

**THE VISIT OF CHARLES FRASER (THE
COLONIAL BOTANIST OF NEW SOUTH WALES)
TO THE SWAN RIVER IN 1827, WITH HIS
OPINION ON THE SUITABLENESS OF THE
DISTRICT FOR THE SETTLEMENT, TO WHICH IS
ADDED THE JOURNAL OF H. M. S. "SUCCESS",
ON THE ABOVE OCCASION**

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The Visit of Charles Fraser (the Colonial Botanist of New South Wales) to the Swan river in 1827, with his opinion on the suitability of the district for the settlement, to which is added The Journal of H. M. S. "Success", on the above occasion by Charles Fraser & J. G. Hay

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CHARLES FRASER & J. G. HAY

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THE
VISIT OF CHARLES FRASER

(THE COLONIAL BOTANIST OF NEW SOUTH WALES)

**To the Swan River in 1827, with his Opinion
on the Suitableness of the District
for a Settlement.**

TOGETHER WITH

COPIOUS NOTES BY J. G. HAY,
"

TO WHICH IS ADDED

The Journal of H.M.S. "Success"

(CAPTAIN JAMES STIRLING, R.N.)

On the above occasion.

PUBLISHED BY J. G. HAY, 182 PIER STREET, PERTH,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

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PREFACE.

The original papers, now published for the first time in Western Australia, speak for themselves,

The journal of the Clerk of H.M.S. "Success" has never before seen the light of day, and much interesting matter is pleasantly related therein.

Attention may be drawn to one or two items not hitherto known.

The original intention of the expedition was to suggest *Buckland Hill* as the site for a town for the proposed settlement. This, however, was superseded by Captain Stirling, on his arrival with the first immigrants, in the ship "Parmelia," in June, 1829, by placing the capital, Perth, about twelve miles from the port, at which he settled the town of Fremantle. The elucidation of the naming of Perth after the birthplace of Sir George Murray, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, in honor of whom also towns in New South Wales, Tasmania, and Canada were named, and the origin of the naming of Mount Eliza after Lady Darling, should set aside many absurd stories for these nomenclatures.

Another fact that is not generally known is that *Chenopsis atrata* (the black Swan of Australia), which was first observed by Vlaming, at the river he named after the bird, on the 5th of January, 1697, was not confined to that portion of Australia, but was once common to the whole southern coast from east to west, as also Tasmania and the islands of Bass' Straits. It is not a true swan, but belongs to an allied genus now, unfortunately, almost annihilated. It has been collected and brought together in numbers to the Swan River at Perth, where it is protected by legislation from being destroyed.

Finally, I have to thank the Department of Lands for facilities given me to search their records, and especially have I to thank Mr Joseph Hope, the Chief Draughtsman, for assistance freely rendered me on this and other occasions.

I have also to express my thanks to Mr. Malcolm A C. Fraser, the Registrar-General, for the loan of some of the Plates used in illustration.

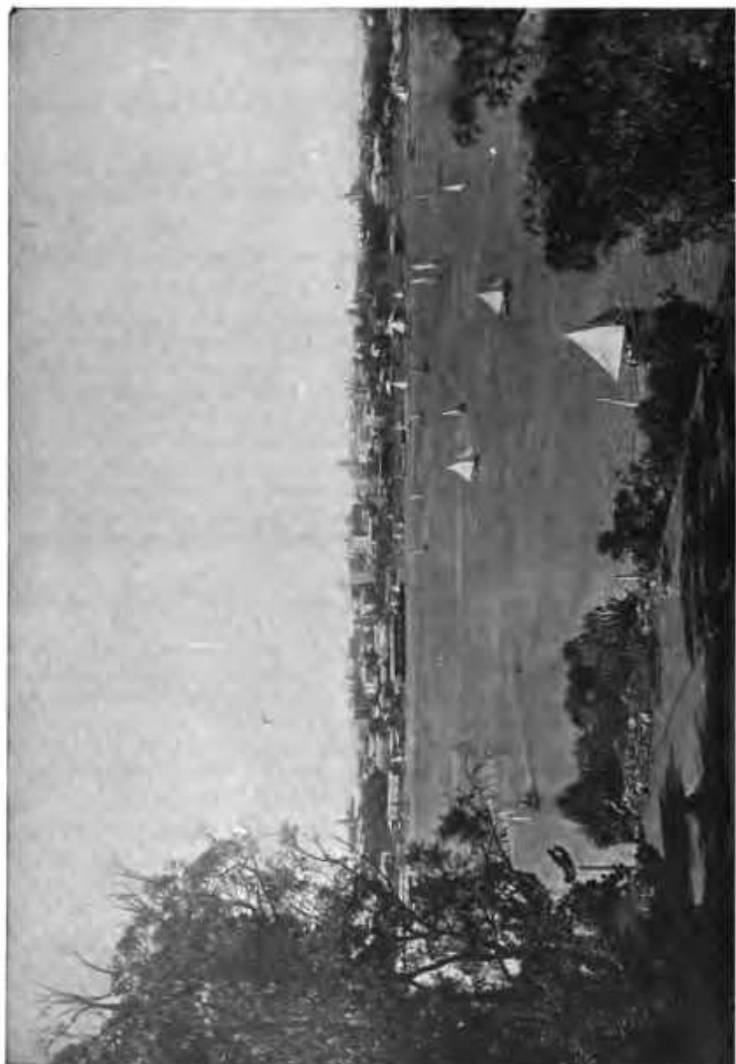
One day, I trust publishing a small history of Western Australia, in the meantime, this little brochure, I hope, may not be unacceptable to some as a first instalment.

Perth, 1906.

J. G. HAY.

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VIEW OF PERTH FROM THE LOWER TERRACE OF THE KING'S PARK.

THE VISIT OF MR. CHARLES FRASER, COLONIAL BOTANIST OF
NEW SOUTH WALES, WITH CAPTAIN STIRLING, IN H.M.S.
"SUCCESS," TO THE SWAN RIVER IN 1827, WITH HIS REPORT
ON THE BOTANY, SOIL, AND CAPABILITIES OF THE LOCALITY.

(A Paper read before the West Australian Natural History Society
by Mr. J. G. HAY, 20th March, 1906).

The visit of the Colonial Botanist of New South Wales, with Captain Stirling, in H.M.S. "Success," to the Swan River in 1827 was pregnant with considerable importance, as it was mainly on Mr. Fraser's report that the subsequent settlement was directed.

Previously to 1826, the British practically made no claim to Western Australia, being content to allow that portion to remain under the name of New Holland.

If reference be made to Captain Phillip's instructions, it will be seen that he was directed to occupy all that portion of New Holland lying eastward of the 135th degree of longitude; and although, only a few years after, Captain Vancouver (1) took possession (on Michaelmas Day, 1791) of the land he discovered and named King George the Third Sound, yet no occupation of this territory was immediately effected.

It was only after the expedition of 1800-4, ordered by Napoleon (2), had usurped Flinders' discoveries, and named the whole southern coast "Terre Napoléon," and other French ships had visited these

(1.) Captain George Vancouver, with H.M.S. "Discovery" and "Chatham," was on a mission to the north-west coast of America, when, with a crew stricken by dysentery, he made the southern coast, at about Chatham Island, and left it at Termination Island.

(2.) Napoléon's expedition, sent out under the French Republic, consisted of the "Géographe," Commodore Baudin, and the "Naturaliste," Captain Hamelin, who was afterwards sent back to France with despatches when a second visit to Western Australia was made with the "Géographe," accompanied by a schooner bought in New South Wales, and christened by the French the "Casuarina," into which Lieutenant Freycinet was placed in command.

shores, that the British authorities, being alarmed, at last directed the occupation of King George's Sound, which was accordingly carried out on Christmas Day, 1826 (3).

Following this event, the Governor of New South Wales directed Captain Stirling to take the Colonial Botanist with him, for the purpose of reporting on the suitableness of the Swan River neighborhood for a settlement.

The "Success," leaving Sydney on January 17, 1827, was accompanied by a cutter, named the "Currency," intended to be employed in coast survey, but which, meeting with mishaps, had to return to Port Jackson.

After a preliminary visit to Hobart, the "Success" arrived off Rottnest on the 5th of March, 1827; and, three days after, the ship's gig and cutter entered the Swan River for the purpose "of examining the banks, the depth of water, to fix on an eligible spot for a settlement, to ascertain the productions of the country, the nature of the soil, and the practicability of shipping." Considering the short time occupied in all this work (not a month in the whole territory), it can scarcely be said that anything like an exhaustive examination of the country was made, and certainly not one that would justify the laudatory terms that were afterwards used to attract the settlers.

The report on which the colony was founded is not in the possession of the State, but a copy of a semi-official journal kept by Mr. Augustus H. Gilbert (clerk of the "Success") is preserved; and from a paper compiled on the botany of the Swan River, etc., by Mr. Charles Fraser, for his friend Dr. Hooker, and published in the first volume of the "Botanical Miscellany," in 1830, we learn much of the prevailing flora seen by the visitors.

Some slight mistakes were made such as calling the Red Gum (*Eucalyptus calophylla*) *Angophora*; but, taken in all, the description of a totally different series of shrubs to those common on the Eastern Coast of Australia, may be called fairly accurate. Mr. Fraser, in the course of his paper, says:—

"The soil on the South Head is a barren sand, producing a considerable variety of interesting plants, amongst which I observed

(3.) General Darling sent Major Lockyer from Sydney, with a detachment of the 39th Regiment and a party of convicts, to King George Sound, numbering in all about 70 persons. They landed 25th December, 1826.

Anigozanthus Rufus, *Anthocercis littorea*, two species of *Metrosideros* (4); a charming species of *Prostanthera* (5), producing large quantities of rich blue flowers; a species of *Gnaphalium* (6), with procumbent stems, the white flowers of which give a snowy appearance to many parts of the cliffs; and a beautiful species of *Dryandra* (7). The appearance of the *Gnaphalium* above mentioned is in some measure confirmatory of the sandy character which the French give of these hills

“On tracing the river a quarter of a mile from its entrance, on the south bank (8), I observed quantities of a species of *Brunonia* (9), growing in great luxuriance on the margin of a salt marsh, its flowers of a brilliant sky-blue. Here I likewise gathered a magnificent species of *Melaleuca*, with scarlet flowers (10), and two species of *Metrosideros*, with various other plants, which, from their being neither in flower nor in fruit, I could not attempt to describe.

“Half a mile from the entrance, I found the soil, although apparently sterile, to consist of a fine light-brown loam, containing a small proportion of sand, and capable of producing any description of light garden crop. This character not only applies to the immediate bank as far as the reach (11) below Pelican Point (12), but likewise to the hills as far as my observation led. These hills present the appearance of a petrified forest (13), from the immense quantity of trunks which protrude for several feet above the surface;

(4.) Dr. A. Morrison, the Government Botanist, to whom I am indebted for these botanical notes, says:—“*Metrosideros*, at the time Fraser wrote, was a name applied to a great variety of myrtaceous plants, now known under the genera *Melaleuca*, *Kunzea*, *Callistemon*, *Angophora*, *Eucalyptus*, *Syncarpia*, and *Exanthostemon*. Probably he referred to paper-bark trees.

(5.) Most likely *Hemiandra pungens*.

(6.) *Caloccephalus Brownii*.

(7.) *Dryandra floribunda* probably, a shrub or small tree.

(8.) The position of Phillimore-street, Fremantle.

(9.) Probably *Dampiera Linearis*.

(10.) More than one such.

(11.) Blackwall Reach.

(12.) Pelican Point. This is evidently intended for Point Walter. Fraser wrote this paper in Sydney, two years after his visit, and a number of errors principally small, occur in its pages.

(13.) The petrified appearance may be observed at several localities, notably at Cottesloe, Mount Eliza, and Arthur's Head. It is due to the shrubs and small trees being buried by drifting sand, then calcified by the lime (dissolved out of the sand by the rains) taking the place of their decaying tissues.

their decomposed state renders them of benefit rather than otherwise to the soil. Here I observed a brown snake, similar to that of Port Jackson, and it is remarkable that this was the only snake seen during the survey (14).

"At the distance of one mile from the mouth of the river (15), the genus *Eucalyptus* appears, although in a stunted state. I was much astonished at the beautiful dark-green and vigorous appearance of the trees, considering that the season had been evidently unusually dry; but the cause must arise from the great quantity of springs with which this country abounds. On penetrating two feet into the earth, I found the soil perfectly moist, and I feel confident that, had I penetrated a foot deeper, I should have found water. On the beach I observed several small pools of water and many moist spots, which, in seasons of unusual humidity, must be the seat of active springs issuing from the calcareous rocks that bound them. The luxuriance of the vegetation on the immediate beach is truly astonishing. It consists principally of syngenesious plants, and a species of *Hibiscus* with peltate leaves (16). Here I observed a beautiful pendulous *Leptospermum*, resembling in its appearance, and the situation which it prefers, the weeping willow (17). An arborescent species of *Acacia* (18) was likewise seen associated with it.

"While examining the productions of a mass of cavernous limestone rocks on the beach, I was astonished by observing an extensive spring issue from beneath them, in width about 7 feet, running at the rate of 3 feet in a second. The water was brackish, but it is evidently fresh at some periods of the tide. Its elevation is about 3 feet above low-water mark, yet at its lowest ebb its current was at the above rate. The water was found, on being analysed, to be of the same quality as that at Harrowgate (19).

(14.) Snakes. On the occasion of the French visit in June, 1801, the report states:—"Snakes are common enough on Rottnest Island. Many are not less than 4ft. to 5ft. long, with a diameter of 1½ in. to 2in. Their color is greyish, but we did not observe if they were venomous." This was probably the brown snake (*Diamonia superciliosa*), the color of which varies. It may be presumed that they would also be on the mainland, as brown, black, and brown-banded are to be obtained about Perth to this day, though not so numerous as in the Eastern States.

(15.) This would be the position of the present railway bridge crossing the river at Fremantle.

(16.) *Hibiscus Huagelii*, but leaves not "peltate."

(17.) *Agonis flexuosa*. The peppermint tree.

(18.) *Acacia cyanophylla*.

(19.) This mineral spring would be about the position of the Port Brewery, near the railway bridge; but the water is not similar to Harrowgate.