

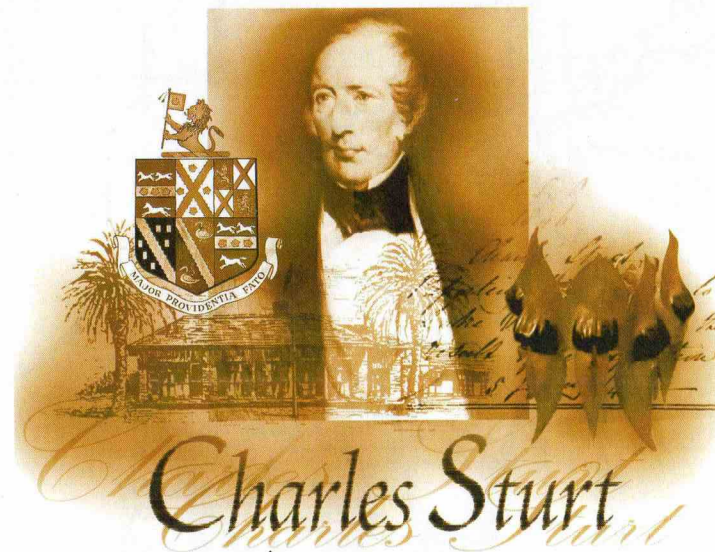


Sea Mouth of the Murray & Barker's Knoll by G.F. Angus Ca 1845



"Overlanders" S. T. Gill Ca 1880

## STURT'S FORGOTTEN JOURNEYS OF 1838



Charles Sturt (Circa 1832)

As he would have looked at the time of his overland cattle drive in 1838



**STURT'S OVERLAND JOURNEY  
BY THE HUME & MURRAY  
TO ADELAIDE.**

1838.

Scale of Miles  
0 20 40 60 80 100

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June they sighted a feature named "Mount Hope" by "Major Thomas Mitchell" on his expedition. It was at this place that Sturt lost his small



flock of 30 sheep when they were attacked by a pack of wild dogs and scattered into the bush. It was also at this point that Sturt noted that the tracks of Eyre's party and Hawdon's party, having merged with those of "Mitchell's earlier exploration now formed a great high road of the interior.

He now followed this track, passing the junction of the "Murrumbidgee" with the "Hume" (which he had named the "Murray" River in 1830) and made camp about eight miles below it. It was at this point he was able to record that *"he had traced the 'Hume' River for more than 250 miles and that over that length it had received six tributaries, five on the left bank and one on the right"*.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of July Sturt reached the junction of the "Darling" River, but instead of crossing the "Murray" above the junction, he carried on, pitched camp two miles below it and made preparations to cross over to the northern bank.

It was at this point that he and Finnis had an argument as to the best method of getting the dray across. Finnis objected to the disassembly of the dray as a waste of time, and insisted instead on dragging it across the river. Finnis prevailed and it proved a total failure. The dray got stuck in the mud of the river bed and resisted all efforts at recovery. Finally Sturt solved the problem by using empty casks as buoyancy floats and on the 28<sup>th</sup> having floated it free, they used bullocks and ropes to haul the dray ashore. This cost the party valuable time and for the first time put them at risk.

During this operation, when the party was scattered, they encountered their first serious trouble with the natives who entered the camp and on one occasion blows were exchanged and blood drawn. Sturt was able to avert serious conflict and the party were able to move on but it was evident that the area was to prove hostile to later overland parties.

On 11<sup>th</sup> of August the party reached the fossil cliffs noted by Sturt on his earlier expedition, at which time the party was experiencing food shortages and on the 13<sup>th</sup> Sturt agreed that Strangways and Fraser should ride ahead to Adelaide and return with supplies, whilst the rest of them continued on to their destination. On the 16<sup>th</sup> "Mount Lofty" was sighted, the Great Nor-West Bend of the river was reached on the 17<sup>th</sup> and they continued to follow it until they reached the vicinity of what later became known as "Moorundie". Sturt now struck westwards toward the hills where, in dire straits, on the 21<sup>st</sup> they camped in waterless bush and Finnis set out to obtain help and find out what had happened to Fraser and Strangways.

However, help was near at hand. Finnis met up with Eyres and Bewes Strangways who had set out with very welcome supplies, and at nine o'clock at night he led them into Sturt's camp. On the following day Giles Strangways and Fraser arrived with larger supplies, explaining that their delay in returning was because they had been impeded for five days by dense scrub. Eyre then led the party to a nearby waterhole where the stock quenched their thirst and were saved.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1838 Sturt reached a point just under Mount Barker, some 25 miles from Adelaide, where he established his cattle party *"at a station on a clear rivulet falling into a lake amid a luxuriant pasture"*, and thus ended the journey commenced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May in that year. Sturt then travelled on to Adelaide where he called on Mr. Stephens, the Acting Governor, received a tumultuous welcome from

the citizenry, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> September a public dinner was given in his honour at "Beck's Store", in Flinders Street, at which he spoke of his journey and his impressions of the country he had traversed. It was also at this time he made his observations as to the limitations of "Encounter Bay" as a suitable anchorage for shipping vessels as he had seen it in 1830, and announced that he would immediately lead a party back to that area to test establish the true state of affairs and to report his findings.

Those findings were to have a profound effect on the colonists and to settle the disputed matter of the rumoured safe anchorage at "Encounter Bay", once and for all.

## TWO MEMBERS OF THE OVERLAND CATTLE DRIVE



Giles Strangways Ca 1880



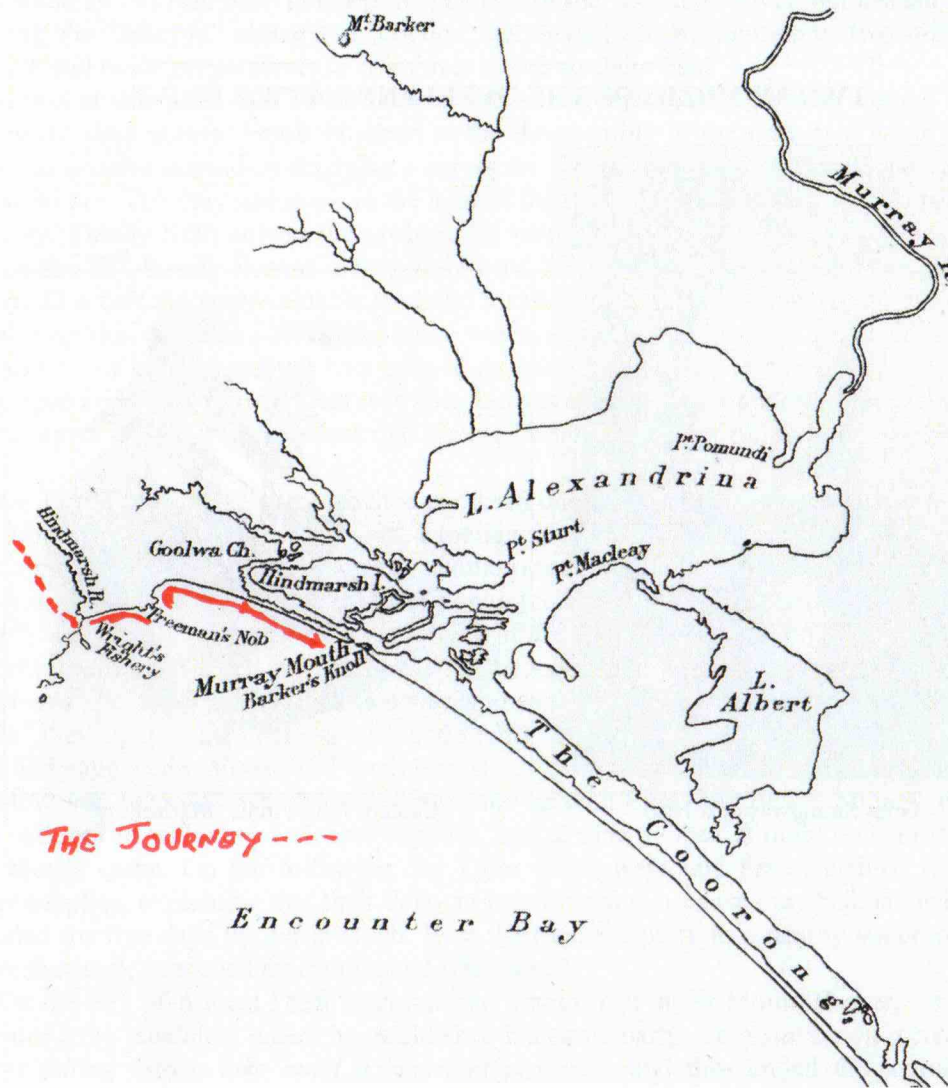
Captain John Finnis (Maritime)

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## DIAGRAM OF SEA MOUTH OF MURRAY

Scale of Miles  
0 1 2 3 4 5 10 15 20



Sturt's 1838 Journey from "Wright's Fishery" to the "Murray" Mouth

### Sturt's Journey from "Wright's Fishery" to Encounter Bay – September 1838

Following the settlement of the previous controversy surrounding Colonel Light's selection of the site of the capital, a story surfaced that there was a safe anchorage at Encounter Bay. This rumour again raised the matter of an alternative settlement even though the dangers of the passage into "Lake Alexandrina" became quite evident when in December 1837 Judge Sir John Jeffcott and Captain Blenkinsop lost their lives when their boat capsized whilst attempting to cross the Bar at the sea mouth of the "Murray".

It re-emerged in 1838 when the "Fanny" under the command of Captain Gill was wrecked off the south-east coast. In obtaining help and bringing the passengers to shore Captain Gill entered the outlet several times. He later expressed the strong opinion that *"it was perfectly safe for vessels of moderate tonnage to enter, asserting that no danger need be feared"*. This was to rouse a clamour in some quarters that a settlement be considered and caused a loss of investor confidence in Adelaide properties. It was to settle this matter that Sturt agreed to journey to the area and report his findings.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1838 he set out overland with a party that included Messrs. Bewes and Giles Strangways, and Police Inspector Inman with a detachment of men. They travelled overland via Myponga arriving at "The Fishery" on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, at what is now "Victor Harbour", where Sturt obtained a boat and the services of a whaling Captain named "Witch". The party then split, one travelling along the coast by land, the other by boat and on the 15<sup>th</sup> they reached "Freeman's Knob" which location is now known as "Port Elliott".

On the next day Sturt set out arriving off the mouth of the outlet where he saw a line of breakers that rose a full fifteen feet before they burst on the sand bar across the mouth. He then made three attempts to enter the outlet from different directions but all failed and on one occasion the boat was almost capsized. These manoeuvres were anxiously witnessed from the shore by Inman and his party but there was nothing they could do to help.

Sturt finally concluded that it was too dangerous to continue, abandoned any further attempts and returned to Adelaide on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. There he reported to the Acting Governor that the mouth could not be safely navigated and that Captain Gill was extremely fortunate in that he had been able to do so. The "Southern Australian" reported, *"Every attempt has been made to establish as a truth what Captain Sturt has at last virtually declared to be a falsehood"*, and in the mind of the colonists the matter was finally settled.

The question being so settled, investment in land and commerce was resumed, the site of Adelaide was finally fixed and it went on to play its important part in the history of the State and ultimately the Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, 1838, Sturt took passage to Sydney on board the "Hope", returned to his home in New South Wales and in 1839 accepted the post of Colonial Surveyor of South Australia. This decision was to change the entire course of his life, and therein is the start of yet another story.