

The Lost Dutch Tribe Of Central Australia

Acknowledgments

Author:

Les Hiddins AM, DSc h.c.

Contributors:

Karen S. Cook, MLS, MS, PhD, Special Collections Librarian Emerita, University of Kansas

Andrew S. Cook, Ph.D., formerly Map Archivist, Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London

Femme S. Gaastra, formerly Professor of Maritime History, University of Leiden, The Netherlands

Sidney Maloney, Luritja Elder and Luritja Traditional Owner,

Neil R McGregor Professor BDS, MDSc, PhD University of Melbourne

Introduction

It has always been known and accepted that white settlement in Australia commenced with the First Fleet in 1788. This followed Lt. James Cook's voyage up the East Coast of Australia in 1770. However within this research paper the fact that the first white settlement occurred in January 1788 is being very seriously challenged, and for good reason, as will be detailed here. The initial basis for this challenge is an Expedition Journal extract that was published in a provincial English newspaper called the *Leeds Mercury* in January 1834.

An historical perspective

When the *Leeds Mercury* article first appeared in the UK on the 10th January 1834, it took several months on board a sailing ship for copies to eventually arrive here in Australia. Once Australian newspaper Editors read the contents they were quick to dismiss the article as fiction. It flew in the face of the established historical narrative and absolutely no one in the Colony of New South Wales

had ever heard of such an expedition being sponsored by the East India Company settlement known as Singapore. Those same newspaper Editors in Sydney Town were in no way a reliable authority concerning the Wilds of Northern Australia.

Additionally, the ability of anyone at that time, be they newspaper editors or the Colonial authorities to attempt any sort of follow up or research on the matter was extremely limited. The electric telephone was over 40 years away from being invented, and in the 1830's research would have been restricted to sailing ship correspondence, to and from the Mother Country as well as Singapore. Of course being a so called "secret expedition" the powers that be in Singapore would have been most unlikely to cooperate in any such enquiry. Additionally to research this topic via sailing ship correspondence would have been quite impossible within one persons life span.

The easiest way out was simply to dismiss the Leeds article as being pure fiction, and that was that. No need for any further investigation. And so it was that it sat in the "fiction tray" for nearly 200 years, gathering almost zero attention. Occasionally it was trotted out to fill some newspaper space and deemed to be a form of entertainment rather than historical education. Such was the stigma attached to it that no professional historian in recent times would dare to pay it any form of serious attention for fear of damaging their professional reputation. Besides, everybody knows the *Leeds Mercury* article is a hoax, because *Wikipedia* has told them so.

That was unfortunate, for tucked away within the document were two vital clues to indicate this so called secret expedition did in fact take place. The first one was of course the most obvious one... the name Van Baerle. That's something that could quite possibly be checked out and verified as either fact or fiction, but more of that later. The second pointer is the Longitude given for the Mt. Singapore mentioned in the article.

The Longitude given for the Mt. Singapore is 132° 25' 30", and if left by itself would provide no further intelligence. However if you extend that line of Longitude all the way up north, through the entire length of the Northern Territory, you will find that it cuts into Raffles bay, and more precisely Fort Wellington near the eastern shore of Raffles Bay. This was the expedition start point we are told within the Leeds article.

This small piece of information immediately tells us that the Exploring Party left Raffles Bay or rather Fort Wellington and moved South using the compass bearing of Magnetic South. That approach allowed them to turn around and use the compass bearing of Magnetic North to return to their original starting point, Fort Wellington.

Such an approach will require diverting around geographical features such as swamps or mountainous escarpments, but for that purpose there is a particular military technique known as the "bypass" technique, which is of course not perfect but acceptable enough to help maintain a general magnetic heading. This approach can be noted in many of Australian explorers journals. Latitude readings are mentioned almost on a Daily basis, but Longitude readings almost always fail to get a mention, almost certainly due to the lack of a reliable time piece to take into the field. Latitude did not require an accurate time piece. In fact it required no time piece at all, but Longitude did.

But the most obvious point that was readily available to scrutinise was of course the Dutch surname of Van Baerle which is sighted within the Leeds article. In this instance an unsolicited telephone conversation from the Netherlands, which surprisingly revealed the point that the caller, in fact lived with one of the three Van Baerle individuals still alive in the Netherlands. From that initial conversation in 1996, it was then eventually established that a certain Constantine Van Baerle went missing on a ship named the *Concordia* in 1708.

And so it was the telephone that provided the initial breakthrough with this ongoing research project. About the same time, the so called Fax Machine was also providing a new and interesting form of communication, but was shortly bypassed with the Internet and Emails, which all excelled with speedy communications that was simply not available to earlier researchers. Photocopying or scanning relevant articles and posting them to and from overseas via the Internet became a modus-operandi for a wide range of people who became associated with this project. Finally, to top off all these assets, along came Google Earth, which immediately allowed satellite observation of the relevant locations. In fact, many of the documents and journals referenced here do no longer require a trip to the City or University library. They are now simply available over the internet.

The point to make here is that this research on the Leeds article has been undertaken just at the right time in history, a point when all the most efficient communication resources were available and at a time when they were at their very best to carry out this most complicated research task. To highlight and refer to past opinions and assessments that were arrived at over 100 years ago and to then apply them within today's environment, would be quite untenable.

The *Leeds Mercury* Article itself

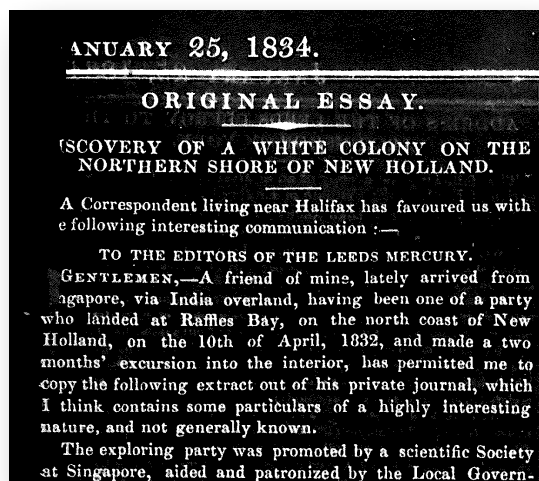
(LEEDS MERCURY - Jan 25, 1834 - P 7, Col. 1)

DISCOVERY OF A WHITE COLONY ON THE NORTHERN SHORE OF NEW HOLLAND

A Correspondent living near Halifax has favoured us with the following interesting communication:-

TO THE EDITOR OF THE LEEDS MERCURY

GENTLEMEN, - A friend of mine, lately arrived from Singapore, via India overland, having been



one of a party who landed at Raffles Bay, on the north coast of New Holland, on the 10th of April, 1832, and made a two months' excursion into the interior, has permitted me to copy the following extract out of his private journal, which I think contains some particulars of a highly interesting nature, and not generally known. The exploring party was promoted by a scientific Society at Singapore, aided and patronised by the Local Government and it's object was both commercial and geographical; but it was got up with the greatest

secrecy, and remained secret to all except the parties concerned. (for what good purpose it is impossible to conceive:-) Extract from an unpublished manuscript Journal of an exploring party in Northern Australia by Lieutenant Nixon.

"May 15th, 1832. - On reaching the summit of the hill, no words can express the astonishment, delight and wonder I felt at the magical change of scenery, after having travelled for so many days over nothing but barren hills and rocks, and sands and parching plains, without seeing a single tribe of aborigines excepting those on the sea coast and having to dig for water every day." Looking to the southwards I saw below me at the distance of about three or four miles, a low and level country, laid out as it were in plantations, with straight rows of trees, through which a broadsheet of smooth water extended in nearly a direct line from east to west, as far as the eye could reach to the westward, but apparently sweeping to the southward at its eastern extremity like a river; and near its

banks, at one particular spot on the south side there appeared to be a group of habitations embosomed in a grove of tall trees like palms. The water I guessed to be about half a mile wide, and although the stream was clearly open for two thirds of the distance from the southern bank, the remainder of it was studded by thousands of little islands stretching along its northern shores: and what fixed me to the spot with indescribable sensations of rapture and admiration was the number of small boats or canoes with one or two persons in each gliding along the narrow chanel [sic] between the islands in every direction, some of which appeared to be fishing or drawing nets. None of them had a sail, but one was floating down the body of the stream without wind, which seemed to denote a current ran from east to west. It seemed as if enchantment had brought me to a civilised country, and I could scarcely resolve to leave the spot I stood upon, had it not been for the overpowering rays of a mid day sun affecting my bowels, as it frequently had done, during all the journey. On reaching the bottom of the hill in my return to our party at the tents, I was just turning round a low rock, when I came suddenly upon a human being whose face was so fair and dress so white, that I was for a moment staggered with terror, and thought I was looking at an apparition. I had naturally expected to meet an Indian as black or as brown as the rest of the natives, and not a white man in these unexplored regions. Still quaking with doubts about the integrity of my eyes I proceeded on, and saw the apparition advancing upon me with the most perfect indifference: in another minute he was quite near, and I now perceived that he had not yet seen me, for he was walking slowly and pensively with his eyes fixed on the ground and he appeared to be a young man of handsome and interesting countenance. We were got within four paces of each other when he heaved a deep and tremulous sigh, raised his eyes, and in an instant uttered a loud exclamation and fell insensible to the ground. My fears had now given place to sympathy, and I hastened to assist the unknown, who I felt convinced, had been struck with the idea of seeing a supernatural being. It was a considerable time before he recovered and was assured of my mortality; and from a few expressions in old Dutch, which he uttered I was luckily enabled to hold some conversation with him; for I had been at school in Holland in my youth and had not quite forgotten the language. Badly as he spoke Dutch, yet I gathered from him a few particulars of a most extraordinary nature; namely, that he belonged to a small community, all as white as himself, he said about three hundred; that they lived in houses enclosed all to-gether within a great wall to defend them from black men; that their fathers came there about one hundred and seventy years ago, as they said, from a distant land across the great sea; and that their ship broke, and eighty men and ten of their sisters (female passengers ?) with many things were saved on shore. I prevailed on him to accompany me to my party, who I knew would be glad to be introduced to his friends before we set out on our return to

our ship at Port Raffles¹, from which place we were now distant nearly five hundred miles, and our time was linked to a fixed period so as to enable the ship to carry us back to Singapore before the change of the monsoon. The young man's dress consisted of a round jacket and large breeches, both made of skins, divested of the hair and bleached as white as linen; and on his head he wore a tall white skin cap with a brim covered over with white down or the small feathers of the white cocatoo [sic]. The latitude of this mountain was eighteen degrees thirty minutes fourteen secs south.; and the longitude one hundred and thirty two degrees twenty five minutes thirty seconds east. It was christened Mount Singapore, after the name and in honour of the settlement to which the expedition belonged."

A subsequent part of the journal states further, "that on our party visiting the white village, the joy of the simple inhabitants was quite extravagant. The descendant of an officer is looked up to as chief, and with him (whose name is Van Baerle,) the party remained eight days. Their traditional history is, that their fathers were compelled by famine, after the loss of their great vessel, to travel towards the rising sun, carrying with them as much of the stores as they could during which many died; and by the wise advice of their ten sisters they crossed a ridge of land, and meeting with a rivulet on the other side, followed its course and were led to the spot they now inhabit, where they have continued ever since. They have no animals of the domestic kind, either cows, sheep, pigs or anything else: Their plantations consist only of maize and yams, and these with fresh and dried fish constitute their principal food which is changed occasionally for Kangaroo and other game; but it appears that they frequently experience a scarcity and shortage of provisions, most probably owing to ignorance and mismanagement; and had little or nothing to offer us now except skins. They are nominal Christians: their marriages are performed without any ceremony: and all the elders sit in council to manage their affairs; all the young, from ten up to a certain age are considered a standing militia, and are armed with long pikes; they have no books or paper, nor any schools; they retain a certain observance of the sabbath by refraining from their daily labours, and perform a shorts superstitious ceremony on that day all together; and they may be considered almost a new race of beings.²

¹ Port Raffles is a Naval term, only used by Captain James Stirling in 1827, and Commander Laws of *HMS Satellite* in August 1828. It was a term that was very rarely used. At all other times the title Raffles Bay is used.

² At the time, the *Leeds Mercury* was a prominent provincial newspaper of liberal persuasion but totally respectable. It no longer exists as it was merged in 1939 into the *Yorkshire Post*. For further detail on the standing of the *Leeds Mercury* in the 1830's see *The Life of Edward Baines*. London 1851.

Overseas Publications

As a result of the *Leeds Mercury* public exposure, the journal extract was in turn picked up and republished within a variety of overseas publishing houses. The article was reproduced during the following weeks and months in *The Scotsman* and the *Liverpool Times*, as well as the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, which was a Dutch and English language newspaper. In September 1834, an abbreviated version of the *Leeds Mercury* article was also published in the *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* ³. The report was later picked up in Holland and published in the *Nederlandsch Magazijn*⁴ in 1837, with further comment appearing in the Dutch journal *Tijdschriftvoor Nederlandsch Indië*⁵ in 1851. As a historical topic, the article then lay dormant until the late 1980's. During the Australian Bicentennial year, it was again given coverage by a Western Australian newspaper⁶. In 1996, the issue formed the basis for a television documentary, as well as a chapter in the book *Stories of Exploration and Survival*. The subject received further exposure with the subsequent publication of the book, *Tarnished Heroes* in 1998. It's interesting to note that it was the *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal* that took immediate notice of the *Leeds Mercury* and reprinted an abbreviated version of the article on the 20th September 1834. As will be seen later, it's more than likely that they had some insider knowledge and association concerning this matter. A little bit of "Insider Trading" so to speak.

The *Concordia*

As a result of the previously mentioned telephone call from The Netherlands, we now had the name of a ship that possibly carried Van Baerle to the Australian coastline. That aspect needed to be more closely checked out and verified via the experts in the Netherlands. For this research, contact was established with Dr Femme S. Gaastra, of Leiden University. Dr. Gaastra is considered one of the foremost authorities on the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and has published a considerable number of books and papers on the VOC. It should be stated that at this stage, Dr. Gaastra was even quite unaware of a VOC ship by the name of *Concordia*.

In 1997, Dr. Femme Gaastra gave a lecture here in Australia addressing this exact question.

³ Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal, 20th September 1834

⁴ Nederlandsch Magazijn ter Verspreiding van Algemeene en Nuttige Kundighden, Te Amsterdam, Bij, Gebroeders Dieerichs, (Bloemart, No. 227) 1837, p.179.

⁵ Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie 13 (1851), vol 12, p.361

⁶ Harris A. Western Australian, June 4, 1988

"I owe this speculation on the possibility of a Dutch group of settlers in Australia well before the settlement at Botany Bay in 1788, to a man who is apparently well-known to you because of his television program: *Les Hiddens*, (sic) or the "bush- tucker man". He made contact and provided me with some material about this matter, asking me to confirm that Constantine Van Baerle was indeed aboard the ship *Concordia* when it disappeared in 1708."⁷

As mentioned, Dr. Femme Gaastra had not heard of a VOC ship named *Concordia*, and so was searching Dutch East India Company archives for the very first time for relevant *Concordia* data. After considerable effort, Dr Gaastra located the evidence he was looking for. He found a copy of the letter from the Government of Batavia addressed to the Gentlemen Seventeen, the original being lost with the ship *Concordia*. In that letter it is stated that:



VOC Ship Concordia

"With this ship [*the Concordia sic*] we send home the assistant Constantijn van Baerle, out of service."

Having established the point that there was a person by the name of Van Baerle on board the *Concordia* at the time of its disappearance at sea, the next task was to take a closer look at the ship itself and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance at sea. For instance we are told in the *Leeds Mercury* article that the original ship was a 'great vessel', and that 'eighty men and ten of their sisters (female passengers ?) with many things were saved on shore'.

The *Concordia* was in company with two other ships returning to The Netherlands when two of them went missing south of Sunda Strait. This occurred in early Feb 1708. So it would appear most likely that the *Concordia*, along with the *Zuiderburg*, were struck down by bad weather to the south of Sunda Straits in early February 1708, during the height of the local monsoon season.

The *Mercurius*, which was a "galjoot" or small ship, reported at the Cape of Good Hope that she had last sighted the *Concordia* and the *Zuiderburg* together in open seas to the south of Sunda Strait on the 5th February 1708. The last ship seen by the *Mercurius* at the time was the *Zuiderburg* alone

⁷ The Australian Association for Maritime History inc. *The Dutch East India Company A Reluctant Discoverer*. Femme S Gaastra 1997, Vol 19, No. 2, (1997) . pp 118

on the 8th February in bad weather. According to the report of the *Mercurius*, High waves and hollow seas continued until the 22nd February, during which time no further sightings occurred. On the 22nd February, the crew of the *Mercurius* observed flotsam in the water.

*"They saw then several goods in the water, some firewood, a chest of tea, a Chintze piece of cotton, a carpenter's boor, white candles, and the staves for barrels"*⁸

The oral history of the Dutch settlement in Central Australia as recorded by 'Nixon' in the *Leeds Mercury* article seems to confirm these circumstances when the Dutch settlers stated to 'Lt.Nixon' that they came '*from a distant land across the great sea; and that their ship broke*'. A complete passenger listing for the *Concordia* has not yet been established, however Dr Femme Gaastra has been able to assemble some of the individuals on board at the time of her disappearance. The name he has established so far, tend to relate to the crew members of the ship. The females that gain mention, were those being transported at the time either on board the *Concordia* or the *Zuiderburg*.

Femme Gaastra was also able to uncover some fine detail concerning some of the passengers on board the *Concordia* at the time. He found that some people on board had a special status.

*On board the Concordia were a Balinese prince, in Dutch sources called "Prama Jouda" or "Soutenella", his wife, and one of his courtiers, named Ranya Sourang. They came from the defeated and destroyed group of Balinese rebels in Passarouang (on Java) and were banned to the Cape. The Prince was destined for the chain-gang and the courtier for some other form of penal labour"*⁹.

Concluding his paper and commenting on the *Leeds Mercury* article, Dr Femme Gaastra notes that it would have been a very tricky thing for the anonymous author to research the name Van Baerle and insert it in the article as a means of authenticating the story, and also confusing future historians. So let's quickly deal with that very very remote possibility. Anyone who tried to do that would also be well aware that Van Baerle went missing in 1708. Subtract 1708 from 1834 and you get 126, yet the Dutchman in the article tells our Lt. Nixon they had been there for 170 years. A mathematical error that such a devious author would be most unlikely to make, surely?

⁸ VOC 4059 Overgekommen Brieven en Papieren Vande Kaap de Goede Hoop in 1709, tweed stuk. [Letters and Papers from the Cape of Good Hope, arrived [in the Netherlands] in 1709.

⁹ The Australian Association for Maritime History inc. *The Dutch East India Company A Reluctant Discoverer*. Femme S Gaastra 1997, Vol 19, No. 2, (1997) . pp 120

Surviving the Ship wreck

Trying to estimate the final resting place of the VOC ship *Concordia* along the Western Australian coastline, is at best, an educated guessing game. We are told in the Leeds narrative that they walked inland "*toward the rising sun*". So in other words they walked East from the shipwreck site on the coast. We also now know that their final location in Central Australia was roughly around Latitude 24° 30' +, so we can extend that Latitude westerly and figure that the *Concordia* beached somewhere north of present day Carnarvon on the Western Australian coastline. Quite likely somewhere between Latitudes 24 and 25 degrees.

Looking at that environment from a purely survival perspective presents a daunting prospect. The natural survival resources available to feed 80 men and 10 females per day are far from adequate. Of a total of 176 survival species listed by the Australian Army, only 16 possibly relate to that geographical location. Not only are those resources extremely limited, but also many may not be in season at that time, so the available resources drops even further. Above all that, if you found yourself in that situation, you had to know exactly what you were looking for, and that possibility is almost zero.

Those 16 species by the way also include some of the more obvious resources available from the ocean shoreline such as oysters. Trying to feed 90 people per day from the ocean itself may not be totally impossible when land based, but would be extremely limited particularly when taking the very restrictive fishing equipment available for that era into account. Not surprisingly, they eventually came to the same conclusion that so many previous Dutch shipwreck survivors¹⁰ also made when cast up on that shoreline. Citing the fact that "*...they were compelled by famine*" they moved inland.

We also know that from the shipwreck of the *Concordia* "*...many things were saved on shore*". On most sailing vessels, including the VOC ships of that era, there would have been a variety of livestock on board for use during the long and protracted sea voyages. Chickens were apparently a

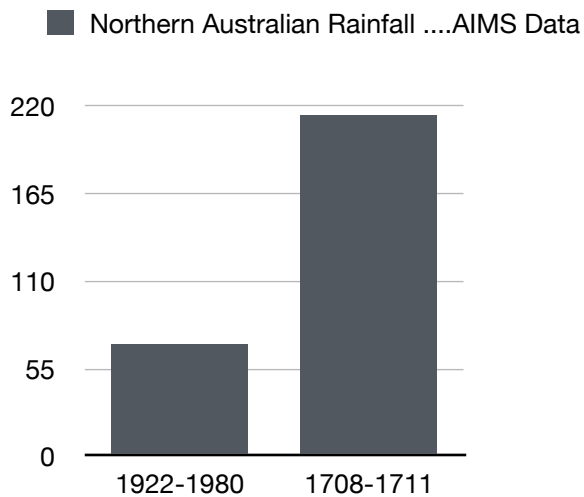
¹⁰ For instance let's look at the *Vergulde Draeck* which is often erroneously referred to as the *Guilt Dragon* here in Australia. She was wrecked on the Western Australian coastline in April 1656. Seventy five seamen reached the shore alive, and a small party of seven in the ships boat were despatched to Batavia, which they reached in June 1656. Although a number of rescue attempts were made by the VOC in the following months and years, no sign of the castaways was ever found.

favourite as were goats and sheep. Lt. James Cook for instance, on board the Endeavour in 1770 took a range of livestock, including a goat which had already travelled around the world in 1768 with Royal Navy explorer Captain Sam Wallis. Cows were often dismissed as being too large and difficult to accommodate. As will be seen later in this research paper, goats may well have been the animal of choice on board the *Concordia*. They provided both milk and meat, and are easily domesticated and handled. In addition, goats have been known to eat almost anything. It should be noted that Goats also formed a considerable portion of the Swan River livestock inventory, and may well have also accompanied the exploration party from Raffles Bay 1832. Apparently at Swan River, the goat population provided a favourite target for the local Indigenous population

Watching the Weather

With the information concerning the loss of the *Concordia* in mind, a check on the weather in the year 1708 was next required. A discussion with Dr Peter Isdale at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) confirmed that any ship disabled to the south of Sunda Strait at that time of year, would most likely be picked up by the Leewin Current and eventually find itself cast upon the Western Australian coastline. Just exactly where the ship would end up along that expansive coastline, would very much depend on the starting point of the incident. In other words, just where the ship *Concordia* was dismantled or lost its steerage, would also determine the path the Leewin Current would eventually carry it to the east.

Due to the work already collated at the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Dr Isdale was also able to explain the rainfall patterns for the period in question. For the Dutch to move inland as they claimed they had done, they would also need to have had access to good reliable water supplies, which would not normally be the case in that part of the continent these days. But as can be seen from Isdale's work, the Australian continent in 1709. Annual Rainfall Comparisons for Northern Australia in the early 1700's was much better watered than it presents today. The figures from the AIMS Burdekin runoff give a general indication of the rainfall not only for North Queensland but also Northern and North West Australia. This is an extrapolation of rainfall for the northern tropics of Australia, in much the same way as temperature can also be extrapolated across the northern regions of the continent. Looking at the period when the Dutch were possibly cast ashore in 1708, we can see that from 1705 to 1711, the yearly average rainfall was 215 mm per year. In comparison, the year period from 1922 to 1980 was very much drier with a yearly average of just 70 mm per year. During that entire time, from 1922 to 1980, there were only two occasions where the yearly



rainfall equalled or exceeded the yearly average for the most likely Dutch landing period. This situation would tend to provide the necessary surface water required for such a cross country movement by the Dutch in 1708-9. In short, it would appear that the Australian continent received much more rainfall in the 1700's than it did in the 1900's

The Walk Inland

To modern day society, the possibility of a large group of people walking inland for a distance of nearly 2,000 kilometres over such inhospitable country would initially appear to be a near impossibility. If the detail contained in the *Leeds Mercury* is any indication, the task was clearly daunting for the Dutch also resulting in many dying along the way. But looking at the predicament more closely, the task is not insurmountable. For instance, if the party covered ten kilometres per day, they would be able to reach the central regions of Australia in well under one year. The information already provided by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) tells us that the country at that time was much better watered than it is nowadays, and so the possibility is not entirely out of the question. We should not forget that a number of our own explorers such as Burke and Wills, John McDouall Stuart, and Ludwig Leichhardt did in fact cover that sort of distance, and under more severe climatic conditions.

It should also be remembered that previous generations were much more accustomed to undertake greater hardship and privations than are present generations. Consequently, back in the early 1700's, we would be looking at very hardy group of individuals, who were also well acclimatised due to their previous time spent living in Indonesia. In passing judgement on this question, we should not make the mistake of applying today's standards on yesterday's occurrences.

The question of just why they would choose to walk to the eastward toward the interior is open to speculation, and so the move to the east may have been in fact their only option at the time. It may also be that the motivation for such an easterly movement may have been in the hope that they would eventually reach the Gulf of Carpentaria or the closer and more fertile region of Arnhemn Land, both of which had previously been explored and charted by the Dutch navigators from Batavia.

But then came van Blommestein

The *Leeds Mercury* article did not stand alone in its revelation. The *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* in 1851 also published a related article previously mentioned, which is particularly interesting.

In 1836 an English merchant ship arrived in Samarang [sic] where I was the Harbour master. The captain, whose name I have forgotten, told me that he had just come from the north coast of New Holland and that some of the passengers on board his ship who had travelled into the interior had met [there] about 300 Hollanders living in a totally primitive manner. I reported to the Governor - General De Eerens what the captain had related to me, but have never heard anything more about the matter. I did read a story of this kind later in an English newspaper. Probably this story is the basis for the account in "Nederlandsch Magazyn" of 1837 p. 179 which relates that some English travellers in the Raffles Bay area, on the west coast of New Holland, had encountered about 300 Hollanders in the interior; they were dressed in hides and their chief was descended from an officer named Van Baerle. They related to the travellers that their ancestors had been shipwrecked some 170 years ago; 10 women had also survived the wreck. They lived in a very backward civilisation. Sundays were still honoured when they refrained from work"¹¹.

van Blommestein

Now van Blommestein was not in any way suspect of writing fiction here, but his dates and timings do not correctly line up. For a start, the expedition took place in 1832 not 1836. However the Governor - General De Eerens was in fact in office in 1836. He was appointed Governor - General in February 1836 and died in office in 1840. Of course this "secret expedition" was made public knowledge in 1834 via the *Leeds Mercury*, after which the Captain of the ship may have felt unburdened in remaining silent on the matter. Both the ship and the Captain, that is the one most favoured in this assessment for carrying out this operation, was most definitely plying those Dutch East India Company ports in 1836, as he also was in 1832. Either way it makes no difference to the fact that the Samarang Harbour master was told of the Dutch Colony in Central Australia by the mystery ships captain. More on him and his ship shortly. After his time as Samarang Harbour Master, van Blommestein went on to become a leading light in the sugar industry of the Dutch East Indies.

Looking at Singapore and a Lt. Nixon

¹¹ "Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie" [vol. 13, no. 12, 1851, p. 361]

When looking at the initial information provided via the *Leeds Mercury*, the fact that Singapore is nominated as the home base of the undertaking meant that the Honourable East India Company (HEIC) would probably turn out to also be the sponsors of the exploring party. East India Company records most likely to assist, would possibly be found in the United Kingdom. As a result, this research project ended up getting some significant assistance from a husband and wife team within the British Library, specifically the India Office, in London. Doctors Andrew and Karen Cook had set up the task to find the person who submitted the *Leeds Mercury* article and also to try and isolate a Lt Nixon based in Singapore. Despite collating a list of 28 Lt Nixon's in uniform at the time in question, they could not identify any Lt. Nixon in the British or the Indian Army who would fit the persona, so it looked like the name "Nixon" was fictional. Not only that, but the possibility of such an expedition being undertaken by the Singapore government at that time was very very unlikely.

The local government at Singapore (Honourable East India Company, and the Madras Army detachment) was deeply involved in the Naning Campaign in the Malay Peninsula, and diverting valuable and scarce resources to equip an exploring party to discreetly look at inland Australia would have been presumably a very low priority indeed. The meagre manpower resources of the HEIC in Singapore were then fully focussed to ward that rather localised campaign. In addition, the company was also undergoing severe financial cutbacks, which were in due course implemented in the early 1830s. As far as the outpost of Singapore was concerned, the political and economic climate was not right in 1832 for such an irregular and unnecessary undertaking. So the Singapore connection also looked to be somewhat fictional. Additionally the Agricultural and Horticultural Society was not formed in Singapore until 1836 and the Raffles Institute had collapsed some years before 1832.

Decades of Searching

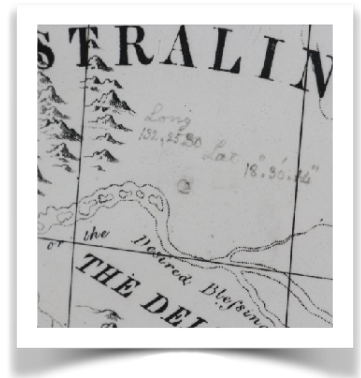
The next task in checking this story out was to look seriously at the Latitude given in the narrative. It's a known fact that Latitudes are much more reliable than Longitudes and so Latitudes are taken as near Gospel. As a result, many years were spent searching this general Latitude of 18° 30', with nothing more than a small sand mound ever showing up for Mount Singapore. I knew from 15 years past experience flying around Northern Australia in Army Aviation Kiowa helicopters, that river systems and water ways alter at various times. They do change course and alter to some considerable degree, but mountains or hills almost always stay the same. It takes an earth quake or some major event to change the shape and presentation of a mountain or hill. After years of flying

and ground searching for Nixons Mt Singapore, there was nothing that came anywhere near the result required. Yet the evidence found to-date, suggested that the Dutch Colony did in fact once exist. Something would appear to be very wrong with the Latitude.

So a reassessment of the available data, was not very encouraging. There was no geographical data supporting a Mt Singapore at the Latitude given of 18° 30', nor was there any Mt Singapore within 50 odd kilometres of that Latitude, there was no Lt. Nixon to fill the slot of Expedition commander, and there was no information incriminating either Singapore or the HEIC involvement. However Dr's Andrew and Karen Cook from the British Library in London did find who the individual was who originally submitted the article to the *Leeds Mercury* in 1834. He was a retired Lt Thomas Maslen from the Indian Army living near Blackstone Edge', (a ridge at the western boundary of Yorkshire) approximately six miles to the south west of the city of Halifax¹². However making that Maslen connection would turn out to be critical at a later date when trying to pin- point the location of the Dutch settlement in Central Australia.

Maslen's personal copy of *The Friend of Australia*

Dr's. Andrew and Karen Cook managed to track down Thomas Maslen's personal copy of his book *The Friend of Australia* where it resided in the Mitchell Library, Sydney NSW¹³. In this copy, Maslen had made numerous notes in the margins on corrections he wanted incorporated in any future reprints that may occur. These notes were done in pencil along the margins of the applicable pages, including the Lat. and Long. for Mt Singapore. But in the rear fold out map of Australia, he had noted down the position of Nixons Mount Singapore along with the Lat and Long. Sure enough, the position is to the north of his imagined *The Great River or the Desired Blessing* just where the river at its eastern extremity bends to the south, as per the description in the original *Leeds Mercury* article.



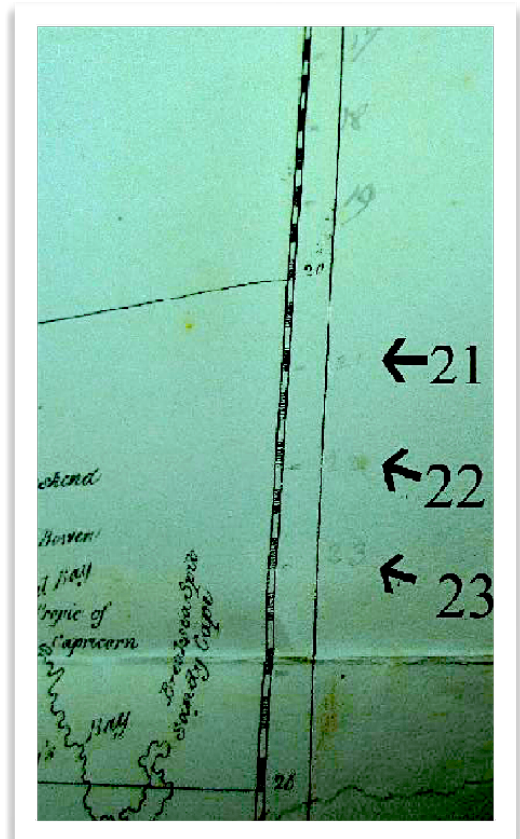
I've had a photocopy of Maslen's map hanging on my study wall for years properly framed up, and behind glass. It had already been noted that Maslen had penciled in along the right hand border the numbered Latitude markings for 16, 17, 18, and 19 degrees of Latitude which of course he had to do

¹² In the 1841 census, Maslen's name appears in Soyland Township enumeration district no. 8 which is located southeast of the Rochdale and Halifax Road, between Blackstone Edge and Ripponden. The address is given as being "Small Lees", which is a small hamlet off Blackstone Edge Road.

¹³ Mitchell Library reference ML 980.158A2

to mark in the location of Nixon's Mt Singapore on his map. On the left hand border of the map he had marked off the same degree marks.

But one day when looking very closely at these marking I finally noticed that Maslen had at one stage also marked in the Latitude markings for 21, 22, 23, and 24 degree markings. Like the other markings they were also once numbered and also marked up on the left hand border. But unlike the others, they were partially rubbed out. A better coverage was obtained from the Mitchell Library which you can see attached to the right. Now why would anyone want to mark up something belonging to the 18 degree line of Lat, and also mark up AND deliberately number the degrees below that ? That can't be some sort of mistake but rather was done for a purpose and likewise the attempt to rub out the numbers was an attempt to hide something. This had become the "smoking gun" that was always missing from this research. So the penny then dropped, that "Nixon's" original Latitude was way further south than the 18 degrees noted in the *Leeds Mercury* article. This had been deliberately done by Thomas Maslen, most likely to try and advance his own political agenda with the Colonial Office and enhance his profile with them. After all, he repeatedly was inclined to be pestering them to employ him and let him explore the vast Australian Outback. They never took up his offer.



Looking Further South

Looking further to the south, a number of factors now began to fall into line. A couple of the more interesting aspects related to the Mission at Hermannsburg¹⁴. When the Lutheran Church set up the Hermannsburg Mission in 1877, one of the missionaries made a rather interesting observation at the time concerning the local Aboriginals.

"they were certainly no fools, but very human and intelligent folk; some of them were readily picking up English words, so that they and the missionaries could make themselves mutually understood." And get this comment.... "In facial features some of them even resembled European acquaintances ¹⁵"

This pioneering missionary work was initially carried out by two ministers of the Church, Pastors F.A.H. Kempe and W.F. Schwarz in 1876. In a paper given to the Royal Geographic Society of South Australia in 1887, Pastor Kempe made the following observation.

"It is quite certain that many of the women had Jewish names such as Judith, Paula, Mirjam, before they ever saw a white man¹⁶".

The names cited here by Kempe are all from the Old Testament, and according to Dr Femme Gaastra were all in popular use in the Netherlands in the early 1700's. The Hermannsburg Mission is just to the north of Palm Valley, and the Palmer River. One of the first explorers through that region was Earnest Giles in 1872. Reading through the diary of Giles (1872) he comes to a geographical gap which he calls "Middleton's Pass" and "Fish Ponds" after his friend A D Middleton. This is on the Palmer River and he says these ponds were...

"literally alive with fish, insomuch that the water had a most disagreeable fishy taste, great numbers of fish floating in the water.¹⁷"

Giles also made a rather fascinating observation concerning the local Aboriginals along the Palmer River at Rogers Pass.

¹⁴ Also known as Fink River Mission or Fink Mission

¹⁵ Scherer P A Venture of Faith An Epic in Australian Missionary History p. 67

¹⁶ Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society of Australasia - South Australian Branch, Sessions 1886-7 and 1887-8 Vol ii "The Customs, Religious Ceremonies, etc, of the "Aldolonga" or "Mbenderinga" Tribe of Aboriginals in the Krichauff Ranges, South Australia, p.34

¹⁷ Geographic Travels in Central Australia from 1872 to 1874 by Ernest Giles p. 66

“Here we found a considerable number of natives; and though the women and children would not come close, several of the men did so, and made themselves useful by holding some of the horses bridles and getting some firewood. Most of them had names, given them by their godfathers at their baptism – that is to say, either by the officers or men of the O.T. construction at their first meeting. I called this place, which is my 3rd camp, “Rogers Pass,” after Murray Rogers, Esq., of the Darling River.¹⁸”

Rogers Pass is located on the Palmer River just south of Palm Valley. This is very strange behaviour for Aboriginals who had not encountered white men and horses before. Clearly that was not the case and the existence of the newly constructed O T was the only possibility that Giles could think of. It is here at Rogers Pass that the river turns south as described in the *Leeds Mercury* article...*"sweeping to the southward at its eastern extremity like a river."*

What Giles did not know at that time is that a secret exploring party under command of Lt. Robert Dale (i.e. Lt. Nixon) had stayed with this very same group of Aboriginal people for a total of eight days some forty years before. That's when they learned to hold horses' bridles, and had nothing to do with the Overland Telegraph line that was located some 130 kilometres to the East. The Rogers Pass area is the same location that the Luritja Traditional Owner Sidney Moloney, had previously pointed out to me in 2018 as being the occupation site of his tribal elders many years ago.

Giles when he found a place named Glen Thirsty at Lat 24°28'34.9"S and Long 131°01'55.2E found some rock art that was rather interesting. He describes it as follows:

The rude figures of snakes were the principal objects, but hands and devices for shields were also conspicuous. One hieroglyph was most striking. It consisted of two Roman numerals, a V and an I placed together, and representing our figure VI. They were daubed over with spots, and were painted with red ochre¹⁹.

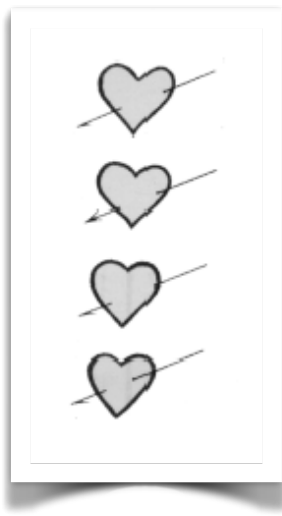
This location is at the extreme eastern end of Lake Amadeus, and that location just falls into the Luritja tribal area according to Norman Tindale's map. But there is more unusual artwork in Central Australia. Within striking distance to the south of the Palmer River area is Ayers Rock (Uluru).

¹⁸ *ibid* p 66

¹⁹ Giles E Geographic Travels in Central Australia from 1872 - 1874 P. 49

Again this is within Luritja country. As far as its discovery by white people is concerned, this monolith was first noted by explorer Gosse in 1873, well before any attempt to settle the central regions of the continent. When exploring around the base of the rock, along the western side, Gosse noted the multitude of caves and overhanging rock faces that were adorned with various examples of Aboriginal artwork:

These caves are formed by large pieces breaking off the main rock and falling to the foot. The blacks make holes under them, and the heat of their fires causes the rock to shell off, forming large arches. They amuse themselves covering these with all sorts of devices - some of snakes, very cleverly done, others of two hearts joined to-gether.²⁰



Drawings of hearts popping up in Australian Aboriginal art work is, to say the very least most unusual, a similar scene was apparently witnessed by Mr. Charles Winnecke²¹ during one of his travels just to the north of Alice Springs. In this instance, Winnecke supplied a copy of the artwork as well as a description.

On this point there is absolute certainty contained within the paper published in the Royal Geographic Society by Worsnop. This paper was partially compiled from letters received by Worsnop from Charles Winnecke and the assumption may be made that in his preparing the paper, Worsnop may have drawn and inserted the attached diagram. However in the text description supplied by Winnecke he leaves no doubt that he also supplied sketches as well as notations ... *"The group of native drawings which I have roughly shown herewith are found in several caves near Mt. Skinner"*²². Hearts like this do not have any relationship with Australian Aboriginal art. These

²⁰ Gosse W C, *WC Gosse's Explorations*, 1873, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1874, p.9. Two hearts joined together is not of Australian Aboriginal origin, but rather European background.

²¹ As an observer in central Australia, Charles Winnecke should not be underestimated. He was by profession a surveyor and map maker, having originally joined the South Australian Surveyor Generals Department. Later he decided to establish his own surveying brokerage and general agency in 1882. Apart from his extensive explorations and surveys in the centre, he was nominal leader of the Horne Expedition in 1894. Upon his death the Register newspaper (September 11th, 1902) described him as 'probably the best informed man in South Australia respecting the geography of the interior'

²² Worsnop T 1886, *The Pre-Historic Arts of the Aborigines of Australia*, Royal Geographical Society of South Australia, Vol 2, p 29 and plate J.

drawings were not a product of Aboriginal people, but rather totally reflect a European influence and were clearly located in Central Australia well before white settlement in that region.



A Luritja Infant - 1980

Again the explorer Earnest Giles on the 6th January 1874 recorded an interesting encounter.

"In the middle of the night, my little dog Cocky rushed furiously out of the tent, and commenced barking at and chasing some animal around the camp, and evidently drove it right up into the tent. In the obscured moonlight, I supposed it was a native dog; but it was white, and looked exactly like a large fat lamb. When it sauntered away, I sent a revolver bullet after it--and hit it somewhere, as it departed at much better speed, squealing and howling until out of hearing. ²³"

The Luritja Traditional Owner Sidney Moloney, has advised me that his tribal people always herded goats even before the establishment of Alice Springs. The Giles "fat lamb" may well have been a renegade Luritja goat.

Tiger and the Pussy Cat

In 1950 Arthur Groom published a book titled *I Saw a Strange Land* which focussed on Central Australia when white settlement was in its infancy there. Within that book he has a chapter titled *Pussy-Cat and Puppy- Dawg Country*, which is set near Tempe Downs right in the middle of Luritja country. He is working with a Traditional Luritja Elder by the name of Tiger, who then educates Arthur Groom on the history of the Feral Cat in Central Australia. According to Tiger, the cat has been in the Centre a long, long time. Before the Mission, before the rabbit, before the sheep and camel. Then to quote Tiger, in Arthur Grooms book he states;

"My people tell me-pussy-cat come that way," he said nodding to the west. *"Long time ago-before white people come, big boat come that way and pussy-cat jump off, run about, find another pussy-*

²³ Geographic Travels in Central Australia from 1872 to 1874 Mc Carron Bird and Coy Melbourne 1875 pp 139

*cat, and now big mob pussy-cat everywhere, run about desert country alla time; eat little birds-lizard-eat close up everything.*²⁴"

Due to Tiger being a Luritja Elder, it's not hard to imagine what the name of the ship would have been. Clearly it's a hand me down historical explanation of the cat arriving in Central Australia. In more recent years, some scientific research has been conducted concerning the origins of cats in central Australia. This work was being carried out at Macquarie University by biologist Paul Wagner, and at this stage tends to confirm the point that cats in the western two thirds of the Australian continent are distinct to those found within the eastern one third of the country. The ones in Central Australia, tend to have links with those in Java²⁵.

But the Locals Knew

In the late 60's and early 70's there was a young Caucasian station hand working on New Crown and Tieyon stations by the name of Ross Milne. These two adjoining cattle stations are located within the Northern Territory but close to the South Australian border and not far from the Fink River south of Alice Springs. Due to the fact that Ross could ride a motorbike, he was tasked to carry out the mustering, doubling on the back one Aboriginal helper by the name of Richard Stewart.

Due to this arrangement with Ross and Richard doubling as a pillion passenger on the motor bike around the countryside, the two became deeply trustful of each other. After all, Richards life was in Ross's hands and quite often the reverse situation was the case when trying to deal with rogue bulls on foot without the bike as an escape hatch. So confidence and trust flowed both ways over the months.

On one occasion Richard began telling Ross about some Aboriginal business from a long time ago. In fact the era he was speaking of was before his time and he only knew about this business as a result of the very old Aboriginal Elders talking about it when he was a youngster. During this discussion, Richard mentioned a "White Tribe" and indicated they were once located not so far to the North West of Tieyon Station area.

²⁴ Groom A 1950 I Saw a Strange Land Angus and Robertson, London, p.144.

²⁵ Personal communication between Les Hiddins and Paul Wagner on the 26th June 1998.

With this White Tribe, Ross Milne got confused and immediately thought Richard must have been talking about Alice Springs to the North, but no that was not the subject Richard was on about. He apparently was most definite that it was a White Tribe to the North West, once upon a time wayback. He elaborated that this Tribe of people had Blue Eyes and Blond hair just like Ross Milne had. Richard pointed to Ross with the words "*Just like you Boondi*". Apparently in his youth Ross had blond hair and the blue eyes. So it can be concluded that way back, the locals around Central Australia, knew about the White Tribe in their midst.

A bit of Material Culture

In the *Leeds Mercury* article, it is mentioned that the Dutch "*are armed with long pikes*". Aboriginal spears are invariably made of two separate sections joined together with resin and the like. One part would be the long shaft of the spear and the second part, the blade of the spear which sometimes has barbs attached or cut into it. But there is one exception to this situation and it was first noted by Professor Baldwin Spencer during the Horn Expedition in 1894 into Central Australia.

He described it as "a kind of spear, or rather lance ("Tajunja"), not very frequently seen was made *from a single piece of some hard wood...*²⁶" Spencer concluded that it was thrown by hand not using a woomera.



The Lance shown by Spencer showing the Tip and the Tail only.

I had forgotten the fact that I collected one of these lances' years ago during my Defence Fellowship year in 1980, and in due course found it amongst my collection of Aboriginal artefacts, so I had a specimen of the very weapon in question which provides a possible link to the Dutch Pikes, right under my nose. I remember picking it up around the Papunya area at the time. Papunya is located south of the 23⁰ line, half way to the 24⁰ Latitude. Papunya is within Luritja country.

²⁶ The tree has since been identified as the very juvenile version of the Desert Oak (*Allocasurina decaisreana*)

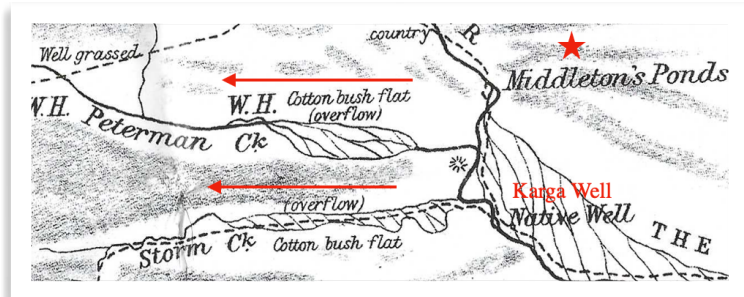
Sometime later I was visiting a friend of mine in the Northern Territory and noticed he also had one of these spear/lances hanging up. He had been a NT Conservation Commission Ranger in Central Australia and had collected his in the same area that I had collected mine. Both are about 2.3 metres long.

Chewings and the Native Well

Central Australia began to be opened up to European exploration in the 1860's and Geologist and Explorer Charles Chewings in 1881 was part of that movement. He moved through the Palmer River area of what is now called the Northern Territory and noted the existence of what he called a "Native Well" near the southern bank of the Palmer River catchment area. The trouble is, the Australian Aborigines did not construct well's as such. This well is still in existence to-day, and was originally about eight metres in depth and was originally boarded up using bush timber around the sides. That information was passed to me by the Luritja Traditional Owner. The bush timber has now been replaced with circular sheets of corrugated iron. On the 1:250,000 map Henbury the well is named Karga Well and can be located at 24° 33' 04"S, and 132° 37' 31" E. The origin of name Karga is a mystery to the Luritja people as well as the surrounding Arrunta people. Apparently it is not a Luritja word nor is it an Arrunta word. Clearly for that Native Well to be in existence when Chewings passed through the area, and still be viable to day nearly 150 years later, says a lot about its original construction. The name for the well, "Karga", was most likely Dutch in origin, since the Dutch word "karig" means scanty or sparing and could describe the water yield of a well. When the German missionaries, arrived in the late 1870s and began compiling a vocabulary of existing aboriginal words, they may have transcribed the word for "small" as "karg", like the similar-sounding German word "karg(e)" with the same meaning and linguistic origin.

But Charles Chewings and his journal report of exploring *The Source of the Finke River* during 1881 and 1882 provides the much needed evidence to finally locate the Mt Singapore and the surrounding waterway as described in the *Leeds Mercury* article. In 1888 Chewings went to Europe and studied geology at University College London and University of Heidelberg, where he obtaining his Ph.D. His Doctorate was submitted written in German. But first have a close look at portion of the map that is attached to Chewings publication. The red star is "Mt Singapore" and the two red arrows show the overflow due west. The native well is Karga Well. These red markings are of course not part of the original Chewings map. Standing on top of "Mt. Singapore" you would look down with an enfilade view of the numerous channels running North South, exactly as

described in the original "Nixon" journal extract. "Mt. Singapore" presents as a "hill" when viewed from the north looking south. Now to the most interesting part. Notice the dashed line of Chewings journey going south from Middleton Ponds. Here is what he found.

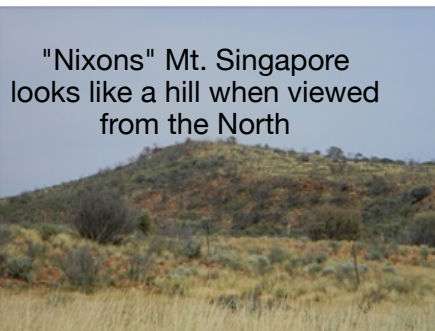


"Leaving Middleton Ponds we noticed almost immediately that the course of the of the creek ran to the south, but the banks lowered, and to the east and south-east the country bore unmistakable marks of frequent inundation. In times of heavy flood the

water cannot be carried away in the main channel, and spreads over an area from three to four miles wide and six of seven in length, when again, it finds its way into the main channel, only to run out on the other side as soon, and so it keeps on to Rogers Pass.²⁷"



Mud mortar here no cement



"Nixons" Mt. Singapore looks like a hill when viewed from the North

The "Mount Singapore" the red star, is in fact named Ayers Lookout²⁸, which is located at 24° 30' 14" **NOT** 18° 30' 14". The correct Longitude for Mt Singapore amazingly turns out to be 132° 36' 10.55". So our Lt "Nixon" was surprisingly very close to his original starting Longitude at Fort Wellington (132° 25' 30") even though it appears that he

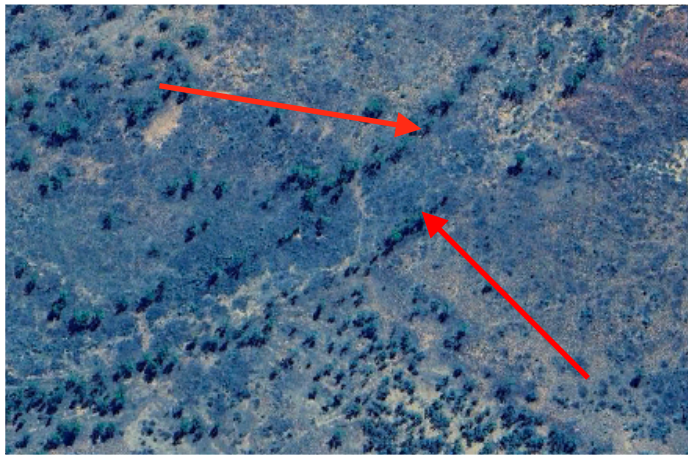
marched due south using only his compass bearing. That's a fine piece of navigation. It's necessary to note that both Peterman Creek and Storm Creek source their water from the Palmer River

²⁷ "The Sources of the Finke River and other expeditions" by Charles Chewings, State Library of South Australia 2010 pp 64

²⁸ Ayers Lookout has a Horizontal Control Point allocated to it and a spot elevation number 572. 1:250,000 map named Henbury

catchment and flow due West as per the Lt. "Nixon" description, which is why Chewings has marked them with the words Overflow. The eastern extremity of the Palmer River turns south at Rogers Pass as per the Leeds description.

The water flow down the main channel apparently was interrupted by some form of barrier, which in turn caused the water to bank up and spread out as per Chewings and "Nixons" description. Such a barrier may well have formed their Great Wall. On Google Earth some unusual parallel tree lines forming a curved pattern may indicate the remnants of the sand barrier used to control the water in the Palmer River catchment area. These lines may have been formed by the sandy soil being



Parallel vegetation lines

scooped out and piled up between the two lines, thereby forming a sandy soil barrier. The scooped out soil lines become artificial creek beds holding water and encouraging vegetation growth. Either way, they don't appear to be a natural occurrence.

The Dutch Food Supply

Within the text of the Leeds article we are given specific detail concerning the food supply situation for the Dutch settlement in 1832.

"Their plantations consist only of maize and yams, and these with fresh and dried fish constitute their principal food ..."

The presence of abundant quantities of fresh fish in the Palmer River catchment area especially around the Middleton Ponds area has already been well established as fact. The use of yams is understandable as the settlement would no doubt over time have taken on board local Aboriginal people and the local Bush Tucker knowledge that goes with such a situation. The most likely starter in the Yam category is *Ipomoea costata* commonly called the Desert Yam. However the use of maize or corn as it is now called, is a different scenario. That had to be imported from the original



shipment on board the *Concordia*. My old friend Google tells me that "*Maize relies on humans for its propagation*". So armed with that knowledge we can now start to look for possible propagation locations that may possibly host both the Yams and the Corn growth.

Here again Mr. Google comes into play, producing a very strong contender for the propagation area. To say it definitely was their

propagation area nearly 200 years ago is a long bow to draw, and that fact should be a constant check and argument for further investigation. There are however several aspect that arise when taking this satellite image into account. The satellite images shown here were all dated 2024.

These squares are roughly a little over 9 metres by 9 metres²⁹ and they run roughly North South and



East West. And the location is right in the middle of the general location of the Dutch Settlement. Clearly the establishment of these squares was done as a result of human activity either using machinery or by manual labor. Of course if it were done using machinery then that immediately rules out any Dutch involvement.

On the ground inspection reveals that the white lines seen in the satellite image present like they were once a slightly raised footpath about one metre in width. Now days they are virtually the same height as the surrounding terrain, however the vegetation has not encroached onto them. That pathway has been highlighted in the photograph above.

It has been suggested by a Belgian Archaeologist that these squares may represent the remains of Dutch Polders. A *polder* is a low-lying tract of land that forms an artificial hydrological entity, enclosed by embankments known as dikes. The fact that the squares measure just over 9 metres

²⁹ The distance of 9 metres possible is a result of pacing out 10 paces.

square would tend to indicate that they may have been originally sized by pacing out ten paces in each direction. Certainly they are not an add-hoc construction. The Luritja Traditional Owner states that this area in days gone by was always called "The Swamp" by the local Luritja people.

In this same Palmer River location there is apparent a wide coverage of land which has been tilled and ploughed using mechanical means, which contrasts severely to the squares also in the same area. The two satellite images shown here are virtually side by side on the ground.



Tractor tilling

Whats in a Name

The name Palmer River first appears on the map attached to Charles Chewings publication titled *The Sources of the Finke River and other expeditions*. It just suddenly appears and in that publication there is no explanation as to why that name was allocated to the river, now known as the Palmer River. It could be that Chewings picked up the name Palmer from encounters with the local Luritja population, but he certainly makes no mention of such an exchange. Just as an aside, the Dutch word for Palm is Palm. If you travel along this region of the Palmer River to day, there are no sign of Palms (*Livistona mariae*) growing there. Apparently that was not always the case according to one of the local Missionaries at the time.

"The scenery in the MacDonnell , as well as the Krichauff Ranges , is at some places most striking and picturesque . The finest of these is along the course of the Palmer River in the Krichauff Range, about 10 miles from the mission station , Hermannsburg , where there are hundreds of Fan -palms ,whose slender stems , a foot in diameter , rising straight and tall , bear aloft a beautiful , globular crown of leaves , some 30 feet in diameter.³⁰ "

So what could have happened to the tall Palms? This part of the Palmer River soon became grazing property known as Tempe Downs and as it happens Chewings was initially part owner of that property. However it is a very real possibility that palm outcrops that once existed have been destroyed. This occurred for instance at Sturt Creek Station in Western Australia where the palms were cut down to provide fence posts for the stockyard and the verandah posts for the homestead.

³⁰ Royal Society of South Australia Vol xiv 1890-91 Reverend Louis Schulze pp 211

Palm trunks were favoured as a result of their length, their straightness, and their resistance to termites³¹.

Stirling and Raffles Bay

We are told in the narrative that the party were dropped off in Raffles Bay by a ship on the 10th April 1832, and that ship would also pick them up for their return. The return date for the pick up timing was left open except for the journal comment that *...a fixed period so as to enable the ship to carry us back to Singapore before the change of the monsoon*. The Monsoonal change in and around northern Australia and Raffles Bay does not occur until about October. This seasonal change is highlighted by Captain James Stirling³² when, in June 1827, he originally established and set up Fort Wellington at Raffles Bay, and requested a replacement ship be sent from Sydney to Raffles Bay, before the change of the Monsoon in October³³. So in that very simple statement from a well respected Royal Navy Captain, we have quite a definitive affirmation concerning the change in the monsoon at Raffles Bay. Stirling was anchored at Raffles Bay for a total of six weeks during which time, the buildings and fortifications were constructed. It's rather interesting to note that during that period, Stirling sent one of his officers, Lieutenant Carnac and a party to explore the inland regions, or the 'interior' as they preferred to call it. Although this particular activity by Lt. Carnac is somewhat reminiscent of the account in the *Leeds Mercury*, it is impossible to be one and the same. For a start, the entire duration of Stirling's anchorage at Raffles Bay was barely six weeks duration, and the resources available to Lt. Carnac's little exploring party would have been meagre at best. Additionally, it is doubtful that a Royal Naval officer would have the necessary field skills to undertake the expedition in the efficient and professional manner. Even so this small incident is well worth remembering as it's very much a precursor for the Leeds expedition. The expedition report and general findings would have been in Captain Stirling's possession at the time. As it turns out, both expeditions had the very same sponsor, ... Stirling.

Stirling was married to Ellen Mangles, whose father was a director of the Honourable East India Company (HEIC), and so the concept of free enterprise was almost bred into Stirling and his wife.

³¹ This information has been gathered in a personal interview between the author and Sheila Savage (daughter of Matt Savage, the Boss Drover) at Kalkaringi (Wave Hill) in 1995.

³² Captain Sir James Stirling, Royal Navy, born 1791 died 1865. Commanded *HMS Success* when he established Fort Wellington at Raffles Bay. Initiated the establishment of the Swan River Colony in 1829 and was appointed Lieutenant-Governor to the settlement. Australian Dictionary of Biography Crowley F K, Vol ii, p 484.

³³ Historical Records of Australia series iii, vol v, p 811

The Mangles family were responsible for the setting up of a commercial venture to have invalid Indian Army Officers rest and recuperate at Swan River, a scheme which James Stirling whole heartedly supported. The first shipment however, aboard the barque *Mercury* in October 1833, was lost at sea without trace, on its way to King George Sound. It was the intention of the company behind the scheme, Mangles of Calcutta, to make King George Sound in Western Australia their operational base. As a direct result of this tragic loss, enthusiasm for the project languished and eventually failed altogether.

Who was Lt. Nixon?

It had already been well established that there was no Lt. Nixon in uniform at the time of the expedition who was able of conducting this activity. Likewise there is no identifiable connection with the HEIC settlement of Singapore. If the expedition leader could be identified that would then lead us to also identify the organisation sponsoring the undertaking. Whoever Lt. Nixon was, it had to be someone who was capable and perhaps very experienced in dealing with the Australian outback. Someone who understood that they may well be*having to dig for water every day*. Finally pin pointing that individual came about by accident. A bit like the unsolicited telephone call from the Netherlands which identified the missing Van Baerle and the ship *Concordia*, way back in the beginning of this research.

The revelation was imbedded within a publication titled "*Journals of Several Expeditions Made in Western Australia During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, and 1832, Under the Sanction of the Governor, Sir James Stirling*³⁴". That publication covered a number of explorations that were conducted in the formative years of the Swan River Settlement by mainly military personnel. One particular person was a stand out with his ability to relate with the Australian bush, and clearly became Governor Sterling's "go too" man for local exploration matters. His name was Lt. Robert Dale of the 63rd Regiment of Foot.

That by itself of course does not link him to the Central Australian Expedition. But what does is the wording he used within the description he wrote concerning one of his expeditions. In 1830 Dale wrote in his exploration journal that, "*On our right was an apparently fertile valley, beyond which were low hills, the trees on which were dispersed like a plantation* ³⁵". Of particular note is the use

³⁴ Published by J.Cross, 18, Holborn, London in 1833

³⁵ Journals of Several Expeditions Made in Western Australia During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, and 1832, *Under the Sanction of the Governor, Sir James Stirling*, J. Cross, London 1833 pp 63

of the word '*plantation*' or '*plantations*', as applied to the natural Australian landscape, which is most uncommon. In fact its more than uncommon and the only people known to use these words in their exploration journals are Nixon and Dale, and it is believed that this example by Dale is the only known case in any Australian exploration journal, where this word is used. Reading through all of Dales journals, there were also a multitude of further expressions common to both Dale and Nixon. Expressions such as *.....east and west as far as the eye could see*, and *a sheet of water*. and *On arrival at its summit*. It would appear that Lt. Robert Dale was our man.

But comparing journalistic phrases was not the only noticeable common factor. Comparing the method of field operation, as well as the words used by Dale is revealing. Clearly both Dale and Nixon believed in pulling up their respective expeditions during the heat of the mid day sun. Dale tells us for instance that *... we rested our party here during the middle of the day* while Nixon tells us that he bumped into the young Dutchman at midday *... in my return to our party at the tents* ...which has a very familiar ring to Dale's wording as well as his actions. At the time this expedition takes place, April, May, June 1832, Dale was supposedly at King George Sound. Dale was by far the best qualified to undertake such a land expedition, with considerable experience and bush skills. As a surveyor on loan to Roe's Survey Department, he was held in high esteem. At some time in late 1831 or early 1832, it would appear that Ensign Robert Dale arrived at King George Sound. The Muster Roll sheets for the 63rd Regiment, tell us that he was Detached, King George Sound, and then added to that entry are the words "*Attached to Survey Genl. Dept*". For the pay quarter of 1st Jan to 31st March 1832. For the next quarter, 1st April to 31st June 1832, the Muster Roll simply tells us that he is "*Detached, King George Sound*", with no mention of the Surveyor Generals Department. So if Dale is our man, then that places Governor James Stirling³⁶ as the sponsor, and with Stirling's background and association with Raffles Bay, it makes a logical fit.

Some Monkey business

Trying to identify the ship that was used to land the exploring party at Raffles Bay and later, before the Monsoon Season pick them up again is fraught with problems. Those problems start with the fact that a complete shipping data base for Swan River/ Fremantle, or King George Sound for 1832 appears to have not survived. So it's a case of sifting through archives trying to identify likely

³⁶ It is worth mentioning that Irwin as Commanding Officer of the Swan River Detachment was also the Acting Pay Master, and on the Muster Rolls, it is Irwin's signature that appears certifying all the accounts are true and correct. There is most often also a counter signature bearing witness to the fact, sometimes signed by Irwin's cousin Mackie, and at other times signed by the Colonial Secretary P. Brown. All three of course were members of the Legislative Council.

suspects. To some degree, some intelligence can be picked up via the Dutch Indo Asian newspaper the *Javasche Courant*, and other archives dealing with the Swan River settlement in general.

Most of the mainstream shipping that called into Swan River was in transit to other ports and so was not available for Stirling to hire. There was also the additional demand that this expedition was to be conducted in absolute secrecy. There are two possible reasons for that secrecy. The first one is the fact that Stirling was overstepping his authority as Governor of Swan River Colony in conducting an exploration into the Colony of New South Wales. That was Governor Darling's Colony and Stirling was trespassing. Secondly, the Swan River settlement was struggling financially and there was generally a shortage of food for the settlers. Understandably, for this exploration to become public knowledge, would not have been well received within the Swan River community.

So Stirling had a dilemma on his hands if the operation was to proceed. Attached to the Swan River Settlement and under Stirling's command there was *HMS Sulphur*, at that time sailing either to or from Hobart seeking out additional food supplies. For a so called "secret mission", the use of *HMS Sulphur* would be out of the question. Too many loose lips as the saying goes.

In addition to all this, Stirling would appear to have identified Lt. Dale to carry out this mission and he was stationed at King George Sound supposedly with the Surveyor Generals Department. But the answer for Stirling was right under his nose sailing commercially between Swan River and the Dutch VOC islands of Dutch East Indies. This particular shipping passage would only require a small detour along the way to call in at Raffles bay. Captain Walter Pace, an officer of the Honourable East India Company (HEIC), arrived at Swan River January 1832 with his family. The situation is best described by his daughter as follows.

"My father, Captain Walter Pace, had been, from his youth upward, an officer in the service of the Honourable East India Company, and having heard glowing accounts of Western Australia, determined to have a look at the colony, and for this purpose he chartered a vessel in conjunction with Mr. Philip Dodd, an elder brother of the Trinity House, carrying passengers and loading her with cargo suitable to the wants of the colony. They sailed from the River Thames and arrived at their destination in the year 1832. They were much pleased with the colony and met with a cordial reception from all classes of the community. The then Governor of the Swan River Settlement, as it was called, was Captain (afterwards Sir) James Stirling, whose brother, Captain Walter Stirling,

was an intimate friend of my father in England, so that he and Governor Stirling soon became fast friends likewise."

The fact that Stirling's Father in Law was one of the Directors of the East India Company would not have been lost in this arrangement also. It would not be difficult to come to the conclusion that the HEIC were somehow involved in this venture. As it turns out, in late 1831, Stirling received a visit at Swan River from the Quarter Master General, Lt. Col. Hanson, of the Madras Army HEIC, who apparently was on sick leave. It would have been well within Hansons power as Quarter Master General, to approve the charter of a suitable craft, to travel to Raffles Bay. That's the sort of thing Army Quarter Masters do, buy and procure services and stores and equipment for their Army's. Hanson later sailed to Hobart as a guest onboard *HMS Sulphur* and from there he returned to India via Singapore, quitting his sick leave, six months ahead of schedule.³⁷

Walter Pace was not slow in purchasing another ship to Captain, the *Monkey of Java*, shortly to be know simply as *Monkey*. Better still the crew of the *Monkey* were a Luscar crew drawn from all parts of the Indonesian and Indian sub continent, none of whom could speak English. Captain Pace was the only person on board who spoke English. A trip to Raffles Bay may well have been the first charter for Walter Pace, quite possible funded by the HEIC via the Quarter Master General of the Madras army, Lt. Col. Hanson. Elements of the Madras Army by the way, were the occupying troops for the HEIC settlement of Singapore at this time. Here we may well have the Singapore connection.

Very little of the *Monkeys* activity can be traced through Swan River archives. However we do know from the *Javasche Courant* shipping details that the *Monkey* is at anchor in the roads Batavia on the 9th March 1832. Next she is departing Soerabaija on the 11th March for "New Holland ³⁸". Not Swan River³⁹ or Fremantle or King George Sound, but "New Holland". The question must be asked if the words "New Holland" are code words for Raffles Bay where the exploration party were put ashore on the 10th April. Surprisingly two months after departing Soerabaija, on the 11th

³⁷ Hanson had farming property at Albany near King George Sound in Western Australia so his interests in the Swan River Colony were quite deep.

³⁸ *Javasche Courant* No 3420 (20 March 1832)

³⁹ On the 6th February 1832, the title "Western Australia" was officially adopted and used. This makes it doubly suspicious why anyone would now use the term "New Holland". This is very much an outdated terminology.

March, for "New Holland", the *Monkey* shows up at Swan River on the 13th May 1832⁴⁰. So it's taken the *Monkey* two months to travel from Soerabaija in the Dutch East Indies and down the West Australian coast to Swan River.⁴¹ That's an extremely long period of time when we know from established records of that era (1831/2) that it should be less than half that time.⁴²

It would be natural for the ship that drops off the "Nixon" exploring party, to also be the one that picks them up at an appropriate time. Here we also have controversy arising. By early 1832 a young man by the name of George Windsor Earl had arrived at the Swan River Colony. He was amongst other things a HEIC trained Ships Master and soon had himself signed up as Mate on the *Monkey* with Walter Pace. In his book *The Eastern Seas*, Earl states quite clearly on the opening page of Chapter One, that he was on board the *Monkey*, and departed Swan River on the 5th August 1832. Counter to this detail the *Javasche Courant* states the *Monkey* arrives Sunda Strait 20th August 1832 having departed Swan River on 25th July 1832. Again, the *Javasche Courant* states the *Monkey* arriving Batavia on the 27th August having departed "New Holland" on the 25th July 1832. So Walter Pace is informing the various Harbour Masters up in the Dutch East Indies that he departed New Holland 10 days earlier than what his shipboard Mate is stating in his book. Not only is the numeral date different, but they are both talking different months. You would think that the young Mate of a ship on his first charter in the new Colony of Swan River would have the departure date engraved forever in his memory, ... and perhaps he did. Keep in mind that the name "Western Australia" had been in official use for six months at this stage, so there was no need to use the term "New Holland". The geographical name of "Australia" first appeared in 1803 and was officially adopted by the British Admiralty in 1824.

Earl's book was published five years after this event. Pace again gives his departure point of New Holland⁴³ as well as Swan River. There are only two occasions when the words New Holland are used in relation to shipping movements in the *Javasche Courant* during 1832. On both occasions it

⁴⁰ Lloyds London report 16 Nov 1832

⁴¹ The *Monkey* was also chartered by the Western Australian government in July 1833 to sail north looking for a rumoured ship wreck in the Shark Bay region. The person instigating this charter was Capt. Irwin as Stirling was on board *HMS Sulphur* returning to England at the time. No ship wreck was found and the possibility exists that they were in fact discretely looking for the *Concordia*.

⁴² Sailing time between Java and Swan River in 1831-2 was three weeks. See *A Voyage from Madras to Swan River, King George Sound and Van Diemens Land in the year of 1831 and 1832*. P 63 by J Hansen.

⁴³ *Javasche Courant* No. 103 (30 August 1832)

was with Walter Pace and his *Monkey* and both roughly line up with the insertion and extraction timings for Raffles Bay.

It's worth noting that George Windsor Earl, who supposedly had never sighted Raffles Bay, took some sort of attraction to that part of the wild Australian continent. Upon his return to England in 1834, he was constantly lobbying the British Government to establish settlement in Northern Australia. In fact, it was during this period that he had his first publication on the subject. It was titled *Observations on the Commercial and Agricultural Capabilities of the North Coast of New Holland and the Advantages to be Derived from the Establishment in the Vicinity of Raffles Bay*⁴⁴. George Windsor Earl and the *Monkey* both deserve much further investigation.

Maslen and the Augustus Gregory mystery camp site

Thomas Maslen's book *The Friend of Australia* was initially published in 1830, and within it he paid considerable attention to his proposals concerning the exploration of Central Australia. One of the major principals that Maslen suggested was that exploring parties venturing into Central Australia, should establish Depots or Base Camps some considerable distance inland, and from those Depots, exploration parties should branch out further, like the extended fingers of an exploring arm. It would appear that a copy of Maslen's book was taken to the Swan River Colony in the early 1830's.

Putting that to one side for a moment, we now move forward to the year 1855, when the explorer Augustus Gregory was moving from Timber Creek in the Northern Territory, heading for Brisbane in Queensland. Well into his journey, whilst still in the what is now classified as the Northern Territory, Gregory and his party came across the bare remains of what was quite clearly an old European constructed campsite.

.....several trees cut with iron axes were noticed near the camp. There was also the remains of a hut and the ashes of a large fire, indicating that there had been a party encamped there for several weeks; several trees from six to eight inches diameter had been cut down with iron axes in fair condition, and the hut built by cutting notches in standing trees and resting a large pole therein for a ridge; this hut had been burnt apparently by the subsequent bush fires, and only some pieces of the thickest timber remained unconsumed. Search was made for marked trees, but none found, nor

⁴⁴ *An Eastern Calling* by George Windsor Earl and *The Spirit* Chapter 6 Part 3

*were there any fragments of iron, leather, or other material of the equipment of an exploring party, or of any bones of animals other than those common to Australia. Had an exploring party been destroyed here, there would most likely have been some indications, and it may therefore be inferred that the party had proceeded on its journey. It could not have been a camp of Leichhardt's in 1845, as it is 100 miles south-west of his route to Port Essington,*⁴⁵

The explorer Ludwig Leichhardt and his party of 1845, was the only possible culprit that Gregory could imagine as being the possible body that may have originally constructed this mystery campsite, but he also rightly concluded that it could not be in any way associated with Leichhardt. Apparently the fact that the residue *ashes of a large campfire* would tend to indicate a long term stationary party was involved for whatever period of time. The most interesting thing about this camp site is the fact that it is precisely on track for any party heading south from Raffles Bay. Having bypassed both the Admiralty Gulf and then the Arnhem Land Stone Country escarpment. It was located upon Elsey Creek, over 400 kilometres south of Raffles Bay and just to the NW of present day Larrimah township. The Lat and Long of this old abandoned camp site are Latitude 15°13' 49"S and Longitude of 132° 59' 43"E. Its also worth noting that there were no "marked trees" unlike most other Australian Exploration parties, who were quite fond of carving their relevant initials into surrounding trees as well as the Camp Number, using Roman Numerals. Public recognition was clearly not on the agenda for these unknown explorers.

The camp it would appear was occupied for some considerable period of time and Gregory suggests several weeks. Such a prolonged stationary period, does not fit-well for it to have been any sort of exploring party. Quite the opposite. So for over 170 years, there was no possible answer as to who may have established Gregory's isolated Mystery Campsite in the wilds of the Northern Territory. Now, that question may very well be solved. This camp site reeks of Military Discipline.

Stirling's return to England

At least one of the reason for the secrecy was the fact that Stirling was trespassing into the territory of New South Wales⁴⁶. Possibly Stirling may have been taking advantage of the change over of

⁴⁵ *Journals of Australian Explorers* by August Charles Gregory, James C. Beal, Government Printer, Brisbane pp159

⁴⁶ Gov Darling had departed NSW in October 1831 and was replaced by Gov Bourke in Dec of the same year

Governors of New South Wales at that time, and decided the time was ripe in early 1832 before the new Gov. Bourke settled into office properly. When Lt. Dale returned to Swan River⁴⁷ with the news of the Dutch Colony, things began to move quickly. Governor Stirling had previously determined to have the HMS *Sulphur* sail for the Cape⁴⁸ to upload provisions for the Colony, but now there was an alternate sailing plan afoot. Stirling decided that he must have the *Sulphur* carry him and his wife all the way back to England. However the local Swan River newspaper was suspicious of the real reason and reported his return to England as follows.

With real sorrow we announce that his Excellency the Governor has intimated by Public Notice his intention to proceed to England immediately. There is a vast deal more in this arrangement, we apprehend, than meets the public eye ⁴⁹.

Stirling and his family departed Swan River on the 12 December 1832 on board *HMS Sulphur* bound for the Cape and then England. It must be remembered that Governor Stirling was in fact in charge of *HMS Sulphur* and he could well order Captain Dance to take on board needed supplies from the Cape and set sail back to Swan River. A few months earlier he indeed had such an action in mind, but that was no longer the case. Something had changed his mind and he now insisted that *HMS Sulphur* sail all the way to England. He of course chose to remain on the *Sulphur* until it berthed at the Isle of Wight on the 11th December 1832. In the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Stirling's return is noted as follows:

*However, the British government was not well pleased at seeing this truant governor on its doorstep, and Stirling was lucky to escape censure for leaving his post without permission*⁵⁰.

That being the case, it is interesting to speculate as to why, on the 3rd April 1833, having been back in England just four months, Stirling received a knighthood. So Stirling gets a knighthood for leading the Colony of Swan River into poverty? Or was it something else?

⁴⁷ The exact date for his return is unknown but early July 1832 is the favoured period at this stage. However it's worth noting that the local Swan River newspaper as early as the 14th July 1832, felt something suspicious concerning Stirling's return to England.

⁴⁸ Cape Town South Africa

⁴⁹ *Western Australian Colonial News*, Saturday 14 July 1832

⁵⁰ Crowley F K Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol ii p.488

Five months later Lt. Robert Dale, in company with Captain Irwin, departed Swan River supposedly aboard the ship, the *Isabella*, on the 29th September 1833 bound for England, or at least that's what the Muster Rolls tell us, but we also know the two of them were in England months before the *Isabella* arrived there. However the confusion goes on. The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register reports the arrival in England on the 1st March 1834 of the ship Princess Victoria (also called the Victoria) from Batavia. According to that journal, the passengers disembarking at Deal (near London) were:

*.. from Mauritius, &c: Captain Irwin, late acting Governor of Swan River, Lieut. Dale, from Swan River; Mr. Alex. MacNeal, from ditto; Capt. Humphreys from Mauritius, Mr. C. A. M'Naughten from Jaffna; Capt. And Mrs. Brown and three children, from Calcutta*⁵¹;

So it would appear that Dale and Irwin were moving from one ship to another, and their names remained as part of the various ships manifest even though they were no longer on board. This is exactly the approach needed to tackle the India to England overland route. Irwin was no doubt the leading light in this adventure as he had previously done the overland route from the days when he was stationed in Ceylon.

*... Captain Irwin, made all the peninsular Campaigns with the 3rd Division - and afterward, made the overland journey from India to England, by the excellent Man, and what he says, as far as his opinion valuable - may be depended on*⁵².

As a result, Irwin is the primary suspect for passing the journal extract to Maslen, prior to publication in the *Leeds Mercury*.

Lets look at DNA

In early 2023 Professor Neil McGregor⁵³ at the University of Melbourne became aware of this historical research, and offered to look at the possible DNA situation. As it happened, a couple of years prior to this, some DNA samples had been gathered from some Luritja people. These samples

⁵¹ Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register, April 1834.

⁵² CO 18/11 p.177

⁵³ Professor Neil McGregor, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and Health, The University of Melbourne.

were collected anonymously by the Luritja Tradition Owner for examination by Ancestry.com. Those results from that analysis indicated there were some broad Western European DNA evidence, but nothing of any great significance. Consequently, the results lay dormant for the next couple of years. According to Professor Neil McGregor, DNA research has advanced considerably in recent years and they (University of Melbourne) could lend their knowledge and expertise to make full use of that situation. As a result, they were given access to the results turned up by Ancestry.com and turned up some amazing DNA links between the Luritja samples and people now living in Belgium and The Netherlands.

Alexander Varshaver Dutch
 Alyce Vlaco Dutch
 Angelia Van Vranken Dutch
 Betty Velett Dutch
 Carmen Baettig Dutch
 Chris P. Vuris-Vourazeris Dutch
 Christine Vanheyningen Dutch
 Courtney Vlugt Dutch
 Faye Verrall Dutch
 Fletcher Pearre Veitch III Dutch
 Frederick Van Patten Dutch
 Jack Andrew Veale Dutch
 James Vanderhoff Dutch
 Janet Voight Dutch
 Judy K Vogt Dutch
 Loreen Veum Dutch
 Mark R Villeneuve Dutch
 Monica Putnick Vance Dutch
 Joshua Eric Van Vranken Dutch
 Louis Petrus Vermaak Dutch

V. Taylor Van Buskirk Dutch
 Nicholas Vinez Dutch
 Nicole J Vondra Dutch
 Paul Vandenberg Dutch
 Rene Van Daalen Dutch
 Robert Craig Viar Dutch
 Wayne Varden Dutch
 William C Vanderbilt Dutch
 Beverly DeLong Belgium
 Caroline DeMontigny Belgium
 John C DeSherlia Belgium
 KAREL Depauw Belgium
 Kenton J Demotte Belgium
 Michael DeNight Belgium
 Joseph Francis DeLuca Jr. Belgium
 Cynthia Ann DeFazio Belgium
 Peter James DeMuth Belgium
 Shelia Marie Demakas Belgium
 Susan DeLange Belgium



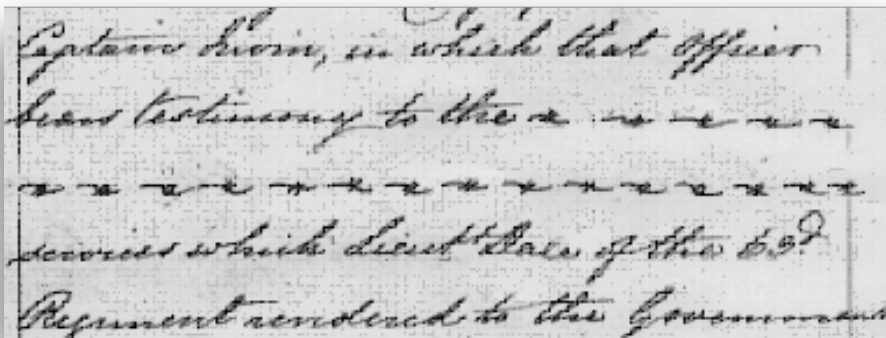
Author talking to the Luritja Traditional Owner in Central Australia

It should be noted that in 1708 when the *Concordia* sailed, the country of Belgium did not exist, and that geographical area was then considered as being part of The Netherlands. Belgium only came into existence in 1830. There is clearly a DNA link between the people listed above and Aboriginal Luritja people living in Central Australia. As the Professor overseeing the DNA research at University of Melbourne states, the findings are consistent with the *Leeds Mercury* story. DNA doesn't lie.

What about the United Kingdom?

The next place to start looking for detail concerning this situation is of course the United Kingdom and the records contained within the Public Records Office located at Kew Gardens, London. In particular the original records archived from the Colonial Office for the period 1832-4. Here we immediately encountered a rather interesting obstacle as one of the archive volumes dealing with the Swan River Colony up to 1832 was still marked classified as a "Restricted Document". At least this was the case as of December 1999. A researcher may only view this particular volume in a secure room and under direct staff supervision. Staff at the Public Records Office were unable to explain why this should be the case, and simply dismiss it as a situation they inherited for whatever reason ⁵⁴.

So let's start with the one of the more interesting documents and it concerns Lt. Robert Dale and is addressed to Lord Fitzroy Somerset at Downing Street, singing Dale's praises (see below photocopy). This letter is not particularly surprising for what it says, but rather it is startling for what it does not say, or what has been taken out of it. In places the ink has been totally removed⁵⁵ so that there was no way anyone could decipher the original text. This was most unusual, as the normal



approach by the Colonial Office Clerk was to simply draw a line through the incorrect wording, and rewrite the passage all over again.

Photocopy of Lt. Robert Dales report, Public Records Office, London.

The Lord Fitz Roy Somerset Downing Street 5th March 1834
My Lord

⁵⁴ For further explanation of British obsession with secrecy see *The Culture of Secrecy, Britain 1832-1998*, David Vincent, Oxford University Press 1998.

⁵⁵ Removed possibly using a razor blade to scratch off any trace of dry ink from the surface of the page.

With reference to your Lordships letter of the 2nd December 1831 in reply to one from Mr. Hay of the 25th November 1831, I am directed by Mr. Secretary Stanley to transmit to you a Copy of a letter from Captain Irwin, in which that officer bears testimony to the

~~~~~ services which Lieut. Dale of the 63rd Regiment rendered to the Government of Western Australia, & to request that you will submit this further application in behalf of Mr. Dale to the favourable consideration of the General Commanding in Chief.

I am sir —

John Lefevre⁵⁶

So to find out what was the original text within this letter, the obvious way to go is to look at Lord Fitzroy Somerset's copy of this letter within his archives. To this end, Lord Somerset's personal archives including his government and Colonial Office letters were all located deposited at the Gwent Records Office in England. There, the head archivist, a Mr. David Rimmer personally made an exhaustive search for the letter of March 1834. According to Rimmer:

... although the collection is very rich and varied, the specific Colonial Office letter of the 5th March 1834 — does not form part of the collection⁵⁷.

But there are also additional examples within the Public Record Office archives at Kew which tend to further deepen the suspicion that the original records have been adjusted to suite the Colonial Office officials and the British authorities at the time. In CO 714/15 there is noted three references to reports and exploration reports dealing with the Swan River settlement during the early 1830's. One of those reference relates to Reports of Exploring Parties from the Commencement of the Colony to July 1832.

But instead of the documents dealing with the Swan River Explorations, there is in place of it a small piece of paper, also bound into the archive volume with one single word pencilled on it "missing". Not to worry, this same archive, CO18/10⁵⁸, also informs us that a copy of this report by Stirling was despatched to the Royal Geographical Society, in a letter from the Colonial Secretary Hay, on the 4th October 1832. So the next thing to do is approach The Royal Geographic Society. But a search for the material in the Royal Geographic Society archives in 2000, failed to locate the material, and the archivist at the RGS, presumes it may have been returned to the Colonial Office at

⁵⁶ CO 397/p 416

⁵⁷ Letter from David Rimmer to Margaret Ray, History Department, University of Durham. dated 5th October 1999.

⁵⁸ This archive is the one still classified in 1999

the time, or otherwise disposed of. This is a rather startling situation, particularly in view of the fact that the Royal Geographical Society was in its early years, paying particular interest to the geography of the Australian continent. In particular the Royal Geographic Society along with the Colonial Office had in 1836/7 commissioned Lt.'s Grey and Lushington to explore the Western Australian coastline from the Prince Regent George down to the Swan River. The Secretary of the Royal Geographic Society at this time was one Captain Alexander Maconochie, Royal Navy, who was one of the founders of the Society and its first secretary. He had previously been held as a Prisoner Of War by the Dutch after his ship *HMS Grasshopper* ran aground off the Dutch coast.

Additionally we find that not only was there just one minor mention of Lt. Robert Dale and his exploits during 1832, but remarkably there is absolutely no mention of Governor Stirling and his sudden and unannounced arrival back in England in December of the same year. It's as if Stirling's sudden return never happened as far as the Colonial Office is concerned. Discussions between the Colonial Office and Stirling pick up on the official level, once he was settled back in England but only after a period of some months, and yet we know he made his first visit to the Colonial Office in London, within days of his arrival on board the *HMS Sulphur* on the 14th December 1832. This completely unexpected and unauthorised arrival by one of their Governor Generals, receives not one written comment in the Public Records archives at Kew.

Without labouring the point too much a great deal of the historical archives dealing with the Swan River Colony that were once in existence, now nearly 200 years later, seem to have vanished, and that disappearance appears to have been instigated from within the Colonial Office in the early 1830's.

- (1) Copy of letter concerning Lt. Dale's activities in Colonial Office records - sentence edited out.
- (2) The original of the above letter in Lord Somerset's papers - letter missing.
- (3) Sterling's unexpected arrival back in England in December 1832, - no mention in CO records.
- (4) Stirling's Report to Colonial Office on Swan River Exploration to July 1832 - report missing.
- (5) Copy of above report sent to Royal Geographic Society by Hay October 1832 - report missing.
- (6) Colonial Office volume which once contained above report - volume still classified in 1999.
- (7) Lord Howick's (Colonial Office Under Secretary) private journal for 1832 - volume missing.
- (8) Prime Minister Grey's personal papers concerning the Australian Colonies 1832/3 -missing

The details concerning some instances contained in the above listing here have not all been exposed in this paper right now, but further information is available on them if needs be. There are probably

enough instances revealed here to employ the word "Coverup" on behalf of the British Establishment of the 1830's. That aspect certainly deserves further investigation.

The Bottom Line

This paper started by resurrecting a journal extract first published by the *Leeds Mercury* newspaper in 1834. That article had been left sitting in history's "fiction file" for near on 200 years, gaining virtually no historical attention. If it is to again be sent back to the "fiction file" then some serious questions need to be addressed and logical answers supplied. We have here a volume of overlapping hard evidence that cant be simply shrugged away.

Firstly, what was the point of anonymously submitting the article to the newspaper in the first place? Who was to gain what, by doing so? How come the Dutch VOC employee Van Baerle managed to get his name in the journal extract? Let's not also forget the Harbour Master van Blommestein's account of meeting the expedition ships captain in Semarang Harbour. Was that fiction also?

Leaving the *Leeds Mercury* article aside for a moment, there are a multitude of overlapping anomalies that present themselves in Central Australia, and in particular, geographically associated within the Dutch settlement's orbit of influence. Let's start with the Jewish names listed by the German missionaries at Hermannsburg Mission. *Judith, Paula, Mirjam* are not Aboriginal names, so where did they come from? How come the Aboriginal women carried these names well before they ever saw a white person? Then we have the two interlinked hearts drawn on Uluru (Ayers Rock) which is Luritja country, which were found by Goss in 1873. Hearts drawn with spears running through them also pop up north of Alice Springs according to Charles Winnecke. Are both Goss and Winnecke making this up? Somehow I doubt that.

You also have to totally dismiss the local Aboriginal Elder, Richard Stewart, who in confidence spoke to Ross Milne when they worked at Tieyon Station about the White Tribe that once existed to the North West of that property. You have to believe that Richard was just making this story up just like all the others that have contributed to this account. However we also have to account for the Luritja Elder "Tiger" telling us that the Feral Cat arrived from the West, having jumped off a

ship. That's detail you would not expect an Aboriginal in Central Australia to have off the top of his head.

How come the description given by Charles Chewings of the water inundation 3 -4 miles wide and 6-7 miles in length, completely matches the description in the "Lt. Nixon" journal extract? Not only the water inundation but the river bending to the south at the eastern extremity, and the location of "Ayers Lookout" and "Mt Singapore" being one and the same? Is that all just a coincidence? Chewings also shows how the water backing up and then overflows to the West, just like "Nixon" description in the *Leeds Mercury*.

But then we also have to deal have the testimony of Augustus Gregory and the Mystery Campsite that he discovered during his expedition from Timber Creek to Brisbane in 1845. This is not fiction or his imagination at play, it is clearly objective fact and undeniable. He clearly marks the location on the map within his journal. That location lines up perfectly with a party moving south on compass bearing from Raffles Bay, having bypassed Admiralty Gulf and the Arnhem Land Stone Country along the way. It fits the scenario perfectly.

Finally we are saddled with the DNA result that the people at Melbourne University turned up which compliments and endorses the original theme of the *Leeds Mercury* journal extract. All those Dutch and Belgian relatives were very much a surprise to the Luritja people concerned in Central Australia. They had no idea of that situation being part of their heritage. Somehow that result by Melbourne University needs to be explained away, along with everything else, if we are to put the *Leeds Mercury* article back in the fiction file. This vast array of connecting and overlapping evidence has always been there. The only task needed, was to join the dots.