LIEUT. CHARLES JEFFREYS, R.N.
THE LAST BUCCANEER?


Read to a General Meeting of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland on Thursday 26 July 1979.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED]

After "Endeavour" had been repaired at the river named after her, James Cook succeeded in taking her out to sea on 4 August 1770. Aware of "a long passage to make to the E. Indies through an unknown and perhaps dangerous sea" he proceeded with great caution. By 10 August he was among the numerous islands and reefs which lie around Cape Flattery (so called because he had flattered himself when abreast of it that he had clear, open sea ahead of him). There are good channels among them, but they are very confusing to a sailor coming on them for the first time.

Cook's anxiety in his situation can well be imagined, especially with his recent near-disaster in his mind. By the time he had inspected Lizard Island on 12 August he had made up his mind to relinquish any idea he might have had of continuing north along the mainland for fear of being embayed in shoals and reefs and losing his chance of a passage to the East Indies. He was well aware that in November the north-west monsoon would replace the southeast tradewinds; the former would have been a foul wind for Batavia. On 14 August he had sailed Endeavour through what is now called Cook's Passage, to the open sea.

Yet, it was to prove a case of leaving the frying pan for the fire. The months of south-east trade winds had given the sea a set from that direction so when the wind failed on 16 August, nevertheless Endeavour continued to be borne inexorably in a north-west direction towards the great reef. When "between us

Mr Gill, partner in a legal firm in Brisbane, is Senior Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland and the author of numerous papers on Australia's colonial history.
The Labyrinth as shown in Wharton’s Edition of Cook’s Journal.
and destruction was only a dismal valley, the breadth of one wave, and even now no ground could be felt with 120 fathoms.\(^2\) Cook resorted to the desperate expedient of trying to tow the vessel off with the ship’s boats. This, with the aid of a turning tide, averted disaster. The passage, from which the ebb had poured which had helped to take them off the reef, was utilised at the flood tide to sail *Endeavour* inside the reef again. Cook’s relief is evidenced by his calling the entrance to a safe anchorage, Providential Channel. Feeling he had no alternative, he cautiously felt his way through the reefs and shoals until 22 August when he landed on Possession Island and claimed the whole east coast of the continent for the British Crown. We leave Cook now, but it is noteworthy that when his chart of the east coast of New Holland was published, the great navigator labelled the area inside the Barrier Reef from Endeavour’s River to Providential Channel with the one succinct word — “LABYRINTH.”\(^3\)

Cook’s description of his harrowing experiences within the Barrier Reef, as well as the several hundred miles of terra incognita represented by the labyrinth, did not encourage the early navigators of the east Australian coast to seek to use the waters within the Barrier Reef.

Bligh and the loyal members of his crew cast adrift in the *Bounty*’s launch did in fact enter the reef through Bligh’s entrance in latitude 12° 51’S on 29 May 1789. Bligh surmised he was near the Providential Channel named by Cook; in fact he was only 17 miles south of it. Bligh added little to what was already known, as his entrance to reef waters was so close to Cook’s re-entry point.\(^4\)

Mention must be made of the amazing journey of the escapee convicts led by William Bryant who escaped from Sydney with a six-oared fishing boat on 28 March 1791 and successfully made their way to Timor. They are the first Europeans on record to voyage up the east coast through the interior waters for the whole length of the reef. Bryant was a seaman and skilled in the use of small boats. As the runaways kept no log, and made no charts, their voyage, although an epic of endurance, was from the practical viewpoint, of no use at all in solving the riddle of the labyrinth for subsequent navigators.\(^5\)

In 1802 Flinders followed in Cook’s wake as far as Cape Bowling Green. As it was then mid-October and he had to be through Torres Strait before the north-west monsoon commenced, he decided to seek the open sea. The *Lady Nelson* (Lieutenant Murray, R.N.) which had sailed as tender to the *Investigator* had proved a poor sailor, suffered a number of accidents and had
delayed progress up to the coast. On 18 October Flinders ordered Murray to return to Sydney and on 20 October he took Investigator to the open sea through what is known as Flinders Passage in lat. 18° 45'S, long. 148° 10'E. and is now in frequent use.

Flinders’ remarks on the journey through the reefs would do little to encourage navigators to risk the inner passage. He said: “The Commander who proposes to make the experiment must not, however, be one who throws his ship’s head round in a hurry so soon as breakers are announced from aloft; if he do not feel his nerves strong enough to thread the needle as it is called, amongst the reefs, whilst he directs the steerage from the masthead, I would strongly recommend him not to approach this part of New South Wales.”

Thus, for over the next decade vessels continued to take the outside route and either sail through Torres Strait, which now thanks to Bligh, Brampton and Alt, Flinders and others was reasonably well known (although still full of dangers for the unwary or unlucky) or sail northabout New Guinea to China or the East Indies. Although judged safer, the outside route had its perils in the shape of reefs which dot the Coral Sea. In 1803 Flinders, himself, suffered shipwreck on Wreck Reef when travelling in H.M.S. Porpoise (Lieutenant Fowler) in company with Cato, also wrecked, and the East Indian Bridgewater which sailed on and left the shipwrecked people to their fate; happily only three lives were lost and due to the initiative of Flinders who sailed one of Porpoise’s cutters to Sydney (quite a feat) and brought help, the rest were saved.

BRIGS FOR COLONIAL DUTY

After Lachlan Macquarie assumed office as Governor of New South Wales on 1 January 1810 he found that a shortage of colonial government vessels hampered the administration of government between Sydney and Van Diemen’s Land and Norfolk Island.

On 30 April 1810 he requested the home government to supply him with two brigs, to be colonial ships and not subject to the control of the Admiralty. No ships having been made available by 17 November 1812, Macquarie then advised the home government he would have to charter ships for various colonial services such as the transfer of the whole of the inhabitants of Norfolk Island and their effects to Van Diemen’s Land in accordance with his orders to effect this. A despatch he had received on 9 November 1812 had informed him of the purchase of two
brigs for the use of the colony, but that several months could elapse before their departure for New South Wales.

Then, to his chagrin, he learned that the brig *Emu* had been captured as a prize by a French privateer (in actuality the privateer was American) in the Atlantic whilst en route to New South Wales.  

At length on 10 January 1814 His Majesty’s colonial armed brig *Kangaroo* commanded by Lieutenant Charles Jeffreys of the Royal Navy arrived at Sydney after a passage of seven months and eight days from England. Macquarie required Jeffreys to explain the delays on the voyage. Jeffreys’ account stated that he was at Madeira from 21 June to 3 July 1813 in consequence of *H.M.S. Inconstant*, under whose orders he was, having gone there. Then he was at Rio de Janeiro from 20 August to 20 September for refreshments and to get the brig caulked in every part of her upper works, they having proved leaky in consequence of her having been built of green wood. After 45 days’ passage from Rio to the Cape of Good Hope on account of heavy weather he was at the latter place from 3 to 13 November replenishing water and getting refreshments which the women passengers stood in great need of, and to refit the rigging which had suffered damage in the foul weather. He also reported only two deaths on the voyage, both children not 18 months old.

Lieutenant Charles Jeffreys was born on 16 October 1782 at Cowes, Isle of Wright, England the son of Ninian and Mary Jeffreys. He joined the navy at 11 and served as midshipman in various ships before his passing certificate as Lieutenant was issued by the Admiralty in August 1803. He was commissioned Lieutenant in March 1805. In August 1810 at Lambeth, Surrey, he married Jane Gill of London. His wife accompanied him when he sailed for Australia in the *Kangaroo*.

Early in February 1814 *Kangaroo* was despatched to Norfolk Island to conclude the evacuation and abandonment of the settlement there. This was effected on 28 February and on 10 March *Kangaroo* arrived back at Sydney after an absence of five weeks. Macquarie was pleased to report this to Earl Bathurst and in the same despatch he refers to “the Energy and very Zealous Exer­tions of Lieut. Jeffreys of the *Kangaroo*” in hastening the departure of the hired transports “*General Hewitt*” and *Windham* with elements of the 73rd Regiment then on transfer to Ceylon, the 46th Regiment having arrived in Sydney to replace them. It turned out, however, that *Kangaroo* had performed the Norfolk Island duty under the command of her executive officer, Mr.
Martin, Jeffreys having applied for and obtained Macquarie's permission to remain at Sydney "on account of a severe indisposition his wife then laboured under".12

By 16 March 1815 Lieutenant Jeffreys had become non persona grata with Macquarie. The latter was perturbed at the costs of the brig to the Crown having regard to the little service Kangaroo had been to the colony. In a despatch to Bathurst of the above date, Macquarie refers again to the brigs employment in the evacuation of Norfolk Island (but not under the command of Jeffreys). Then refers to the failure of the Kangaroo to make a voyage to Hobart with 60 female convicts and a few other passengers; she sailed from Sydney on 29 May 1814 (Jeffreys in command) and after 66 days returned without having been able to make her passage to Van Diemen's Land, although much smaller and far worse manned colonial vessels made good their passage to the Derwent during this period.

As soon as Kangaroo was repaired, Macquarie ordered a second voyage to the Derwent and strictly required a return from thence to Sydney as soon and as speedily as possible. Lieutenant-Governor Davey was instructed to the same effect, with liberty, however, to send Kangaroo to Port Dalrymple to load whatever wheat was available there for the commissariat in Sydney. Jeffreys sailed on 21 August 1814; Sydney did not see him again until 2 February 1815. He was absent five months and twelve days on a voyage which should have taken, at the most, two months.

A FURIOUS MACQUARIE

Macquarie was outraged and recommended the reduction of the establishment of both Kangaroo and the brig Emu (Lieutenant Forster) which had arrived on 12 March 1815. If the govenment did not see fit to do this, Macquarie urged the return of both vessels to England as soon and as speedily as possible. Lieutenant-Governor Davey was instructed to the same effect, with liberty, however, to send Kangaroo to Port Dalrymple to load whatever wheat was available there for the commissariat in Sydney. Jeffreys sailed on 21 August 1814; Sydney did not see him again until 2 February 1815. He was absent five months and twelve days on a voyage which should have taken, at the most, two months.
The Historical Records of Australia contain all the relevant correspondence between Macquarie, Lieutenant-Governor Davey and Jeffreys. The retails are too numerous for this paper, but the main items of the dispute were Jeffrey’s refusal both to load wheat and embark a detachment of 17 men of the 73rd Regiment with 10 women and 36 children for passage to Sydney, his refusal to load wheat in bulk because it could shift in transit and “choak” the bilge pumps, and his proceeding with the ship’s surgeon, Mr. Napper overland from Hobart to Port Dalrymple whilst his first lieutenant brought Kangaroo around by sea.\textsuperscript{14}

The Kangaroo having no other duty and “being idle” in Sydney, Macquarie decided to use her to convey the final detachment of the 73rd Regiment to Ceylon, with orders to Lieutenant Jeffreys to return again to Port Jackson with the least possible delay after he had landed the troops. The numbers embarked were two subaltern officers, 38 soldiers, 19 women and 45 children under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Skottowe of the regiment. Kangaroo sailed on 19 April 1815, and Jeffreys this time really aroused the Governor’s wrath. In a despatch of 24 June 1815 to Earl Bathurst it is evident that, even after the lapse of two months, Macquarie was still seething. Letting him speak for himself, he says: “I am sorry to be under the disagreeable necessity of reporting to your Lordship the highly improper and unjustifiable conduct of Lieutenant Jeffreys, the commander of His Majesty’s colonial brig Kangaroo, on his late departure from this port, in being guilty of a wilful and premeditated disobedience of my orders in the following instance, namely: — Having been informed from unquestionable authority that the great delays made by Lieutenant Jeffreys in his first attempt last year to get to Van Diemen’s land, and in the second one in which he succeeded, were principally owing to his wife, whom he had on board on both voyages, and thro’ whose influence and caprice he was induced to remain so long in every creek and harbour he touched at on this coast, I could not but consider it as highly injurious to the public service to allow her to accompany her husband to sea any longer, the more especially as her doing so is not only contrary to the long established rules of the Royal Navy, but also contrary to his own printed instructions from the Commissioners of the Transport Board. I therefore deemed it advisable, for the good of His Majesty’s Service, to send positive written orders to Lieutenant Jeffreys not to take his wife to sea with him on the voyage he was then about to undertake for the island of Ceylon. I took it of course for granted that he would not dare to disobey this order, which was so clear and positive as not to
admit of any misconstruction. I was consequently not a little surprised on being informed by the Naval Officer, on his return from seeing the *Kangaroo* clear of the heads of Port Jackson, that he (Jeffreys) had taken his wife to sea with him.

"I have already had occasion to write to your Lordship respecting the dilatory conduct of Lieutenant Jeffreys in making his last voyage to Van Diemen's Land, as well as respecting the very great expense of the brig *Kangaroo* to Government, and her unfitness for the service of this colony. Under this conviction, and in consequence of this officer daring to disobey my positive orders in the instance above alluded to, as well as on account of his being a very unfit person to command that vessel, it is my present intention to relieve the Government of such heavy useless expense by sending home the *Kangaroo* to England soon after her return to this port from Ceylon..."**

On 18 March 1816 Macquarie reported in his despatch to Earl Bathurst of that date that "after an absence of nine months and seventeen days in performing her voyage, His Majesty's colonial brig *Kangaroo*, commanded by Lieut. Jeffreys returned to this port on the 5th of the last month from the island of Ceylon, whither she had been sent from hence with the remaining detachment of the 73rd Regt. in April, 1815, and where she landed that detachment on the 25 of July following. The great length of time Lieut. Jeffreys took in performing this voyage, and the very great expense he has put the government to in provisioning and supplying his vessel with stores while at Ceylon, serve to confirm me in the opinion that I had formerly expressed that neither the *Kangaroo* nor her commander are at all fit for, or calculated ever to render any important service to this colony; at least in no degree to compensate for her very great annual expense to the Crown; I have therefore fully resolved on sending the *Kangaroo* to England in January next, in case I receive no orders to the contrary from your Lordship in the intermediate time in reply to my former dispatch on this subject."**

Macquarie continued to use *Kangaroo* on the Sydney-Hobart service during 1816 pending receipt of instructions as to her disposal from Bathurst. On 16 April the ship was despatched to Hobart with 60 female and 40 male prisoners. Macquarie, in a despatch dated 12 April 1816 to Lieutenant-Governor Davey, directed the *Kangaroo* be allowed ten days to discharge her passengers and take in wood and water and this was the greatest extent of time Davey was to permit her to remain at the Derwent.**
VOYAGE TO CEYLON

Jeffreys was back in Sydney on 28 May 1816, but during his absence he brought into public notice a remarkable fact concerning his voyage to Ceylon in 1815. The late Professor E. Morris Miller, on 8 August 1958, read to a general meeting of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association a paper about "An Unrecorded Hobart Town Gazette". Professor Miller is of the opinion that Andrew Bent was keen to start a newspaper in Hobart and that on 11 May 1816 he published an issue of The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter which purported to be No. 158 of Volume III. Now, until this issue had been discovered in the Mitchell Library some years before 1958, it had been thought that this newspaper was first issued on Saturday 1 June 1816 and certainly that issue bore the imprint Vol. 1 No. 1. Professor Miller came to the conclusion that the issue of 11 May 1816 (which apparently had received the imprimatur of the Lieutenant-Governor) was issued in advance of regular publication (to commence on 1 June 1816) for the purpose of attracting advance subscriptions for the forthcoming official Gazette.

It would appear that whilst in Hobart, Jeffreys learned of Bent's proposal to print and publish a newspaper in Hobart then under consideration by Lieutenant-Governor Davey. Davey and Bent had no more reason than Jeffreys to like Macquarie. They had all received (not undeserved) lashings from his caustic pen, and in Jeffreys' case certainly by word of mouth. Jeffreys, although an outstanding example in early Australian history of the brash young man clothed with the authority of a rank which within the wooden walls of his command gave him well nigh supreme power, must have felt denigrated by Macquarie's criticisms of his seamanship and courage. In the circumstances he would seek any opportunity to reinstate himself and prove the worth of his seamanship. The pilot issue of The Hobart Town Gazette provided such an opportunity. After the official imprimatur at head of page 1, an unheaded article takes up the rest of the page and one-and-a-quarter columns of the two columns on page 2. The text of the article, which is reproduced in full, reads:

"We are happy to lay before our readers the following very interesting Journal of Lieutenant Jeffries, of H.M. armed brig Kangaroo on her voyage from Port Jackson to Ceylon; which is highly creditable and meritorious to the nautical abilities of Lieut. Jeffries; and as the publication of a new track in seas abounding with reefs and shoals in every direction, to the imminent danger of the navigator must prove of the greatest import-"
and utility to the commercial World; more especially that part of it which enjoins the trade of Australasia and Bengal, besides adding to the general stock of nautical knowledge:

"His Majesty's armed brig Kangaroo commanded by Lieut. Jeffries, sailed from Port Jackson the 19th of April 1815 for the island of Ceylon, for the purpose of conveying to their regiment the various detachments of the 73rd that had remained, and who, with their families, amounted to about 100 persons in number. Intending to make the passage through Torres' Straits, Capt. Jeffries ran along the coast as far as Hervey's Bay, which lies in about 24°2'S. latitude; when finding the weather grow thick and unfavourable as he approached Wreck Reef, he formed a resolution to try the passage inside the Great Barrier Reefs, which commence in about 23°, and extend as far as lat. 10°S. Capt. Jeffries followed Capt. Cook's track along the coast of New Holland, considering it in all respects preferable to the outer passage, in which almost every vessel that has adopted it has fallen in with unknown reefs and shoals. Having observed that officer's track as nearly as was possible until he reached that part of the coast which lies off Endeavour River, Capt. Jeffries was left to his own judgment in running down an immense track that had been hitherto unexplored. On the 28 April at noon he rounded Breaksea Spit, Hervey's Bay, and hauled in towards the coast to the westward; passed the Keppel Islands, and anchored at Port Bowen for the purpose of getting fresh water, as her old stock, which had been taken on board at Port Jackson during an extremely dry season, had become putrid. The launch, upon her watering expedition, was driven 15 miles to leeward of Port Bowen by an unexpected gale of wind, and this accident detained the vessel several days. After leaving Port Bowen Capt. Jeffries continued as nearly as possible in the track of our celebrated but unfortunate countryman, and always ran down in the daytime such parts of the coast as Capt. Cook had passed by night, deriving thence an occasion of describing places which in Capt. Cook's unlimited extent of observation have unavoidably escaped his more minute attention."

"Having passed Northumberland and Cumberland Islands, Capt. Jeffries made Whitsunday Passage upon Whitunday as Capt. Cook had previously done in the Endeavour 35 years before; from which circumstance the passage took its name. There is something pleasingly coincident in the circumstance of two British commanders having upon that particular day anchored in the same remote and unfrequented spot the
knowledge of which brought to recollection the immortal Cook and filled the mind with reverential awe and sympathy."

"At Cape Sandwich in about 17°S. Capt. Jeffries had communication with the natives, who were very friendly and conveyed fruits to the vessel. The men are rather stouter than the natives of this southern part of the coast; but in point of industry, or apparent genius, there is scarcely any difference. They have a fruit among them in shape and colour resembling the mangosteen of the East, and in taste the English medlar. By the 28 May, Capt. Jeffries had proceeded as far as Capt. Cook's track extended, he having there borne away from a consideration that the coast beyond that Strait was an impractical labyrinth. In the evening Capt. Jeffries hove to off Turtle Island, intending to examine the coast to the northward before he went outside the reef; and as the inshore passage had never been tried, it was examined with the most minute attention, and found to be all clear as far as the eye could traverse. By so encouraging a prospect Capt. Jeffries was led to determine on the experiment, and more particularly so, from the recollection that whenever Capt. Cook stood off he had mostly met with difficulties."

**HAZARDS WERE NUMEROUS**

"From this day (the 29th) till 1 June, Capt. Jeffries continued by day to sail along that unexplored coast, and at night bringing up under the lee of some rock, reef, or shoal which were numberless. On the night of 30 May, Capt. Jeffries anchored under a large group of islands to which he gave the name of Flinders Group. Ascending a high mounting at daylight, he examined the coast and perceived a chain of reefs along it as far as the eye could penetrate. Weighed, and standing along the coast close inshore, arrived at the entrance of an amazingly extensive bay, or gulf, at least thirty miles in depth, to which he gave the name of Princess Charlotte Bay; the land about this part of the coast appeared much finer than any other Capt. Jeffries had seen, presenting a fine green, moderately wooded, and bearing a considerable resemblance to the interior of this (Van Diemen's Land) Island."

"Capt. Jeffries found a safe and clear passage from three to five miles off the shore; and from seven to nine miles appeared a continuation of the reef, and sand banks commencing off Endeavour River, or rather from Cape Grafton, from whence the chain was first discovered."

"On the 1st June, at half 12, the vessel fell in suddenly with a dark red coloured water, which from the vertical position of the
sun was not perceived until within 50 yards. The helm was instantaneously put hard aport, and the vessel going between 5 and 6 knots cleared a coral shoal which had given the red colour to the water, within the narrow distance of ten yards. This danger was first observed by the captain, who was fortunately at the masthead with three seamen, employed for the lookout. Upon examination, the changed colour of the water was found to have been occasioned by a bed of mushroom coral rock, about four feet under water. The latitude of this dangerous rock is $13^\circ32'5''S.$ and the longitude, by lunar observation, $143^\circ47'East.$”

"On the 2nd Capt. Jeffries having passed the unexplored part of the coast, fell into Capt. Bligh's track in the Bounty's launch, and proceeding along shore, had an opportunity of observing the correctness of the charts; but notwithstanding which, about 40 min past 1p.m. the brig grounded on a sand bank, not being visible, on which there was only from 9 to 12 feet water, with upwards of ten fathoms water within a ship's length to the eastward. Capt. Jeffreys sent an anchor out, which unfortunately came home, and rendered it necessary to lighten the ship by streaming her water overboard, together with a quantity of luggage. The anchor was again sent out and fortunately held, and by the exertions of the soldiers and seamen, Capt. Jeffries had the happiness to find his vessel afloat at halfpast three the same afternoon; soon after which, came to anchor and examined damage, which was very trivial, and soon set to rights. This shoal lies about two miles-and-a-half west of Bolt Head, the soundings along that part of the coast varying from five to 20 fathoms."

"On the 6th, after having run through all the reefs laid down in Capt. Flinders' chart, Capt. Jeffries doubled Cape York and found it to be an island and not part of the mainland, as heretofore supposed. Here the vessel anchored for the night, and next morning found one of the bower anchors broke, which was attributed to the foulness of the ground, and was the only part where foul ground had been met with. This day (the 7th) passed through Torres Straits, on the side called Endeavour Straits, and found from 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms water at about half flood, which soundings continued till within a few miles of Booby Island. Here the vessel anchored for the night, and thence shaped her course for Timor, which she reached the 19th, and having refreshed, sailed again upon the 26th for the island of Ceylon, where she anchored in Colombo Roads on the 24th of July."

"We noticed in our papers last week the loss of an infant during this very critical passage; with the exception of which
melancholy occurrence, Capt. Jeffries had the happiness to land the detachment, with their families, in a state of health, which from the variety of climates and changes of atmosphere passed through, could not have been hoped for."

"On the 2nd of August Capt. Jeffries was dispatched by Sir Robert Brownrigg to the Gulf of Manar, for the relief of the Shaw Aram, an Arab ship which, with a detachment of His Majesty's 22nd and 87th regiments on board, had become enlabyrinthined in the shoals of the dangerous passage. We are happy to relate, however, that the vessel was extricated, and arrived safely at her place of destination."

"Having returned at Colombo, Capt. Jeffreys sailed for Point de Galle the 19th of August, and sailed the 2nd of September; and upon this occasion the painful task was confided to Capt. Jeffries of acquainting Colonel Geils, who was the commandant of Point de Galle, with the melancholy catastrophe that had attended his four sons that were lost in the Arniston.

"Capt. Jeffries called at Acheen on his way hither from Prince of Wales Island; and chanced to arrive there the day after the dethronement of the monarch, in whose place a successor had been adopted. The inhabitants and officers of that revolutionary government behaved very civilly, and spared no pains to convince Capt. Jeffries of their willingness to accommodate him.

"Capt. Jeffries recommends to commanders of vessels going to India by the way of Torres Straits, to keep the land close aboard from their leaving Port Jackson or Van Diemen's Land, anchoring at night as occasion may direct, when they get among the reefs. A continued chain of sand banks and shoals extends from Cape Grafton, which is in lat. 17°S. to Cape York, which is in latitude 10°30', with numerous narrow passages not more than a mile wide from 4 to 14 miles off shore. This passage, Capt. Jeffries observes, is perfectly safe to ships of moderate draft of water, with the exception of the two dangers which he hitherto encountered."

A REMARKABLE JOURNEY

Jeffreys obviously thought his voyage was remarkable and so it was. He was the first to take a ship of any size through the "Labyrinth" of Cook which for 45 years had been avoided by other mariners, some of note. His journal and chart were in use within the year, when in 1816 the ship Lady Elliott followed his track. Other ships essayed to do this also, but where due care was not taken disaster followed, as witness the wreck of the Frederick
found by King on Cape Flinders on 13 July 1819. This ship had sailed from Sydney early in 1818, according to King. Nothing more was ever heard of her crew.21 Between 20 June and 19 July 1819 King refers frequently to features discovered and named by Jeffreys.21

Now in the published report on Jeffreys’ voyage in the Hobart Town Gazette there are some anomalies. These will be pointed out and dealt with in their chronological sequence of events as this paper proceeds.

Kangaroo made further trips to Hobart Town on 3 August and 18 December 1816, arriving back in Sydney from the latter trip on 21 January 181722.

The Emu had already been sent back to England on 23 February 1816, and at last on 9 April 1817 Kangaroo sailed from Sydney for England and Macquarie fancied himself rid of his bete noir Jeffreys. His despatch of 4 April 1817 to Bathurst indicates the depth of his dislike in no uncertain terms: “I am rejoiced to be able to relieve the colony of the expence of this vessel which has rendered it very little service since her arrival in it owing to the inactivity and negligence of her commander, who is a vain, conceited, ignorant, young man, and totally unfitted for such a command.”23

Yet on 15 May 1817 we find Macquarie writing to Bathurst to report that whilst “I had hoped that all further correspondence with and communication respecting Lieut. Jeffreys, the commander of that vessel Kangaroo would have ceased, and that I should not have been under the necessity of intruding further on your lordship by making any more representations on the subject of that officer’s misconduct and disobedience of orders”, Lieutenant Jeffreys had made his departure in a blaze of, not exactly glory, but at least extreme notoriety. He had taken aboard in Sydney, Garnham Blaxcell, an undischarged bankrupt, who was indebted to the Crown for £2,385/8/9 unpaid customs duties, let alone what he owed other creditors. In addition he was suspected of having taken aboard escaped convicts and also a quantity of prohibited spirits for disposal at Hobart. This was all in the face of Macquarie’s strict orders that Jeffreys was to embark no person who was not normally on the brig’s muster roll or included in the list of authorised passengers which had been handed to him officially by the Governor’s secretary. Likewise Jeffreys had been directed to proceed direct to England and not to call at any port in Van Diemen’s Land or at the Cape
of Good Hope unless unavoidable necessity or stress of weather occasioned this. Yet he had arrived at the Derwent about the 30 April 1817 pleading the loss of a boat and some damage to the ship caused by a gale. As soon as Lieutenant-Governor Sorell became aware of Jeffrey’s orders, he directed him to weigh anchor and pursue his voyage to England. All Jeffreys did to comply with this was to drop down river and re-anchor in the Derwent Estuary. When Sorell sent boats to patrol near the Kangaroo Jeffreys, heading an armed party, boarded one of them, captured the crew and put them in irons on board the Kangaroo. After several hours in irons the prisoners were freed by Jeffreys and allowed to leave Kangaroo. In the course of the foregoing events four prisoners were recovered from the brig. Jeffreys, finding Sorell completely obdurate (unlike the reprobate Davey whom Sorell had replaced), took his departure from the Derwent Estuary on 13 May. Both Macquarie and Sorell had been outraged utterly by his conduct, and strong condemnations and requests for Jeffreys to be dealt with by a higher authority in England went forward from the Governor-in-Chief and the Lieutenant-Governor.24
RETURN TO ENGLAND

Now, in addition to reinstating himself in colonial eyes because of Macquarie's strictures on his seamanship and courage, Jeffreys again had occasion to use his article from the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 11 May 1816. This time as an aid towards the solution of the difficulties into which he had got himself, as he was well aware of the impending dangers from the authorities in England. He reached England towards the end of 1817. In view of the charges which could be laid against him, it was important for him to win prestige as a naval officer as well as to win favour with the authorities. He obviously felt that he would have invaluable help if, early in 1818, he could bring about a London reprint from the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 11 May 1816, containing extracts from his ship's journal. This was achieved on 3 March 1818 when the daily newspaper *Statesman* published the article under the heading "Discovery in Navigation" with the following leading paragraph:—

"Whilst the public attention is turned in an interesting degree to the attempt about to be made to open a navigation across the Polar Seas, we believe we shall perform an acceptable office to science, and the nautical part of our countrymen, by laying before the public the following account of a voyage from Port Jackson, in New South Wales, to Ceylon, by a new and it would appear a safer track than the one usually pursued to the East Indies. This important article we copy from the *Hobart Gazette*, published at Hobart Town, Van Diemen’s Land". It was followed by the caption, "(from the *Hobart Gazette* May 11, 1816)", under which the article itself was reprinted.

The article with introduction also appeared in the Sunday newspaper *Constitution* on 8 March 1818.

The *Statesman* reprint was accompanied by an anonymous letter, dated 26 February, 1818, and signed "Audentia":—

"To the Editor of the *Statesman* [March 3, 1818]

"Sir,

"I think it due, not only to a very enterprising character but to the country at large, that the enclosed narrative of a voyage from Port Jackson to Ceylon should have all possible publicity; that means were taken to prevent such publicity will be seen by the following statement of facts":—

"Captain C. Jeffries, commanding his Majesty’s brig *Kangaroo*, being about to sail from Port Jackson, New South Wales, to Ceylon, conceived that a more safe passage might be found than
the one usually pursued. The attempt proving successful, every one was anxious to obtain as much information on the subject as possible, for which purpose a short narrative was made out, and Captain Jeffries having given his permission for making it public, a notice was circulated through the medium of the *Sydney Gazette*, that the next number would contain an outline of Captain Jeffries' discovery of a new and safer passage to the East Indies. Everything being completed, the first copy (agreeable to custom) was sent to Government House. The day of publication being arrived, greater part of the impression worked off, and thousands waiting for copies judge of their surprise when informed by the printer that he had that moment received government orders for the suppression of the *Gazette* in consequence of its containing Captain Jeffries narrative. The whole colony astonished at the proceeding; even the right of doing so was questioned by many, the justice by all. Will any one declare after reading the narrative, that the information it contains should not be public? Will any one say that, as a public servant, Captain Jeffries was not bound to make it known? Either it should have been made public or it should not. If the former, then the prohibition shows a want of judgment, or that public duty was made subservient to private feeling: if the contrary is insisted on, then is every incitement to honourable enterprise at an end. That the duty to which Capt. Jeffries was appointed required no ordinary skill in the management may be inferred from the circumstances, that of three vessels sent out on the same service, two have been lost, and the remaining one is the *Kangaroo*, which notwithstanding the imminent dangers she has encountered during the five years absence in the most intricate seas, is now by the unwearied exertions and nautical skill of her commander, Lieut. C. Jeffries, safely moored on the bank of old Thames, and on the very spot where he first assumed the command.

I am, Sir, Yours Respectfully.

February 26, 1818.

Audentia."  

At the end of the verbatim copy of Jeffreys' report of his voyage, mention was made of certain anomalies which it contained. One is the reference to Captain Cook and the *Endeavour* having been in Whitsunday Passage 35 years before. As Cook was there in 1770, this is obviously a printing error which, strange to say, no one appears so far to have noticed — 45 years is the correct period, then in the Hobart article of 11 May 1816 there is the paragraph which runs thus:
"We noticed in our paper last week the loss of an infant during this very critical passage; with the exception of which melancholy occurrence, Capt. Jeffreys had the happiness to land the detachment, with their families in a state of health, which could not have been hoped for."

Now, there was no issue of the Hobart Town Gazette a week before the issue of 11 May 1816. Nor was there a subsequent one until the regular issues started on 1 June 1816.

"Audentia's" letter offers a solution, and in the Sydney Gazette of 10 February 1816 the following news item appeared:—

"On Wednesday arrived H.M. brig Kangaroo, Captain Jeffreys, from Ceylon, for which she sailed from hence on 19th April last and went through Torres Straits, with a detachment of H.M. 73rd Regiment on board, also with their families amounted to 100 persons, the whole of whom, with the exception of one child, was safely landed at Colombo on 19 July".

In the same issue the following notice appeared:—

"Having been favoured by the arrival of H.M. armed brig Kangaroo with a variety of interesting information which cannot possibly be included in the limits of our present number, we shall reserve it for a Gazette on Thursday next."

This statement lends support to the claim by "Audentia" that that Gazette was suppressed.

**LIGHT PUNISHMENT**

How much Jeffreys' well advertised nautical skills may have influenced his fate cannot be assessed. Perhaps he was lucky. At any rate on 24 July 1818 Bathurst informed Macquarie in the following terms:

"Upon receipt of your dispatches of the 15th May and of 3rd and 5th June 1817, I did not fail to make an immediate communication to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty with respect to the conduct of Lieutenant Jefferies of the Kangaroo, in order that their Lordships might take the necessary measures for bringing that officer to punishment for his insubordinate, irregular, and in every respect culpable conduct. As there were legal impediments to bringing this officer to a court martial, their Lordships were prepared, upon the case stated by you and Governor Snell (sic) to remove him from the list of Lieutenants of the Navy. I was, however, subsequently induced to recommend to their Lordships a more lenient course, in consideration of Lieutenant Jefferies' having furnished to His Majesty's
Government the means of prosecuting with success their claims upon Mr. Blaxcell, who died upon his passage home, and whose effects would, but for the interference of Mr. Jefferies, have been lost to the public. I have therefore intimated to their Lordships that in consequence of the services rendered by Mr. Jefferies, I am not disposed to press his punishment with any degree of severity.

"After the conduct pursued by Lieutenant Jefferies in the colony, I have thought it incumbent upon me, both for your satisfaction and to prevent any misunderstanding, which might arise from his remaining unpunished, to state to you distinctly the only grounds upon which lenity has been extended to him."26

This was no doubt unpalatable to Macquarie and Sorell, but at least Bathurst had the honesty to inform Macquarie of his reasons for permitting Jefferies to escape the condign punishment he so richly deserved.

It would seem that Jefferies had aspirations as an author, which certainly were not to remain unknown in London. The publication of his book was deferred until after his departure in 1819 from England, and thus he was prevented from "correcting errors in style which his revisal might have otherwise prevented." Thus the year 1820 saw the publication of "Van Dieman's (sic) Land: geographical and descriptive delineations of the Island of Van Dieman's (sic) Land (London, J. M. Richardson, 1820); printed by W. T. Sherwin" by Lieutenant C. Jefferies, (a) R. N. and late Commander of His Majesty's brig Kangaroo.

In accordance with the agreeable custom of the time, Under-Secretary Goulburn wrote to Macquarie on 12 March 1813 that "Lt. Jefferys, of the Royal Navy, having been appointed to the command of the colonial brig Kangaroo, and having received Lord Bathurst's permission to take his family with him to New South Wales, I am directed by his Lordship to desire that a grant of land should be made to him, and that he should be admitted to the privileges and indulgences allowed to free settlers."27

Returns and exhibits tendered to the commission of inquiry held by J. T. Bigge relating to southern Tasmania and general administration, include a return of land grants. These show that in the district of Harrington (a small area on the northern side of Pittwater) a grant of 800 acres had been made to Jefferys.28 The Geographical and Descriptive Delineations, at p.65, refer to the Sweet Water Hills, and state that the author's estate is there on the right. Edward Lord's Orielton Park is on the left of the road.
On 2 May 1820 Sorell sent a despatch to Macquarie reporting that sundry persons, passengers in the ship Saracen, had applied for permission to land and remain in Van Diemen’s Land. These included “Lt. Jeffreys and wife to his property and private affairs” and George Lloyd, a youth, relative of Jeffreys.29

Even though something of a black sheep, Jeffreys was nevertheless, by virtue of his naval commission, of the establishment and on 22 September 1820 Sorell in a report to Bigge on the distribution of pews in St. David’s Church, states that the principle on which the appropriation of seats was made took into account the relative rank and property of the persons, which were the general guides. In consequence, Jeffreys was granted a pew. Likewise, in the distribution of merino rams to landed proprietors at £7/7/- per head, Jeffreys as a resident proprietor was able to secure four animals.30

Advertising to the Geographical and Descriptive Delineations, even as an author Jeffreys could not keep out of trouble. In 1822 John Souter of London published “A Geographical, Historical and Topographical Description of Van Diemen’s Land” by George William Evans, Surveyor-General of the Colony. The author’s preface reads:

“Having had the honour to fill the office of Deputy Surveyor-General of this island since the year 1811, the performance of the geographical and surveying task, the results of which are now, at the recommendation of several very high and most respected officers, both in New South Wales and in Van Diemen’s Land, submitted to the public naturally fell within the line of my duty; and I am rather provoked to, than diverted from, the publications of my verbal description of the island, by a perusal of Lieutenant Jeffrey’s “Geographical and Descriptive Delineations” of the same country, the exaggerations and misrepresentations of which are only calculated to mislead and disappoint the emigrant. Nevertheless, some few passages of the two books will be found too well to correspond; that is to say they concur verbatim, as one of the wits says in the comedy of The Critic, “When they do agree, their unanimity is wonderful”. In explanation of this unison, I can only say that I was once a passenger in His Majesty’s brig Kangaroo under Lieutenant Jeffrey’s command, and that upon that occasion I had the good fortune to recover some missing parts of my manuscript from the hands of his clerk. I accuse not Mr. Jeffreys of plagiarism; but the Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen’s Land (Lieut.-Col. Sorell) will testify that he perused the manuscript of the following pages at the
close of the year 1819, when it was not known to this island that Mr. Jeffreys had any intention of publishing at all; and in the beginning of the year 1820, my little manuscript had the honour to guide His Majesty's Commissioner of Enquiry (Mr. Bigge) in his travels through the island."

In recording the fact of the plagiarisms, both Evans and his editor tread softly and do not indulge in recrimination. The editor merely exposes the exaggerations and inaccuracies of Jeffreys when he makes statements on his own. Professor Miller has made a detailed examination of both texts and, generally, concludes that Jeffreys obtained a copy of Evans' original draft of his two chapters on "Natural Geography" and "Civil Geography", so far as these dealt with topographical descriptions. Jeffreys officially left Tasmania early in 1817, the material then at his disposal did not go beyond the year 1816, to which he refers in some places. As far as the recovery of missing parts of his manuscript was concerned, Evans could not have been a passenger in Kangaroo in 1816 because as late as December 1816 he was engaged on survey work at Port Dalrymple, but it is not improbable that Jeffreys received Evans' manuscript on loan on one of the Kangaroo's voyages to Hobart during 1816. In 1817, however, Kangaroo made her final official voyage from Hobart to Sydney on 13 January. About March 1817 Evans was expected to join Oxley at Sydney for his expedition out west. It is most likely that Evans was then a passenger, on the occasion he refers to in his Preface.

Professor Miller concludes that as the first two separate publications of Tasmanian geography, the books of Jeffreys and Evans are of historical significance. They appeared within twenty years of the founding of the first settlement in the island. Tasmanians may claim them as local authors in distinction from overseas observers who came and went, as both men settled there.31

**LAND GRANT VENTURE**

Jeffrey's good fortune was again evidenced in the matter of his land grant. On 24 July 1818 Bathurst informed Macquarie that the making of liberal grants of land with proportionate indulgences in government men on the stores (assigned convicts), and cattle on long credits, to civil and military officers on their arrival in the colony would cease.12 There seems little doubt that Jeffreys' protracted voyages to Hobart Town were due not only to the caprices of his wife15 but to his taking time off to establish his land grant. At p. 68 of the "Geographical and
Descriptive Delineations” is a short account of the formation of
the author’s own farm. He says “... having fixed upon a spot
[he] was supplied by the [Lieutenant] Governor with three or
four convicts, labourers, to whom were added a ploughman and
an overseer, both freemen”. Hence his disobedience of orders in
May 1817. Obviously before returning to England he had to set
things up at his grant at Pittwater to maintain the operation until
his return from England just on three years later.

We learn the final chapters of the Jeffreys’ saga from “Thirty-
Three Years in Tasmania and Victoria”, published in 1862 at Lon­
don by Houlston and Wright. The author George T. Lloyd was
Jeffreys’ nephew, the youth who had accompanied Lieutenant
and Mrs. Jeffreys to Tasmania in 1820.

Lloyd tells of the ambition of Jeffreys to retire from active ser­
vice and enter upon a rural life, and how as a nine-year-old
schoolboy he accompanied his uncle and aunt to Tasmania.
There Jeffreys set about making his grant “in the fine English
looking district of Sorell, which ... was termed the granary of
Tasmania.” Then is recounted the sad check received when the
“comfortable farmhouse” was destroyed by fire, with the loss of
“its valuable contents, including articles of rare vertu, collected
during the long term of his official cruise amongst the islands” of
the East Indies and Ceylon. He rebuilt first a temporary resi­
dence, but then commenced the erection of a more ambitious
home called “Frogmore”. It is noted that Lloyd refers to an estate
of 1300 acres (p. 13). Now, the return of land grants already
referred to23 showed that Jeffreys had a neighbour Henri St.
John Younge, an assistant surgeon, who had received a grant of
500 acres. On 24 March 1820 Younge was summarily dismissed,
having been under suspension since 10 August 1818.33. It is not
improbable that Jeffreys acquired Younge’s grant from him,
thereby increasing his own holding from 800 acres to 1300 acres.

Lloyd goes on to say that “at the end of four years of arduous
and incessant toil, the alarming fact became apparent that the
assets upon which he (Jeffreys) was wont theoretically to draw
so liberally were always in ruinous arrear of the amount
required for the liquidation of ordinary expenses. At last, all con­
fidence forsook him, and he, like many of his naval brethren,
learnt too late not only that farming in Tasmania at that period
was a fallacy, but also that in any case the avocation of an
agriculturist was quite unsuited to the minds and habits of men
whose associations are wedded to camps and quarter-decks”
(p.13).
Another source has this to say: "The first anniversary dinner of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales was held in July 1823, when the president, Barron Field, the judge of the Supreme Court, stated that false impressions were prevalent in England as to the superiority of Tasmania over New South Wales. He alleged that these impressions were due in part to the account of the island published by Charles Jeffreys in 1820. Jeffreys, however, had already been sentenced by the facts. A superficial enthusiast, who had obtained the materials for his book while on duty in colonial waters and had not become a genuine settler until after it was written, he had been made the goal of a race between death and insolvency."34

Death won the race and he died on 6 May 1826 and was buried at Sorell. The Australian Dictionary of Biography goes on to state that his widow remained in the colony, and was allowed an additional grant of 500 acres.35 Perhaps the land held by Jeffreys during his lifetime did not exceed 800 acres, and Lloyd some thirty years later confused the issue by adding to the original grant the grant received by his aunt after his uncle’s death. In any event, by 1830 “Frogmore” no longer remained in the ownership of the Jeffreys but belonged to a Dr. Garrett.36

It is difficult to make an assessment of Jeffreys. Perhaps it would not be unfair to compare him to some of the famous (or infamous) buccaneers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; a Morgan or a Dampier, for example. Yet, Jeffreys somehow managed to stay on the side of the angels, even though he risked some Lucifer-like plunges into the void. Perhaps Macquarie was correct when he said “it is my decided opinion that no government colonial vessels intended for the common services of this colony ought ever to be commanded by officers of the Royal Navy; their early professional habits of life precluded their submitting to the necessary duties required of colonial craft here in the manner they ought to do; they persevere in considering themselves as commanding vessels of war, and are much too proud to submit patiently to going to Newcastle for coals, lime and timber, or to the Hawkesbury for grain.”37

Luck was on his side, however, until he actually realised his dream of entering upon the life of a landed proprietor in Van Diemen’s Land. His nephew, George Lloyd, has made a fair appraisal of the situation when he in effect says that a naval officer is unlikely to be successful farmer. This is just what happened to Jeffreys, but apparently he died before being completely and hopelessly ruined.
From our viewpoint, the highlight of his life was his successful navigation of the Kangaroo through Cook's "Labyrinth" of reefs and shoals on the voyage from Sydney to Ceylon. At least eight features along the far north Queensland coast still bear the names he gave them (vide Appendix A). He landed at least once, apparently on the hill on an island in the Flinders Group from which it was possible to look to seaward for some twelve or thirteen leagues. I venture to say that his voyage gave the impetus to use of the channel inside the reef and to the exploration which in the following thirty-five years was to make the inside route, in general, so safe for shipping coming from and going to the north of Australia.

APPENDIX A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Position (approximate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PORT MOLLE</td>
<td>20°15'S. 148°50'E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNAPPER ISLAND</td>
<td>16°17'35&quot;S. 145°27'40&quot;E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPE BOWEN</td>
<td>14°31'S. 144°40'E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORT NINIAN</td>
<td>14°20'S. 144°37'E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPE MELVILLE</td>
<td>14°9'30&quot;S. 144°24'50&quot;E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLINDERS GROUP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPE FLINDERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCESS CHARLOTTE BAY</td>
<td>14°29'S. 143°58'E. (head of bay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLOYDS BAY</td>
<td>12°40'S. 143°25'E.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES

2. Ibid 16 August 1770.
3. Cook’s Chart of Northern part of East coast of Australia in Wharton’s edition of the Journal referred to above.
   Vide also Cumpston, J. L. Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney, 1788-1825. Canberra 1964. Part 1, p. 26
9. Ibid Vol. 8, pp. 119 and 123.
11. H.R.A. 1, Vol. 8, pp. 143-144 and 141.
17. Cumpston op. cit., Part 1, p. 100
   Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings Vol. 7,
   No. 3 (Jan. 1959) p. 34 et seq. and Vol. 7, No. 4 (June 1959) p. 59 et seq.
   277 and 287.
   and 201-233.
29. Ibid P. 17
30. Ibid pp. 681 and 684.

NOTE: The renderings of the name as Jeffreys, Jeffries and Jefferies are all as they appear in the official records, but it is generally considered that Jeffreys is the correct version.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are rendered to the staff of the John Oxley Library for producing reference works so readily and to my wife for researching some of the material for me.