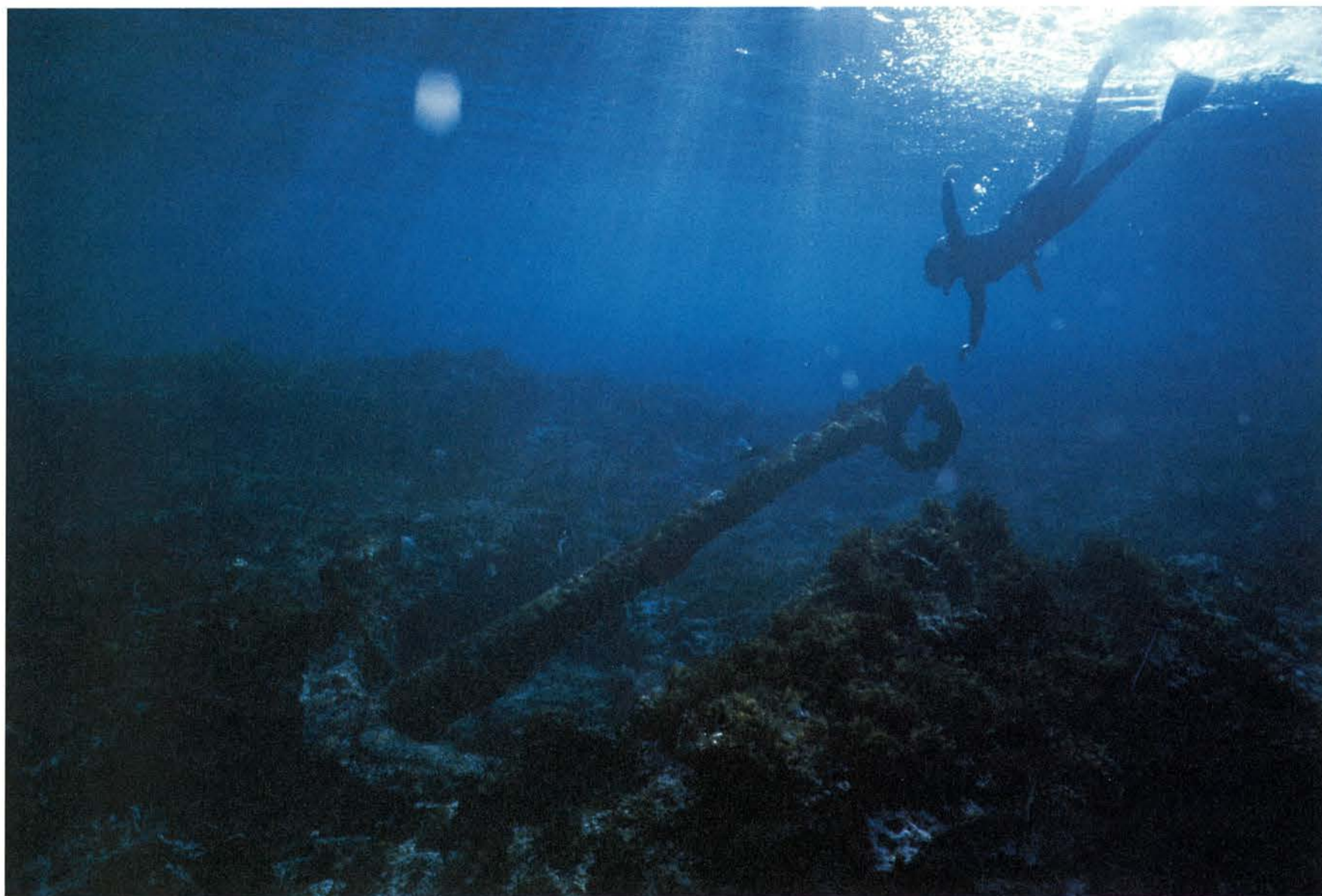


CHAPTER 3

EUROPEAN DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION



The main anchor of the Dutch East-Indiaman Batavia. Photograph by Patrick Baker, 1977. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MARITIME MUSEUM

FROM THE DAYS of the Ancient Greeks, Europeans had assumed that a great land mass must lie to the south simply to keep the world balanced. During the expansion of European maritime discovery and exploration between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the search for the Great South Land, which legend had given incredible riches, began in earnest. This chapter examines the European discovery of Australia and subsequent exploration of the continent. It is a story of pragmatism, of scientific curiosity, of the mysteries of a new continent, and of foolhardiness and courage.

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European discovery and exploration

EUROPEANS BELIEVED IN the existence of a continent to the southeast of Asia for centuries before they sighted any part of Australia. While there is a possibility that the Portuguese were first to see its coast, the earliest authenticated landfalls were made by Dutch navigators. Some encountered parts of the north coast while exploring eastwards from Java. Others found points on the west and south coasts en route to Java from the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa. In 1642 Abel Tasman put Van Diemen's Land and New Zealand on the maps, and roughly established the size of the continent known as New Holland. In 1644 he skirted the north and northwest coasts, joining hitherto separate stretches into a continuous line. Willem de Vlamingh did the same for the west coast in 1697.

Dutch activity languished in the late seventeenth century. After Cook charted New South Wales in 1770 and Sydney was established in 1788, British navigators continued to explore and chart the coastline. In 1798–99 George Bass and Matthew Flinders confirmed the separation of Van Diemen's Land from the mainland. Matthew Flinders and an expedition led by Thomas Nicholas Baudin completed the charting of the south coast in 1802–03. Flinders also charted the east and part of the north coasts. In 1818–22 Phillip Parker King charted, with a few gaps, the remainder of the north and west coasts. Flinders and King produced charts covering the whole of Australia's coastline, which were refined in 1838–42 by John Lort Stokes and John Clements Wickham in HMS *Beagle* and, later, by surveyors working for the British Hydrographic Office and the Royal Navy.

The land

When the British government decided to plant a settlement in New South Wales, it had little idea of what the land was like. James Cook and his companions had explored the country near Botany Bay, and had written about it enthusiastically. They had not, however, travelled far into the surrounding country. When Governor Phillip arrived at Botany Bay in January 1788 he decided that the site had little to commend it and set off to find a better place. He found one at Port Jackson, which Cook had named but sailed past without entering. Expeditions from Sydney Cove soon discovered that the settlement was on a plain surrounded by a sandstone plateau.

Founders of other settlements that became the capital cities of colonies had similar experiences. Navigators had charted the coastlines and the mouths of some of the smaller rivers. Their charts suggested possibilities for settlement, but the men responsible for settling the areas had to find sites for their towns.

The Swan River had been put on the map by Willem de Vlamingh in 1697. In 1827 James Stirling and Charles Fraser followed its course upstream before selecting a site for Perth. Matthew Flinders' survey of the two great gulfs on the south coast of the continent suggested a number of sites that were examined before William Light chose Adelaide's position on the Torrens River ten kilometres inland. Flinders and Bass had mapped the course of the Derwent River, but an initial settlement at Risdon Cove was abandoned when Lieutenant-Governor David Collins decided that Hobart was a more promising site. Moreton Bay had been examined by both Flinders and John Oxley before the settlement was founded, but the site of the first settlement at Redcliffe in 1824 was abandoned for Brisbane's after three months. Several places were chosen for settlement in the Northern Territory before Darwin, at first named Palmerston, was established in 1869. Of Australia's capital cities, only Melbourne stands on a site that was chosen before being occupied (by the two parties that followed John Batman to Port Phillip Bay in 1835).

From each of these footholds on the edge of the continent (and from Albany on King George Sound, Launceston on the Tamar, Portland in Victoria and other coastal towns) explorers penetrated the country and slowly filled the blank outline with the rivers, lakes, ranges and deserts of the interior. Many of the explorers were officials, usually surveyors — civil or military and naval officers relieved of normal duties to undertake exploration; some were botanists whose geographical discoveries resulted from their search for unknown plants; some were private citizens whose travels were financed by governments, the Royal Geographical Society, or other groups such as the Royal Society of Victoria that mounted the Burke and Wills expedition to the north of the continent.

While the people of infant Sydney were still wondering what lay beyond the sandstone barrier, another problem exercised many minds. None of the navigators had discovered the mouth of a river large enough to drain so large a continent: they were not to know that



Abel Tasman with his second wife and daughter by his first marriage. Oil painting by Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp.

REX NAN KIVELL COLLECTION, NATIONAL LIBRARY

much of the land was almost rainless and did not drain into any of the surrounding seas. After the Blue Mountains were crossed in 1813 and the Macquarie and Lachlan rivers were found to flow more or less northwest, belief in a great river or inland sea became popular, and the first phase of inland exploration involved the tracing of these inland-flowing streams. Eventually, after journeys by John Oxley, Charles Sturt and Thomas Mitchell, it was found that the Murray–Darling system drained much of the eastern part of the continent. Ludwig Leichhardt, crossing northern Australia, found the middle courses both of the rivers that rose on the Great Divide and cut their way through the coastal ranges to empty into the Pacific, and of those that flowed intermittently and sluggishly into the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Explorers pushing inland from Adelaide discovered the remnants of the lake that had once encircled the northern end of the Flinders Ranges. They found that it was no inland sea, nor even the 'Horseshoe Lake' that appeared on some maps, but a series of playas — shallow salt lakes — that did not always contain water.

Heroism and foolhardiness became the keystones of exploration. Ambition to be first to the centre and then to cross the continent from south to north inspired several expeditions. John McDouall Stuart was the first to the centre in 1860 and the peak he named Central Mount Sturt was renamed Central Mount Stuart in his honour. Though he succeeded in making a most arduous crossing of the continent at his third attempt, in 1861–62, the honour of being first to cross went to Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills who, abandoning caution and their support party, made a dash into the interior and reached the Gulf of Carpentaria estuary of the Flinders River in February 1861. They died on the return journey, but the hastily assembled and more cautious parties that set out to find them explored much of northern Australia and achieved more of lasting value.

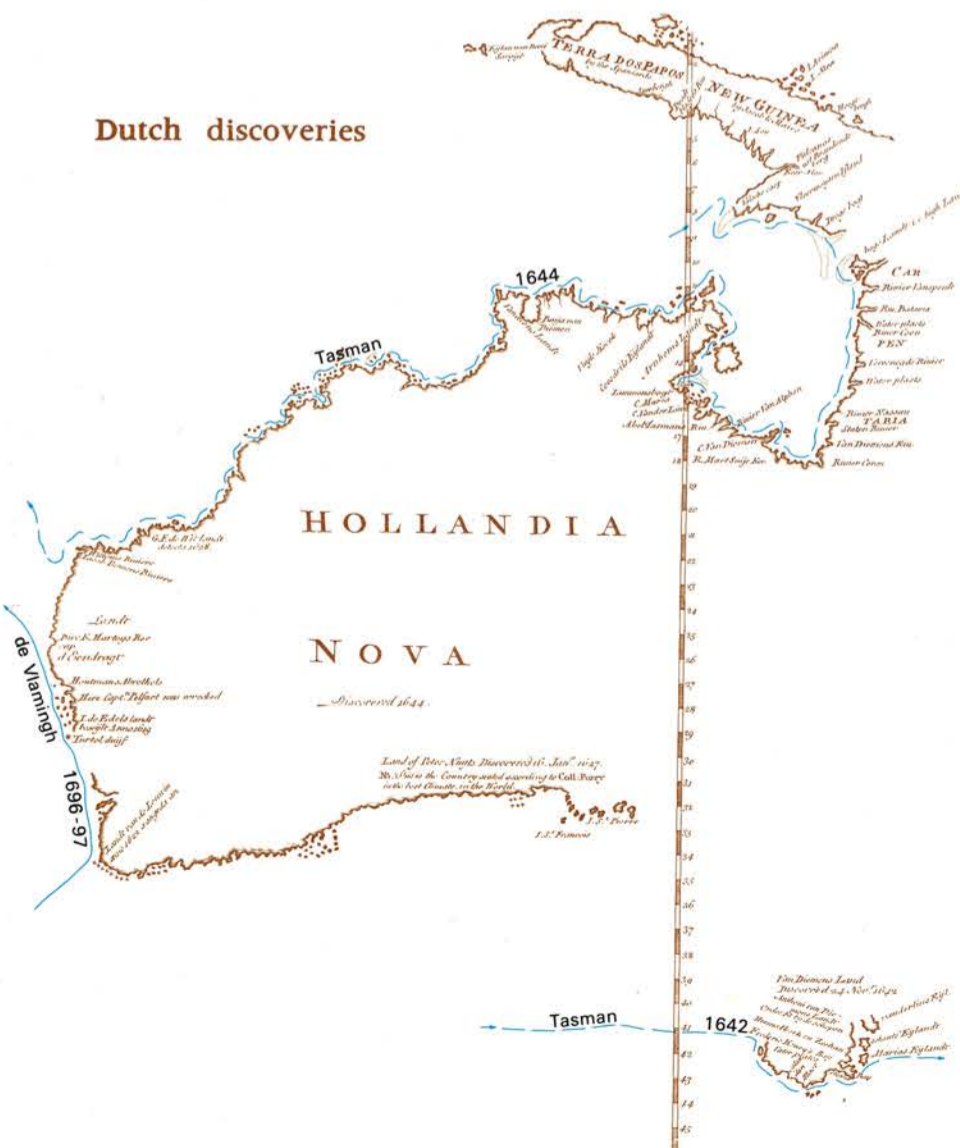
A second phase of heroic exploration followed the establishment of a south-to-north route through the centre, and the building of the Overland Telegraph line between Adelaide and Darwin in 1870–72. A number of parties crossed the western half of the continent from east to west and west to east. Edward John Eyre made the first such crossing, keeping close to the shore of the Great Australian Bight, in 1841. His successors passed through the desert country further north during the 1870s. John Forrest and Ernest Giles made the crossing twice, Peter Egerton Warburton once. They endured appalling hardships, but survived.

All of these men strung thin threads of knowledge across the vastness of Australia. From mountains and high hills they could see a long way, but often they saw only the trees that lay close to either side of their tracks, and sometimes, even on horseback, they could barely see over the tall grasses. What lay beyond and between their tracks was discovered by the thousands of people who moved into the country later. Squatters, surveyors, gold fossickers, settlers and, more recently, aviators and mapping teams have filled in the spaces between the explorers' tracks across the wilderness.

Maritime discovery and exploration



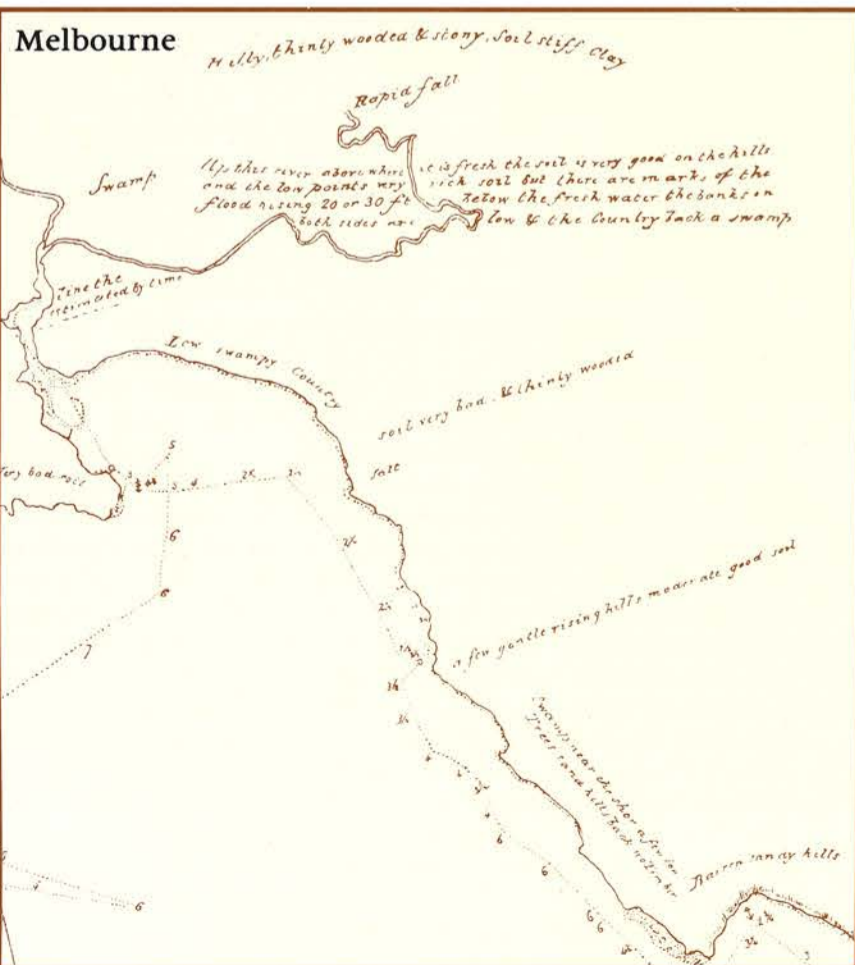
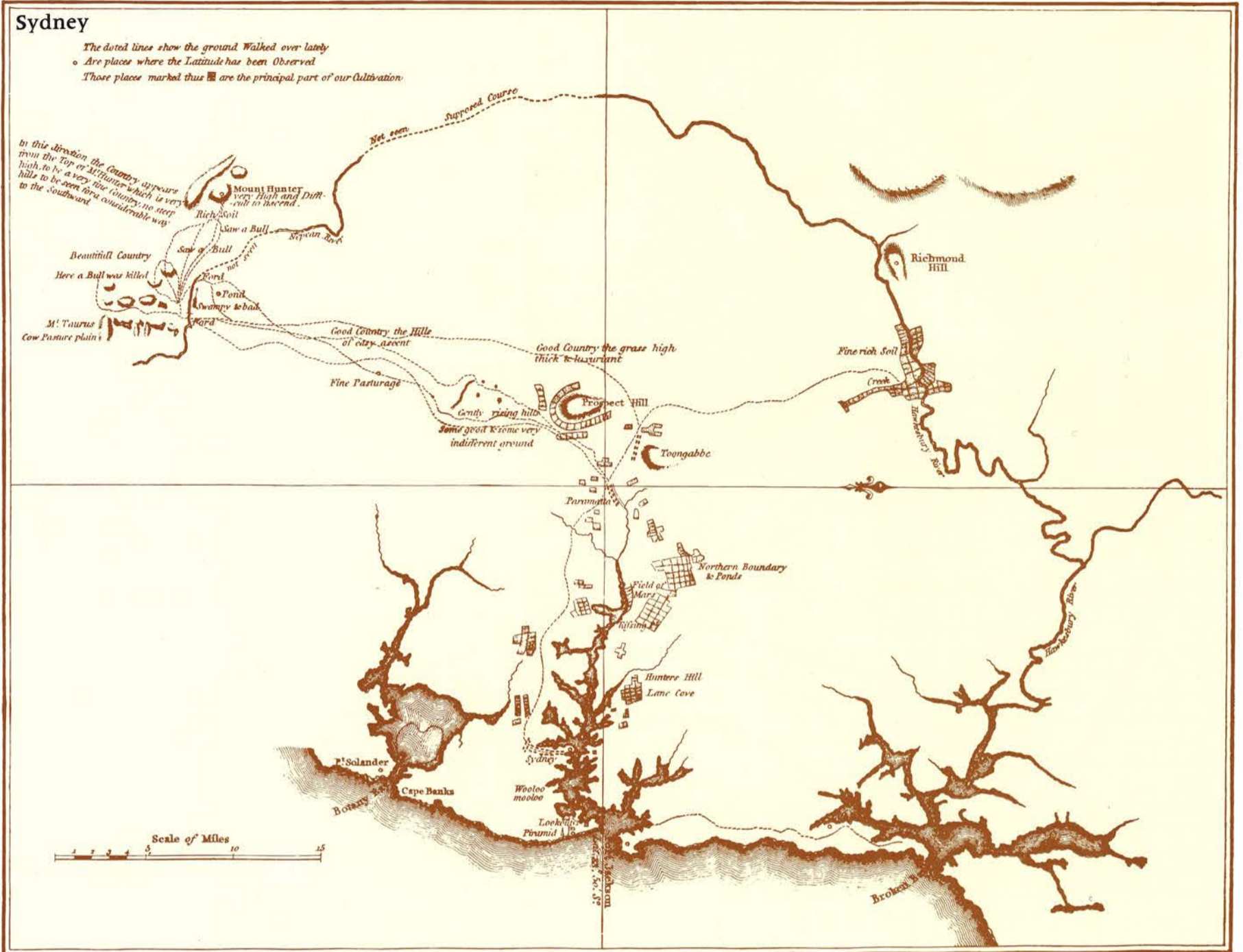
Dutch discoveries



THE DISCOVERY OF Australia's coasts, begun by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, was completed by British and French navigators in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Improved instruments allowed these later navigators to establish longitude more accurately, better methods of hydrographical surveying yielded more accurate charts than the Dutch had been able to obtain, and the improved manoeuvrability of ships allowed them to come closer to the coast with safety. In 1770, James Cook travelled along the east coast and charted it roughly. His 'New South Wales' was linked to 'New Holland' after exploratory journeys along the south coast by George Bass, Matthew Flinders, James Grant, John Murray and the French expedition commanded by Thomas Nicholas Baudin. Flinders resurveyed part of Cook's east coast and greatly improved the charts of New South Wales, the Gulf of Carpentaria and the western section of the Great Australian Bight. A little later, Phillip Parker King produced new and more comprehensive charts of the north and west coasts.

Emmanuel Bowen's map (left), published in London in 1744, shows early seventeenth-century Dutch exploration along the Australian coast. The map is an English version of a French copy of a Dutch map. Difficulties in calculating longitude exaggerated the continent's east-west extent. The coastline is generalised, island groups appear as peninsulas and some deep bays are not shown, as a comparison with the map above shows. Three of the most important Dutch expeditions have been added: de Vlamingh's exploration of the coast and Tasman's two voyages.

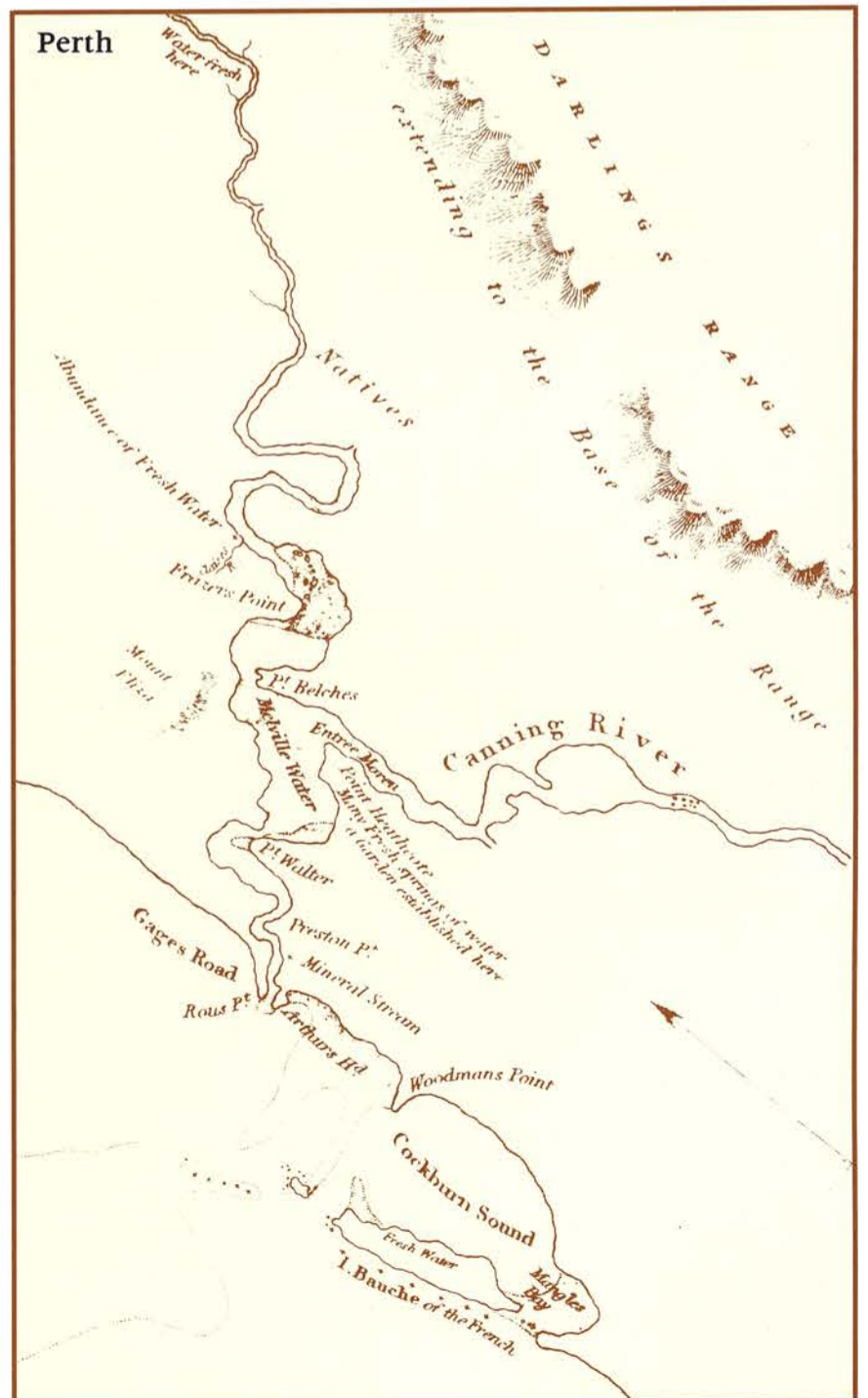
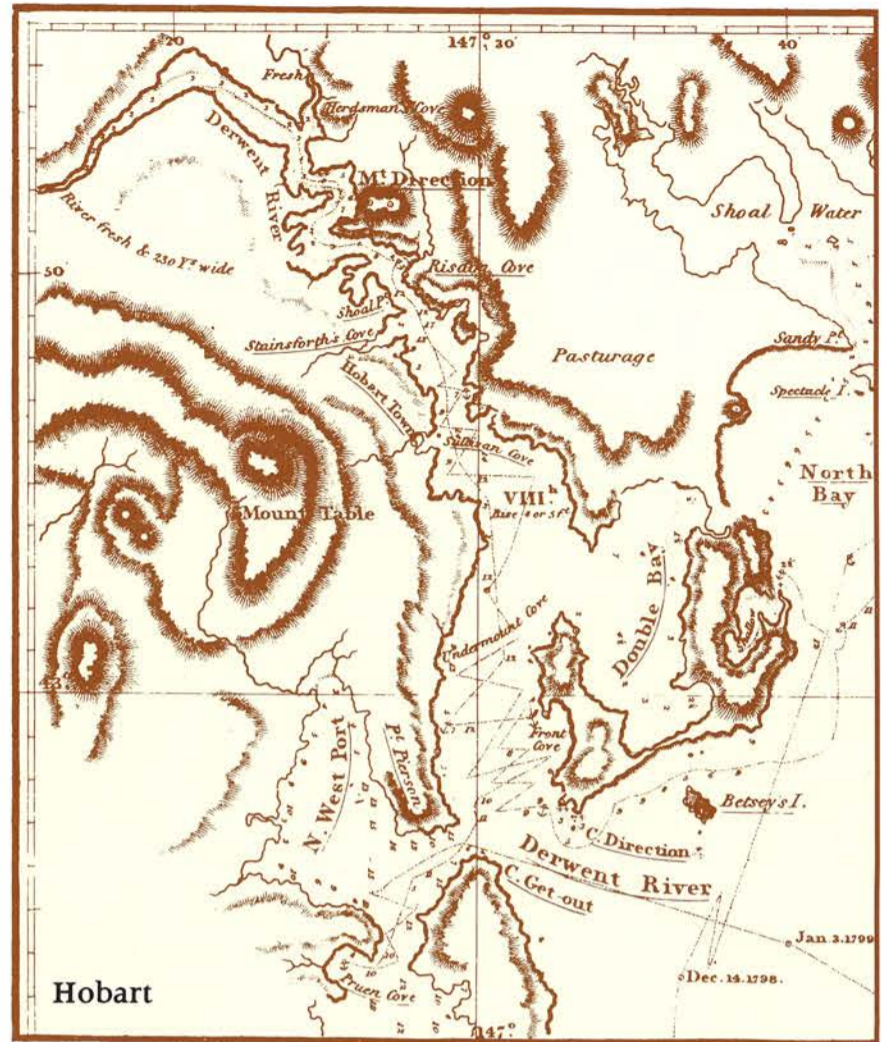
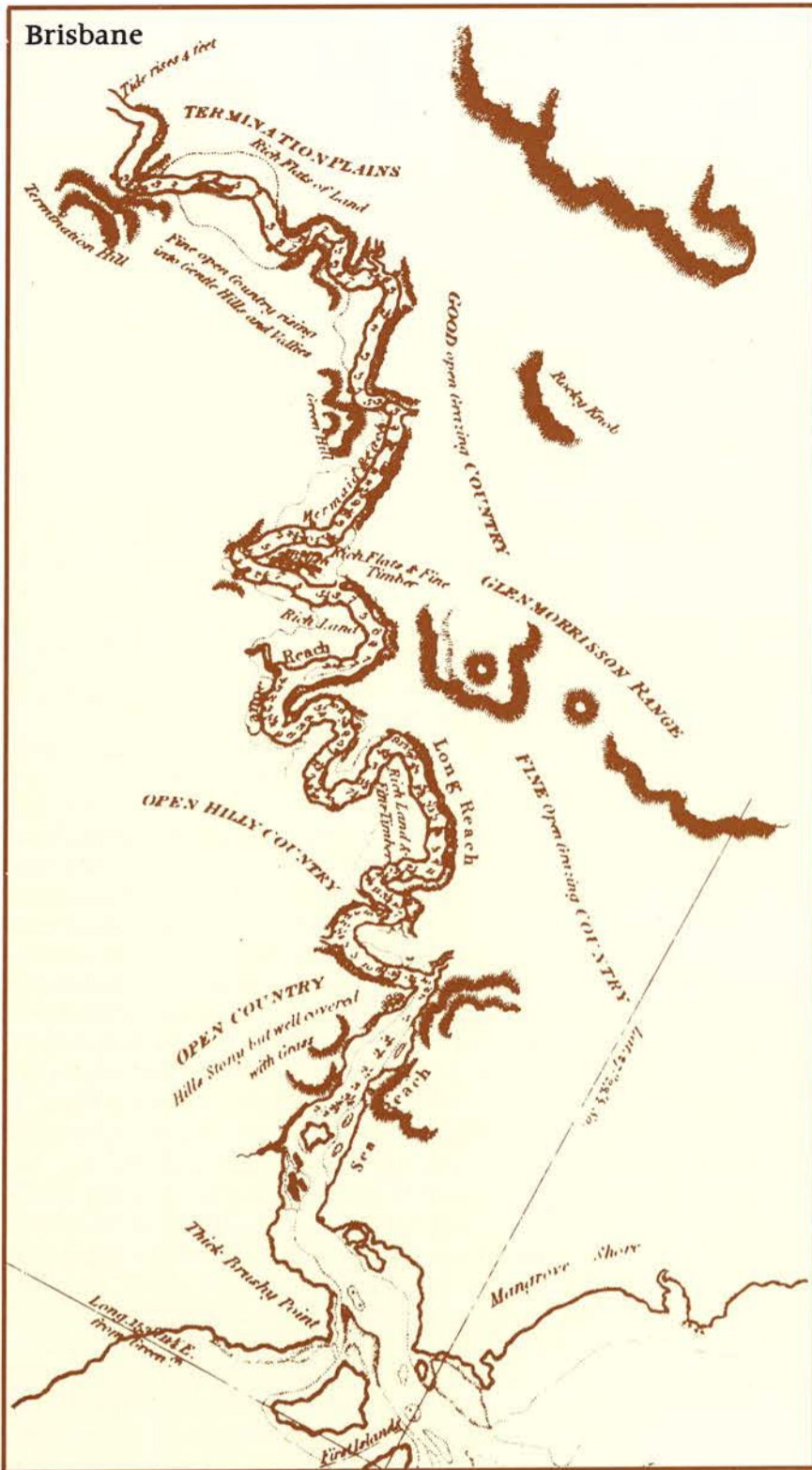
City sites



The settlements that were eventually to become the state capitals were the points of departure for explorers pushing into the interior. In most cases, they were established in little-known areas, and their sites were fixed after hurried exploration of the immediate area. As often as not, the initial site chosen was abandoned for a better one. Capital city environs, with the exception of Adelaide, are shown in this series of facsimiles.

Above. Sydney's site was chosen by Captain Arthur Phillip after he found that Botany Bay lacked fresh water and a protected anchorage for ships. Both were found at Port Jackson. Exploration of the surrounding country showed that the settlement was hemmed in by a sandstone plateau. This map was sketched by David Collins in the 1790s.

Left. Northern Port Phillip was explored by a party under Charles Robbins and Charles Grimes in 1803. The Yarra River and a tributary, the Maribyrnong, were discovered. Melbourne's site, however, was not established until 1835 when John Batman, acting on behalf of graziers in Van Diemen's Land, chose the Yarra near its junction with the Maribyrnong as the site for a 'village'.



Above. Moreton Bay had been explored by Matthew Flinders in 1799 and John Oxley in 1823 before a penal settlement was established in 1824. The initial site at Redcliffe was abandoned after a few months for a site on the Brisbane River near Long Reach. The new site offered protection from Aboriginal attack and a good supply of fresh water. This map was drawn by Oxley.

Above right. Storm Bay and the estuary of the Derwent River were charted by George Bass and Matthew Flinders in December 1798 and January 1799. In 1803 Captain John Bowen established a penal settlement at Risdon Cove. Poor water supplies, and tidal patterns that hindered the unloading of supplies, led to the choice of the present site of Hobart in 1804. The map reproduced here was drawn by Flinders, and 'Hobart Town' was added before its publication in 1814.

Right. The Swan River was noticed by Willem de Vlamingh in the summer of 1696-97 and examined by Thomas Nicholas Baudin's expedition in 1801. In March 1827 James Stirling and Charles Fraser explored both the Swan and Canning rivers before choosing a site for Perth on the north bank of the Swan, above the Narrows at Point Belches. This map was drawn by James Stirling.

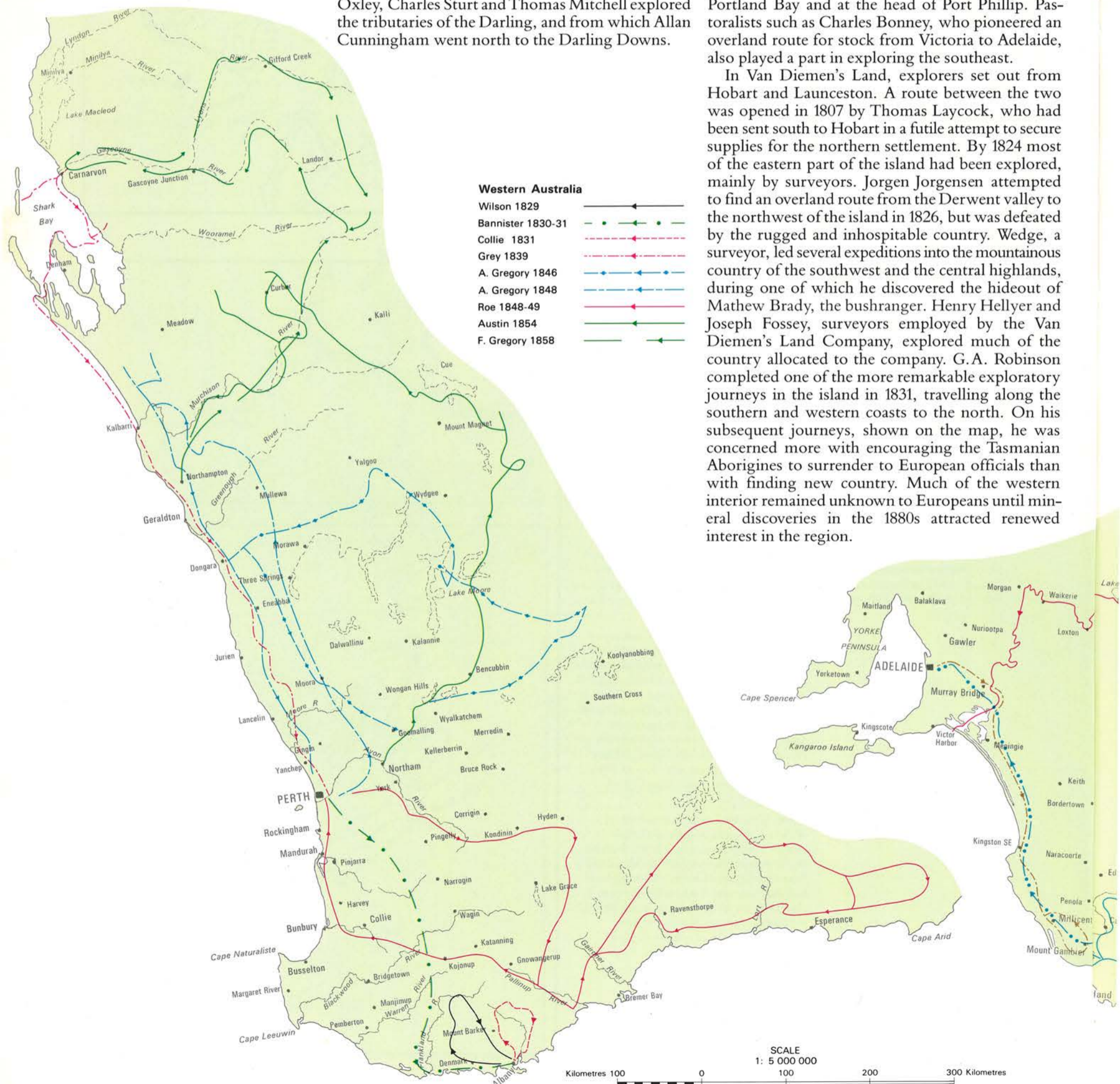
Land exploration to 1860

EARLY LAND EXPLORATION in southeastern Australia was hampered by the sandstone plateau that surrounded Sydney's hinterland. In 1813 Gregory Blaxland, William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth found a way across the plateau, the Blue Mountains to the west of Sydney, though they did not actually cross the mountains. The first to cross them was George William Evans, who followed the 1813 route and then pushed further west, discovering the Macquarie River and later the Lachlan River, and opening the way into the interior. The maps on these pages show the major expeditions that followed, as well as major expeditions in the other colonies.

Bathurst became the base from which John Oxley, Charles Sturt and Thomas Mitchell explored the tributaries of the Darling, and from which Allan Cunningham went north to the Darling Downs.

To the southeast, using the Goulburn-Yass district as a base, Hamilton Hume and William Hovell travelled to Port Phillip, Charles Sturt followed the Murrumbidgee to the Murray and the Murray to the sea, and Paul Strzelecki pushed into the Australian Alps (where he named Mount Kosciusko) and then on to Melbourne. Although Strzelecki claimed to be the first European to have discovered Gippsland in eastern Victoria, Angus McMillan had seen the region a year before while searching for pastoral land to the south of Omeo. This was not the only example of an official explorer's party being the second group of Europeans to reach new country. In 1836 Mitchell explored western Victoria, naming it 'Australia Felix', but found settlements already established at Portland Bay and at the head of Port Phillip. Pastoralists such as Charles Bonney, who pioneered an overland route for stock from Victoria to Adelaide, also played a part in exploring the southeast.

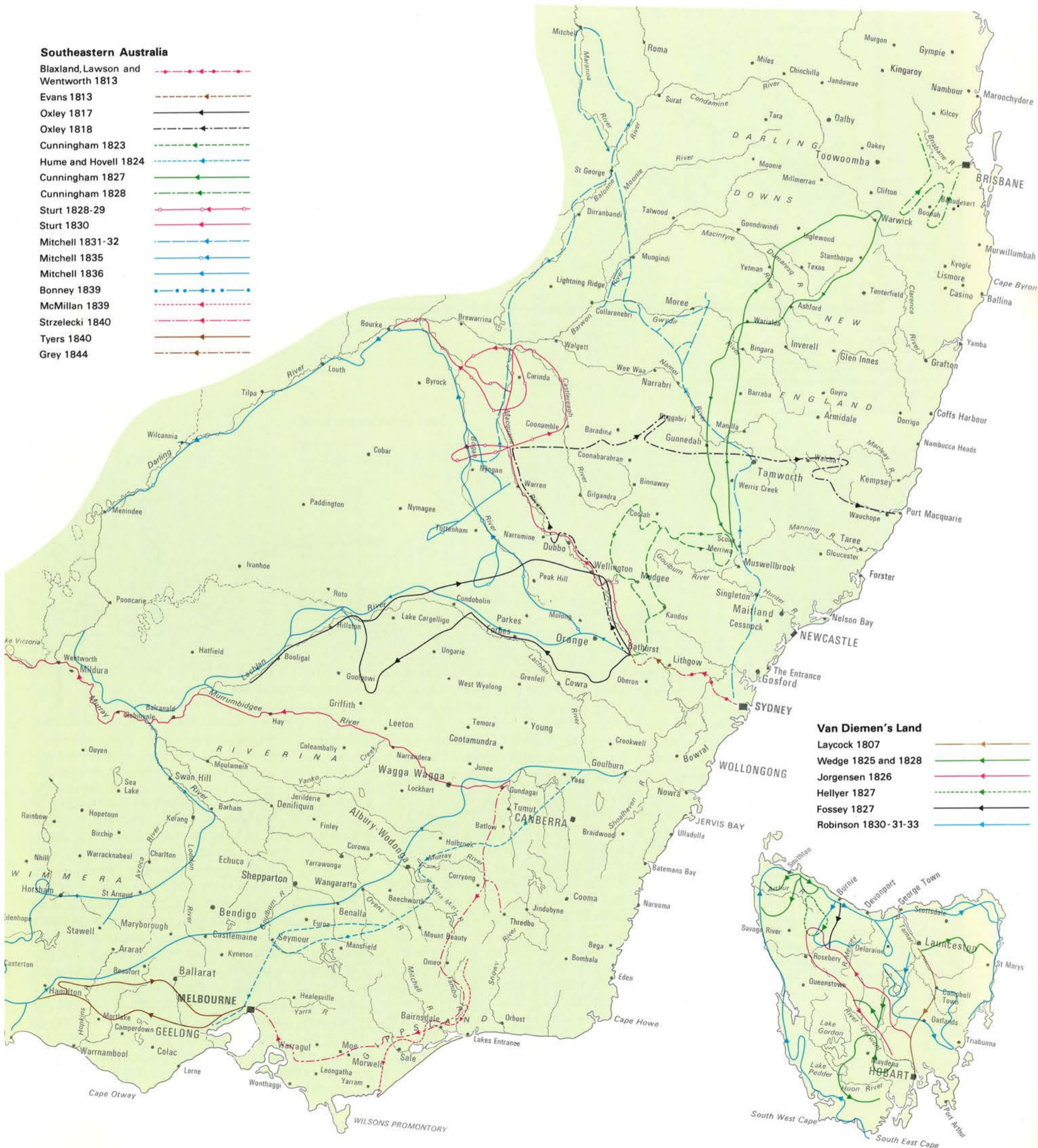
In Van Diemen's Land, explorers set out from Hobart and Launceston. A route between the two was opened in 1807 by Thomas Laycock, who had been sent south to Hobart in a futile attempt to secure supplies for the northern settlement. By 1824 most of the eastern part of the island had been explored, mainly by surveyors. Jorgen Jorgensen attempted to find an overland route from the Derwent valley to the northwest of the island in 1826, but was defeated by the rugged and inhospitable country. Wedge, a surveyor, led several expeditions into the mountainous country of the southwest and the central highlands, during one of which he discovered the hideout of Mathew Brady, the bushranger. Henry Hellyer and Joseph Fossey, surveyors employed by the Van Diemen's Land Company, explored much of the country allocated to the company. G.A. Robinson completed one of the more remarkable exploratory journeys in the island in 1831, travelling along the southern and western coasts to the north. On his subsequent journeys, shown on the map, he was concerned more with encouraging the Tasmanian Aborigines to surrender to European officials than with finding new country. Much of the western interior remained unknown to Europeans until mineral discoveries in the 1880s attracted renewed interest in the region.



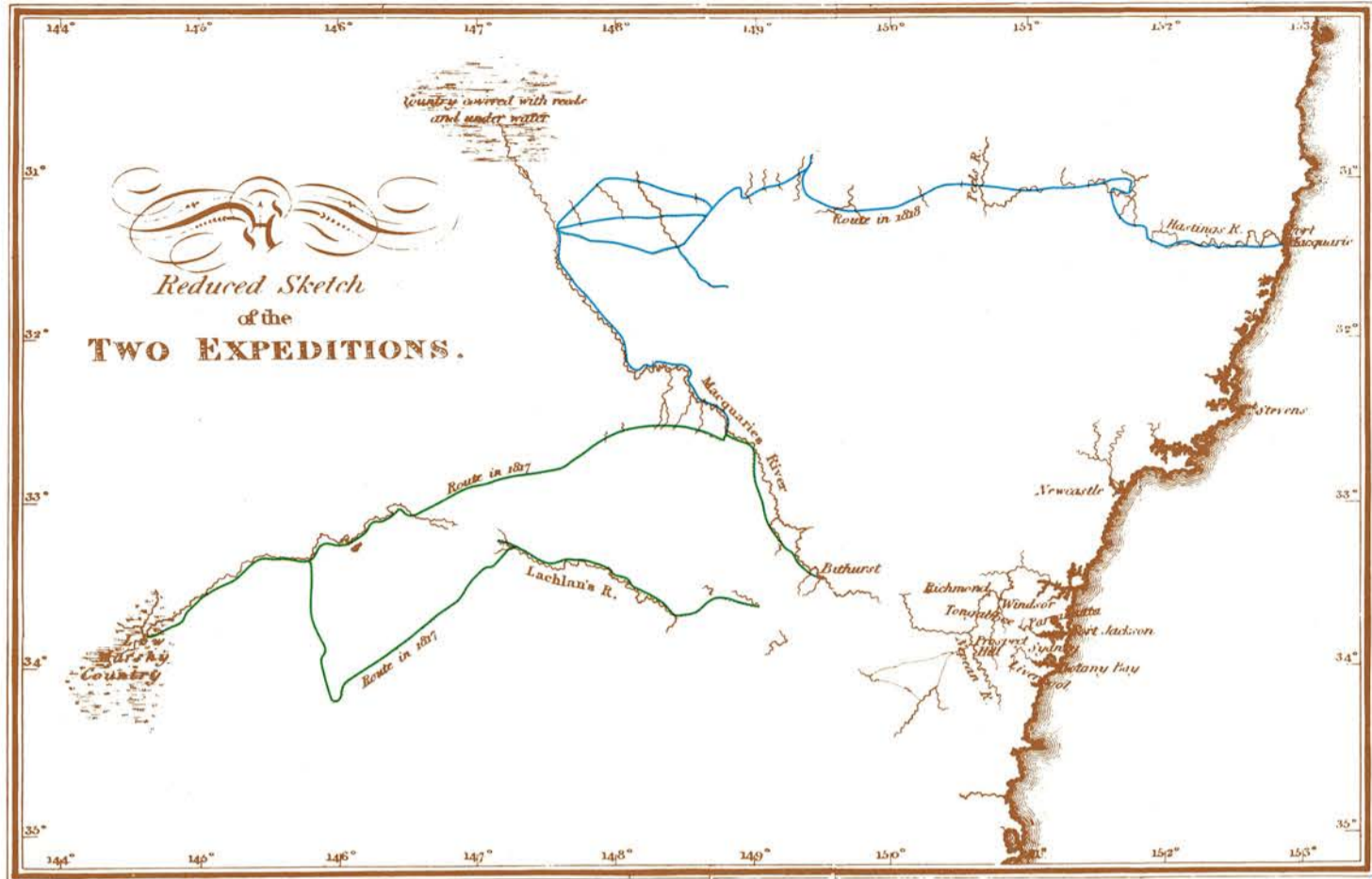
Perth and Albany were departure points for the explorers of the southwest. A route between them was pioneered by Thomas Bannister in 1830-31. Wilson had failed to find a route between the two settlements in 1829. John Septimus Roe comprehensively explored the southwest in the period before 1860. Expeditions led by Roe, George Grey, the Gregory brothers and others were mounted specifically to open up country for pastoralism.

Exploration in Western Australia was dominated by the search for new grazing lands, but this motivation was only one of many behind exploration in Australia. Another was scientific curiosity, not only about the

geography of a new continent but also about the nature of its animal, bird and plant life. Personal ambition and professional rivalry also played their parts and, in the case of Mitchell, were dominant elements. His 1835 expedition was mounted partly to disprove the assumption made by his rival, Sturt, that the Darling River flowed into the Murray River. For the surveyors, exploration was often part of the job; two examples are Evans' journey across the Blue Mountains, and C.J. Tyers' 1840 expedition, intended to fix the boundary between Port Phillip and South Australia.



Oxley and Eyre



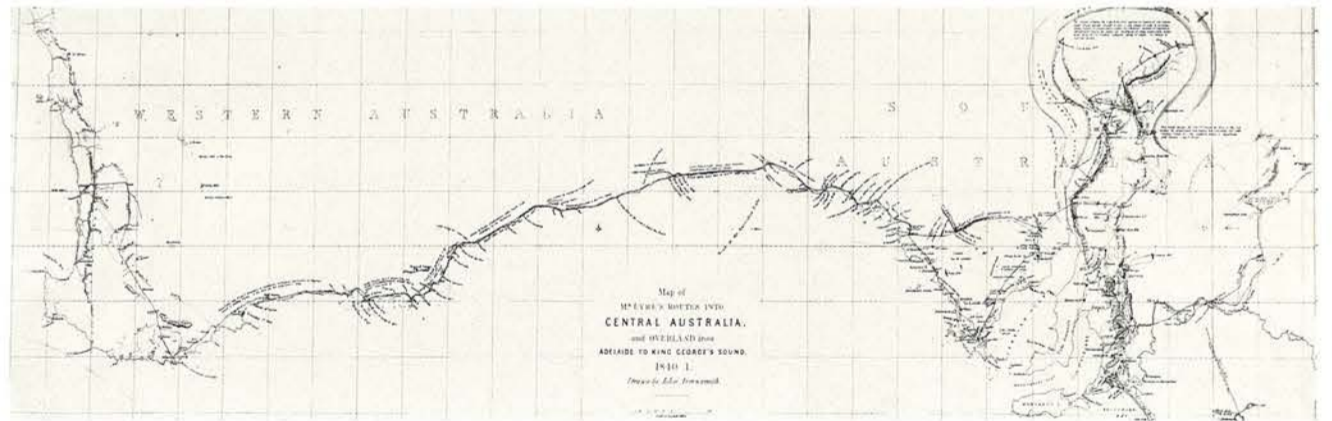
Above, John Oxley's two expeditions.

Below right, Edward Eyre's routes into central Australia and overland from Adelaide to King George Sound.

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This sketch was drawn by Thomas Mitchell in 1835 after meeting Aborigines in the Bogan valley. On the left is one of 'several young natives' who accompanied the party. On the right is the 'chief'. T.L. Mitchell, Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia, with descriptions of the recently explored region of Australia Felix, and the present colony of New South Wales, London 1839 (1838).



THE NAVIGATORS who charted the coast had found few large rivers entering the sea. Even Matthew Flinders had missed the mouth of the Murray River. In 1817, John Oxley discovered that both the Lachlan and Macquarie rivers flowed in a northwesterly direction before dispersing into vast swamps. His findings fostered a belief in the existence of either an inland sea or a great river whose mouth might be found on the island-studded northwest coast. Charles Sturt penetrated the swamps ten years later and followed the Macquarie to the Darling River. In 1830, during his expedition down the Murray, he passed what he assumed to be the junction of the Darling and Murray rivers. Thomas Mitchell's expeditions of 1835 and 1836 confirmed Sturt's assumption and the belief that the Murray-Darling system drained inland eastern Australia. The great river was now out of the question, but an inland sea remained a possibility.

Eyre

Edward John Eyre's exploration of the country to the north of Adelaide in South Australia brought him within sight of Lake Torrens and the other intermittent lakes in the region. He concluded that the lakes were part of a giant horseshoe lake blocking the way north. Eyre's best known expedition began with an attempt to skirt this lake. After failing to find a way around it in 1841, he turned westwards with one white companion, Baxter, and three Aboriginal guides in an attempt to reach Albany. The country was difficult, much of it desert. During an Aboriginal attack on April 29, Baxter and two guides disappeared into the desert. Eyre and his remaining guide, Wylie, pushed on. A French whaler gave them food and water at Rossiter Bay and the two men reached Albany on July 7. Eyre's journey is one of the most harrowing in the history of Australian exploration.

Continental crossings



THE MAP ON THIS PAGE shows the major expeditions undertaken beyond the southeast and southwest sections of the continent, and takes the story of exploration up to 1862, when the first successful south to north crossing took place.

In the north, Ludwig Leichhardt travelled through Queensland's eastern ranges to the base of Cape York, and northwest to Port Essington, becoming the first European to explore northern Australia. Although the expedition was a success in many ways — adding to the limited knowledge of the north, identifying new species of plants and animals and discovering valuable pastoral country — it was marred by bickering between members of the expedition. In 1848, Leichhardt set out to cross the continent from the east to the west, but his party disappeared and Leichhardt's fate remains unknown. Augustus Gregory began his expedition at the Victoria River, tracing its course until desert country forced the party to retreat. From the Victoria River, Gregory moved eastwards across the continent, keeping an eye out for any sign of the fate of Leichhardt's party. When a ship failed to meet the party in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Gregory continued eastwards along a route close to Leichhardt's route of 1844–45. Reaching Port Curtis, Gregory became the first European to cross the continent from west to east. Two years later, he travelled north from the Port Pirie district in South Australia, searching in vain for traces of Leichhardt's party. The expedition did, however, show that Queensland's Channel Country was good pastoral land. The third route in northern Australia marked on the map is Edmund Kennedy's expedition to Cape York from Rockingham Bay. Hampered by often impenetrable country and faced with

strong Aboriginal resistance, the expedition ended in tragedy. Kennedy was speared and died as he neared his destination. Of the thirteen men who set out on the journey, ten died or disappeared.

In the south, Thomas Mitchell explored lands north and west of the settled region of New South Wales. He was anxious to find a major river flowing to the north coast, a feat that would match the discovery of the Murray-Darling system by his rival Charles Sturt. Mitchell found a stream flowing to the north near the Thomson River, but it proved to be only a tributary of the Thomson, which in itself was part of the Cooper Creek system. The expedition did discover the pastoral country around the Maranoa and Warrego rivers, however.

From Adelaide, Sturt tried to reach the centre of the continent, following the Murray and Darling rivers upstream and pushing northwest into desert country (see page 55). Edward John Eyre's expeditions are described on page 52.

In the west, Francis Gregory explored the Pilbara, finding the Gascoyne, Fortescue and Oakerover rivers and good pastoral country.

During the 1850s it became clear that, like the inland river, the inland sea simply did not exist. Crossing the continent from the south to the north became the next major objective in Australian exploration. John McDouall Stuart attempted the crossing through central Australia in 1860 and again in 1861, but failed on both occasions. To the east, a rival expedition was mounted under the leadership of Robert O'Hara Burke. Burke's goal was the Gulf of Carpentaria via the Darling River and Cooper Creek. These south to north expeditions are described on page 57.

Leichhardt

THIS REPRODUCTION SHOWS Ludwig Leichhardt's route from the Darling Downs to the military settlement of Port Essington. Leichhardt's party undertook this journey from October 1844 to December 1845, experiencing many difficulties,

but discovering good pastoral land along the way. Leichhardt's second expedition, across the north of the continent, was less successful. Little is known about his third journey, begun in April 1848, as he and his party disappeared without trace shortly after setting out.



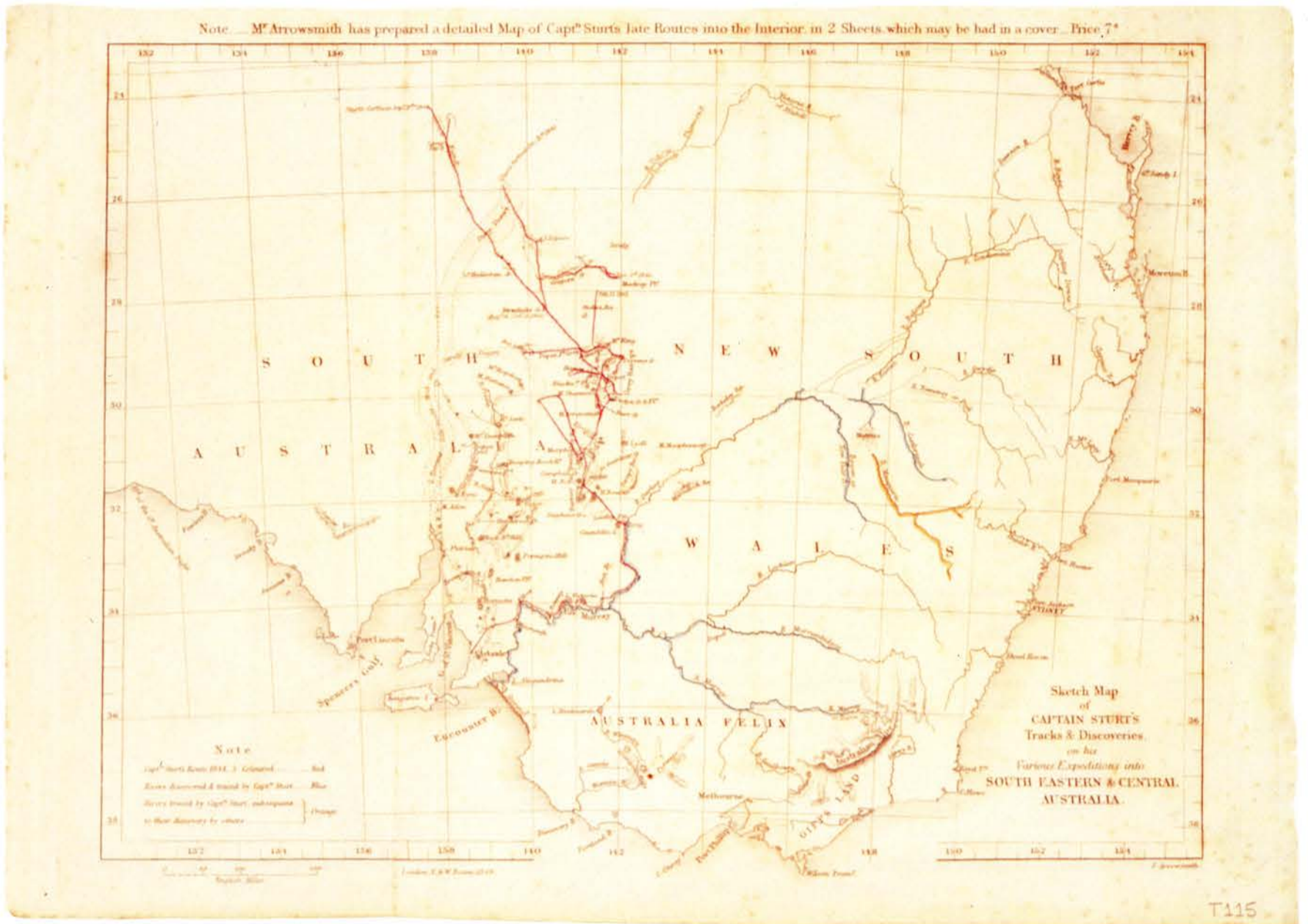
Overland expedition to Port Essington by Ludwig Leichhardt, colour lithograph of a map by Captain S.A. Perry, c1845. MITCHELL LIBRARY

Blacks about to attack Leichhardt's camp near the Gulf of Carpentaria, 1845. Painting by J. Macfarlane, in Robinson's Australian history pictures, 1912. MITCHELL LIBRARY

Sturt

IN THE 1840s the interior of the continent was unknown and the mystery of the inland sea unresolved. In 1844, months before Leichhardt began his epic journey across northern Australia, Sturt mounted an expedition north from Adelaide. Accepting Eyre's horseshoe lake as a geographical reality, he travelled east from Adelaide to the Murray and Darling rivers before moving into the interior. As he probed westward he found several

salt lakes, which reinforced his belief in Eyre's lake. During the expedition, Sturt discovered Queensland's Channel Country and the intermittent watercourses of Strzelecki Creek, Cooper Creek and the Diamantina River. In between, he crossed arid country. The existence of Eyre's horseshoe lake was disproved during the 1850s by expeditions led by, amongst others, Augustus Gregory and a member of the 1844 expedition, John McDouall Stuart.



Map of Sturt's expeditions in southeastern and central Australia, showing his routes (in red) and the rivers he discovered or traced (in blue or orange respectively). This map was produced in London by John Arrowsmith in 1849.

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Sturt's party attacked by blacks, by J. Macfarlane from Robinson's Australian history pictures, 1912.

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Land exploration from 1860



THE FINAL STAGE of Australian exploration was marked by a series of epic and dangerous journeys through the desert country that lay between the west coast and the Overland Telegraph. Few now believed that Australia's centre contained agricultural land, but the possibility that the land held mineral riches was still strong. Depots built along the Overland Telegraph became convenient points of departure or goals for those travelling through the centre.

John Forrest was a major figure in the exploration of the arid centre of the continent after the 1860s. His first expedition was undertaken in search of the remains of Ludwig Leichhardt's party, which had disappeared in 1848. No trace of them was found, although the expedition added to the knowledge of the country. In 1870 Forrest made the first west to east crossing in the southern part of the continent, following much of Edward John Eyre's route of 1841. The expedition reinforced Eyre's assessment that much of the country near the Great Australian Bight was desert. In 1874 Forrest repeated his west to east crossing, this time choosing a route further north after examining the country between the Murchison and Ashburton rivers. Travelling across some of the most arid country in Australia, he reached the Overland Telegraph south of Oodnadatta.

Forrest's brother, Alexander, earned a reputation as an explorer in his own right. Travelling east from Northam, he completed an arc via Esperance to Perth through country that is now Western Australia's major agricultural region.

Ernest Giles made three attempts to cross the deserts of the interior. The first, which began in the east, failed. On his second attempt, Giles started further south and used camels instead of horses as his main pack animals, and he succeeded in reaching Perth in 1875. In 1876 he

crossed back to the east from the Murchison and Ashburton rivers, reaching the Telegraph south of Oodnadatta.

In 1873 William Gosse attempted to cross the interior from Alice Springs, but the country he travelled through was waterless and forced him to abandon the attempt. During the expedition, however, he did discover Ayers Rock.

Peter Egerton Warburton's 1873 expedition from the Alice Springs district to the west was one of the most difficult undertaken during this period. As the party trekked across the Great Sandy Desert, they were in constant danger of dying of dehydration.

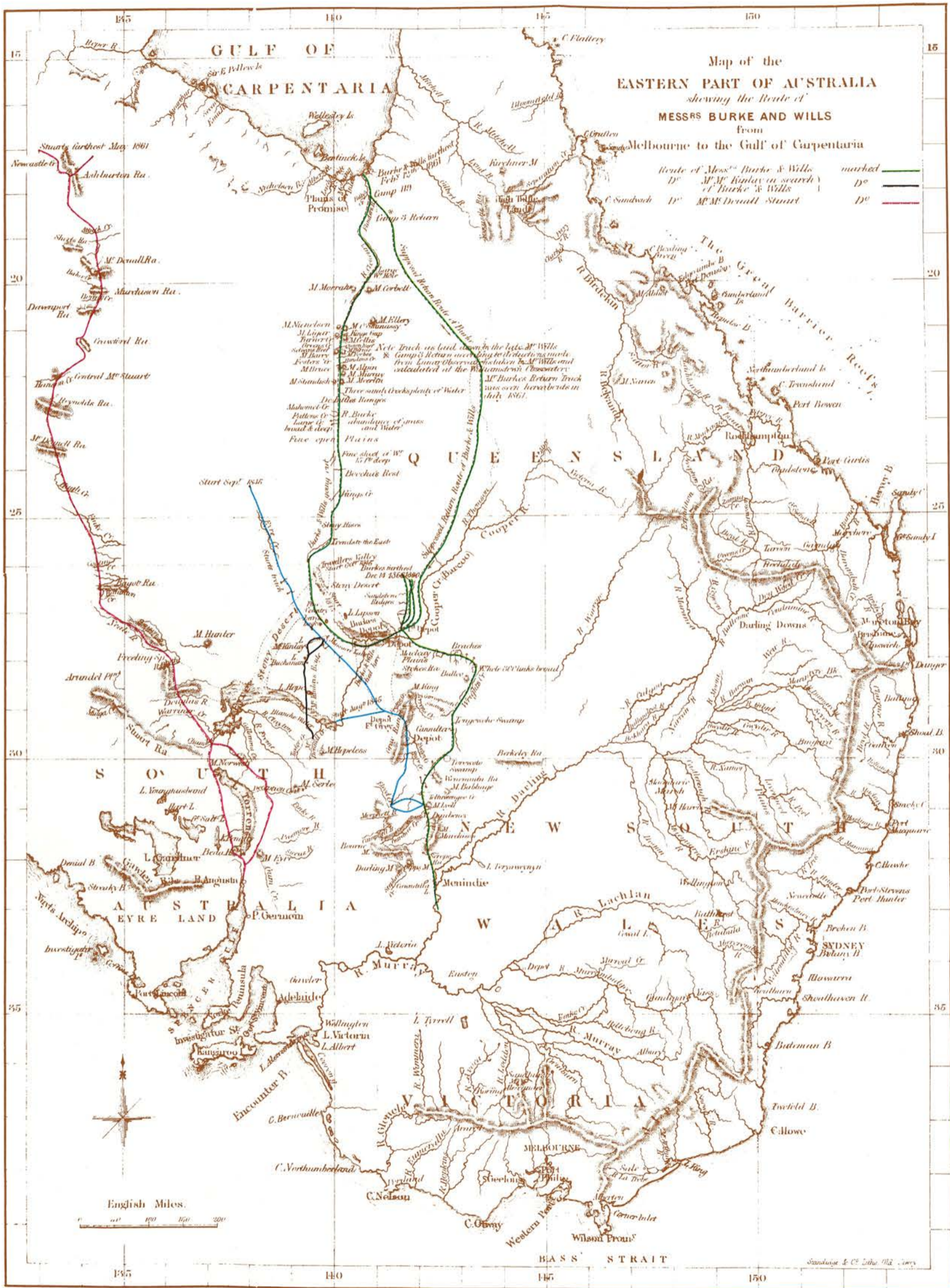
The expeditions led by these men confirmed that the central core of the continent was among the world's most inhospitable regions, dominated by vast deserts. The inland sea had taken its place in Australia's geographical mythology.



Oodnadatta, one of the points of departure and destination for explorers of the central deserts. Giles and Forrest used it in the 1870s. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1983.

WELDON TRANNIES

South to north crossings



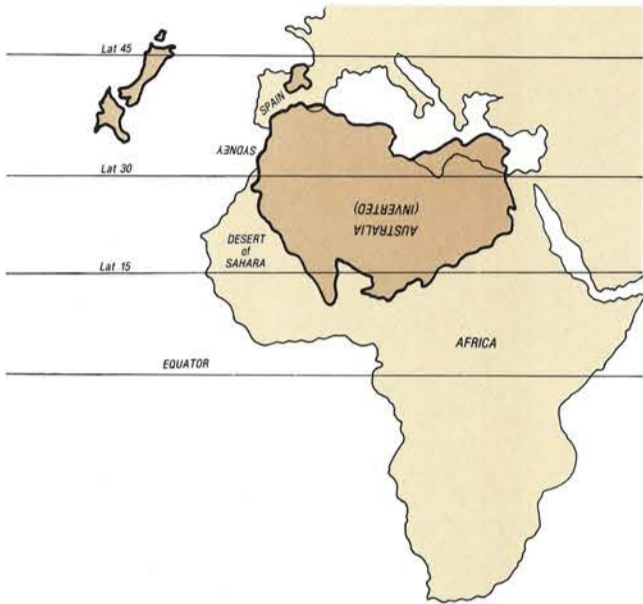
ONCE THE NOTIONS of an inland sea and Eyre's horseshoe lake had been disproved, competition to be the first to cross the continent from the south to the north began. John McDouall Stuart reached Central Mount Stuart in 1860, and Van Diemen's Gulf in 1862. His route on this attempt was followed by the Overland Tele-

graph, completed in 1872. From Melbourne, a party led by Robert O'Hara Burke also began a crossing in 1860, and four of them reached the Gulf of Carpentaria in February 1861. On the return journey all but one perished. The search parties sent after Burke's party added valuable information to a sketchy knowledge of the north.

High hopes and stark realities

AS LONG AS the Australian continent remained a mystery, fanciful notions of its nature abounded. The material reproduced here reflects those notions: the belief in better country beyond the areas known, the myth of an inland river and the belief in an environmentally rich interior. The first indications that Australia's interior was barren came not only from explorers, but also from geographers.

It is impossible to conceive a Country that promises favour from its Situation, than this of Terra Australis, no longer incognita, as this Map demonstrates, but the Southern Continent Discovered. It lies precisely in the richest Climates of the World. If the Islands of Sumatra, Java & Borneo, abound in Precious Stones and other valuable Commodities, and the Moluccas inspire; New Guinea and the Regions behind it must by a parity of Reason be as plentifully endowed by Nature. If the Island of Madagascar is so noble and plentiful a Country as all Authors speak it; and Gold, Silver, and other Commodities are common in the Southern part of Africa from Melinda down to the Cape of Good Hope, and so up again to C. Gonzalez; here are if same Latitudes in Carpentaria, New Holland, and New Zealand; If Peru overflows with Silver, if all the Mountains of Chili are filled with Gold, and this precious Metal & Stones much more precious are if product of Brazil; this Continent enjoys the benefit of the same position and therefore whoever perfectly discovers & settles it will become infallibly possessed of Territories as Rich, as fruitful, & as capable of Improvement, as any that have been hitherto found out, either in the East Indies, or the West.



Above. Although Dutch observations of the north and west coasts of Australia promised little, and although William Dampier confirmed their opinions, high hopes of wealth and prosperity and of better country further inland were a constant theme in Australia's settlement history. Emmanuel Bowen placed a paragraph loaded with such promise in his map of 1744, believing that the best climate on earth was to be found at 35 degrees north and south of the Equator.

Below. The notion of an inland river was popular until Sturt's and Mitchell's expeditions during the 1830s. This map, drawn in 1827, shows the Castlereagh and Macquarie rivers flowing into the Great River or Desired Blessing which, after moving through an inexplicable delta, reaches the ocean at the northwest of Australia. The map also contains other fanciful geographical features, including mountain ranges and rivers in the deserts of central Australia.

Left. By 1860 wealth from gold, a greatly expanded population and a prosperous pastoral industry in the eastern colonies seemed to promise well for agricultural land use despite salutary experiences of drought and flood in areas already settled. In 1859 W. S. Jevons reviewed the limited data on Australia's climate and suggested the continent's environmental limitations by superimposing a map of Australia on a map of Africa. He pointed out that, far from being located in favourable latitudes, Australia lay in the same latitudes as the world's greatest desert. Jevons' view was ignored for decades.

