

3.0 A MILITARY OUTPOST and settlement at Westernport

3.1 Getting ashore...Corinella, the site.



H.M.S. FLY.

HMS Fly, had remained anchored at Lady Nelson Point, about five miles to the south west, close to Fort Dumaresq on Phillip Island. Our ship the *Dragon* had just anchored in deep water off what we called Red Point north east of the little island, well clear of the sandbanks and about a mile from the rock strewn beach, that was our landing spot.



**Westernport, looking northwards to Corinella Headland, from Ryhll.
Originally called Fort Dumeresq.**

I was sitting on the tiny seat, between the anchor and chain, in the bows of the big longboat, facing the stern. The mares face was about 1foot away, and its head was on a level with mine. Its mouth was wide open, its eyes were bulging and rolling, and its ears were frantically swiveling in all directions. In one hand I held the 3 foot halter that was attached to the head stall and then ran through the breast plate to the hobbles so that pull on the rope with strength to keep its head down low. In the other hand I held the long halter lead, attached directly to the head stall. I had a few handfuls of grass to distract it with feed.

Two horses, several oarsmen, several helpers and lots of stores were crammed into the longboat, between the thwarts

"AAAARGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH," that was the seaman, who was rowing directly behind the mare. The mares anxiety made it forcefully shoot its waste out, all over the seaman behind her.

Well! That was the start. The seaman half stood and made cleaning motions, his oar struck the water surface, then all the other oarsmen got out of rhythm jerking their arms and slapping the water. One oarsman then struck the other horse, a cob, accidentally on the thigh, it then lunged forward in fright and its head powerfully thrust into the rear end of the mare. The mare made a startled movement, got off balance, then just fell over the side of the boat into the water.

The boat swayed alarmingly and everyone cried out.

The officer in charge of the boat called out.

"Quick boy! jump over board and release the mares breast plate or its hobbles, if you don't it will drown, and then we will all be in trouble with Captain Hovell. Pass the long halter to the man near you."

Without a thought, I handed over the long halter end to the seaman, and jumped over into the water.

What a stupid thing to do without thinking. The boat slowly passed me and the mare was thrashing around in the water something awful. I swam over the top of it, with my legs very flat in the water because I was scared of them hanging down and being kicked . I grabbed its mane in my left hand and with my right hand I was feeling for the buckle on its withers to jerk it free.

The horses head and front legs that were tied closely together, would plunge deeply into the water, with its back legs out of the water, then it would rear up into the air with its head and forelegs with its rear legs deep in the water, just like a dolphin it kept on doing that, and I was frightened of being badly hurt. At last I managed to release the buckle, then the mare reared up and with the back of its head, it bashed me on chest flinging me away. Luckily, its thrashing legs just missed me. I was still scared

Now that the mare could dog paddle the boat started to give way again, towing the horse. I could see that I would get left behind so I did a couple of quick strokes enough to grab the mares tail and hang on. The long boat was rowed and rowed towing the mare and myself to the shore.

Suddenly it appeared that the boat had grounded on shore, men milled around, the mare started to walk I staggered ashore and just flopped down on the water edge getting my breath back. Next thing the seaman who had been covered in horse poo, flung himself into the water, then sat up and started splashing water all over himself trying to clean it off. All the while making wingeing and fierce exclamations. I don't know how they got the horse out of the boat because he was a big fellow and not very happy. Nor do I care.

Finally some men asked me how I was. The convict overseer Mr. Matthias Maher, came over. "Well done son, well done," and patted me on the shoulder.

I still felt like a drowned rat. Luckily the day was very hot and the breeze was warm. I started to squeeze water out of my clothes.

I looked out into the water, the *Dragon* was anchored about half a mile off shore, as close as possible without running aground on the sand and mud. *HMS Fly* had made her way her way up from Phillip Island, and was preparing to anchor.

"Hey you Benjamin! Look lively now, Captain Wright is expecting you very quickly up at his tent."

"Where is he?"

"Up there," with that Lt. Burchell, pointed up to a spot on the curving hill surrounding the tiny cove, and walked off with his secretary Mr. Collman, and a corporal.

On the small flat area, and part way up one of the small hill sides, I could see that the area was being cleared of trees and bushes.



Low water at Corinella Headland.

They were just being chopped off at nearly ground level, the branches and bushes being stacked in mounds for burning. Nearly at the top I could see Captain Wright, standing at the front of two large tents, looking over all the landing area. Two soldiers were standing very closely behind him on guard with muskets and bayonets, a midshipman from the *Fly* was also standing there.

I quickly trotted up the hill.

"Here I am Sir."

"Hmmm , just as well boy, I need you here. Dry yourself off quickly, then go into my private quarters tent, and bring out my small diary. By the way that was well done recuing the mare. The *Dragons* men should never have put two horses into that longboat."

I went inside the small tent, whew! was it hot in there. I started to dry off very quickly.

"I am ready Sir"

A corporal came up to Captain Wright and saluted. " We have completed your privy Sir, I got the convicts to put a small screen of branches and leaves around it."

"Good. Now report to Lt. Burchell, and he will tell you where we want the other privies dug. Remember this is only temporary, until we move further over the escarpment to make it permanent settlement, so don't put too much time into it. Be quick."

Everywhere I looked there were small parties of men working, under supervision of the soldiers. Some were still chopping and clearing bushes, another group was erecting a largish tent to hold the stores and get a lot of

stores out of the sun. Some sailors from the Dragon were carrying stores from the beach to the tent.

To the western side of the beach, a party of navy officers and seamen, were struggling to cut a path in the bush and drag the cannons up and out to the cliff area facing the other flagstaff and cannons that were mounted on the north eastern tip of Phillip island 5 miles away.

Some were lashing cut down branches together to provide a temporary enclosure for all the horses and animals. Others were digging privies, others were setting up cooking triangles and water barrels. The two women, with a couple of small kids hanging around them, were filling up big stew pots with food to be cooked over the fires.

Another small group were also cutting a small path that would lead over the hill to where the fresh water creek was located that Captain Wright, and Captain Wetherall the *Fly's* Captain had discovered in their examination and survey of the site. The next day Captain Wright would lay out the settlement in a military fashion.



Pathway up the cliffs at Corinella.

Captain Wright had me running all over the place. "Run down there Benjamin and tell that person to do this....run over there Benjamin....Benjamin write this down in my diary...Benjamin do this....Benjamin do that....Benjamin tell Lt. Burchell...."

Boy oh boy was I getting tired towards the end of the day.

I thought that I had done enough. But not so according to Captain Wright.

"Benjamin, be very clear about this. I want you to inform Captain Wetherall, Lt. Burchell, Captain Skelton of the Dragon, Captain Hovell, Henry White, John Rosie and Matthias Maher, to be present at my tent in precisely 1 hour from now. Lt. Burchell may bring Mr. Orchard his secretary if he wishes. Do you understand?"

"Yessir!"

"Go!"

With that I had a quick look over the encampment, tents, and piles of objects had appeared as if by magic. Anyway, I identified where I thought some people would be. Captain Wetherall of the navy ship was easy, his blue uniform and the red of the two marines with him stuck out. I could also see Lt. Burchell, but I couldn't see Captain Skelton or Captain Hovell. Mr. White should be near the store tent so would Mr. Rosie. Mr. Maher could be anywhere. Anyway I took off at a run, no time to lose!