, Kiama Illawarra' W. Spreat, circa 1848, lithograph
Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria



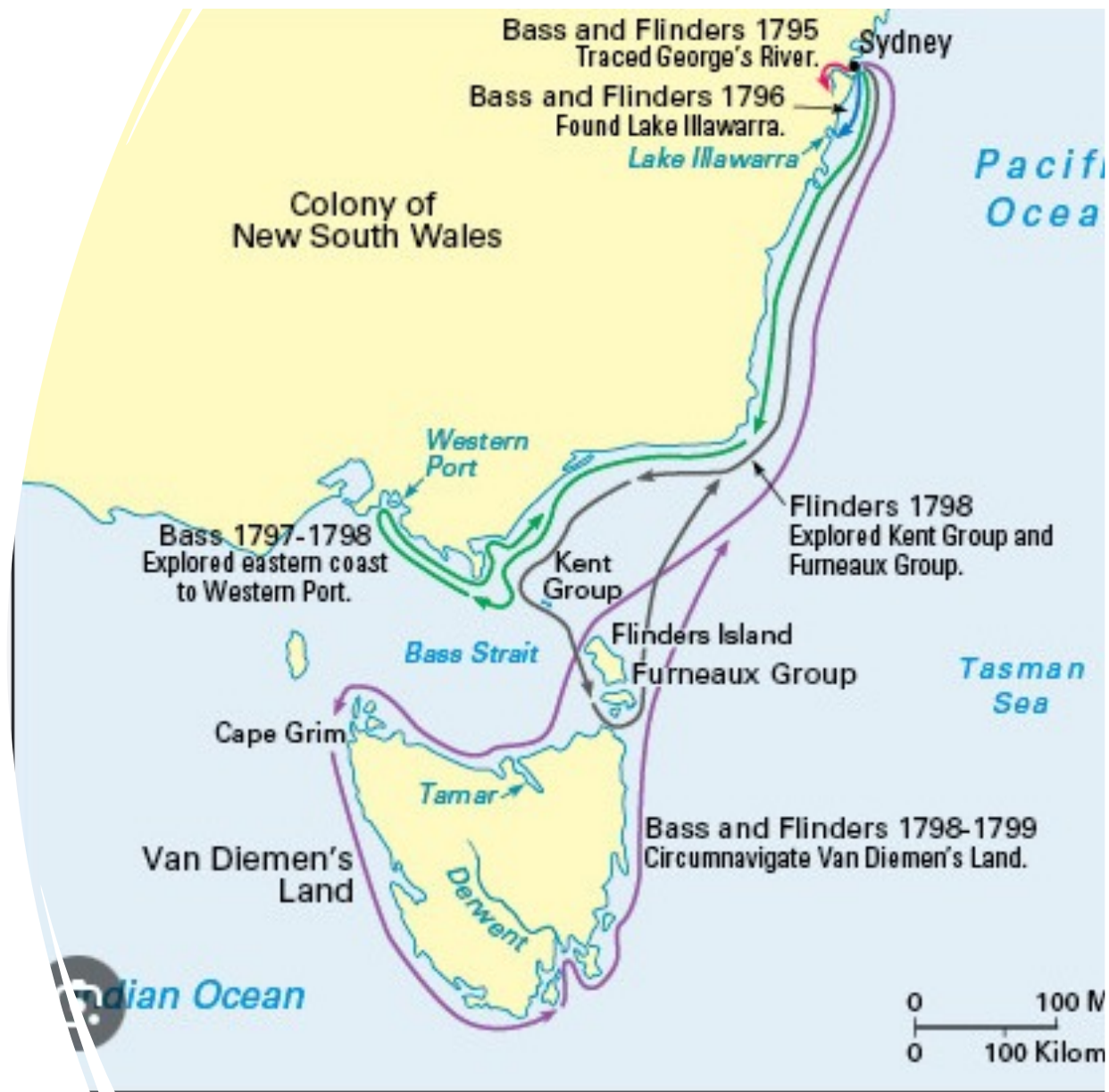
Bass and the Blow Hole plaque

Tasmania– connected to NSW?

French very interested in Tasmania- more like a European climate

Suspensions of a Strait by many earlier explorers.

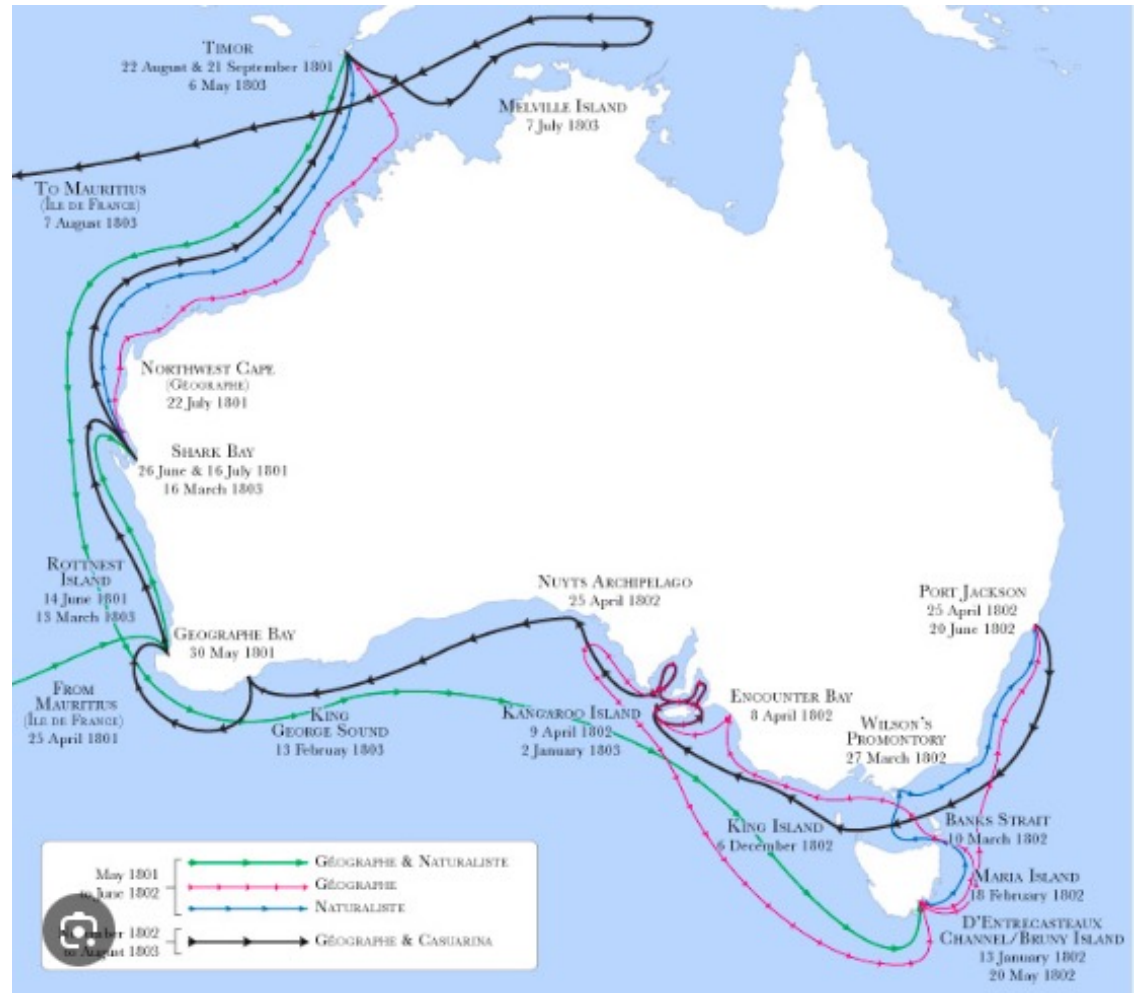
Bass and Flinders 1795-1799



Nicolas Baudin and the French 1800

- UK and France at War but scientific expeditions get passports which give them immunity- 1800 Baudin applies to English but they are suspicious.
- French had previous expeditions to Tasmania. Also the French wanted to establish that there was no sea channel down the middle of Terra Australis.
- Joseph Banks wants to send Flinders to shadow the French or at least find the true nature of Australia.
- Baudins ships are *Le Geographe* and *Le Naturaliste*!!

Nicolas Baudin voyage 1800-1804



1801 Flinders back in England

- Leaves England on the *Investigator* to circumnavigate New Holland and claim it for British. Has a French passport as scientific expedition.
- Travel and map south coast and try to find the channel to Gulf of Carpentaria. Met ship in Encounter Bay -Baudin' ship s *Le Geographe*.
- Baudin sails to Sydney with very sick crew and Govenor King looks after them.
- Baudin spies on Sydney but dies on way home. His reputation crushed.

The Investigator



Trim





TO THE MEMORY OF
TRIM

The best and most illustrious of his race

The most affectionate of friends,

faithful of servants,

and best of creatures

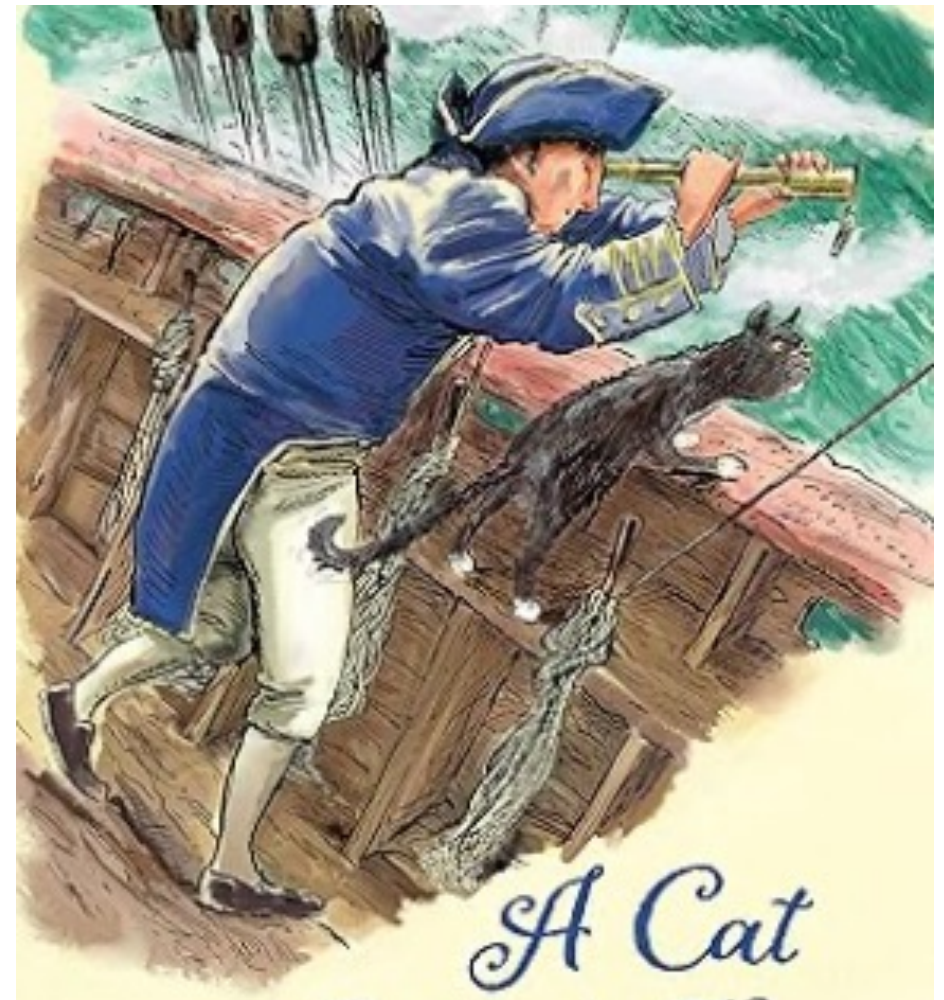
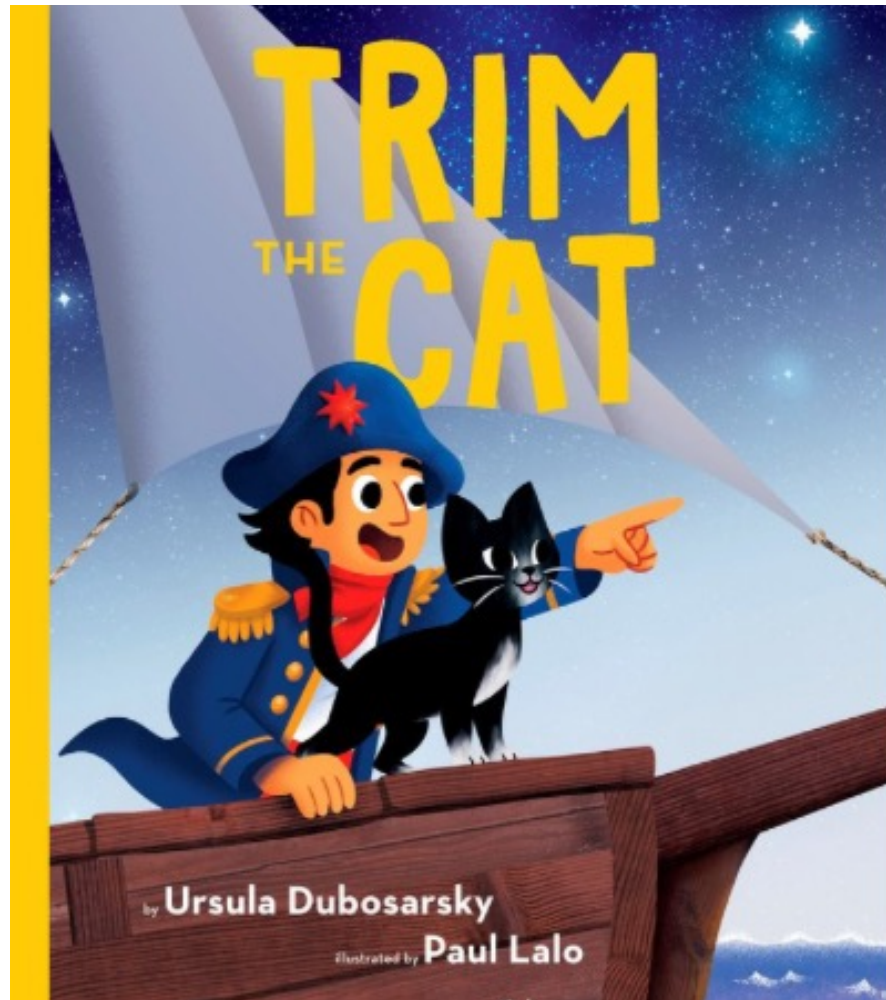
He made the tour of the globe, and a voyage to Australia,

which he circumnavigated, and was ever the

delight and pleasure of his fellow voyagers

Written by Matthew Flinders in memory of his cat

Memorial donated by the North Shore Historical Society



Flinders circumnavigates Australia

- 1802-1803 on the *Investigator*.
- North from Sydney along Cook's route
- Successfully negotiates the GBR and Torres Strait.
- Needs provisions and goes to Timor and then speeds down west coast and back to Sydney with sick and dying crew.
- The *Investigator* has been failing since leaving England and is now beyond repair.
- Proved no channel dividing New Holland- better maps of Queensland and reef area. But no mapping of WA.



Voyages of Matthew Flinders

"Investigator"

1801-1802 —————
England - Sydney

1802 -1803 - - - - -
Circumnavigation

Flinders wants to return to England

- 1803 gets the *Porpoise* but gets wrecked on the reef and has to return to Sydney in small boat- all rescued.
- Later in 1803 leaves on the *Cumberland* headed back but UK.
- Ship needs repair so he calls into Mauritius – French controlled.
- He is declared a spy as the Passport says the ship is the *Investigator*.
- Despite pleas and even Napoleon giving the order for his release – he is kept till 1810- 6 years in this place. Trim goes missing here as well.

Postscript on Mauritius

- 1809 Napoleon sends troops to defend Mauritius and then to capture Port Jackson but English send a bigger better equipped group to capture the Island.
- Within months of Flinders leaving Mauritius, it is captured by the English with some help from Flinders knowledge of the island and its defences.
- It was an English colony till 1968- becomes a republic in 1992 but stays in the Commonwealth.

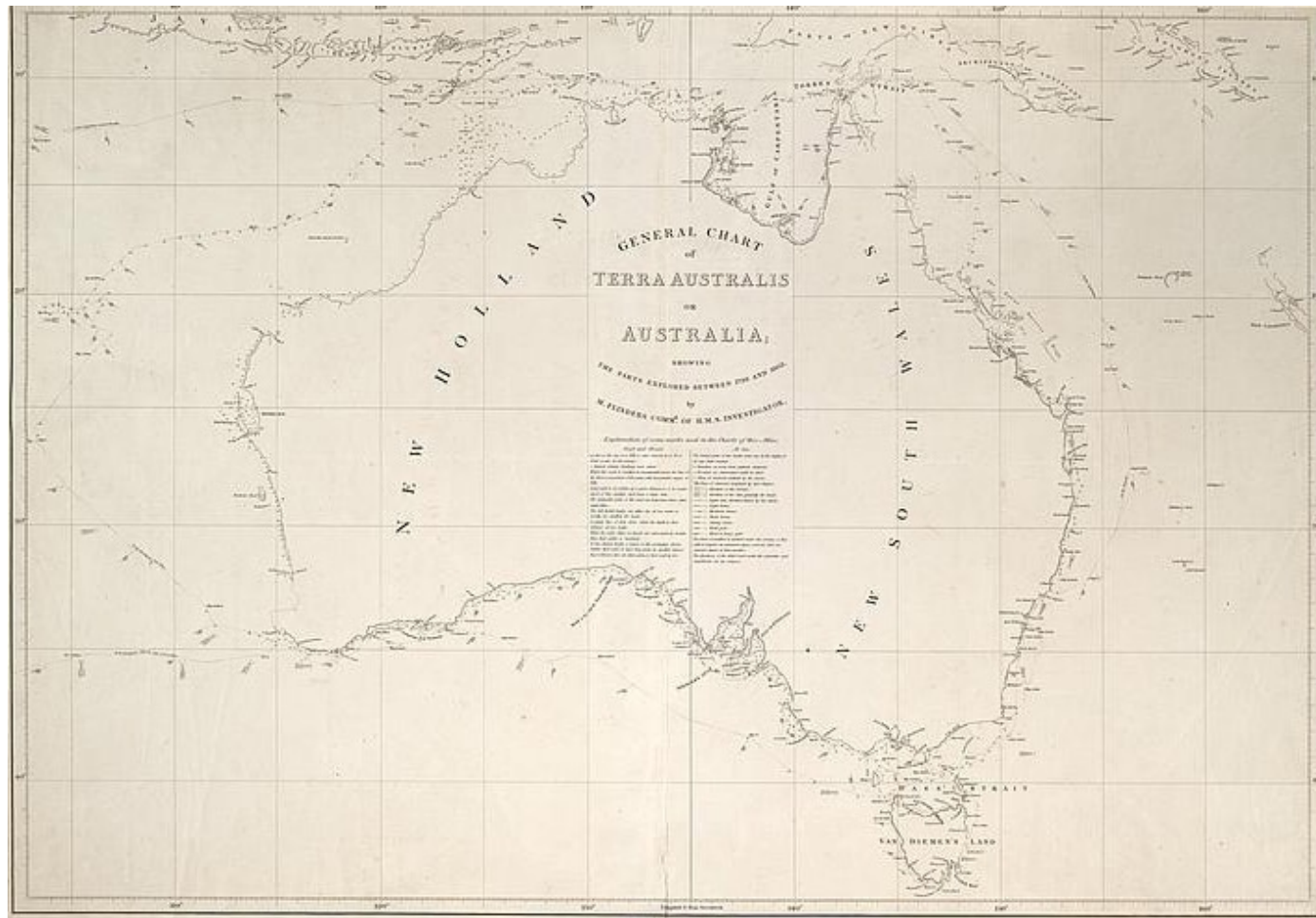
England v France for controlling New Holland

- Baudin died in Mauritius a few days before Flinders arrived.
- Baudin was not liked by other senior men in the crew and they took Baudins diary and rewrote the whole tale of the voyage and published it in 1809 whilst Flinders was still captive in Mauritius.
- It named much of the coastal features with French names in opposition to Flinders names. Also diminished Flinders and English claims on the West Coast and in Tasmania. Secretly reported to Napoleon that Port Jackson was takeable by French forces.
- Flinders tried to convince Banks by naming the whole continent Australia was a way of diminishing French control. Banks settled for Terra Australis as compromise.
- French threat weakens after Trafalgar and disappears at Waterloo 1815.

Flinders returns home

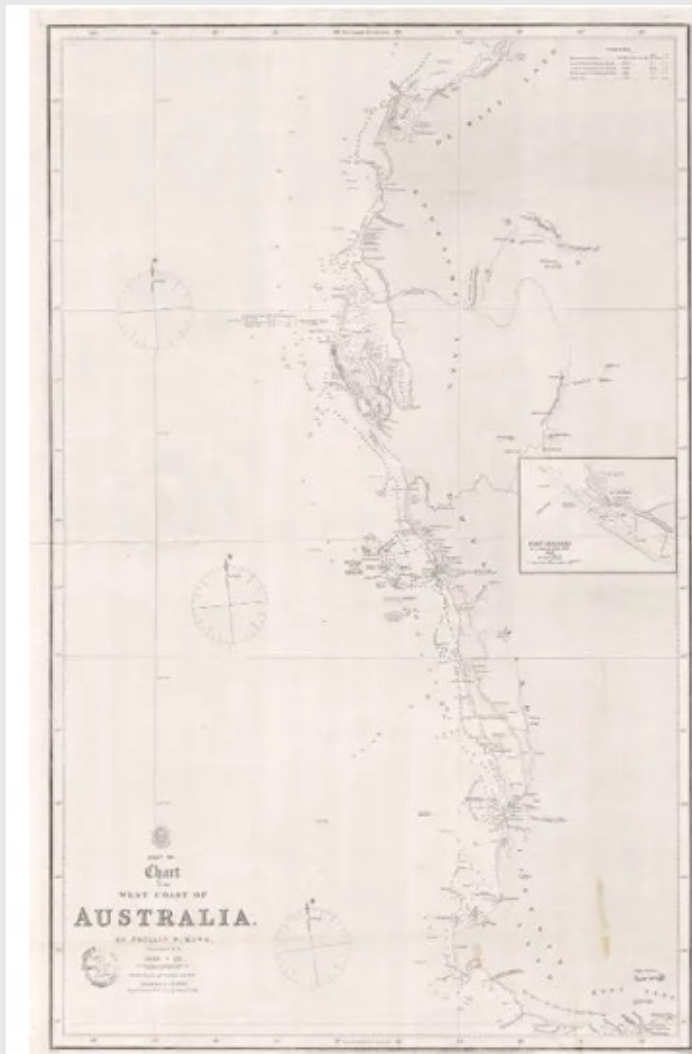
- 1810 he returns to England
- Wife Ann Chappelle has waited for 9 years- they were married a few months before he left in 1801. Matthew had tried to get permission to take her on his 1801 voyage to Sydney but was prevented by the Admiralty
- Matthew has named a mountain and island in Tasmania after her.
- They have a daughter in 1812 - Flinders is unwell but writes his story and discoveries- *Voyage to Terra Australis* published 18 July 1814 and he dies the next day.

Flinders Map 1814



Flinders and Australia

- The continent was called New Holland as the Dutch had mapped much of west coast and a distance along southern coast and all the way around the north coast to the western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria.
- Cook acknowledged this when he claimed the “east coast” in 1770.
- Latin term "Terra Australis Incognita," meaning "unknown southern land". This term was used by Flinders (NB his published work) and others
- Flinders throughout his life promoted the term Australia
- Governor Macquarie used it in his writings back to England from 1817.
- British Government uses this from 1824- Phillip Parker King shows Australia in his maps.



Philip Parker King

Western Australia

seminal chart of Western Australia

lacking in every collection

Sheet VIII of the West Coast of Au...

London, 1825

Stock#: 19339

SOLD

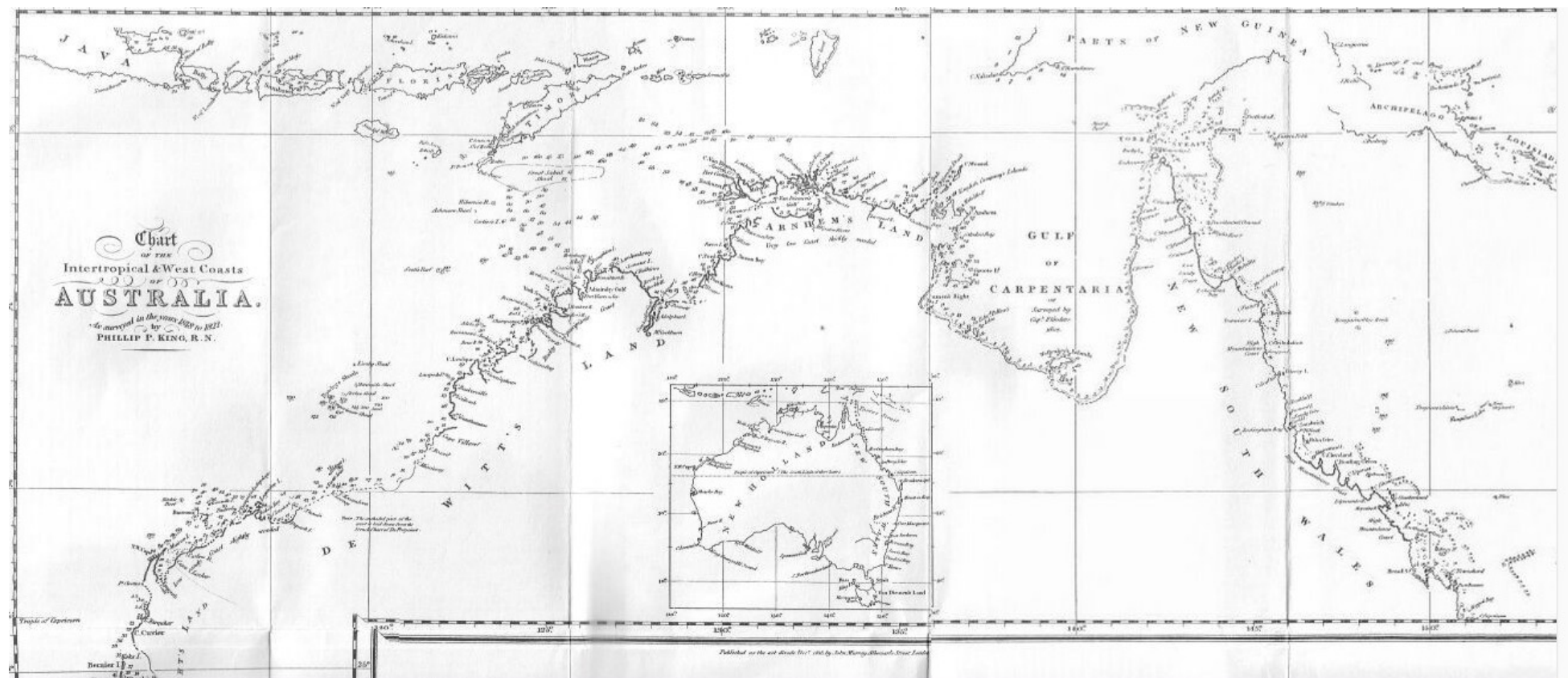


CHART OF THE INTERTROPICAL AND WEST COASTS OF AUSTRALIA.
As surveyed in the years 1818 to 1822 by Phillip P. King, R.N.

Flinders in Australia

- Three islands called Flinders- Tasmania and Queensland after Matthew and South Australian Island named after Samuel his brother who was on the *Investigator*.
- Lots of streets- one University, at least one mountain range after him.
- Statues in various places.

Statues of Matthew Flinders

- Sydney
- Melbourne
- Adelaide
- Port Lincoln
- Robe
- Cronulla
- Euston Station London – he was buried there in 1814 but the railway station took over the grounds. His coffin was found in 2019 when the were excavating the area- he is now buried in his home village
- Donington 2024 (another statue)
- Mauritius



PORT LINCOLN

Adelaide



Melbourne



Sydney





CRONULLA



EUSTON LONDON

Donington



MAURITIUS



Coffin 2019

“Captain Matthew
Flinders RN, died
19 July 1814 ,
aged 40 years”



- In 1820s France was still interested in Western Australia
- Governor Brisbane send a group of troops to Albany and later a settlement to Fremantle.
- The British then claimed the whole continent.
- That ended the issue of who controlled Australia
- grandson Egyptologist- sold Flinders papers to NSW Library and other libraries.

