

# The Hobart Circuit,

## TASMANIA.

### THE FOUNDING OF HOBART.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

##### THE FOUNDING OF HOBART.

In our sketch of "The Beginning of Launceston," we noted that one of the most astonishing things connected with the colony of Tasmania is that it is a British colony to-day, and we made brief reference to the discoveries of the Dutch in 1642, and the designs of the French in later years. All this should be borne in mind with regard to our present subject, for it applies to Hobart as well as to Launceston. It was the French who gave the impetus to the British Government which resulted in the settlement on the Derwent as well as that on the Tamar.

##### THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S EXPEDITION.

As early as 1793, the East India Company sent out an expedition of discovery to Van Diemen's Land. Not that they had any intention of founding a colony there; on the contrary, as we have already noted, they regarded colonisation in these lands as dangerous to their interests, and as Mr. James Backhouse Walker says, in one of his admirable papers,\* "The Company looked upon New Holland and Van Diemen's Land, its supposed southern extension, merely as obstacles in the way of their lucrative China trade—jutting out inconveniently into the South Seas, lengthening the voyage, and increasing its dangers." But they wanted harbours on the way, in which their vessels could take refuge from dangerous storms, fill their water-casks, or refit, if necessary, and this was the purpose of the expedition they sent out in 1793. Lieutenant John Hayes, of the Bombay Marines, was appointed to the command of the expedition, which consisted of two well-found armed ships, the Duke of Clarence and the Duchess. Hayes was instructed to explore the Van Diemen's Land coasts, making a careful survey of any safe harbours he might find, and then to return to India by way of the South Sea Islands and the Malay Archipelago. He did his work well, and his surveys of Tasmani, New Caledonia, parts of New Guinea, and the islands of the Solomon and New Hebrides groups were regarded as of the greatest value by the Company's officers in India. Unfortunately, however, they sent his journals and charts to England in a merchant vessel, which was captured on the way by a French cruiser; and, since they had made no copies, all the valuable information gathered by him during three years' diligent work was lost to England and gained by France. Hayes sailed up the Derwent in the course of his Tasmanian surveys, and a rough sketch of that river by him found its way, somehow or other, to Sydney. This, Mr. Walker observes, is "all the record we have of his exploration of Tasmania, and of the Hon. East India Company's first, last, and only discovery-expedition to Australian waters!"

\*"The Settlement of Tasmania," by James Backhouse Walker. Royal Society of Tasmania, 1890. We are greatly indebted to Mr. Walker for the information supplied by his valuable papers.—Ed.]

##### CAPTAIN COOK'S VISIT.

Captain Cook, during his first voyage, which was undertaken to observe the transit of Venus at Tahiti, in 1768, did not sight Tasman's "Van Diemen's Land," as he expected to do. On his second voyage in 1772, his ship, the Resolution, was parted from her consort, the Adventure, in a fog, and Captain Thomas Furneaux, commander of the latter vessel, shaped a course for Van Diemen's Land, which he reached on March

tween New Holland and Van Diemen's Land, but a very deep bay." On his third and last voyage, Captain Cook reached Tasmania, anchored in Adventure Bay, and had friendly intercourse with the natives, whom Dr. Anderson, the ship's surgeon, described as "mild and cheerful, without reserve or jealousy of strangers."

Tasmania had no more European visitors, as far as we know, until 1789, when Captain John



5, 1773, and anchored in Adventure Bay. As far as we know, this was the first landing of Englishmen on Tasmanian shores. Furneaux sailed northward along the east coast of Tasmania, intending to connect his survey with Cook's southernmost point, near Cape Howe; but after he lost sight of land to the north of the Furneaux Group, he found himself on soundings which alarmed him, and he bore up for New Zealand, making the following entry in his log: "It is my opinion that there is no strait be-

Henry Cox, of the brig Mercury, discovered Oyster Bay, and Captain Bligh touched at Adventure Bay in the Bounty, on his voyage. Bligh was made memorable by the historic mutiny, and the settlement of the mutineers on Pitcairn Island. Then in 1792 came the French expedition, commanded by D'Entrecasteaux, who sailed up the strait which bears his name, and discovered the river Derwent, which he called "La Riviere du Nord." But Lieutenant Hayes, who, as we have already stated, discovered the



river on his own account in 1794, not knowing of the Frenchman's visit, named it the Derwent, after the river in Cumberland which broadens out into the beautiful Derwentwater.

#### GOVERNOR KING DI-TURBED.

When Governor Hunter, of New South Wales, sent Lieutenant Flinders and Dr. Bass to determine the question as to whether Van Diemen's Land was an island, or only the southernmost part of New South Wales, or New Holland, as all Australia was called at the time, they passed through the straits in their little schooner of twenty-five tons, with a volunteer crew of eight seamen, examined the northern coast of the island, sailed southwards along its western coast, with frequent landings where safe shelter was to be had, and finally anchored off Bruny Island, in Storm Bay, on December 14, 1798, after a voyage of sixty-nine days. Thence they took their little vessel as far up the Derwent as they could persuade her to go, and made her fast off the mouth of the Jordan. From this point they made excursions inland, Flinders making careful surveys, and Bass diligently examining the country, its soil, and products. In their report to Governor King, who had succeeded Governor Hunter, Bass gave a glowing account of the capabilities of Risdon, a place so named by Lieutenant Hayes, six miles above Hobart, on the opposite bank of the Derwent, and of its

steps to checkmate the Frenchmen. The only vessel available just then was a little Sydney-built armed schooner of twenty-nine tons, called the Cumberland, and he sent her off forthwith, in charge of Charles Robbins, master's mate of H.M.S. Buffalo, with a crew of seventeen men, and an imposing military force of three marines. Robbins had also with him Mr. Acting Surveyor-General Grimes, who was sent on special duty.

#### THE FRENCH SQUADRON AND THE MASTER'S MATE.

The Governor gave Robbins a letter to Commodore Baudin, written in a friendly tone, but very plainly informing him that no French settlement would be permitted, Great Britain having taken possession of all the country, and with that letter in his possession, the gallant master's mate set out on his hunt after the French ships. He fell in with them, after a fortnight's search, on December 8, 1802, anchored in Sea Elephant Bay, King's Island, near the western entrance of Bass' Straits, where Baudin had set up an observatory. Robbins made haste to deliver his letter, and the Frenchmen were very civil to him; but he could get no satisfactory assurances from them, and when he had given them six days to think the matter over, he thought he had waited long enough, so he sent one of his men up a tree overlooking Baudin's observatory with a small block and a coil of signal halliards. The

willing to give him his discharge, King was glad to accept him. He was a very profitable bargain in him, for the lieutenants, though doubtless a capable naval officer, showed himself to be ludicrously unfit for the work which was now put into his hands. "In those days," Mr. J. Backhouse Walker remarks, "the exigencies of the service compelled governors to take whatever offered to aid them in accomplishing their plans. Many were the missions of relief and despatch that were entrusted to whalers, and even to American sealers, and their remuneration was sometimes odd enough. Thus, on one occasion, Governor King desired Governor Collins to pay for the despatch sent to him on board a sealing sloop, by giving the skipper thirty empty salt-beef casks—surely an odd a postage as ever was paid."

#### "THE BIRTHDAY OF TASMANIA."

Another of Governor King's difficulties was that he had no suitable vessels available at the time. Lieutenant Bowen made an attempt to reach the Derwent in H.M. armed vessel Porpoise, with the Lady Nelson, a brig of sixty tons. He sailed on June 30, 1803, but met with such bad weather that he was forced to put back to Port Jackson, which he reached on July 4. The Porpoise was now required for other work, and King had only the Lady Nelson left, which was not large enough, but fortunately the Albion



OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE, HOBART.

suitability for a settlement. King, accordingly, in his despatch to Lord Hobart, recommended the occupation of that place, and his lordship in his reply directed him to form a settlement there.

All this, however, took up a long time, for in those days a despatch to England, and its reply, might be a matter of years, and in the meanwhile the Governor received a piece of information which disturbed him greatly. We have already noticed the hospitality afforded by our countrymen in New South Wales to the scurvy-stricken crews of Commodore Baudin's ships, the *Geographe* and the *Naturaliste*. The seamen and marines were taken to the Colonial Hospital, and the officers were cared for by Governor King, the military officers, and the leading citizens. The Governor also gave the Commodore unlimited credit on the Treasury for the expenses of refitting his vessels, &c. On the eve of their departure, after a six months' stay in Sydney, the French officers were entertained at a farewell dinner by Lieutenant-Colonel Patterson and others, and the Frenchmen enjoyed their after-dinner wine so well that they became imprudently talkative. They let out the secret that one of the chief objects of their expedition was to take possession of some convenient place in Van Diemen's Land for a French settlement. Patterson told the Governor of this, and King lost no time in taking

man made fast the block to a convenient branch and rove the halliards, whereupon Robbins stationed his three marines with loaded muskets at the foot of the tree, hoisted the British flag, fired three volleys, gave three cheers, and took possession of the island in defiance of the two French ships, and indeed of all the fleets and armies of that nation. He waited in his little schooner till the Frenchmen sailed away, and then went to Port Phillip in accordance with his instructions, that Mr. Grimes might make a survey of the harbour, which he did, discovering the Yarra in the process. Robbins then took the Cumberland back to Sydney and reported to the Governor, who roared with laughter as the seaman told his tale.

#### AN ODD POSTAGE.

The Frenchmen having been thus warned off, the Governor turned his attention to forming a settlement on the Derwent, and was very anxious to get his men on the spot as soon as possible, for he expected the French would make another attempt. Among the difficulties in his way was the fact that he had no officer just then whom he could spare, and who could be regarded as suitable for the post of commandant. But in March, 1803, H.M.S. *Glatton* came in, and on board of her was Lieutenant John Bowen, who came of a good family, and was already known in the colony, which he had visited before. This gentleman volunteered his services, his captain was

whaler, 326 tons, Captain Ebor Bunker, turned up just in the nick of time, and she was immediately chartered for the service. The two vessels were made ready without delay, and on August 31, 1803, they sailed from Port Jackson with the new colony on board. This consisted of Lieutenant-Governor Bowen; Dr. Jacob Mountgarret, medical officer; Mr. Wilson, store-keeper; one lance-corporal and seven privates; twenty-one male and three female convicts, with six free settlers; in all forty-nine souls, of whom thirteen were women or children. They had ten head of cattle, fifty sheep, one horse (the Governor's); and the free settlers had seven sheep, eight goats, and thirty-eight pigs, all surviving after the voyage, whereas twenty-five of the Government sheep died on board. On the second day after their departure from Sydney, they were buffeted by a heavy gale, which made the captain of the Albion heave his ship to; but her little consort, the Lady Nelson, hung on, and got into the Derwent five days before him. After the gale a dead calm vexed the soul of Captain Bunker; but a school of sperm whales came in sight, and he caught three of them, which restored and strengthened his belief in an overruling Providence. The Lady Nelson anchored in Risdon Cove on September 7, 1803, "and this," says Mr. Walker, "was the birthday of Tasmania." The settlement on the Tamar did not take place until the following year.