

The Dutch Colony in Central Australia 1708

Introduction

I've noted in my Instagram Account that there is considerable interest in the episode that we did in the second series of *Bush Tucker Man* concerning the possible Dutch Colony in Central Australia. That episode was titled *The Dutch Settlement*. Research on this topic has been ongoing for the past 20 odd years and we now have the situation where the case has been historically proven beyond reasonable doubt.

We now know when it happened, and where the colony was located in Central Australia. But then, something rather strange happens. Australian television production houses as well as some academics that I have approached on this matter, simply don't want to know about it and turn away and bury their heads in the sand. They don't offer any argument against the evidence but rather just go silent. In some cases these production houses, are deeply involved in Australian Aboriginal productions, and this information is not well received. It does not sit comfortably with the modern day embedded political narrative.

The *Leeds Mercury* article

There are two main articles that initially started off this investigation. The first was published anonymously in the *Leeds Mercury* newspaper in the UK in 1834. Read through that article here and note the highlighted points that I have made within the article. All spelling mistakes are also included as per the original *Leeds* article.

(LEEDS MERCURY - Jan 25, 1834 - P 7, Col. 1)

DISCOVERY OF A WHITE COLONY ON THE NORTHERN SHORE OF NEW HOLLAND

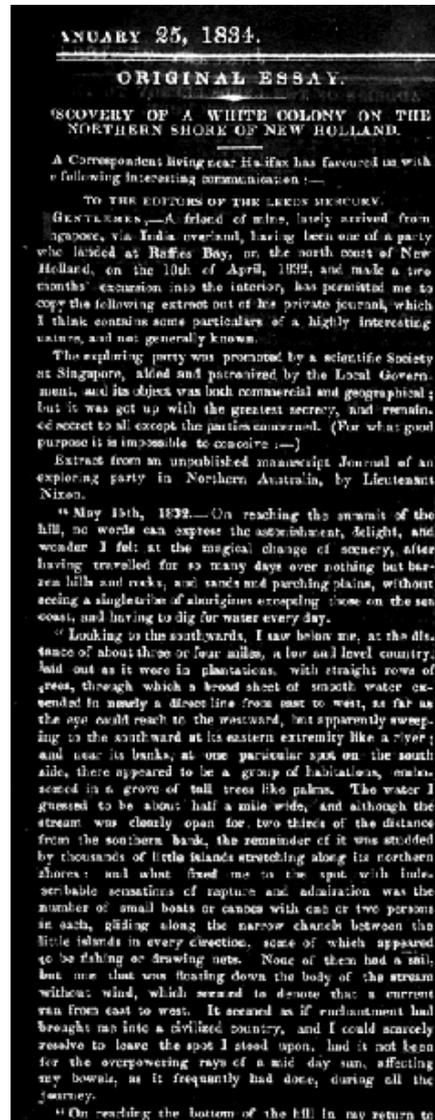
A correspondent living near **Halifax** has favoured us with the following interesting communication:-

TO THE EDITOR OF THE LEEDS MERCURY.

GENTLEMEN-

A friend of mine, lately arrived from Singapore, via India **overland**, having been one of a party who landed at **Raffles Bay**, on the north coast of **New Holland**, on the 10th of April, 1832, and made a two months' excursion into the interior, has permitted me to copy the following extract out of his private journal, which I think contains some particulars of a highly interesting nature, and not generally known.

The exploring party was promoted by a scientific Society at Singapore, aided and patronised by the Local Government and it's object was both commercial and geographical; but it was got up with the



greatest secrecy, and remained secret to all except the parties concerned. (for what good purpose it is impossible to conceive:—)

Extract from an unpublished manuscript Journal of an exploring party in Northern Australia by Lieutenant Nixon.

"May 15th, 1832. - On reaching the summit of the hill, no words can express the astonishment, delight and wonder I felt at the magical change of scenery, after having travelled for so many days over nothing but barren hills and rocks, and sands and parching plains, without seeing a single tribe of aborigines excepting those on the sea coast and having to dig for water every day.

"Looking to the southwards I saw below me at the distance of about three or four miles, a low and level country, laid out as it were in plantations, with straight rows of trees, through which a broad sheet of smooth water extended in nearly a direct line from east to west, as far as the eye could reach to the westward, but apparently sweeping to the southward at its eastern extremity like a river; and near its banks, at one particular spot on the south side there appeared to be a group of habitations embosomed in a grove of tall trees like palms. The water I guessed to be about half a mile wide, and although the stream was clearly open for two thirds of the distance from the southern bank, the remainder of it was studded by thousands of little islands stretching along its northern shores: and what fixed me to the spot with indescribable sensations of rapture and admiration was the number of small boats or canoes with one or two persons in each gliding along the narrow channels [sic] between the islands in every direction, some of which appeared to be fishing or drawing nets. None of them had a sail, but one was

floating down the body of the stream without wind, which seemed to denote a current ran from east to west. It seemed as if enchantment had brought me to a civilized country, and I could scarcely resolve to leave the spot I stood upon, had it not been for the overpowering rays of a mid day sun affecting my bowels, as it frequently had done, during all the journey.

"On reaching the bottom of the hill in my return to our party at the tents, I was just turning round a low rock, when I came suddenly upon a human being whose face was so fair and dress so white, that I was for a moment staggered with terror, and thought I was looking at an apparition. I had naturally expected to meet an Indian as black or as brown as the rest of the natives, and not a white man in these unexplored regions. Still quaking with doubts about the integrity of my eyes I proceeded on, and saw the apparition advancing upon me with the most perfect indifference: in another minute he was quite near, and I now perceived that he had not yet seen me, for he was walking slowly and pensively with his eyes fixed on the ground and he appeared to be a young man of handsome and interesting countenance. We were got within four paces of each other when he heaved a deep and tremulous sigh, raised his eyes, and in an instant uttered a loud exclamation and fell insensible to the ground. My fears had now given place to sympathy, and I hastened to assist the unknown, who I felt convinced, had been struck with the idea of seeing a supernatural being. It was a considerable time before he recovered and was assured of my mortality; and from a few expressions in old Dutch, which he uttered I was luckily enabled to hold some conversation with him; for I had been at school in Holland in my youth and had not quite forgotten the language. Badly as he spoke Dutch, yet I gathered from him a few particulars of a most extraordinary nature; namely, that he belonged to a small community, all as white as himself, he said about three hundred; that they lived in houses enclosed all together within a great wall to defend them from black men; that their fathers came there about one hundred and seventy years ago, as they said, from a distant land across the great sea; and that their ship broke, and eighty men and ten of their sisters (female passengers ?) with many things were saved on shore. I prevailed on him to accompany me to my party, who I knew would be glad to be introduced to his friends before we set out on our return to our ship at Port Raffles, from which place we were now distant nearly five hundred miles, and our time was linked to a fixed period so as to enable the ship to carry us back to Singapore before the change of the monsoon. The young man's dress consisted of a round jacket and large breeches, both made of skins, divested of the hair and bleached as white as linen; and on his head he wore a tall white skin cap with a brim covered over with white down or the small feathers of the white cocatoo [sic]. The latitude of this mountain was **eighteen degrees thirty minutes fourteen secs south.**; and the **longitude one hundred and thirty two degrees twenty five minutes thirty seconds east.** It was christened **Mount Singapore**, after the name and in honour of the settlement to which the expedition belonged."

A subsequent part of the journal states further, "that on our party visiting the white village, the joy of the simple inhabitants was quite extravagant. The descendant of an officer is looked up to as chief, and with him (whose name is **Van Baerle**.) the party remained eight days. Their traditional history is, that their fathers were compelled by famine, after the loss of their great vessel, to travel towards the rising sun, carrying with them as much of the stores as they could during which many died; and by the wise advice of their ten sisters they crossed a ridge of land, and meeting with a rivulet on the other side, followed its course and were led to the spot they now inhabit, where they have continued ever since. They have no animals of the domestic kind, either cows, sheep, pigs or anything else: Their plantations consist only of maize and yams, and these with fresh and dried fish constitute their principal food which is changed occasionally for Kangaroo and other game; but it appears that they frequently experience a scarcity and shortage of provisions, most probably owing

to ignorance and mismanagement; and had little or nothing to offer us now except skins. They are nominal Christians: their marriages are performed without any ceremony: and all the elders sit in council to manage their affairs; all the young, from ten up to a certain age are considered a standing militia, and are armed with long pikes; they have no books or paper, nor any schools; they retain a certain observance of the sabbath by refraining from their daily labours, and perform a short superstitious ceremony on that day all together; and they may be considered almost a new race of beings.¹

The article was reproduced during the following weeks and months in *The Scotsman* and the *Liverpool Times*, as well as the *South African Commercial Advertiser*, which was a Dutch and English language newspaper. In September 1834, an abbreviated version of the *Leeds Mercury* article was also published in the *Perth Gazette* and *Western Australian Journal*.² The report was later picked up in Holland and published in the *Nederlandsch Magazijn*³ in 1837, with further comment appearing in the Dutch journal *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*⁴ in 1851. As a historical topic, the article then lay dormant until the late 1980's. During the Australian Bicentennial year, it was again given coverage by a Western Australian newspaper⁵. In 1996, the issue formed the basis for a television documentary, as well as a chapter in the book *Stories of Exploration and Survival*. The subject received further exposure with the subsequent publication of the book, *Tarnished Heroes* in 1998.

The Samarang Incident

The *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* in the 1851 article mentioned above is particularly interesting. Here it is reproduced below. Clearly Van Bloomestein appears to be getting his dates mixed up after 20 years.

Translation of a passage from "*Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie*" [vol. 13, no. 12, 1851, p. 361]

In 1836 an English merchant ship arrived in Samarang [sic] where I was the Harbour master. The captain, whose name I have forgotten, told me that he had just come from the north coast of New Holland and that some of the passengers on board his ship who had travelled into the interior had met [there] about 300 Hollanders living in a totally primitive manner.

¹ At the time, the *Leeds Mercury* was a prominent provincial newspaper of liberal persuasion but totally respectable. It no longer exists as it was merged in 1939 into the *Yorkshire Post*. For further detail on the standing of the *Leeds Mercury* in the 1830's see *The Life of Edward Baines*. London 1851.

² *Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal*, 20th September 1834.

³ *Nederlandsch Magazijn ter Verspreiding van Algemeene en Nuttige Kundighden*, Te Amsterdam, Bij, Gebroeders Dieerichs, (Bloemart, No. 227) 1837, p.179.

⁴ *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie* 13 (1851), vol 12, p.361.

⁵ Harris A. *Western Australian*, June 4, 1988.

I reported to the Governor - General De Eerens what the captain had related to me, but have never heard anything more about the matter. I did read a story of this kind later in an English newspaper. Probably this story is the basis for the account in "*Nederlandsch Magazyn*" of 1837 p. 179 which relates that some English travellers in the Raffles Bay area, on the west coast of New Holland, had encountered about 300 Hollanders in the interior; they were dressed in hides and their chief was descended from an officer named Van Baerle. They related to the travellers that their ancestors had been shipwrecked some 170 years ago; 10 women had also survived the wreck. They lived in a very backward civilisation. Sundays were still honoured when they refrained from work.

Van Bloomestein

The Van Baerle connection

By 1989, the first series of Bush Tucker Man was making its way into overseas areas such as the UK and The Netherlands. Around that time, I received a phone call from a fan of the series who was located in Holland. He was not known to me, and he was simply an unknown voice calling from the other side of the world to express his admiration for this new television series coming from Australia. During the conversation, I happened to mention that I was about to embark on some research concerning the Dutch. The conversation went like the following.

Self: *I'm about to research some of you Cloggies.*

Dutchman: *Oh yes, what are you looking at?*

Self: *I've got to try and track down a family called Van Baerle.*

Dutchman: *Did you say Van Baerle?*

Self: *Yes why?*

Dutchman: *Do you realise how small that family is?*

Self: *I have no idea as I haven't started researching them yet.*

Dutchman: *Well I can tell you. There are two of them alive and I live with one of them.*

Well after that you could knocked me down with a feather. I then went on to ask if he knew of any Van Baerle who went missing on a ship a couple of hundred years ago. Of course he knew nothing but he was aware that the Dutch Central Bureau of Genealogy had published the history of the Van Baerle family and he would look it up for me. That information is contained below and is extracted from page 14, Item vii, number 3, Nedlands Patriciaat 40e Jaargang 1954. Translation is via Google Translate.

Constantijn Van Baerle ^ (on his way back from Eastern Idia missing with the ship Concordia) 1708, in The Hague (Gr.K) 12 Aug. 169 8 Christina van Zuylen van de Haer ^ s Gravenh age (impo st. Be t. Ald 4 Sept.) 1703 From this marriage 3 young deceased children.

So we now know that an officer by the name of Constantijn Van Baerle went missing with the ship Concordia in the year 1708.

The Concordia

So we now had the name of a ship that possibly carried Van Baerle to the Australian coastline. That aspect needed to be more closely checked out via the experts in the Netherlands.

For this research, contact was established with Dr Femme S. Gaastra, of Leiden University. Dr Gaastra is considered one of the foremost authorities on the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and has published a considerable number of books and papers on the VOC.

Dr Gaastra's first task was to confirm that Constantijn Van Baerle was indeed aboard the ship Concordia when it disappeared in 1708. After considerable effort, Dr Gaastra located the evidence he was looking for. He found a copy of the letter from the Government of Batavia addressed to the Gentlemen Seventeen the original being lost with the ship Concordia. In that letter it is stated that:

With this ship [the Concordia] we send home the assistant Constantijn van Baerle, out of service.

Having established the point that there was a person by the name of Van Baerle on board the Concordia at the time of its disappearance at sea, the next task was to take a closer look at the ship itself and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance at sea. For instance we are told in the *Leeds Mercury* article that the original ship was a 'great vessel', and that 'eighty men and ten of their sisters (female passengers ?) with many things were saved on shore'.

Accordingly, if the Leeds article is correct, the ship would therefore need to be of a considerable size, and must have been carrying at least ninety personnel at the time. Indeed, Dr Gaastra was able to confirm that the Concordia was a large vessel of 900 tons, and at the time of her last voyage from Batavia in 1708, had a total of 130 people on board, including some females. Some of the passengers were also Balinese, being deported from the Dutch East Indies to the Cape due to bad conduct.

The Concordia was in company with two other ships returning to The Netherlands when two of them went missing south of Sunda Strait. This occurred in early Feb 1708. So it would appear most likely that the Concordia, along with the Zuiderburg, were struck down by bad weather to the south of Sunda Straits in early February 1708, during the height of the local monsoon season.

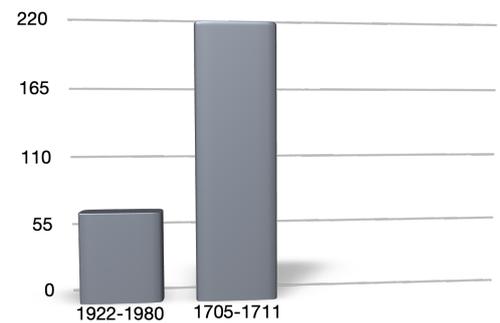
The oral history of the Dutch settlement in Central Australia as recorded by 'Nixon' in the *Leeds Mercury* article seems to confirm these circumstances when the Dutch settlers stated to 'Lt.Nixon' that they came 'from a distant land across the great sea; and that their ship broke'. A complete passenger listing for the Concordia has not yet been established, however Dr Femme Gaastra has been able to assemble some of the individuals on board at the time of her disappearance. The names he has established so far, tend to relate to the crew members of the ship. The females that gain mention, were those being transported at the time either on board the Concordia or the Zuiderburg.

Watching the Weather

With the information concerning the loss of the Concordia in mind, a check on the weather in the year 1708 was next required. A discussion with Dr Peter Isdale at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) confirmed that any ship disabled to the south of Sunda Strait at that time of year, would most likely be picked up by the Leewin Current and eventually find itself cast up on the Western Australian coastline. Just exactly where the ship would end up along that expansive coastline, would very much depend on the starting point of the incident. In other words, just where the ship Concordia was dismantled or lost its steerage, would also determine the path the Leewin Current would eventually carry it to the east.

Due to the work already collated at the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Dr Isdale was also able to explain the rainfall patterns for the period in question. For the Dutch to move inland as they claimed they had done, they would also need to have had access to good reliable water supplies, which would not normally be the case in that part of the continent these days. But as can be seen from Isdale's work, the Australian continent in the early 1700's was much better watered than it presents today. The figures from the

■ Annual Rainfall Comparisons for northern Australia



AIMS Burdekin runoff give a general indication of the rainfall not only for North Queensland but also Northern and North West Australia.

This is an extrapolation of rainfall for the northern tropics of Australia, in much the same way as temperature can also be extrapolated across the northern regions of the continent. Looking at the period when the Dutch were possibly cast ashore in 1708, we can see that from 1705 to 1711, the yearly average rainfall was 215 mm per year. In comparison, the 58 year period from 1922 to 1980 was very much drier with a yearly average of just 70 mm per year. During that entire time, from 1922 to 1980, there were only two occasions where the yearly rainfall equalled or exceeded the yearly average for the most likely Dutch landing period. The situation described above would tend to provide the necessary surface water required for such a cross country movement by the Dutch in 1708-9. In short, it would appear that the Australian continent received much more rainfall in the 1700's than it did in the 1900's'

Who lives near Halifax and submitted the *Leeds Mercury* article and who was Lt Nixon?

By this stage I was getting some significant assistance from a husband and wife team at the British Library in London. Doctors Andrew and Karen Cook had set up a task to find the person who submitted the *Leeds Mercury* article and also to try and isolate a Lt Nixon based in Singapore.

Despite collating a list of 28 Lt Nixon's in uniform at the time in question, they could not identify any Lt. Nixon in the British or the Indian Army who could fit the persona, so it looked like the name "Nixon" was fictional. Not only that but the possibility of such an expedition being sponsored by the Singapore government at that time was very very unlikely.

The local government at Singapore (East India Company) was deeply involved in the Naning Campaign in the Malay Peninsula, and diverting valuable and scarce resources to equip an exploring party to discreetly look at inland Australia would have been presumably a very low priority indeed. The meagre resources of the EIC in Singapore were then fully focussed toward that rather localised campaign. In addition, the company was also undergoing severe financial cutbacks, which were in due course implemented in the early 1830s. As far as the outpost of Singapore was concerned, the political and economic climate was not right in 1832 for such an irregular and unnecessary undertaking. So the Singapore connection also looked to be fictional. Additionally the Agricultural and

Horticultural Society was not formed in Singapore until 1836 and the Raffles Institute had collapsed some years before 1832.

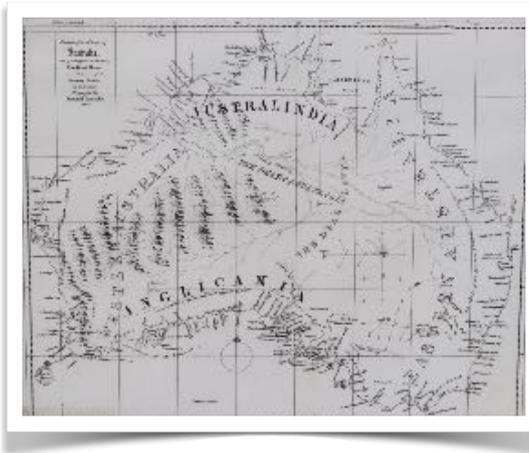
However the Cooks did find who the individual was who originally submitted the article to the *Leeds Mercury* in 1834. He was a retired Lt Thomas Maslen from the Indian Army living near Blackstone Edge', (a ridge at the western boundary of Yorkshire) approximately six miles to the south west of the city of Halifax.⁶

Lt. Thomas Maslen

Now I often describe Lt. Thomas Maslen as a bit of a "nut case". He self published a book titled "The Friend of Australia", and in that book he was constantly proposing that the authorities at the Colonial Office in London, should pick him to go out and explore the unknown inland of Continental Australia. Of course they never did and for good reason.

It must be remembered that at this time, in the 1830's no exploration had been undertaken into the centre of the continent, and it would not be until the 1858 to 1862 that John McDouall Stuart would start to explore those regions. It was imagined that there existed an inland sea there but no one knew for sure.

Maslen's Magical Map



Maslen even advocated that such an exploring party should wear "chain mail " armoured suites to deflect Aboriginal spear attacks, and they should be rewarded with grants of land in the colony. In this regard he had himself in mind as leader and therefore getting the biggest land grant. Funny about that

Included in the rear section of

⁶ In the 1841 census, Maslen's name appears in Soyland Township enumeration district no. 8 which is located southeast of the Rochdale and Halifax Road, between Blackstone Edge and Ripponden. The address is given as being "Small Lees", which is a small hamlet off Blackstone Edge Road.

Maslen's book was a foldout map of the Australian Continent, showing what Maslen believed would be found in the centre of the outback A giant river system draining the entire centre toward the west coast up near the Kimberley region. He went so far as to name this imagined river system calling it "*The Great River or the Desired Blessing*" He even manages to rename the northern portion of Australia as Australindia and the southern part gets the name Anglicania. So whoever carried out the expedition into Central Australia in 1832, had somehow met Maslen or his journal was passed onto Maslen. More concerning Maslen and his magical map later.

Lets talk Lat and Long

Firstly I would like to focus on the Longitude of 132 degrees, 25 minutes, and 30 seconds, which would normally be written up as $132^{\circ} 25' 30''$. The Longitude is the one reading that gave the greatest difficulty in those days, and that was due to the fact that accurate timepieces were not particularly reliable. With this particular reading something quite fascinating begins to emerge when you trace it north.

That Longitude figure cuts right through Fort Wellington at Raffles Bay that was established by Captain James Stirling in 1827. Stirling was anchored in Raffles Bay for a total of six weeks after which he sailed for India. He was at that time particularly eager to promote the setting up of his Swan River Settlement. Fort Wellington was abandoned in August 1829. Raffles Bay is of course on the northern coast of "New Holland"

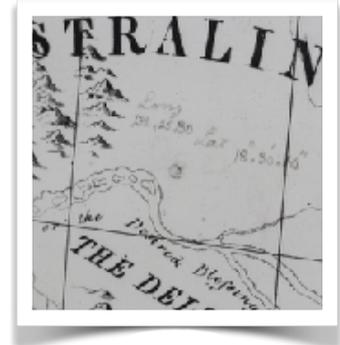
What this would tend to indicate is that Fort Wellington was the start point and that anyone starting at Fort Wellington to explore inland knew exactly the correct Longitude for the start point ($132^{\circ} 25' 30''$), and simply marched due south on a compass setting of South (180°). That way, to return to their starting position, they simply turned around 180 degrees and marched north (360°) again by compass setting, due North. Under such an arrangement, they eliminated the need to be bothered with taking Longitude readings.

Of course this method does not give an accurate reading along the course of the march inland as the track would by necessity require some deviation around obstacles such as the Arnhem Escarpment and the Van Diemen Gulf inlet.

Now to Latitude. This is the one that the explorers never got wrong and their Latitude readings could always be relied upon to be very accurate, far more so than the Longitude readings. So that means that we could totally rely on "Nixon's" reading of 18° 30' 14" to fix his "Mount Singapore". Or could we?

Decades of Searching

Many years were spent searching this general Latitude area, with nothing more than a small sand mound ever showing up for Mount Singapore. I knew from 15 years past experience flying around Northern Australia in Army Aviation Kiowa helicopters, that river systems and water ways alter at various times. They do change course and alter to some considerable degree, but mountains or hills almost always stay the same. It takes an earthquake or some major event to change the shape and presentation of a mountain or hill. After years of flying and ground searching for Nixons Mt Singapore, there was nothing that came anywhere near the result required. Yet the evidence found to-date, suggested that the Dutch Colony did in fact once exist. Something was very wrong with the Latitude.



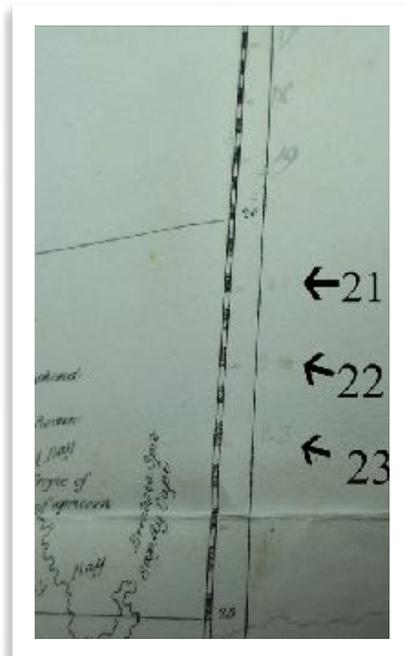
Maslen's personal copy of *The Friend of Australia*

Andrew and Karen Cook managed to track down Thomas Maslen's personal copy of his book *The Friend of Australia* where it resided in the Mitchell Library, Sydney NSW.⁷ In this copy, Maslen had made numerous notes in the margins on corrections he wanted in any future reprints that may occur. These notes were done in pencil along the margins of the applicable pages.

But in the rear fold out map of Australia, which I refer to as "Maslen's Magical Map" he had noted down the position of Nixons Mount Singapore along with the Lat and Long. Sure enough, the position is to the north of his imagined *The Great River or the Desired Blessing* just where the river at its eastern extremity bends to the south, as per the description in the original *Leeds Mercury* article.

⁷ Mitchell Library reference ML 980.158A2

Now I've had a photocopy of Maslen's map hanging on my study wall for years properly framed up, and behind glass. I had already noted that Maslen had penciled in along the right hand border the numbered Latitude markings for 16, 17, 18, and 19 degrees of Latitude which of course he had to do to mark in the location of Nixon's Mt Singapore on his map. On the left hand border of the map he had marked off the same degree marks.



But one day when looking very closely at these marking I finally noticed that he had at one stage also marked in the Latitude markings for 21, 22, 23, and 24 degree markings. Like the other markings they were also once numbered and also marked up on the left hand border. But unlike the others, they were partially rubbed out. A better coverage was obtained from the Mitchell Library which you can see at left.

Now why would anyone want to mark up something belonging to the 18 degree line of Lat, and also mark up AND deliberately number the degrees below that. That can't be some sort of mistake but rather was done for a purpose and likewise the attempt to rub out the numbers was an attempt to hide something. This had become the "smoking gun" that was always missing from this research.

So the penny then dropped, that "Nixon's" original Latitude was way further south than the 18 degrees noted in the *Leeds Mercury* article. This had been deliberately done by Thomas Maslen, most likely to try and advance his own political agenda with the Colonial Office and curry favour with them.

Looking Further South

Once I started looking further to the south, a number of factors began to fall into line. A couple of the more interesting aspects related to the Lutheran mission at Hermannsburg. When the Lutheran Church set up the Hermannsburg Mission in 1877, one of the missionaries made an interesting observation at the time concerning the local Aboriginals.

"they were certainly no fools, but very human and intelligent folk; some of them were readily picking up English words, so that they and the missionaries could make themselves mutually understood." And this as well. "In facial features some of them even resembled European acquaintances" ⁸

This pioneering missionary work was initially carried out by two ministers of the Church, Pastors F.A.H. Kempe and W.F. Schwarz in 1876. In a paper given to the Royal Geographic Society of South Australia in 1887, Pastor Kempe made the following observation.

"It is quite certain that many of the women had Jewish names such as Judith, Paula, Mirjam, before they ever saw a white man".⁹

The names cited here by Kempe are all from the Old Testament, and according to Dr Femme Gaastra were all in popular use in the Netherlands in the early 1700's. Now that's a bit of evidence that you simply can't ignore. The Hermannsburg Mission is just to the north of Palm Valley.

One of the first explorers through that region was Earnest Giles in 1872. Reading through the diary of Giles (1872) he comes to a geographical gap which he calls "Middleton's Pass" and "Fish Ponds" after his friend A D Middleton. This is on the Palmer River. He says these ponds were...

"literally alive with fish, insomuch that the water had a most disagreeable fishy taste, great numbers of fish floating in the water"¹⁰

⁸ Scherer P A *Venture of Faith An Epic in Australian Missionary History* p. 67

⁹ Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society of Australasia - South Australian Branch, Sessions 1886-7 and 1887-8 Vol ii *"The Customs, Religious Ceremonies, etc, of the "Aldolinga" or "Mbenderinga" Tribe of Aboriginals in the Krichauff Ranges, South Australia, p.34*

¹⁰ *Geographic Travels in Central Australia from 1872 to 1874* by Ernest Giles p. 66

In the same general location he encounters some local Aboriginals (men only) who made themselves useful by holding the horse's bridles and collecting firewood. Now that is extremely unusual. Nowhere in Australian history have Aboriginal people reacted like that when first encountering white explorers. According to Giles, clearly they had previous encounters with white men and their horses. Again on page 66...

"Here we found a considerable number of natives; and though the women and children would not come close, several of the men did so, and made themselves useful by holding some of the horses bridles and getting some firewood. Most of them had names, given them by their godfathers at their baptism – that is to say, either by the officers or men of the O.T. construction at their first meeting. I called this place, which is my 3rd camp, "Rogers Pass," after Murray Rogers, Esq., of the Darling River"

Rogers Pass is located on the Palmer River just south of Palm Valley. This is very strange behaviour for Aboriginals who had not encountered white men and horses before. Clearly that was not the case and the existence of the newly constructed OT was the only possibility that Giles could think of. It is here at Rogers Pass that the river turns south as described in the *Leeds Mercury* article...*sweeping to the southward at its eastern extremity like a river.*

The OT referred to by Giles is the Overland Telegraph Line, but that was located some 130 kilometres to the East of this location. The names attached to the aboriginals could not have come from contact with Hermannsburg Mission as that was yet to be set up in Central Australia. For those aboriginal men to encounter the construction crew involved with the OT they would have to cross into at least two other tribal Aranda areas en mass. Not a good idea really. There is no way they could have managed to get to the overland telegraph line and back passing through other tribal areas along the way. Which leaves the question, where did they pick up these names?

Giles when he found a place named Glen Thirsty at Lat 24°28'34.9"S and Long 131°01'55.2E found some rock art that was rather interesting. He describes it as follows:

*The rude figures of snakes were the principal objects, but hands and devices for shields were also conspicuous. One hieroglyph was most striking. It consisted of two Roman numerals, a V and an I placed together, and representing our figure VI. They were daubed over with spots, and were painted with red ochre.*¹¹

¹¹ Giles E *Geographic Travels in Central Australia from 1872 - 1874* P. 49

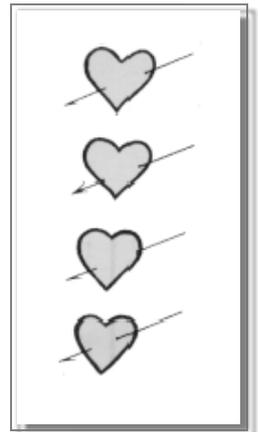
This location is at the extreme eastern end of Lake Amadeus, and that location just falls into the Luritja tribal area according to Norman Tindale's map.

But there is more unusual artwork in Central Australia. Within striking distance to the south of the Palm Valley area is Ayers Rock (Uluru). As far as its discovery by white people is concerned, this monolith was first noted by explorer Gosse in 1873, well before any attempt to settle the central regions of the continent. When exploring around the base of the rock, along the western side, Gosse noted the multitude of caves and overhanging rock faces that were adorned with various examples of Aboriginal artwork:

These caves are formed by large pieces breaking off the main rock and falling to the foot. The blacks make holes under them, and the heat of their fires causes the rock to shell off, forming large arches. They amuse themselves covering these with all sorts of devices - some of snakes, very cleverly done, others of two hearts joined to-gether.¹²

Drawings of hearts popping up in Australian Aboriginal art work is, to say the least most unusual, a very similar scene was apparently witnessed by Mr.

Charles Winnecke¹³ during one of his travels just to the north of Alice Springs. In this instance, Winnecke supplied a copy of the artwork as well as a description. On this point there is absolute certainty contained within the paper published in the Royal Geographic Society by Worsnop. This paper was partially compiled from letters received by Worsnop from Charles Winnecke and the accusation may be made that in his preparing the paper, Worsnop either inserted the particular diagram or altered it to his own liking. But in the text description supplied by Winnecke he leaves no doubt that he also supplied sketches as well as notations ... "*The group of native drawings which I have roughly shown herewith are found in several caves near Mt. Skinner*"



¹² Gosse W C, WC Gosse's *Explorations*, 1873, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1874, p.9. Two hearts joined together is not of Australian Aboriginal origin, but rather European background.

¹³As an observer in central Australia, Charles Winnecke should not be underestimated. He was by profession a surveyor and map maker, having originally joined the South Australian Surveyor Generals Department. Later he decided to establish his own surveying brokerage and general agency in 1882. Apart from his extensive explorations and surveys in the centre, he was nominal leader of the Horne Expedition in 1894. Upon his death the Register newspaper (September 11th, 1902) described him as 'probably the best informed man in South Australia respecting the geography of the interior'

A bit of Material Culture

In the *Leeds Mercury* article, it is mentioned that the Dutch “*are armed with long pikes*” Now the Australian Aboriginals have spears that are thrown with a woomera, they do not have pikes or lances. Aboriginal spears are invariably made of two separate sections joined to-gether with resin and the like. One part would be the long shaft of the spear and the second part, the blade of the spear which sometimes has barbs attached or cut into it. But there is one exception to this situation and it was first noted by Professor Baldwin Spencer during the Horn Expedition in 1894 into Central Australia. He described it as “*a kind of spear, or rather lance (“Tajunja”), not very frequently seen was made from a single piece of some hard wood...*” Spencer concluded that it was thrown by hand not using a woomera.

The "lance" shown by Spencer, showing only the Tip and the Tail



I had forgotten the fact that I collected one of these lances' years ago during my Defence Fellowship year in 1980, and in due course found it amongst my collection of Aboriginal artefacts, so I had a specimen of the very weapon in question which provides a possible link to the Dutch Pikes, right under my nose. I remember picking it up around the Papunya /Haast Bluff area at the time. Both of these locations are south of the 23° line, half way to the 24° Latitude.

Sometime later I was visiting a friend of mine in the Northern Territory and noticed he also had one of these spear/lances hanging up. He had been a NT Conservation Commission Ranger in Central Australia and had collected his in the same area that I had collected mine. Both are about 2.3 metres long.

Chewings and the Native Well

Some 14 years after Giles, Charles Chewings moved through the same Palmer River area and noted the existence of what he called a "Native Well" on the southern bank of the Palmer River. Trouble is, the Australian Aboriginals did not construct well's as such. This well is still in existence to-day, and was originally about eight metres in depth and boarded up using bush timber around the sides. That information was passed to me by the Luritja Traditional Owner. The bush timber has now been replaced with corrugated iron. On the 1:250,000 map Henbury the well is named Karga Well and can be located

at 24° 33' 04"S, and 132° 37' 31" E. The origin of name Karga is a mystery to the Luritja people as well as the surrounding Arrunta people. Im told it is not a Luritja word nor is it an Arrunta word.

The Tempe Downs Location

All our evidence is starting to form a cluster around the Palmer River and Palm Valley location. So the next thing to focus upon is the work of the first anthropologist to work in that region and that was Baldwin Spencer, as a member of the Horn Expedition in 1894. Spencer makes an interesting observation concerning the hair colour of some of what he calls the Arrernte people. Tempe Downs however is the heartland of the Luritja people.

*"At almost every camp, but most frequently at Tempe Downs, the hair of some of the children was in marked contrast to the usual dark hue, of a very light tawny or almost tow colour, and wherever this coloration existed it was most marked at the tips, though, in some cases it extended to the roots. This peculiarity appeared to be quite independent of any artificial bleaching and was not a very frequent occurrence. As all natives have their heads equally exposed to the weather it is not easy to account for this exceptional feature."*¹⁴



Once you start to focus on the Tempe Downs location, things start to fall into place. So what about Mount Singapore?

Mount Singapore

Remember that the latitude of Mount Singapore was given as 18° 30' 14" and there is some concern that this figure may be deliberately falsified by Thomas Maslen. Well, that assumption looks like being correct. Looking at the Palmer River location we find there

¹⁴ Spencer 1896 *Report on the Work of the Horn Expedition to Central Australia Part iv - Anthropology* p. 18.

Ayers Lookout presents as a "hill" when viewed from the north looking south



is indeed a small lookout to the immediate north of the Palmer called Ayers Lookout. The latitude for Ayers lookout is 24° 30' 14" NOT 18° 30' 14". When viewed from the northern approach, Ayers Lookout (Mount Singapore) indeed looks like a hill **not** a mountain, and remember the *Leeds Mercury* article twice described it as a hill. Below this hill is indeed a "low and level country".

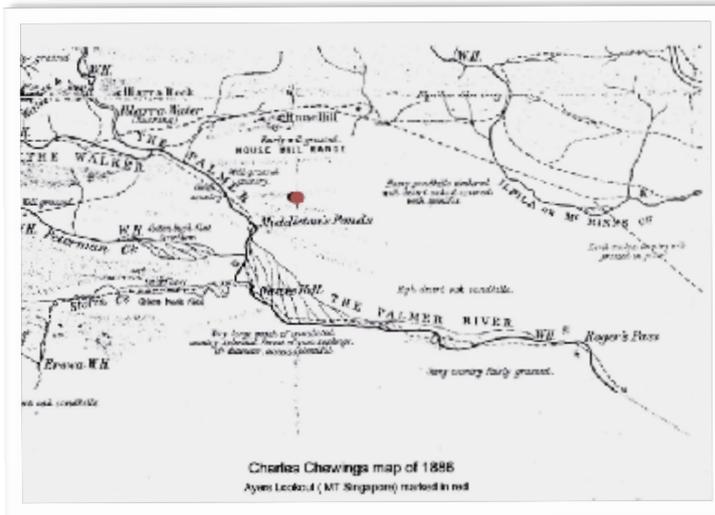
When you travel down onto that "low and level country" as "Lt. Nixon" did, and look back at your hill, it alters it's appearance and indeed presents as a Mountain.

Ayers Lookout when viewed from the south



Now I'm not going to bore you with an ongoing transcript of my research on this matter but will finish off by just adding a number of points that have emerged over the past few years about this whole episode. But first, take a look at the map drawn by Chewings in 1886.

Chewings map of the Palmer River



Charles Chewings map of 1886
Ayers Lookout (MT Singapore) marked in red

Notice that Chewings map shows numerous channels running north south which would be viewed end on from anyone positioned on top of Ayers Lookout. That's how you get your "straight rows of trees". Also note that along Storm Creek and Peterman Creek he has written the words (*overflow*). Clearly this is where the water backs up and flows to the west. For this to happen, it would require some form of dam or dyke and skill controlling the water and its natural flow via the Palmer River which turns southwards at its eastern extremity at Rogers Pass, just like the Leeds article states. I think the Dutch knew something about water management.

Concluding points

Lt. Nixon was in fact a Lt Robert Dale from the Swan River colony, who was sent to explore Central Australia by the Swan River Agricultural Society and Governor Stirling. The reason for the secrecy was the fact that Stirling was trespassing on Governor Darlings territory of New South Wales.

When Dale returned to Swan River with the news of the Dutch Colony, Governor Stirling made a hasty trip back to London, to report the matter to the Colonial Office. This sudden trip was done under the disguise of being done supposedly to plead the case for assistance for the young colony. However the local newspaper was suspicious of the real reason and reported his return to England as follows.

With real sorrow we announce that his Excellency the Governor has intimated by Public Notice his intention to proceed to England immediately. There is a vast deal more in this arrangement, we apprehend, than meets the public eye.¹⁵

In the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Stirling's return is noted as follows:

However, the British government was not well pleased at seeing this truant governor on it's door step, and Stirling was lucky to escape censure for leaving his post without permission.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Western Australian Colonial News* which was a Fremantle weekly newspaper, dated 14th July 1832.

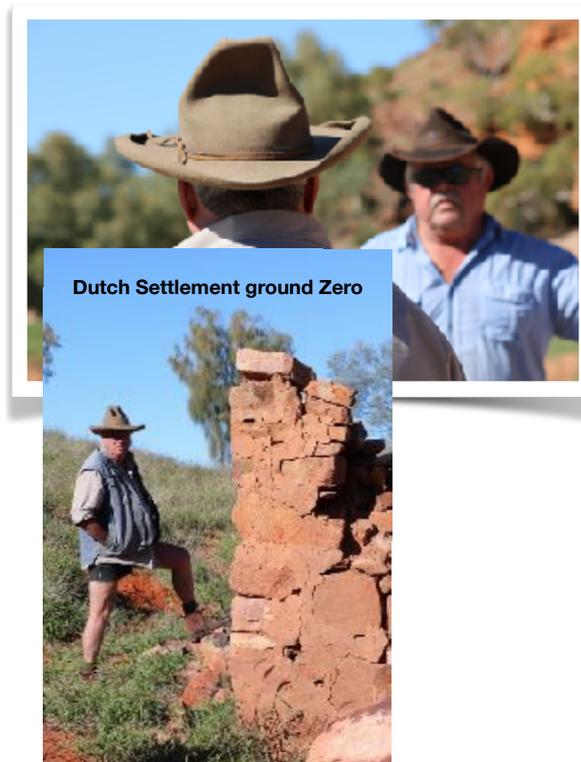
¹⁶ Crowley F K *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol ii p.488

That being the case, it is interesting to speculate as to why, on the 3rd April 1833, having been back in England just four months, Stirling received a knighthood.

The Dutch Colony basically merged into a new tribal group now known as the Luritja, and that name was given to them by the surrounding Arrunta/Arrunda Aboriginal people. The word Luritja meant "foreigner". Remember the final word in the Leeds article "they may be considered almost a new race of beings."

Self talking with the Luritja Traditional Owner in Central Australia. The point being made here in this photograph is very obvious.

One final interesting point made by the Luritja Traditional Owner pictured at left. Apparently the Luritja word for Gun is "Muket". Now the first white person to venture into Central Australia was John McDouall Stuart whose expeditions commenced in 1858 and ventured nowhere near Luritja country. By that time(1858), the Musket had gone the way of the Dodo.



The stone work here is held together with mud mortar, no cement, which is not surprising.