

# **Chapter 4 Extending Our Understanding**

## **4.3 The Lady Nelson under Lt J. Murray: 'Log Book' review of two bays.**

I am sailing the ship ESE with the western entrance to Western Port on my port side. The date is 11th M 1802. We have finally departed from Port King and are returning to Port Jackson.

The Governor and other officials will study my log and survey reports closely. The new Port of King will change the existing map of New South Wales significantly, in terms of defence and settlements.

I thought that before leaving this special place I should scan my Log Book and see if it reflects our discoveries and assumptions. The civilians reading my log may be confused with our naval days that start at noon.

**Thursday, 12th November 1801.** Left Port Jackson.

**Sunday, 6th December.** Arrived off Western Port.

**Monday, 7th December.** At 5 pm a breeze sprung up at the south west. Stood in for the entrance with all sail and the sweeps. At 6 pm gained entrance and passed between Grant's Point and Seal Island. At 7 came to anchor in Elizabeth's Cove in six fathoms of water with the small bower. I lowered the gig and went ashore to observe if any sign of strangers were to be seen. Saw nothing to make me think the cove had been visited since we left last May. Four am: put out the launch and sent first officer and five armed men to the river for fresh water.

**Tuesday, 8th December.** At 10 am stood further up the harbour.

Later at 4 pm came to anchor off Lady Nelson Point and I went ashore and shot a few birds. Went in the gig to Churchill's Island, and found everything as we left it: the wheat and corn in full vigour, onions gone to seed; the potatoes had disappeared

**Wednesday, 9th December.** At 1 pm the first officer in the launch returned with a load of water. On examining the river he reported that everything seemed the same as when we had left it-no signs of natives or their canoes. The party caught and shot five pairs of swans.

**Friday, 11th December.** The very favourable weather we have had enabled us to soon fill our water. I expected that to take nine or ten days. At noon ran over to Lady Nelson Point and anchored in 7 fathoms.

**Saturday, 12th December.** Sent the first mate up Salt Water Lagoon to get swans for meat.

**Sunday, 13th December.** At 8 am first mate returned in gig after having shot nine large and small swans, the large ones weighed eight or nine pounds each.

**Wednesday, 16th December.** Walked along the beach six or seven miles, but saw no signs of strangers being here. As it continued to be calm, I again sent the first officer to Seal Island to get some skins of seals as specimens for the Government, and also for our own use to make some shoes and hats for some of our men. Served out fishing lines and four hooks to each mess.

**Thursday, 17th December.** Making ready for sea. Observed native fires about four or five miles inland.

**Friday, 18th December.** First Mate and party returned from Seal Island. Two soldiers cutting wood found a large spring. I went on shore: the spring was

capable of watering in a few days a line of battleships. Pleased with this circumstance I took a gang of hands on shore and made a good road to it.

**Saturday, 19th December.** Saw quite a few fires from the natives but no contact. Made up a painted board for directions on how to find the spring.

**Friday, 25th December.** At noon suddenly taken with a violent squall at the West. This hurricane of wind increased so rapidly and with such fury ... dragged on all three anchors. The squall continued for four hours, then settled into a westerly gale with constant thunder and lightning and at intervals very hard rain and also heavier sea than I supposed possible in this cove.

**Saturday, 26th December.** From noon till 3 pm the gale continued to increase. Made all as snug as possible for riding out the gale, the hardest I ever saw in this country. Nothing less than the greatest providence could have saved us had we got to sea either of the times I attempted it. Weather still bad; made a run to Lady Nelson Point. Under the land felt very little.

**Sunday, 27th December.** Eight am: vessel drove-she tailed on a sandbank, which obliged us to weight the best bower and with the long boat lay it ahead to heave her off. At noon two and a half fathoms.

**Tuesday, 29th December.** Winds at the south west. Shifted to north west and freshened into a gale with cloudy weather. This kind of weather bound us here this last 12 days. Sent the First Mate and a party to shoot birds.

**Friday, 1st January 1802.** All this 24 hours it has been blowing a gale. The New Year was ushered in with us splicing the main brace and three cheers. Released Robert Warren

**Monday, 2nd January.** First Mate came back on board with birds, water and wood. The party had an encounter with the natives, mostly friendly ... all crew

went naked. But it required firing a piece over their heads to prevent molestation. Made sail for Elizabeth Island.

Departed Western Port following our orders for further exploration of King Island and western Bass's strait.

**Tuesday, 5th January.** Winds from south east to east with cloudy weather. At quarter past one pm Cape Schanck bore north east by north. Kept running down along the land steering west and west by north in order to traverse the whole of the land. Impossible to survey any part of the coast as yet from the numerous fires which covered this low shore in one volume of smoke.

Saw land bearing west-north-west distant 12 miles, and an opening in the land that had the appearance of a harbour. Having the appearance of fine weather, every passing minute made us sure it was a good harbour. At 5 pm observed a small island, and between it and the main lay a reef. First Mate and boatswain's mate at the masthead. One and a half miles from the entrance I perceived the sea broke short and was heavy. Hove the lead and found only 10 fathoms. Astonished at this I hauled our wind ... then I bore away. Mr Bowen called rocks ahead-immediately stood off. Going often to the masthead, I saw the reef did nearly stretch across the whole way. No doubt it has a channel into it. Apparently a fine harbour of large extent. Bore away to west.

**Wednesday, 27th January.** Intend to make Cape Albany from King Island. Onset of a gale.

**Saturday, 30th January.** Never experienced such length of bad weather at any time of year or in any country since I have sailed the seas. Perceived with surprise it was Grant's Point instead of Cape Albany. I thought it prudent to send our boat down to overhaul for a channel into the harbour mentioned

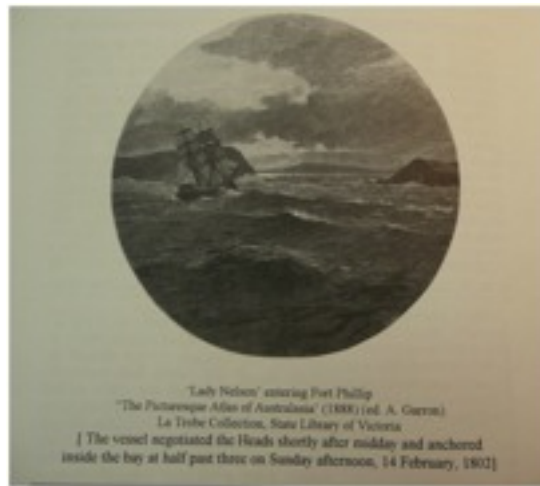
in the Log on 5th January. Had a heavy swell; the surf was breaking about Seal Island in a fearful manner.

***Sunday, 31st January.*** Observed a long range of breakers in the western side of the channel. Five pm: got to berth at Elizabeth Cove. I went ashore in the gig and inspected our well. Sent Mr Bowen in the launch with five armed men and 14 days' provisions and water down to the westward. Gave him particular instructions on how to act both with respect to the harbour and natives should he fall in with any; to take marks proper for coming in with the vessel. If a passage into the harbour is found I will take the vessel down into it and survey as speedily as possible, and if time allows follow up the remainder of my orders.

***Thursday, 4th February.*** Calm hot sticky weather. The launch returned; Mr Bowen reported that a good channel was found into this new harbour. According to his accounts it is a most noble sheet of water, larger even than Western Port, with many fine coves and entrances in it. The boat's crew lived on swans all the time they were away.

***Saturday, 13th February.*** 14 days of calm, inconsistent weather. Today our hopes of getting to sea have vanished.

***Sunday, 14th February.*** At 6 am weighed and made all sail down the port. At half past ten, South Head of the New Harbour was eight miles distant. At noon the entrance was half a mile distant. I had a view of this part of the spacious harbour. The bar stretches itself a good way across. With tide out and wind in the ripple is such as to cause a stranger to suspect a rock or shoals ahead. Kept standing up the port with all sails set.



### ***The Lady Nelson entering Port Phillip. SLV.***

***Monday, 15th February.*** Working up the Port with a strong ebb against us. The southern shore of this noble harbour is bold high land in general. Western Port is thick with brush ... and stout trees of various kinds.

Away to eastward about 20 miles, the land is mountainous, which I named Arthur's Seat from the resemblance to a mountain of that name a few miles from Edinburgh. To The north east by north, about five miles away, lies a cluster of small rocky islands, and all around them a shoal of sand. Plenty of Swans and Pelicans there, so I named them Swan Islands. I named two points, Point Paterson and Point Palmer.

I went on shore and walked through the woods for a couple of miles ... did not find water but saw several native huts. Sent the gig to Swan Island for Swans and fish. I climbed a hill and observed a large sheet of water to the north east.

***Tuesday, 16th February.*** After dinner I took a walk ashore with a soldier and our ship's carpenter to examine the timber. Again did not find water. Snapper and rock fish were caught, and Mr Bowen and four armed hands made contact with the natives, about 18 or 20 men and boys.

**Wednesday, 17th February.** Mr Bowen made contact with the natives ... a friendly time. Then a spear was thrown at a sailor-our people fired at the natives, wounded and possibly killed someone.

**Thursday 25th February** .Preceding days, thunder and lightning, rain and then a hard gale blew. Observed several large fires at the foot of Arthur's Seat.

**Friday 26th February** .Examined the beach and land for about eight miles. Sent our longboat on shore for repairs, leaking hard and requiring constant bailing.

**Saturday 27th February** Fine weather, moderate winds. Both ship's boats out sounding and surveying the harbour.

**Sunday 28th February.** Gave some of the people liberty on shore.

**Friday 5th March.** Previous days searching for water, surveying harbour for anchoring places for ships larger than ours. Taking on stones for ballast.

**Saturday 6th March.** The days have been so clear we have been able to see the land all around the Port. Went in the launch to the previously sighted large sheet of water.

Slept on a pleasant little island, I named it Maria Island after a sister I lost some years past.

**Monday 8th March.** As we now intend sailing in a few days, I judged it consistent with His Majesty's instructions (I was furnished with a copy from the Governor and Commander in Chief of N.S.W.) to take possession of this Port in the manner laid down in my instructions:

At 8 am the United Colours of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland were hoisted on board and on Cape Paterson. At one o'clock, under a discharge of

three volleys of small arms artillery, the Port was taken possession of in the name of His Most Sacred Majesty George the Third of Great Britain and Ireland.

Served a double allowance of grog. In the afternoon I went ashore attended by an armed party and passed the remainder of the day about and under the colours flying on shore. At sundown, hauled down the colours flying aboard and ashore.

**Tuesday 9th March.** All employed getting ready for sea. Overhauled our keels fore and aft.

We have now expended 19 weeks and one day's provisions out of 24 weeks...bread decayed, birds and fish assisted. It is not in my power to prosecute the object of our cruise much further. The weather and circumstances have been against us the whole cruise. However, the little that is performed of the original instructions is pretty accurate, and I trust will give the Commander in Chief some satisfaction.

**Thursday 11th March.** Weighed anchor and made sail for Port Jackson.



***The first map of Port Phillip. Murray originally called it Port King in honour of his benefactor. Governor King renamed it to honour Governor Phillip. SLV.***