

Chapter 1 Westernport

1.3 The object, and forming the Discovery Club

After a few days soaking the object in a small tub, Phill was able to push off small pieces from the end bits of gunk, revealing about eight inches of what was unmistakably the end of a lethal piece of steel.

Phill rang Chris. 'Hi Chris, what's on?'

'Hi, not much.'

" Well, you know that "thing" you found the other day? I think it's either a bayonet or a real sword!'

'That's cool. What does it look like?'

"Well, maybe a large bayonet from an army rifle. Maybe a brush cutter made on a farm for a purpose. I'll continue soaking it, and gradually helping bits fall off without damaging it. I really think it's a fighting sword, not just a bit of steel for play acting. I think I can see the start of the blood flow indents. How it got there I don't know, but I think it could be very important."

" Can we get hold of Tristan, and have another look where I found it? There could be more."

"Okay, you ring Tristan. We can meet there about 4 p.m. tomorrow. If you don't ring back I will assume it's okay."

'Okay, so long.'

At 3.45 the next day Chris had called at Phill's place and both had walked down to the bottom of the hill. Tristan had drifted over from his school. After exploring, and kicking bits of clay and dirt, they had found nothing.

"What are we going to do now?" Chris asked.

"Let's go to Phill's and have a drink and some food. I'm starving," Tristan said.

Later that arvo, Tristan was flicking and half-throwing Phill's blackberry cutter into the sand in the horse ring. The cutter looked like a rudimentary sword with a wooden handle.

He followed it up by exaggerated sword-fighting actions, nearly hitting Chris.

"Hey, be careful, man, that nearly got me! I'm going to have another look from that tree to see where the creek from the back of my place might go."

Chris grabbed the ladder out of the shed, shoved it against the tree, and extended it to about seven metres. He climbed up the ladder, and with effort shinned up the few available branches until it got dangerously high. 'Getting a bit windy up here, the tree is starting to sway, and it sounds as if the trunk is creaking a bit.'

"What can you see?" asked Tristan.

"Not much. I've got to hang on tight."

"Come on down from the tree, then. You might be able to see from the shed roof."

So both Chris and Tristan scrambled up onto the shed roof. They then did a kind of boy's jig on the roof, making lots of noise.

"I can see where the creek at the back of my place goes but it kind of gets lost near the aero club. Can you see it, Tristan?" Chris asked.

"Can't see a thing."

"Over there," pointing broadly.

'Still can't!'

'Okay guys! come on down before you both get blown off. The wind's blowing about 30 knots now. What say we watch the movie about Captain Cook's voyages? Your nan is going to make some hamburgers for us. We can eat them watching the movie.'

On the way to the house the fellows just talked a bit.

"At my old school, we had a visit last year by a lady who talked about creeks that run into the bay. Can't remember much, although I know the Aboriginal name of Tyabb means "place of many waters".'

'That's interesting, Chris. Did she mention the Bass River on the other side of Westernport?'

"Maybe."

"Why, Phill?" piped up Tristan.

'I have always wanted to explore Bass River. I reckon the bayonet could be a navy cutlass. You know, the sort used by pirates in the Pirates of the Caribbean.'

"Well how did it get there"?

"I would only be guessing"

"Didn't you say once that this Port was visited by several explorers? Didn't the ship *Lady Nelson* come here?"

"That's right," said Chris, "I saw it in the Marina at Hastings."

"How come you saw the *Lady Nelson*?"

"It was a replica and stayed at the Marina for a while."

"That would have been great, Chris. Did you know, guys, Westernport had lots of early explorers? Have you heard of them: George Bass, Lieutenant Murray, Ensign Barrallier? You know Barrallier Island at the top of the bay, that was named after him."

"Yes I know where Barrallier Island is." Tristan had been out on the water a lot with his Dad.

"You know, guys, all early explorers suffered from leaky old boats that could sink in a flash, rotten food, and being scared most of the time. No car phone, no lights on shore, no TV, no GPS, no supermarkets, no Mum and Dad to help out ."

"But how would that cutlass get there?" Tristan was determined to have an answer.

Phill had to think a little before answering. "Well, it depends upon the age of the thing, let's call it a sword. Swords didn't really get used much in battles after roughly 1850, although they would always be handy in a fight. I'm not sure of that date so ask your history teachers. If it was a fighting sword it could have been used by men who settled Australia in the very early days, say approximately 1800."

"I do know that in the early days of settlement, after the First Fleet commander Arthur Philip formed the colony at Port Jackson, which we now

know as Sydney, the later Governors were worried about Napoleon Bonaparte. He was the Emperor of France at the time, and was always trying to conquer countries in Europe, including England. In trying to beat the English he also possibly wanted to settle French people in Australia. So maybe the cutlass was lost or stolen around that time."



A collection of swords. LDMM.

'Why don't we explore the bay where the early explorers were?' Chris was raring to start.

"Well, that's a big ask. Between the three of us we don't know a lot about the early explorers. I suppose we can learn quickly."

"Let's have a go!"

"Okay. What say we form a discovery club. Just the three of us. We can talk about, and decide what we can do, and what we need to know to do it"

"Awesome."

"Cool."

"Come on then, let's watch the movie. It might give us a few clues and encourage us to think like old-time explorers and sailors."

When the movie ended, the questions came thick and fast, creating a stimulating three-way discussion, with plenty of joking, and viewing items on the internet. They then wrote down a few things on paper, during which with more joking the occasional pencil and rubber were thrown about. In the end the guys came up with the following plan, which could be carried out whenever time allowed.

The Discovery Club Plan of Action.

After discussion on 17 April 2007, it was decided to form the Discovery Club.

AIMS

Retrace-re-enact where possible-exploration of Westernport by sailors in Australia's early history. Look for any MYSTERIOUS INSTRUCTIONS given to the early explorers.

METHOD

1. Using a dinghy, explore all creeks, lagoons, and entrances in Westernport
2. Cross-reference to the maps of early explorers, also modern naval map, civil maps and any other resources, including internet
3. Create a 'boat's log' record for all expeditions
4. Bone up on tides and their effects, latitude and longitude. Learn how to use a GPS
5. Construct a magnetic needle. Use a sextant. Take soundings
6. Arrange a sleepover in the bay

7. Fly over parts of the southern coastline to assist in retracing routes

8. Visit museum at HMAS Cerberus

9. Other visits: the Australian Maritime Museum's replica of Captain Cook's ship Endeavour; Replica of HMS *Lady Nelson*; lighthouses.

CLUB MEMBERS

Chris Duncan-Boat Pilot/Writer

Tristan Duncan-Navigator/Surveyor

Phill Duncan-Purser