

3.3 The Disciplinarian...Mr. Hovells's serious mistake...Kooweerup and Corinella

Captain Wright and Captain Wetherall, the Captain of *Fly*, were standing together on the little area of cleared and leveled ground in front of Captain Wright's tents. Two army privates and two navy marines were present to act as guards. The other people that I had given Captain Wright's command to be present, were grouped around and just a little below the Captain.

Two navy officers from the *Fly* were present as well as Captain Skelton of the *Dragon* with his First officer. Lt. Burchell, with his assigned convict secretary, Edward Collman. The sea Captain Mr. Hovell was there, and so was Mr. John Rosier, the retired army serjeant who was in charge of the commissariat. So were two others, who were serving convicts but who had been promoted. They were the Convict Overseer Mathias Maher, and the Surgeon Henry White. If they served well, their sentences may be foregone. I was trying to hide behind as many people as possible .

Captain Wright, then addressed the group. "I am going to remind you why we are all here."

"We are to settle and establish a Military Outpost and small settlement, so that Governor Darling, will rightly be able claim that this country is English territory. Some of you know that when we left Sydney, another ship the *Amity* left with us. She was transporting a Major Lockyer, soldiers and convicts to a place to the extreme west of this land to a place called King George's Sound. There they will found a settlement like ours for the same reason."

"Two years ago a Military Outpost and settlement was founded at Port Essington on the Cobourg Peninsula, and also a settlement was founded very close to the Brisbane River, in Morton's Bay."

"This means we have Military settlements to the North West, the South West, the South East, and the North East. This does not include Sydney,

Newcastle, port Macquarie, Van Diemens Land or Bass Strait Islands. No country can rightfully challenge our ownership of this land."

"The Spanish, Portuguese, and particularly the French will always try to challenge our sovereignty"

"You are all probably aware that Mr. Scott the Sealers Leader, reported to me, upon our arrival, that a French ship the *Astrolabe*, Captained by Mr. Dumont d'Urville, was here at Westernport about 7 days ago, supposedly conducting another French scientific expedition. After spending about eight days here they took aboard twelve sealers and promised to deliver them to Sydney, so we probably passed their ship some days ago.

"Captain Wetherall is to stay one month or until I know that the settlement has been laid out properly and can sustain itself with a minimum of cargo supplies from Sydney or Port Dalrymple. We must have accurate maps of the Port."

"The *Fly* and most of his men will stay at Fort Dumeresq. If the French sail into the Port he will be able to take care of them and forewarn us."

"I have been given specific orders by Governor Darling into how to deal with the French. However I am to keep those instructions private and not to divulge them to anyone."

"Captain Wetherall is making use of previous maps made by Mr. Bass, Lt. Grant, Ensign Barrallier, Lt. Murray, and Lts. Robbins and Oxley.



Sealers abode, Phillip Island.

"The sealing mens presence in this Port was totally unexpected. They came here from Port Dalrymple in Van Diemens Land, under the leadership of Mr. Scott, They have a great knowledge of this Port. Captain Wetherall intends to pay for their help in using their boat, in exploring the Port and assisting in taking additional soundings. We must be completely familiar with the Port if the French re visit here."

"Captain Wetherall and I selected this site after looking at several locations. We picked this area because for some way we can see any French ships approaching. Furthermore the area is quite difficult land on, as you are well aware, due to the channels with sand and mud. Further it appears that a great deal of south westerly winds do blow up, so we are behind the bluff and rather sheltered."

" Most importantly though, we have a fresh water creek very close. There is also a marshy area that might yield more fresh water. We certainly know that there is fresh water in Mr. Bass's River, but that is some miles away, and

there is that brackish well at Lady Nelson Point, that the sealers themselves use."

"This settlement is not to be a harsh punishment place for incorrigibles, like Macquarie Island or Norfolk Island. The convicts have been selected for their manual skills, and their attitude to authority. However, they will be punished if they disobey instructions."

"Now I intend examining everyone to see if your responsibilities are being and can be pursued successfully. If all the stores are on shore, I intend dispatching the *Dragon* for Sydney tomorrow. It will also carry reports, by Captain Wetherall and myself, for the Colonial Secretary Mr. MacLeay. Of course Mr. Hovell, has not yet had time to explore the land surrounding us to make a report. However his explorations are vital and need to be carried out as quickly as possible"

The next day the camp was awake and active before dawn. Down at the landing place a detachment of soldiers were present to prevent possible convict mutineers trying to board the *Dragon*.

An Officer from the *Fly* interpreted the departure flags that were flying from the jack staff of the *Dragon*. Slowly the ship was turned around by its ships boats, and pointed towards Fort Dumeresq. The tide slowly drifted it southwards. Then some of its sails filled and the ship was able to get under sail, and disappeared from sight.



View from Corinella Headland to Phillip Island.

After H.M.S. Fly sailed, the settlement seemed a little empty of people, but a pattern of daily life began to evolve.

"Benjamin!"

Oh no! Not already.

"Captain Wright sir," I spoke out loudly in case he thought I was half asleep.

During the next few days, the landing place and further over the hill sides into the bush, there were scenes of intense activity. Slowly trees and scrub disappeared, being replaced by posts and rails to further enclose the stock. Wooden frames for huts and other things. Burning off had to be done carefully because it was extremely hot. The bush area looked like it could burst into flames. A long way into the distance lots of smoke was apparent. A few old hands thought it might be a natural bush fire or one started by the local natives.

I had little spare time from carrying out Captain Wright's errands, however Mr. Hovell arranged with Captain Wright that when I did have spare time, I should help him prepare for his expeditions. Captain Hovell's assigned

servant William Colwell, appeared to be in bad health, and was really not much help to him.

"Well Benjamin, both mares look as if they haven't suffered from their swims."

"They look alright to me Captain Hovell."

I was not there when it happened, but the other mare had also jumped overboard from the long boat, when being transported to the shore, and had to swim about two miles to the beach.

"Call me Mr. Hovell Benjamin. It has been a long time since I was a Captain of a merchant ship. One day when I get time, I'll tell you how I was shipwrecked once in the Bass Straight waters, and how I nearly drowned in a makeshift canoe trying to make for a larger island."

Mr. Hovell's four horses were in a small pen, made from wooden rails and posts. His saddles, ropes, harnesses and horse shoes were covered by tarpaulin, outside his tent. He also had as gifts to the natives about fifty tomahawks, and a hundred fish hooks. His assigned soldier just seemed to follow him around.

"Mr. Hovell why do you have presents for the natives?" I asked.

"Well Benjamin, I learnt in Sydney that over the years in this Port, the Natives of the tribe in this area call themselves Bunerong people. They have not been treated very well by the white people. If I am to explore this area I don't want to be always fearful of an attack. So I brought gifts to bribe them. I also did that on my exploration with Mr. Hume. On my previous expedition to this Port, the natives called the area Geelong. When we make contact with these local natives we will see if they call it Geelong."

Sometime later while standing on a high part of ground and looking around, he suddenly exclaimed.

"I don't think we are in the same area as I was with Mr. Hume, last year. The area doesn't look right, or feel the same."

"What do you mean Sir?" I asked.

"Well, on the map we were provided with, we drew a straight magnetic line from Lake George which is just past Goulburn, to this Port. After travelling a great distance we finally, came out of the mountains, and stretching out in front of us towards the north east was a curving line of hills that joined to where we camped. From the north east to the south west we saw beautiful flattish country, with glimpses of blue water. Away to the south west we saw three pinnacles of hills sticking upwards. Now here! even if we went to the land to the west of the western side of French Island, and looked eastwards, I don't think it is the same."

He looked awfully puzzled and muttered a lot.

"Right Benjamin, let's go and find Officers from the *Fly*, I want to be with them when they check the noon day position calculations of latitude and longitude, and compare them with mine. Maybe my artificial horizon tool is faulty."

"What's an artificial horizon tool Mr. Hovell?"

"Hmm that's a bit hard to explain. Well, you know what a magnetic compass is and it points to magnetic north, not the north marked on a map?"

"Yes." I didn't understand it much, but I didn't say so.

"You have seen ships officers at midday taking sights of the sun at midday every day, using a sextant, to establish our position on the charts?"

"Yes." They always did it at midday when the sun was at its highest, and after a lot of mathematical table checking and mumbling, they usually called out loud their calculations of latitude and longitude in degrees. The results were always written down by the ships master on a slate for reference by the Captain of the ship. Then they marked the position on a map.

"The sextant is required to look at the sun in one telescope and the seas horizon in the other, and where they meet on the instrument is the calculated latitude and longitude. Land explorers are not able see the sea, so they carry an artificial horizon tool that holds a little water so one of the sextant's telescopes can pretend to see a horizon on the sea."

"I don't think I understand all that sir."

"Oh well I suppose you have to use the instruments to understand their uses."

It turned out that Mr. Hovell had a one degree error in calculating his longitude, so that what he thought was Westernport was actually Port Phillip Bay.

I found out later that Port Phillip was discovered and mapped by Lt. Murray.

Apart from Lt. Flinders visit soon after Lt. Murray's discovery, Lt. Robbins and Mr. Grimes the Colonial Surveyor had also sailed into Port Phillip bay. They discovered and named a river the Yarra Yarra after finding out its name from the natives.

I know that Mr. Hovell did go to extreme lengths to find the original spot where he and Mr. Hume finished their overland journey, from Lake George to this area.

During his stay here, he also carried out other expeditions in the surrounding area. He added to Captain Wetherall's map, descriptions of the surrounding countryside. I can describe most of them because I accompanied him on a few of them. Particularly in the dangerous Ku werup swamps. He also found out that the natives called the area around the settlement, Corinella, having something to do with kangaroos. There were many small mobs of them, and Mr. Hovell actually shot two of them once with one bullet.