

# **Chapter 1 Westernport**

## **1.7 Diary of Geo. Bass:**

### ***Our voyage down the coast; a strait; my secret orders.***

Ever since passing that very big promontory to our east a few days ago that I think is a part of Furneaux's land, we have had a very difficult, dangerous time with our leaking boat and unreliable gusty hard winds blowing. Our journey has taken a lot longer because of several bad storms that forced us to camp ashore a lot. Not much game around so we have eaten a lot of our stores. Before the big promontory we were stuck ashore near Rams head for 10 days with our boat anchored to the beach. When the weather allowed us to leave, we could not get our anchor up and I think we damaged the boat and possibly some of my instruments.

Our food position was not too good so I thought that we would sail south to the site of the *Sydney Cove* wreck and see if we could salvage some remaining stores from the wreck.

So we sailed south from the bottom of that very big promontory for three days and, just when our boat started to leak very badly, a monstrous storm blew up, which was very frightening, especially so in the dark, with white water spraying everywhere. We had to turn back, and sail north, so that the sea did not come in over our damaged side. The wind was very strong from the south, so we headed to the western side of the promontory to find a safe cove where we could beach the boat and get some rest.

One of my crew spotted a group of people on a headland standing around a fire. We thought they were some local Indians, but when we got closer, and called out to them, we found they were seven convicts, who with seven others had stolen a boat in Sydney and had intended to sail to the wreck of the *Sydney Cove*. They were to get some supplies and escape to China.

However, the other seven had stolen away in the night and left these fellows stuck on an island with nothing.

They were starving because they only had primitive ways of obtaining food for five weeks. I could not squeeze them on board so early in the voyage, but I put them ashore on the mainland, gave them a musket with some ammunition, and some fish hooks, and said I would help them later, on our return journey.



***George Bass and crew on their voyage south from Port Jackson. I.H. & LDMM.***

I have been very excited, for some time, I think that there may be water between the N.S.W. coast and Van Diemen's Land. The waves are big and rolling in from the west going to the east. The tidal set seems to do the same.

The last noon sighting and my calculations indicated that we had travelled further to the west at a higher latitude of 38 degrees 25 minutes, then when Matty Flinders, Gov. Hunter and I had sailed as passengers on the *Reliance*, from England to the NSW colony sometime before. We had to sail around the southern tip Van Diemen's Land on latitude 43 degrees going on to 44 degrees. I also think we have found a large port in the most westerly part of the N.S.W. coast.

I am sure Governor Hunter's intuition is correct. Drowsing in the stern of the whaleboat, I remembered some of the polite conversations I had with Captain Hunter the Governor, and chief official of the Colony. He was most concerned that the seaboard length of the colony that was explored by Cook was about 3000 miles. How could he defend it against Spanish, Dutch and French invaders. Particularly the French.

The Governor was at Sydney as a naval Captain under the command of the First Fleet commander Captain Arthur Phillip. The day the First Fleet left Botany Bay for Port Jackson, Sydney harbour, a French Captain, La Pérouse, sailed into Botany Bay.

Gov. Phillip allowed Captain La Pérouse to stay at Botany Bay and to visit the First Fleet settlement. Phillip was keen to share information and bargain for a few supplies, but chiefly to discover the intentions of the Frenchies in these waters.

The presence of La Pérouse alarmed Gov. Phillip but he was too busy to do anything about it. My Gov. Hunter had been back to England, returning his ship from the First Fleet, and was now taking over as the new Governor.

While in England, Governor Hunter had become very aware of the French Revolution, and was worried France would start up colonies in Australia just as they had in Canada and Northern America. Leaving England for the colony at Port Jackson, we even had to wait off the coast of England until other ships were gathered so that the Navy could escort us in convoy some miles away, and protect us from the French Navy. It was also rumoured that the recent independent colonies in America were also considering colonising N.S.W.

My secret orders were to examine the coastline, to find out where it ended and to look at locations to build forts.

I was to tell no one else of my orders or results.

