

1.6. Wreck of the Sirius...Lt' Governor Ross.....survival...flying sheep....return to Sydney....

The *Sirius* and *Supply* hove to, in the bay now called *Sydney Bay*. They could not stay because of the bad weather, lots of surf crashing on the reef, and lots of gusty wind. The ship's managed to send us some signals. *Lt. King* and others had telescopes trained on the ships. I had a flurry of orders. Put this one up! Quick! Pull that down and raise this one, and so on. I didn't know what all the flags meant.

It appeared that the warship *Sirius* had on board *Major Ross*, who was in charge of all Marines, and was also Lieutenant Governor, second in charge of the colony at *Port Jackson*. *Governor Phillip* in *Sydney* had sent him to relieve *Lt. King* of being *Commandant* of the Island. *Lt. King* was then to go back to *Sydney Cove*, then sail to *England* and update the English Government regarding the settlements progress and situation. I think that information caught *Lt. King* by surprise, he seemed a little unsettled by it.

Because the wind and tides were not suitable to anchor in the bay, both ships were going to sail to the eastern coast of the island, either *Ball Bay* or *Cascade Bay*, anchor and put on shore people and stores. All people ashore would then make their way to *Kingstown*, what we called our village, that was named after *Lt. King*.

Some of our people were sent to *Cascade Bay* to assist in carrying some of the stores back to *Kingston*. *Lt. Governor Major Ross* was one of the party that walked to *Kingston*. He was very unhappy and angry. It appeared he had lost a lot of his possessions during disembarking from the *Sirius*.

I remained at my post on signal hill. A marine was also present to ensure it was guarded at all times. Because ships were at the island I also had to tend to fires on either side of the mast to act as beacons in the dark.

The next day the *Supply* sailed into *Sydney Bay*, in moderate weather. *Lt. King* ordered that I signal that anchoring was very good, and she could unload in boats her remaining cargo. Both *Lt. King*, and *Major Ross* with another Marine Officer and a Private with *Mr. Altree* and a seaman were present.

The *Sirius* then came into the bay, and with the signals going back and forth between us and the ship, we realized that because of the weather and tide she was having a great difficulty in positioning herself to anchor safely.

"This is terrible *Major Ross*, a catastrophe will occur," *Lt. King* cried out. "Look the tide is turning the ship towards the reef, and the wind is backing, not giving sail power."

"Quickly put up the **anchor now** flag!" I quickly put up the flag. Even without a telescope I could see that the stern of the *Sirius* was getting closer to the waves smashing onto the reef.

The ship's boats had desperately towed two bow anchors away from the ship towards the south and sunk them trying to stop the ship dragging towards the reef, but it didn't seem to stop the ship's drift.

"*Lieutenant King*, it looks like men are cutting down some of the masts," *Major Ross* suddenly spoke.

"*Captain Hunter* is trying to reduce the wind effect on the ship so that the anchors can hold. But I think it's too late to stop her foundering on the reef. What's that signal she's flying?"

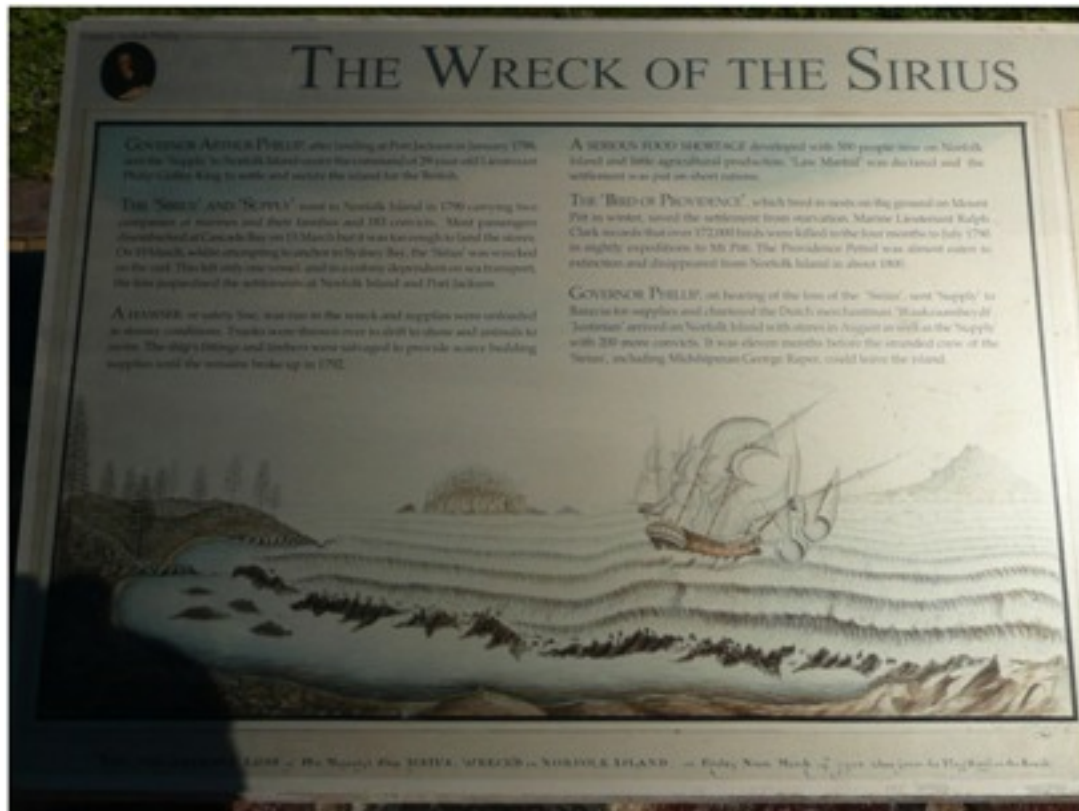
Lt. King asked the people around him speaking aloud. I think he already knew.

Captain Hunter was asking with the weather as it was, should he abandon ship!

Pointing to the *Marine Officers Lt. King* spoke out very loudly. "Quickly now, you go down and get every man down to the beach, opposite where the *Sirius* looks like smashing onto the reef. Signal *Captain Hunter* to let out long ropes from the *Sirius*, the tide will stream them towards the beach where they can be held by the people on shore. Then the *Sirius* people can rig up harnesses to slide people or stores along the streamed ropes over the reef onto the beach."

"You stay here *Mr. Altree* with that Seaman and that Marine so that you can send and receive signals. *David* you come with me and that Marine. I will send flag orders to you *Mr. Altree* on a slate. *David* will be my messenger. When you get the message, sign the slate and send *David* back to me, very quickly."

All the remaining afternoon, I followed *Lt. King* around with very little to do, except when *Captain Hunter*, made the decision that he would come ashore, using the harness. We were all worried that he would be all right, and it did get very serious when it looked like he was stuck on the reef. When he was finally dragged ashore he did have big lacerations, and his clothing was ripped, but he said he was alright. Some of his Officers and Crew had been ordered to remain aboard the wreck overnight.



A public display, using the original drawing of the H.M.S. Sirius wreck, by 19 year old midshipman George Raper. During the long confinement on the Island, Raper taught and embellished other Officers drawing attempts. Including his Captain, John Hunter.

The next day all of the people came ashore, after floating lots of items in the water. The ship looked alright and two convicts volunteered to swim to the wreck and try and rescue more items, which they did. During the night they got drunk and accidentally set fire to the wreck and wouldn't come ashore. Lots of muskets were fired in the air to alert them to come back, but they wouldn't come. Another convict then swam to the wreck, and persuaded them to go ashore. I don't know what happened to them because they were brave to go aboard, but stupid not to obey orders.

Two days later *Lt. King*, my friend *Ann* with little *Norfolk* and his tiny brother *Sydney*, *Lt. Waterhouse* from the *Sirius*, *Lt. Fowell* and about 22 crew members from the *Sirius*, boarded the *Supply* and set sail for *Sydney Cove*.

It was absolute turmoil on the island for quite a time. Many more people were on the island, at least 85 belonging to the *Sirius*. We had landed on *Norfolk* with about 24 people, and now we had nearly 500. Food started to become scarce, *Lt. Governor Major Ross* immediately cut the food rations in half. Fights started between everyone, including the marines from *Major Ross's* detachment and crew members of the *Sirius* as well as the convicts. *Major Ross* soon started lots of punishments for stealing food and general trouble makers. A lot of floggings, being chained up, and no food, seemed to be going on all the time.

Captain Hunter was the superior officer to *Major Ross* in the Navy, being the Captain of a warship, and *Major Ross* was only in charge of the Marines but *Major Ross* had been put in charge of the island by *Governor Phillip*. That made things difficult between them. Pretty soon *Captain Hunter* decided to separate the *Sirius* crew, from others in the settlement, and set up a separate settlement at *Cascade Bay*. I was included in the *Cascade Bay* settlement. *Captain Hunter* also knew he would have to go to *England* and face a court martial over his loss of the *Sirius*. Which, had quickly broken up, and sunk.

One day someone saw that lots of birds seemed to fly around *Mt. Pitt* and land at night time. The birds were back. They had been eaten in the past but other food had been plentiful so there was not much need to capture them. They were about the same size as a pigeon, but tasted a bit fishy. Their eggs were very good.

What a great relief! There appeared to be thousands of birds, flying out to sea during the day time and living in burrows at night time on *Mt. Pitt*. Everyone would be able to capture, kill, and eat every day many birds.

Lt. Bradley organized several parties to go and get the birds, some for seamen, some for marines, some for convicts twice a week. After several days the organizing proved to be too big a task. So every group could get as

many as they liked, but all birds had first to be taken to *Lt. Ralph Clark* of the Marines, who as keeper of the public stores, counted them.

Captain Hunter called them "birds of providence." I heard some officers saying that on average 2000 birds were being killed every day. The birds were now getting scarce when another similar type of bird arrived that was called the "flying sheep" It soon became apparent that the great quantity being killed daily would soon be wiped out, and we would have to go back to crops and fish to survive.

"Hey *Davie*, let's go up to that small cave area under that overhanging cliff, so that I can do some more drawing." That was *Midshipman George Raper*, who was a very special friend of mine.

"Sir, I have got both your satchels, in one is all your paints and in the other is your parchments to draw on."

"Good boy. I have spoken to the quartermaster and you are excused cooking duties to accompany me."

Midshipman. Raper drew in colour much of the landscape, birds, and other wild life on the island, including the scene of the *Sirius* being wrecked. Whenever he was free of his duties, he wanted to paint, and most times I carried his satchels. We must have explored nearly all the island. He tried to teach me to paint, but all I was good at was making an overall plan of the thing he wanted to paint by using a piece of lead or charcoal, onto his parchment.

Midshipmanr. Raper also helped *Captain Hunter* paint. The *Captain* was far better than me. The *Surgeon D'arcy Wentworth*, also took lessons from *Midshipman. Raper*.

Hanging around the Officers a little, doing small jobs, I had heard *Lt. Ralph Clark* saying that *Mr. Wentworth* had been a highwayman in *England*, and learnt to be Surgeon so that a proposed jail sentence would be dismissed if he went to the colony.

One day I had to serve food and drink to quite a few officers and free men. It appeared that a son *William* had been born to *Mr. Wentworth* by a convict woman and they were celebrating his birthday. In between good natured teasing and being ordered about, I learnt a little how Officers ate, drank and behaved.

Some time later the *Supply* arrived back at the Island from *Sydney Cove* to deliver stores, and pickup the *Sirius* survivors and take them back to *Sydney*.

Quite a few people Officers and Crew came up to me, to say good bye, on the day the *Sirius* crew went aboard the *Supply* to be returned to *Sydney Cove* after about 12 months stay on the island.

A few months later on November 4th 1791, a ship arrived at the island with *Captain King*, his wife, and son *Norfolk*. He was to take over from *Major Ross* who was to go back to *Sydney*, then to be returned to *England* because the Marine detachment tour of 3 year duty was over. The ones that did not want to stay in the *Colony* would be returned to *England*.

The Marines, were replaced by a detachment of Army men called the *New South Wales Corps* that had been raised in *England*. They were commanded from *Sydney* by a *Major Grosse*, and here on the island by *Lt. William Patterson*, who was accompanied by his wife, other Officers and Ranks. Quite a few free settlers arrived to take up free land given to them by the Government, in the hope they would grow more crops and livestock to sustain the population.

Captain King had recognized me, studied my record and assigned me, as a servant and helper, to a most notable man. *Mr. Charles Grimes*, a surveyor!

Mr. Grimes was to survey the whole island, including where the Government land was, as well as the free settlers land lots. He was to draw maps of everything! I knew the island like the back of my hand, and I would be able to assist in many ways.

After a while with his patient tuition, I was able to set up instruments, read them, do some small arithmetic calculations on slates. *Mr. Grimes* also taught me how to do special types of drawings on vellum, parchment and occasionally when he was looking over my shoulder on paper. He was always very careful that I understood thoroughly any task he gave me. The calculations had to be exact!

I must have made some good progress, because one day he said I was to go with him to see *Captain King*. The *Captain* was playing with his new son *Phillip Parker King*'

"Well *Davie*, explain to me what you have recently drawn."

"Sir, I have just finished drawing a free settlers land boundary, where it joins the Government stables. I have indicated north and south, and the distance in chains of his property and where it angles away from the Government land. *Mr. Grimes* checked the accuracy."

"Is that correct *Mr. Grimes*?"

"Yes sir. The only thing I found a little out, was the angle turning westward. It was 262 degrees not 260."

"Hmmm *Davie*, looks like you could have become a good masters mate. However I think I have a better proposition for you. When I last saw *Lt. Campbell*, he asked me to relieve you of living on this island, and see if I

could place you somewhere to your advantage in *Sydney Town*. I think I have found the ideal position.

A *Mr. James Bloodworth*, an emancipated convict has become *Superintendent of Builders* in the employ of the Government. He needs a good draughtsman. Would you like to work for him in *Sydney*?"