

Joseph Sherrard first came to my notice as I was exploring the remarkable life of his great niece, Lucy Sherrard Finley (Mrs. Atkinson). I discovered that not only was Lucy an intrepid traveller and explorer but that her great uncle had also travelled far beyond English shores, indeed into the Pacific Ocean. In Joseph's case, his adventures were undertaken as a member of His Majesty's Navy but what makes his story so compelling for us today is that his voyages were undertaken when the Pacific was just opening up to European exploration and the settlement of New South Wales had only just begun. He sailed and rubbed shoulders with men whose names are both legends in the history of exploration and, also, famous in the history of colonial Australia. It is for this reason that, while not known to history himself, it has been possible to reconstruct so much of his fascinating story.

We know from the Royal Navy Muster Book that Joseph Sherrard was born in Southwark, Surrey. One Muster record puts his year of birth as 1775 but a second Muster record, together with his death records, puts his year of birth as 1773. There would appear to be two possibilities as to his parentage. First, the register of St. George the Martyr, Southwark records the following entry for February 20, 1773: "Joseph, Son of Samuel Sherrard, Parish Clerk, and Mary Sherrard, his Wife, born this day." However, also in the Borough of Southwark, in Rotherhithe, one York Sherrard married Elizabeth Robinson on November 1, 1773. This couple must also be considered a possibility because, in the 1881 census, Benjamin Coulson Robinson described Lucy Sherrard Atkinson as a cousin and Lucy's son Alatau included the name Robinson among the names he chose for his third son. It also should be borne in mind that Joseph had a sister called Elizabeth whom he identified in his will as being the wife of William York. For the name "York" to be duplicated in this way would suggest a close relationship between the York and Sherrard families.

Joseph Sherrard himself first appears on the public record in the Royal Navy's Muster Book for *H.M.S. Assistant* in 1791. The entry tells us that he entered service on the ship on May 10, 1791 as an Able-bodied Seaman (A.B.) until July 23 that year, at which point he became Captain's Clerk. Under the column headed "Whence and

whether Pressed or not” it is recorded that he had come from Deptford and had volunteered.

At the time when Joseph commenced his working life, the Royal Navy was one of the biggest employers in the Kingdom and Deptford, the site of the first Royal Navy dockyard established by King Henry VIII in 1513, was where the Navy’s main victualling yard was located. It is interesting that, in 1801, the Royal Calendar, in listing personnel employed in the Navy Victualling Office, includes the following: “Warder at Somerset-place — — Sherrard”. After 1776 the new building-under-construction which was Somerset House in the Strand, London was given over to several government departments, including the Navy Office and the Navy Victualling Office. It is very possible that the “Sherrard”, occupying a position akin to that of a Porter, may have been Joseph’s father or an uncle who had encouraged him to enter the Navy.

Joseph’s entry onto the *Assistant* was to mark the beginning of a remarkable career. Under the lieutenantship of Nathaniel Portlock¹, the *Assistant* was a brig of 110 tons carrying a complement of 27 men, which, between August 1791 and August 1793, accompanied *H.M.S. Providence*, under Captain William Bligh, as tender on Bligh’s second breadfruit expedition. This expedition had the purpose of obtaining breadfruit trees in Tahiti and then conveying them to the Caribbean to investigate whether they might be a successful food crop for the natives there. Bligh had first attempted this commission in 1789 but that voyage on *H.M.S. Bounty* had resulted in the famous mutiny and been unsuccessful. Cast adrift with 19 loyal crew, Bligh had subsequently shown remarkable seamanship in navigating a 23 foot launch 4,164 miles to the nearest European settlement at Timor, which they reached in June 1789. Now, having been honourably acquitted at the court-martial inquiring into the loss of his ship, Bligh undertook the same commission a second time.

The *Providence* and *Assistant* sailed from Spithead on August 3, 1791. They reached Tenerife on August 27, where they replenished their supplies, and, on November 6, they entered Table Bay, Cape

¹ Nathaniel Portlock had earlier accompanied Captain James Cook on his third voyage.

of Good Hope, anchoring one mile off shore. The Cape at that time was under the control of the Dutch East India Company (which had established the settlement in 1652) and the Dutch influence was clearly seen in the thousand or so houses that made up the town beyond the fort. In these houses, many of which took in European boarders, Joseph would have seen slavery but, according to George Tobin, “administered with more mildness and humanity than I had ever before observed it.”² He would also have encountered native Hottentots in the streets, particularly driving carts and carriages, which were sometimes pulled by zebra.

It would be unlikely if he did not also make excursions into the hinterland, probably to Elsenburg and Stellenbosch, where he may have sampled the vineyards. In this open country, Joseph would have encountered the ostrich and perhaps tried its egg. George Tobin recorded that “Mr Portlock [ate] one frequently for breakfast.”³



Model of Cape Town as it appeared in 1800

² Schreiber, Roy (ed.), “Captain Bligh’s Second Chance: An Eyewitness Account of his Return to the South Seas by Lt. George Tobin” (Chatham Publishing, Sydney and London, 2007), page 36

³ Schreiber, op. cit., page 51

On December 16, while Bligh's ships were still in port, a ship arrived at the entrance of the harbour flying signals of distress. Boats from various ships in harbour were sent to tow the arrival, the *Waaksamheyd*, into the bay. The ship was discovered to be captained by John Hunter, whose ship *H.M.S. Sirius* having been recently wrecked off Norfolk Island, its officers and crew were now being sent back to England on the hired Dutch ship. With assistance provided by Captain Bligh, the *Waaksamheyd* was safely moored in Table Bay on December 22. Joseph Sherrard was to meet John Hunter again.

As the *Providence* and *Reliance* were preparing to leave, Lt. George Tobin recorded: "At this port of plenty the crews had been liberally supplied with every kind of refreshment, and it might have been truly said that they were beginning the voyage anew, with the advantage of being better known to each other...The qualities of the *Providence* and her *Assistant* were found equal to what had been expected, and their crews, many of whom had not [previously] sailed beyond the mouth of the Thames [was Joseph one of that number?], were now becoming familiar to the cares of a distant voyage.⁴

Captain Bligh sent Lieutenant Portlock instructions, as follows:

"Sir, I have enclosed a copy of my general orders which you will take care of and be guided by in case you are separated from me. I shall not go to the southward of 40 degrees South on our way to Adventure Bay (which you are to consider as the first place of rendezvous) until I get a meridian with the west side of New Holland...I will wait for you in Adventure Bay ten days. Should a separation be the cause of my being there before you I will leave a bottle with a letter in it on Penguin Island covered with stones on the part nearest the main and cut some memorandum on a tree near the River's mouth towards the sea. Should you get there before me, stay the same time and do the like. From Van Diemen's Land I shall proceed to Otaheite [Tahiti] (by the South of New Zealand) where our rendezvous is to be at Matavai Bay...Should any misfortune prevent my joining you there you are to do the best

⁴ Schreiber, op. cit., page 54

for His Majesty's Service and as you think yourself capable to comply with the orders from my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty." Such were the hazards and uncertainties that all seafarers faced!

On leaving Table Bay, the two ships encountered fair weather with light breezes. On Christmas Day, supplies of fresh mutton, flour, pork and onions were served to the men "to make a sea pie for each person". Four days later Captain Bligh hove a bottle overboard to Mr. Portlock, with the rate of his time-keeper, which was safely picked up by the *Assistant*.⁵ As the voyage progressed, great care was taken to keep the men in health, with "sweet wort or sour kraut...served out to them with great regularity on board both ships". Borecole, a preparation of dried cabbage, was also deemed efficacious with portions sometimes being added to a beef soup with peas for dinner, and in the morning to a warm gruel for breakfast.

Lt. Tobin recorded that "every degree of attention was paid to cleanliness on the ship" with fires constantly maintained in both cockpits and items from the more confined parts regularly brought up for air. At this time, Mr. Portlock remarked of the *Assistant's* crew, "Thank God all perfectly well except the boatswain."

On February 8, 1792, land was sighted and not long after the two ships dropped anchor at Adventure Bay on Bruny Island, Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). This was the third time that William Bligh had visited these parts but for one of the young midshipmen aboard the *Providence*, Matthew Flinders, it was the beginning of an adventure that would forever link his name with that of this hitherto unexplored land.

On making land, Captain Bligh's first priority, as always, was to seek a source of water, and also to find a place for the "wooding parties", searching out firewood. Lt. Tobin recorded that he and the

⁵ Ida Lee, "Captain Bligh's Second Voyage to the South Sea" (1920; now available through Project Gutenberg).



In Adventure Bay, Tasmania (George Tobin)



second lieutenant were in charge of the watering and wooding parties and, although their posts were half a mile apart, they always met at the dinner hour in a hut of the natives (see above plate) which apparently had not been long deserted. The best water was found at the watering spot used by the "Resolution" which location Bligh was familiar with, having been master in that ship when Captain James Cook visited Tasmania in 1777. From Adventure Bay, the two botanists in the party, Mr. Wiles and Mr. Smith, now made excursions into different parts of Bruny Island in search of plants. The explorers were particularly impressed with the giant trees in the forests around the Bay. Kangaroos were often sighted, wild ducks were shot for food, a wombat was described and, of particular interest, was the discovery of a platypus, described as being "an animal of a very odd form". On February 19 some of Bligh's men ran briefly into a party of 22 Aboriginal men and women. Governor Bligh and his officers were the first to explore Bruny Island beyond the limits of Adventure Bay.

The muster taken at Adventure Bay survives and the name of Joseph Sherrard can be clearly seen on the third line.

Bounty Paid.	N ^o	Entry.	Year	Appearance.	Whence and whether Preft or not.	Place and County where Born.	Age at Time of Entry in this Ship.	N ^o and Letter of Tickets	MENS NAMES.	Qualities.	D. D.D. or R.	Tin Dife
	1	Apr 1791	Apr 28	Y ^e	Commiss ^y	16	Apr 17		Nath. Cook	Surge		
	"	28	"	"	Mar	25	April		In W ^o Trunkland	Apr 2		
30	"	10	May	May 10	Detached	20			J ^o Sherrard	16		
	"	12	"	"	12	London	20	16 23	July 1791	Thin	Cap ^t Clerk	
	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Abm. Rivot	Ab Des		

Portion of Muster of H.M. Brig *Assistant*
taken at Adventure Bay, March 31, 1792

Leaving Van Diemen's Land after two weeks, the two ships sailed east south-east across the Tasman Sea, desolate of islands and swept by polar gales. In the darkness of the night of the 16th, the

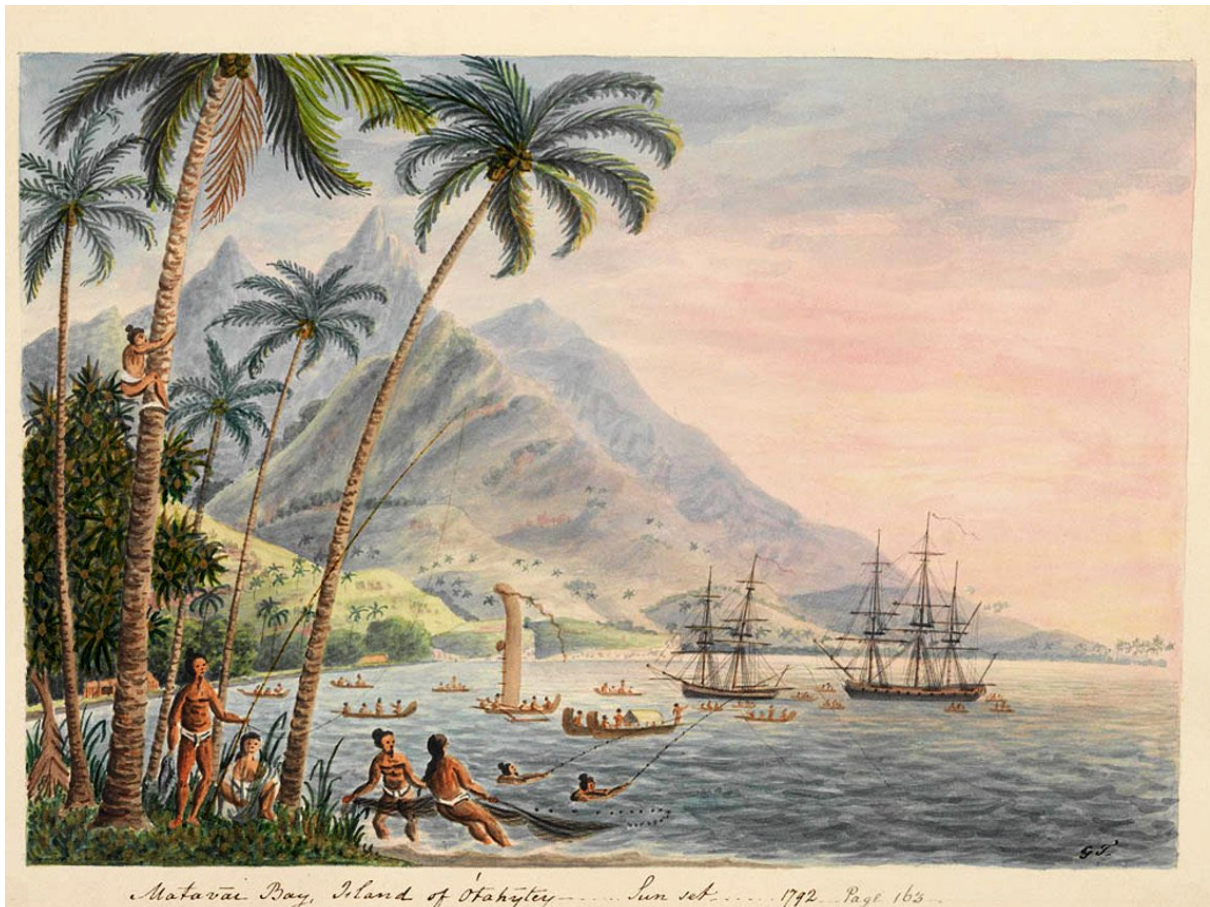
sea became illuminated by a spectacular display of phosphorescence which spread in the wake of the ships for at least half a mile. Bligh wrote “the water had the appearance as if thousands of small lamps were lighted thereon, and it looked beautiful beyond description.”

While in Adventure Bay, Lieutenant Portlock had obtained some soil in which he planted some potatoes. He wrote at this time that he now had ten plants and two melon or pumpkin plants, and growing in the same cask horse-radish in English earth. He had further obtained some figs at the Cape which he brought away in two iron pots and he had also sown some cress which enabled him to provide his men with a little salad. To quote Lieutenant Portlock, “This and other means but above all the protection of God will, I hope, carry us on to port in perfect health.”

As they approached Matavai Bay, Captain Bligh “read orders to establish friendly intercourse with the Otaheitans”. The first instruction was that “No officer or seaman is to speak of the loss of the *Bounty*, or tell that Captain Cook was killed by Indians”, and the 13th that “No person is to take fire-arms (without permission) on shore.” The Islanders were to be treated with good will and no violence used, even to recover stolen implements.

The ships anchored in Matavai Bay on April 10, 1792 and, immediately, Captain Bligh found himself visited by old acquaintances. Bligh wrote, “I had only a few Oparre canoes off, but they brought a sufficiency of hogs, breadfruit, and cocoanuts [sic] to feed every person sumptuously.” And later, “Several inferior chiefs were on board to-day; they were remarkably glad to see me and thanked their god for protecting me from the hands of [Fletcher] Christian [leader of the mutiny].” Bligh heard that the mutineers had actually returned to Tahiti after the insurrection although Christian and a small band of followers had left in the *Bounty* soon after.

Matavai Bay, Tahiti (George Tobin)



The *Providence* and *Assistant* remained three months in Matavai Bay, located on the north side of the island. As stated by Professor Roy Schreiber⁶, what the two ships' companies witnessed was virtually a final look at the Tahitian world before it was changed forever by almost immediate subsequent contact with whalers and missionaries. Captain Bligh and his men negotiated local politics and regularly entertained Tahitians, especially the leaders, on board. They got to know some of the Tahitian language and the officers went through *taio* ceremonies, whereby they exchanged gifts and were linked to individual Tahitians as trusted friends. On May 4, Lt. Tobin recorded: "The whole court remained on board

⁶ Schreiber, op. cit., p. 12

nearly the whole day. It might indeed have been said, from the length and frequency of their visits, that they were our own family.”⁷⁸

The ships’ companies concentrated on maintaining and provisioning the ships, which included bartering with the natives, ironwares and linen cloth being particularly valued. For their part, the natives were happy to trade *inter alia* implements such as stone adzes which European technology had already rendered practically obsolete. However, in accordance with the purpose of their mission, special attention was given to the collection and growing of the breadfruit plants. In this, Captain Bligh was guided by the two botanists on board and it was not long before steadily increasing numbers of the plants were flourishing in a specially fenced and shaded area near the bay. While in Van Diemen’s Land Bligh had obtained a quantity



The watering place, Matavai, Tahiti (George Tobin)

⁷ Schreiber, op. cit., page 96

⁸ Professor Schreiber (op. cit.) points out that the king and queen of that area of the island sought to monopolise their visitors so that they might, through barter, obtain European weapons and so gain an advantage over other chieftains.

of metrocedra wood which he now used to make boxes for the plants. On May 26 Bligh wrote, "I have completed nice airy spaces for them on the quarter deck and galleries, and shall sail with every inch of space filled up." When they eventually left, George Tobin wrote, "...besides the breadfruit and the other plants to be seen on the quarter deck and in part of the cabin, a great deal of the rigging was crowded with plantains, cocoanuts [sic] and other fruits and vegetables which had been taken on board for ourselves and stock" and that a bird's eye view would have revealed the *Providence* clad in "a garb of green, attended by her *Assistant* in the same gay livery."⁹ In view of all the care taken with the breadfruit, it is sad to report that, when it was delivered to the West Indian slaves in the Caribbean, most refused to eat the new food.

The two ships departed Tahiti on Friday, July 17, Lt. Tobin recording that: "As we increased our distance from the shore, the natives reluctantly quitted us. Many vainly strove to follow in their canoes, expressing their sorrow by loud and reiterated lamentations, while some who had particularly attached themselves to the vessels or the post, were seen tearing their hair, and heedless of the pain, wounding their heads with a shark's tooth as on the death of a relation".¹⁰

The vessels steered in a westerly direction. As was Captain Bligh's practice, whenever the passage was difficult, he sent the *Assistant*, with its considerably smaller draught of water, ahead. Passing through the Tonga islands, the ships proceeded to Fiji, a group of islands which had first been seen by Captain Bligh in his voyage on the *Bounty's* launch. The two ships spent six days in the Fiji islands, which Bligh now explored thoroughly. Lieutenant Portlock, having just led the *Providence* through the very centre of the islands, wrote in the *Assistant's* log on August 10: "There can remain but little doubt of these islands being the Feejee Islands that the Friendly Islanders speak so much about, whose inhabitants they seem to fear and speak of as great warriors...Tasman, it appears (in 1643), fell in with the eastern or small cluster of this group and gave to

⁹ Schreiber, op. cit., page 138

¹⁰ Schreiber, op. cit., page 119

them the name of Prince William's Islands, but certainly Captain Bligh is the discoverer of the Western or large group."

On August 11, the ships left Fiji and steered towards the New Hebrides, with variable weather, passing through tropical haze and showers of rain. On August 19, the *Assistant*, leading again, made the signal for sighting land and they spent the next week navigating around, and taking observations of, five different islands. Leaving on August 20, they now set steer for the dangerous labyrinth of coral reefs which surround the entrance to Torres Strait. They made the coast of New Guinea on August 30. With the Strait before them, George Tobin recalled, "I think I now see the zealous and persevering Portlock at our little consort's top gallant masthead, his eye travelling in every direction."¹¹ He also wrote that "Signal flags had been prepared for all the boats as we approached Torres Straits [sic], as well to denote soundings or danger when detached from the ships, as the approach of natives" and that "To guard against their arrows, Captain Bligh had dresses fitted for the boats' crews of the thickest Tahitian cloth."¹²

The next day, Bligh wrote, "I am in good time to save the monsoon to Timor provided my route is clear...I depend on clearing any danger, and Lieutenant Portlock has his orders to keep ahead." To Bligh's knowledge, Torres Strait had only been traversed three times, including by Captain Cook in 1770 and Bligh himself in the *Bounty's* launch. On September 1 he wrote, "The *Assistant* being on the lookout made a signal for danger and tacked toward us. I found it to be a dangerous shoal 3 miles from us. Happily we saw it before night...At sunrise, for until then the weather was so hazy we could not distinguish the colour of the water, we bore away and I ordered the *Assistant* to lead. At 7 o'clock we saw the shoal bearing west...and...we steered to go southward of it, but to my surprise as we advanced, found the breakers inclined more and more to the south and we were obliged to keep our wind...What I shall prove this shoal to be, I hope will soon be determined. It gives a horrible picture of the navigation of this unknown strait."

¹¹ Schreiber, op. cit., page 146

¹² Schreiber, op. cit., page 146

The order of sailing in the Torres Strait (George Tobin)



Captain Bligh, proceeding with great caution among the sunken and clusters of rocks lying off the Barrier Reef, now brought his ships to the entrance into Torres Strait which, ever since, has been known by the name of Bligh Entrance. Bligh's log continues, "September 3rd. In the morning I directed the *Assistant* to lead to the north-west in hopes of determining something about the land... A dangerous reef was seen from the lower yard: towards this shoal we had very bad soundings of coral bottom. I could see no land. The *Assistant* was on the lookout with boats ahead sounding." This pattern of the *Assistant* and the boats (whaleboat and cutter) going ahead and taking constant soundings continued through the next two weeks as the ships slowly worked their way around the islands that they encountered, in the process also cautiously meeting and trading with a few of the islander inhabitants.

On September 11, however, natives in canoes fired arrows at the *Assistant*, wounding three of that ship's company¹³, who were preparing to put off in the cutter. Lieutenant Portlock immediately responded with "a smart fire of small arms" and, as other natives were also preparing to attack the *Providence*, Bligh discharged two of the quarter-deck guns, which measures brought consternation to the natives who fled from their canoes into the sea and "swam windward like porpoises". On September 13, Lieutenant Portlock wrote, "Every day now becomes more critical on account of the plants...It is absolutely necessary to shorten their allowance of water so that in case we are foiled in finding a passage there may be enough left to save the ship's company during the time of beating back. The want of water is all we have to dread." On September 16, a small ceremony was performed on what Bligh named Possession Island, when the expedition claimed the islands of the Torres Strait in the name of King George III. Two days later, Bligh wrote, "Our situation is worse than before. Rocks all around us and a dreadful tide running. Night obliged me to anchor with little certainty of keeping off the rocks. After a miserable night daylight threatened a storm, but sunrise brought more favourable weather. Gave Lieutenant Portlock orders to lead through such a passage as may appear and sending the boats ahead of him, I made the signal to weigh at slack tide...[Finally] after ranging along the keys off the N.W. of Island "V" in a channel¹⁴ three quarters of a cable wide, and that winding, I passed into an open sea." At last they were through! Matthew Flinders later wrote, "Thus was accomplished, in nineteen days, the passage from the Pacific, or Great Ocean, to the Indian Sea...Perhaps no space of 3 1/2 degrees in length, presents more dangers than Torres' Strait, but, with caution and perseverance, the captains Bligh and Portlock proved them to be surmountable; and within reasonable time..."¹⁵¹⁶

¹³ One of the three, the Quartermaster, subsequently died.

¹⁴ Bligh subsequently called the channel "Bligh's Farewell".

¹⁵ Flinders, Matthew, *A Voyage to Terra Australis* (London, 1814) vol. 1, page xxix

¹⁶ The two courses that Bligh took through the Torres Strait, first with the *Bounty's* launch and, second, with the *Providence* and *Assistant*, are both today recommended as the safest and best.

There was relief all round but concern remained. Bligh wrote, "It was now necessary to push on. I had no port to go to. My water



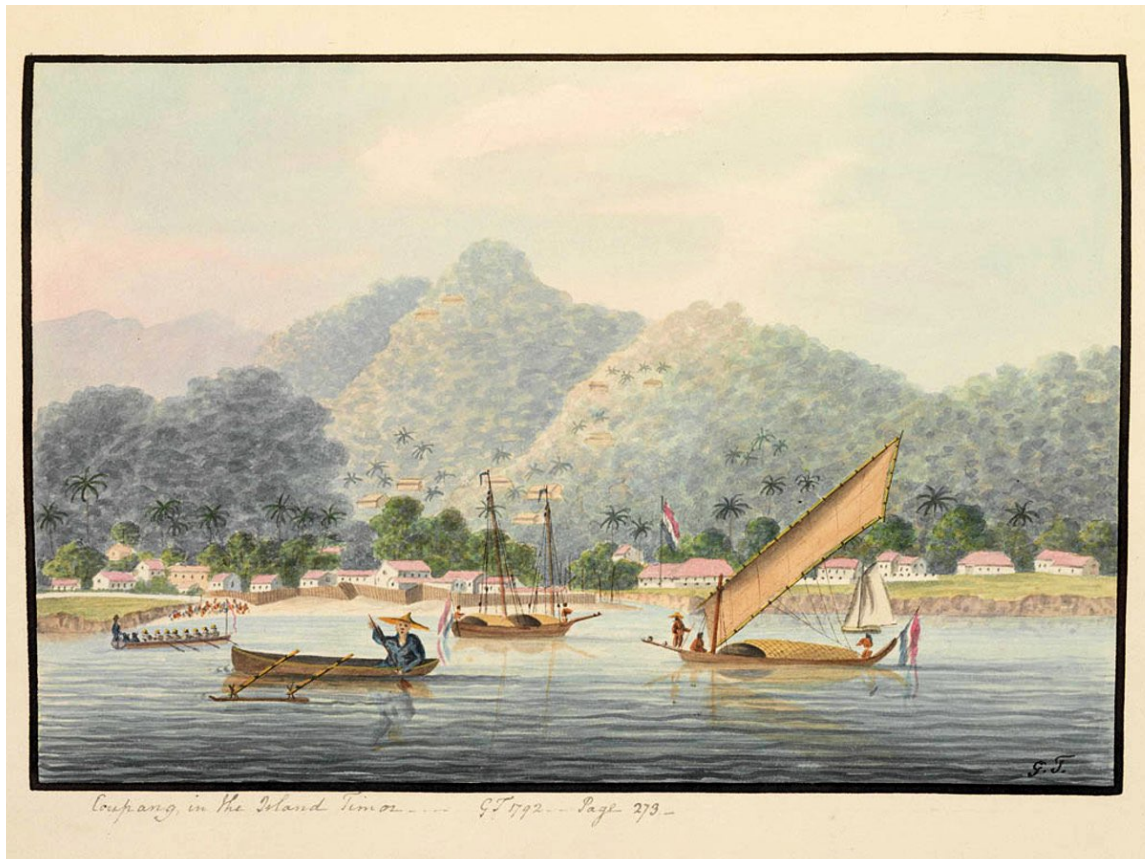
The two vessels obliged to fire on the
native canoes (George Tobin)

was getting short. My ground tackling crippled and only two anchors fit to anchor with." To preserve the plants, Bligh put each man on an allowance of one pint of water daily (separate from their alcohol allowance) and many suffered from thirst. Finally, on October 2, the ships reached Kupang, Timor which Bligh had last seen when he arrived on the *Bounty's* launch. Flinders wrote, "This town as we approached it had more the appearance of an Indian village than an European settlement and but for the Dutch fort and colours...it would scarcely have been taken for one."¹⁷ Here the ships' companies heard the news that Captain Edwards had lost the *Pandora* in Torres Strait in August 1791¹⁸ and that William and Mary

¹⁷ Flinders, Log kept on H.M.S. Providence, 5 February 1793

¹⁸ The *Pandora* had been sent to search for the *Bounty* and the mutineers. She was partially successful in capturing 14 men, of whom four died (along with 31 other crew) when the *Pandora* was wrecked.

Bryant, with seven other convicts, and two young children, had escaped Port Jackson in the Governor's cutter and made a perilous journey to arrive at Kupang on June 5, 1791¹⁹. Indeed, George Tobin recorded, the Dutch governor "was kind enough to allow us the perusal of a journal kept by Bryant".²⁰ On October 10, with water replenished and two buffaloes added to the ships' provisions,



Kupang (George Tobin)

they departed Kupang following a south-westerly course towards Madagascar. Bligh wrote with some anxiety that he had several men on board suffering severely from illness contracted at Timor.

After ten weeks at sea, they arrived at St. Helena, island of about 2,000 inhabitants, on December 17. George Tobin wrote, "More than sixteen months had passed without any communication with our own country. Indeed, we were altogether ignorant of what had taken place on the Grand Theatre of Europe, for at Timor little

¹⁹ Mary Bryant's full story is told in "Escape from Botany Bay: the true story of Mary Bryant" by Gerald and Loretta Hausman (2003).

²⁰ Schreiber, op. cit., page 161

information was to be collected; you will therefore well understand our feelings at again seeing the British flag flying on *terra firma*.”²¹ As at the Cape of Good Hope, many of the population were willing to open their houses for mariner boarders who, George Tobin wrote, “after the tossing of a long voyage, naturally covet a little rest on dry land.”²² Tobin recorded that the crew enjoyed a “skin full” of fresh beef for their Christmas dinner.

The two ships left St. Helena on December 27. On January 22 Barbados was seen to the north-west and the next day the ships anchored in Kingstown Bay, St Vincent. On January 30 the ships once again put to sea and, on February 5, were brought to their moorings in Port Royal harbour, where their long voyage was safely accomplished and the breadfruit tree was at last delivered to Jamaica. While in Jamaica, the ships’ companies, however, received the momentous news that the National Convention of France had declared war on the United Kingdom. The two ships now came under the area’s British naval command and were assigned to war duties, the *Assistant* being often sent to escort ships to ports near at hand. A number of English ships thus came in and were soon put to energetic use in giving chase to French vessels, taking prisoners and bringing prizes into the harbour, in all of this being often aided by the *Assistant*. When the situation stabilised, Bligh was given new instructions to sail to Cape San Antonio (off the coast of Cuba) and there to take such ships of H.M. Honduras Fleet as might be assembled and proceed with them home. In a convoy of six ships, the *Providence* and *Assistant* left San Antonio on June 18 and, after proceeding up the Florida Channel and the Gulf Stream, crossed the Atlantic via Cape Clear on the Irish coast. They finally weighed anchor at Deptford on August 7, 1793, Bligh closing his account with the words, “This voyage has terminated with success, without accident or a moment’s separation of the two ships.”

Joseph Sherrard was now home, with many tales to tell. Significantly, he had witnessed the exploration and charting of a number of the Fijian Islands; observed and experienced something

²¹ Schreiber, op. cit., page 162

²² Schreiber, op. cit., page 164



Bluefields (Jamaica) (George Tobin)

of the cultures of the peoples of the Pacific, together with some very different forms of animal and plant life; taken part in the successful navigation of the Torres Strait for which feat William Bligh is still acclaimed to this day; sailed just north of the northernmost tip of Australia and anchored at the continent's southernmost tip; and had the excitement of chasing enemy naval vessels in the Caribbean. But Joseph wasn't the only one with news! During his absence, his sister Elizabeth had married William York and Joseph arrived home to find a new member of the family, a little niece called Mary Ann. The reunion with this young family must have been joyful and animated.

In 1794 Joseph Sherrard is still with Portlock. We know this because when Joseph made his first will, signed on 27 June, 1794, it was witnessed by Nathaniel Portlock, Captain and H. Moore, Master. It was a simple will, by which Joseph, then unmarried, left his estate to his "sister, Elizabeth York, wife of Mr. William York of King Street, Southwark, London". It is, indeed, through Elizabeth that all of Joseph's blood relatives descend to this day. However, the truly remarkable revelation of this will is that it reveals that Portlock is now captain, and Joseph clerk, of *H.M.S. Reliance* - one

of the famous ships of early Australian exploration. Joseph's connection with the *Reliance* was to change the course of his life and to bring him into close contact with virtually all the famous names of Australia's early colonial history.

As on the *Assistant*, so on the *Reliance*: he was still young and remained a Captain's Clerk. This was however an important role because, in order to have his accounts passed at the Admiralty, a captain had to present at least 25 different completed books and forms and it was the job of the Captain's Clerk to prepare these documents, in addition to which he was also responsible for keeping hand copies of all the Captain's correspondence. The Clerk had high status, working in a small office on the quarterdeck just forward of the captain's cabin. On large ships he had his own cabin in the gunroom but on smaller vessels he lived with the midshipmen on the orlop deck. He worked in close co-operation with the Purser, especially in making up muster books, which were an essential part of victualling the crew.

The Captain's Clerk was a Civilian appointment, typically made by the Captain. This is particularly interesting in Joseph's case because ultimately Portlock did not take the ship out to New South Wales. Rather, it was captained by 25 year old Henry Waterhouse who had previously been to Australia as a midshipman in the First Fleet. That Waterhouse was willing to continue with an appointment made by Portlock would appear to stand as testimony not only to Joseph's abilities but also to his personal qualities.

Although they did not ultimately sail until 25 February 1795, *HMS Reliance*, together with *HMS Supply*, were commissioned to undertake the journey in March 1794, following the appointment of John Hunter as second Governor of the colony of New South Wales in February of that year. *HMS Supply* and *HMS Sirius* had served as the two naval escorts to the convict transports of the First Fleet to Port Jackson in 1788 but when the *Sirius* was subsequently wrecked, the *Supply* was the only ship left to support the two colonies. The *Reliance* was commissioned to replace the *Sirius* and, at the same time, to convey the new governor to take up his appointment. *HMS Reliance* was 27 metres long, a fully rigged ship, classed as a Discovery vessel and carried a ship's

complement of 59 men. *Supply* and *Reliance* were intended to remain on colonial service with the special purpose of transporting livestock to the colony so, on entering his new appointment, Joseph was aware that it could be a number of years before he saw the shores of England again.

The *Reliance* did not however just carry one name (Hunter) which has been passed down in Australian history but three others as well. After Queen Victoria, there is no one in the history of Australia with more public statues to their memory than the navigator and cartographer, Matthew Flinders. It is Matthew Flinders who, between 1801 and 1803, led the first circumnavigation of Australia and identified it as a continent. More than that, it is Matthew Flinders who gave Australia its name, putting it forward as a term to combine New Holland (the western half) with New South Wales (the eastern half). And, for five years, Midshipman Matthew Flinders and Clerk Joseph Sherrard served together as part of the company that made up the officers and crew of the *Reliance*.

Importantly, Matthew Flinders was not the only explorer to come out on that ship. He soon became very good friends with the surgeon, George Bass, a man who had trained as a doctor but whose exceptional abilities, interests and aspirations far exceeded the scope of his profession. In 1797 Bass was to be given permission and a well equipped whaleboat to explore the southern coast of New South Wales and was able to deduce from the great swell and the direction of the tides that a strait separated the mainland from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). In 1798 he returned, this time with Flinders, and together they circumnavigated the whole of Tasmania, their report back to the Governor ultimately leading to the establishment of the second and third British settlements in Australia, Hobart (1803) and Port Dalrymple (Launceston) (1804). At Flinders' suggestion, the strait was later named after Bass.

The fourth significant person on the *Reliance* was the Aboriginal Bennelong. Bennelong was a senior member of the Eora, an Aboriginal people of the Port Jackson area, who was taken to England by the first Governor of the colony, Arthur Phillip, in 1792. On this return journey, he was to spend many hours instructing Bass and the boat builder Daniel Paine (see below) in the language

of the Eora people. The Sydney Opera House today stands on Bennelong Point.

It is indisputable that Joseph Sherrard would have got to know these men and know them well. The ship's confined space would have ensured that (in February 1800, Flinders wrote to Bass, whom he admired enormously, that "your footsteps upon the quarterdeck over my head, took me from my book, and brought me upon deck to walk with you...") and, as indicated above, it is indeed possible that he even shared the sleeping quarters of the midshipmen.

On 19 December 1794 *HMS Reliance*, with *HMS Supply*, was at Plymouth Sound, part of a great assemblage of vessels all waiting to be delivered by the battle fleet clear of the Channel and the danger of French naval attack. The winter was unusually severe; in London the Thames had frozen over and, in rolling and pitching seas, rain and sleet drove hard across the decks. Finally, on 15 February 1795 the Admiral made the signal to get underway and some 500 ships began issuing from the Sound. The next day, the *Reliance* received its signal to join the procession; by 2 p.m. she was at Falmouth and, at 5 p.m., took her last sight of England. The battle fleet turned back two days later and the great assemblage started to break up as the ships set direction for their different destinations.

Now the ship settled into a predictable routine. Under clearing weather, she moved south towards the Canary Islands which they reached on 5 March. The Pitt administration's instruction to Governor Hunter to seek out a person "to fill the office of Boat Builder &c. at Port Jackson" had been fulfilled in the person of Daniel Paine. Daniel Paine's journal of the voyage has survived and he has left us a description of what he found: "The Snowy summit of the Peak afforded a most Beautiful appearance by the reflection of the Sun's rays...the Town of Santa Cruz...a very pleasing appearance by Moonlight the Houses being generally White...neither Fruit or Vegetables were to be obtained but in a

scanty proportion and a most extravagant rate”²³. Presumably, the Purser was prepared for this!

In early May, having crossed the Atlantic, the ship arrived at Rio de Janeiro. For Joseph, this would be the first of several visits to the city. Daniel Paine described the scene: “On entering Rio de Janeiro the Land on each side and the several Islands which are situated around form a very Picturesque and delightful appearance. On the left hand is a Peaked hill from its Shape called the Sugar-Loaf... after having passed the Entrance and leaving a small fortified Island on the left hand the City of St. Sebastian presents itself in the form of a Half Moon as build [sic] round a deep bay on one hand and a most delightful Country interspersed with Villages and Convents on the other with several small Islands scattered around render the Scene more beautiful than Language can describe which enjoyment is much heightened by contrasting it with the Horizon bounded Scene from which the Mariner has just emerged...Our reception here was not such as we had reason to expect as Allies of Portugal not any of our People being Suffered to go on Shore to walk about without the attendance of an Officer or Soldier according to his Rank...evidently from the Jealousy of the Government with respect to the knowledge Foreigners might acquire respecting the Country...Vegetables and some Fruits (particularly Oranges of a superior quality...) are to be had in great Plenty. Beef is tolerable considering the Climate and very cheap somewhat about two pence per Pound. Pork is also to be had reasonable; Mutton I believe is somewhat scarcer and Fish from the consumption amongst Roman Catholicks [sic] is generally dear. Sugar, Coffee and Tobacco very reasonable and altogether this place affords very comfortable refreshments for Shipping.”²⁴

In Rio de Janeiro, the *Supply* having lost two anchors, the *Reliance* hauled a spare anchor out of the hold to give to the *Supply* and three men were lent from the *Providence* and the *Supply* to assist in caulking the ship. In anticipation of the long journey yet ahead, the rigging was also completely overhauled. On June 2, at 6.30 a.m. in

²³ The Journal of Daniel Paine 1794-1797, edited by R. J. B. Knight and A. Frost (Published in association with the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England, Library of Australian History, Sydney , 1983) pp. 5-6

²⁴ The Journal of Daniel Paine, pp. 11-12

fine weather, the *Reliance* weighed anchor and stood out for sea in company with the *Supply*, and at 7 a.m. gave a final salute to the Fort of Santa Cruz.

Now began the longest part of the journey, starting in the South Atlantic Ocean. On 13 June, in a heavy squall with rain, they sighted “great numbers of Albatrosses and other Oceanic birds” and on July 25 “at 6 a.m. several Pieces of Timber supposed to be part of a Wreck passed the Ship which caused some degree of anxiety on Account of the *Providence* which sailed from Rio de Janeiro eight days before us for Port Jackson.”²⁵ Rounding the Cape of Good Hope the ship steered through the Indian Ocean and on 6th September the Australian coast was finally sighted. What must have been Joseph’s feelings? Exhilaration? Most certainly a keen interest. The next day: “Botany bay bearing West at 3 PM a Boat came on board from Port Jackson with several Officers of the Colony and the Pilot; at 6 weathered the S. Head and entered the Harbour, at 7 came to anchor at the entrance of Sydney cove where stands the principal Settlement. Here we found the *Providence* had arrived ten days before and therefore the Colony has been anxiously expecting our arrival. Here also lay the *Endeavour*...and the *Fancy* brig from Bengal with Cattle and Provisions for the Colony of which it stood in great need.”²⁶

At one o’clock on 11 September, the Governor formally took office. The population gathered behind a semi circle of troops, the King’s commission was read by the judge-advocate, the Governor was sworn into office and the *Reliance* thundered a 15 gun salute.

Joseph was to remain with the *Reliance* throughout its entire period of service in Sydney Cove until it arrived back in Plymouth on August 27, 1800. We know this because of an item of correspondence that has survived concerning the purser on the *Reliance*, Christopher Palmer. In December 1819, 19 years later, Mr. Palmer received a letter from the Commissioner for Victualling, His Majesty’s Navy in NSW, calling on him for payment of a debt due from him to the Crown. Apparently, there had been a shortfall

²⁵ The Journal of Daniel Paine, page 17

²⁶ The Journal of Daniel Paine, pp. 21

in the accounts for which he, as Purser, was held responsible. Christopher having in the intervening years suffered a stroke, his brother John replied on his behalf:

“I feel it necessary to mention that I have done everything in my power to learn from my brother what could be the cause of his being so indebted, and all I can obtain is, that in the first instance, he was obliged to take charge as Purser from the remains which



View of Sydney attributed to Thomas Watling, c.
1795-1796.

The verandah on Government House, far left, was added in 1795. Red tiled roofs are beginning to replace shingles.

Captain Portlock handed over to him without a Survey being taken and which upon his faith he received, being assured by him and **Mr Sherrard, then acting as Clerk and Steward**, that everything was correct.

That on my brother's arrival in Rio de Janeiro he was taken so ill that his life was despaired of, so that he was not able to attend to

his duty, and after his return to England in the *Reliance* he was, the greatest part of his time, confined to his Bed, so that his concerns was [sic] entirely left to the care of **Mr. Sherrard, who was Clerk of the Ship**, and who promised my brother after his arrival in England he would make up the accounts for him, and led him to believe he would have a considerable balance bill and he expected would have been the case from what **Mr. Sherrard** had asserted, as he **Mr. Sherrard** had the general overlooking and making out the Provision accounts.”²⁷

While it is unfortunate that Joseph’s name is mentioned in this context, at this distance in time we can make no judgment and it is useful as a glimpse of Joseph in the discharge of his duties.

When John Hunter took up his new position, the British population of New South Wales numbered 3,211 persons of whom 51% were convicts²⁸. Although the Governor’s commission covered a vast territory, in reality his authority extended less than 20 miles to the north and west and only five miles to the south. Hunter had hoped for better but, from previous experience, was not unprepared for what he found: a population suffering from crippling shortages, both of food and practical equipment, visited too often by disease and overshadowed by regular criminal depredations, especially theft. Behind all this lay “the tyranny of distance”, meaning that it could take months for communications to reach London and for critical supplies to arrive in return.

In June 1793, Henry Dundas, the Secretary of State responsible for Colonies, stated that “the procuring live Stock” for New South Wales “is of all other considerations that which leads most directly to put it in a situation to maintain itself”²⁹ and, as mentioned above, it was to transport livestock that the *Reliance* and *Supply* were purchased by the Administration. By 1795, there were a number of young herds in the colony but they were not sufficient to provide for

²⁷ NSW State Records - Colonial Secretary’s Papers (1821-1822), Debt owing to Admiralty by Christopher Palmer - Reel 6018, 4/3521 pp. 305-311

²⁸ John Hunter, “State of the Settlements 25th October 1795”, Enclosure no. 3 in a letter to the Duke of Portland, HRNSW, vol. II, Sydney, 1893, p. 334.

²⁹ The Rt. Hon. Henry Dundas to Lt. Gov. Grose, 30 June 1793, HRA Series 1, vol. 1, page 443.

the colony's expanding needs. To supply the deficiency, salt meat was brought in from England and formed the staple component of the colonial diet.

On the day that he assumed the governorship, Hunter wrote to Secretary of State for the Home Office, William Bentinck, Duke of Portland, that there was "scarsely [sic] a pound of salt provision in store...We are also destitute of every kind of tool used in agriculture, as well as such as are necessary for carpenters and other artisans."³⁰ And three months later, "Your Grace's own private feelings will suggest what I must experience by continual petitions from a people nearly naked, expressive of wants which it is not in my power to relieve".³¹ There was also a serious lack of labour and Hunter was compelled to "direct that every settler, soldier, or other free man who can assist" help in constructing badly needed public buildings, especially granaries, barns and storehouses.

Furthermore, Hunter had major problems with the New South Wales Corps who had been running the colony since the departure of Governor Phillip in 1792. As the colony had no specie, the members of the Corps alone had access to sterling and, with it, opportunities for trade - and profiteering, especially in spirits. Hunter wrote bitterly about the situation: "...the astonishing state of indolence & indifference about the affairs of the Public which the Private traffic of individuals have brought about, is really extraordinary...all is confusion, disorder and licentiousness, & a total inattention to, nay, I might almost say, a direct disobedience of Public Orders; All this My Lord has in my Opinion proceeded from the impatience of those, who having very little real or Active duty to do, have been but too much engag'd in a Most destructive traffic with Spiritous Liquors...it has been as eagerly imported by those who had the means of purchasing, & sold again to the Settlers at an immense profit, so that... very considerable Sums have been realis'd in a very short time by this Ruinous trade; Ruinous to many who might have liv'd now very independantly [sic] on their Farms; To the destruction of all order...in short to the abolition of all discipline & every attention to the Concerns of Government... this

³⁰ John Hunter to the Duke of Portland, 11 September 1795, HRA, Series I, vol. 1, pp. 527-8

³¹ John Hunter to the Duke of Portland, 21 December 1795, HRNSW, vol. II, pp. 245-6

trade with Spirits...has been carried so far, that...it has descended to all the inferior appointments, so that the duty of their respective offices seem'd to have become but a Secondary attention.”³²

In January 1796, four months' after arrival in Sydney Cove, the *Reliance* was sent to Norfolk Island. In 1786 the British government included Norfolk Island as an auxiliary settlement in its plan for the colonisation of New South Wales, principally because it was seen as a source of flax and ship timber. Practically all the hemp and flax required by the Royal Navy for cordage and sailcloth was imported from Russia through St. Petersburg and Riga. It became apparent to the Government that it was unwise to be so dependent on the Empress of Russia and, in the subsequent urgent search for new sources of supply, the Administration identified Norfolk Island as an important resource. In October 1796, the population of Norfolk Island comprised 887 persons including government officials, military officers with their families, free settlers, men and women whose terms of transportation had expired, and convicts³³.

The *Reliance* was sent to Norfolk Island to deliver stores and also to bring a new commandant to replace Philip Gidley King, due to King's ill health. Those on the *Reliance* now saw for the first time the flourishing rainforests and tall Norfolk Island pines that had led Captain James Cook to identify the island as a source for ship masts. They also found, despite periods of great privation, an agricultural settlement that was beginning to hold its own. After taking on fresh water and a supply of carefully counted provisions, the ship eventually arrived back on 5 March. The next month, Henry Waterhouse wrote to Lord Sydney: “How the officers of a dock yard could have purchased two ships [*Reliance* and *Supply*] in so bad a state is inconceivable, having been constantly employed while in port with the carpenter in putting in strengthening timbers, which were absolutely necessary.”³⁴

³² John Hunter to the Duke of Portland, November 12, 1796, HRA, Series 1, vol. 1, pp. 668-669

³³ HRNSW, vol. 3, page 146

³⁴ Copley, John, Sydney Cove 1795-1800: The Second Governor (London, Sydney, 1986), page 58

In August Governor Hunter received word that the Cape of Good Hope, which the British had feared the French would wrest from the Dutch, had rather been seized by the British and he immediately responded by sending the *Reliance* and the *Supply* to the Cape “in order to execute that part of my instructions from his Majesty which relates to the stocking this colony with live cattle.”³⁵ On September 29 that year, the two ships departed, first calling in at Norfolk Island for additional water, grain and livestock, then crossing the South Pacific, rounding Cape Horn and, joined by *HMS Britannia*, arriving at Table Bay on January 16, 1797.

NSW Commissary John Palmer immediately entered into negotiations with suppliers and subsequently bought 70 head of young Cape cattle for the colony. With the opportunity for re-sale, several of the ships’ officers also purchased animals. When the *Reliance* weighed anchor, it carried, according to Waterhouse³⁶, a total of 49 head of black cattle, three mares and 107 sheep. With men and animals crowded on deck and in pens in cabins³⁷, Waterhouse wrote, “I believe no ship ever went to sea so lumbered.”³⁸

The sheep, which were Spanish merino, were not bought by Commissary Palmer, but by several of the officers. Waterhouse and William Kent, captain of the *Supply*, each bought 26 sheep. Eventually, Waterhouse was to sell some of his merinos to John Macarthur who began an industry which so impacted Australia that, by the twentieth century, it was described as the nation whose wealth was built on the sheep’s back. Joseph Sherrard was witness to the beginning of this industry.

The trip back from the Cape was a nightmare as the two ships encountered the fierce storms of the southern Indian Ocean. The

³⁵ John Hunter to Secretary Evan Nepean, 31 August 1796, HRA, Series 1, vol. 1, p. 649.

³⁶ Henry Waterhouse, 26 June 1797, “Importation of live stock on the *Reliance* from the Cape of Good Hope; Private Stock embarked on the *Reliance*, Cape of Good Hope, HRNSW, vol. III, p. 237

³⁷ The captains of the *Reliance* and *Supply* both gave up their cabins for the livestock.

³⁸ Henry Waterhouse to William Waterhouse, 20 August 1797, ZML MSS 6544 [ZSafe 1/187] ML, Sydney

Reliance struggled between feeble daylight and all enveloping blackness as towering seas smashed across her bows and the wind roared through the rigging. Waterhouse described the journey to his father as “one of the longest and most disagreeable voyages I ever made. We met with one gale of wind, the most terrible I ever saw or heard of, expecting to go to the bottom every moment...We arrived safe at Port Jackson with forty head of black cattle, 3 mares and nearly two thirds of the sheep alive, but like chameleons they liv’d on air [being thrown against bulkheads and each other] the part of the time...”³⁹

The usual 35 to 40 day voyage took 78 days. The ship finally arrived back on June 26, 1797. It was found to be in a very poor condition, though better off than the *Supply* which had struggled home to be declared “a complete mass of rotten timber”⁴⁰ and condemned as “irreparable in this Port or any other”. The *Reliance*, itself, was, to quote Waterhouse again, “so leaking when we got in that we have taken everything out of her in hopes of repairing her, altho’ at this moment there is scarsly [sic] anything in her, and the water as smooth as a millpond, she keeps our whole ship’s company pumping from three to four hours a day [did that include the Clerk?], how she will be patch’d up I do not know, it will take near a twelve month, and then I shall dread going to sea in her.”⁴¹

It was indeed months before the *Reliance* was considered seaworthy again. On January 10, 1798, Governor Hunter wrote to Portland that, “My chief concern is that the length of time requisite for such repairs has completely lost the season for returning to the Cape of Good Hope for another cargo of live cattle, and has much retarded many other public works.”⁴² Finally, in May 1798, the *Reliance* was again judged seaworthy and departed Sydney Cove, again to Norfolk Island, this time carrying 100 casks of salt and

³⁹ Henry Waterhouse to William Waterhouse, 20 August 1797, ZML MSS 6544 [ZSafe 1/187] Mitchell Library, Sydney

⁴⁰ John Hunter to the Duke of Portland, 25 June 1797, HRA, Series I, vol. II, p.32

⁴¹ Henry Waterhouse to William Waterhouse, 20 August 1797, ZML MSS 6544 [ZSafe 1/187] Mitchell Library, Sydney

⁴² Historical Records of New South Wales (1895), volume 3, page 346

1200 bushels of wheat. The return journey, beset by storms, took 27 days. Today it is reached by a flight of under three hours!

On January 12, 1799 the sloop “Norfolk” drew alongside *Reliance*, moored in Sydney Cove. On board were George Bass and Matthew Flinders who had just completed three months’ circumnavigation of Van Diemen’s Land, showing that it was an island and not an extension of the mainland. It might be assumed that Joseph’s captain and Joseph himself were among the first to hear the news!

Five months later the Governor was told to expect *HMS Porpoise* to replace the *Reliance* and, on March 3, 1800, the *Reliance*, still under the command of Captain Waterhouse and with Joseph Sherrard and Matthew Flinders still part of the ship’s complement, set sail for England. On this return journey, Waterhouse sailed around and charted the Antipodes Islands to the south east of New Zealand. The *Reliance* arrived back in Plymouth on August 27, 1800 and subsequently anchored at Portsmouth. Contained on board was a box of natural history specimens that George Bass had sent for Sir Joseph Banks.

As Flinders’ duties did not permit him to quit the ship until October, it can be assumed that Joseph was also occupied for several weeks before he was free to leave. Having now, however, more than served the time required for promotion, the records show that he rejoined the Royal Navy on February 8 1801 and thirteen months later, on March 5 1802, he received his Warrant as a Purser. He must have been proud to stand in the officers’ uniform⁴³ for which he had worked so hard when, later that year, on May 9, he married at St. Benet Fink Church, City of London, 28 year old Miss Lucy Rowlett. Did he know her before he went to Sydney Cove? Had he been waiting until he could offer her a secure future before he proposed? We will never know. The marriage was performed under licence (dated May 7) obtained from the Faculty Office. The licence meant that they did not need to wait for the Banns to be read on three successive Sundays before the marriage could take place. The haste suggests either some uncertainty about whether

⁴³ It was not until 1807 that Pursers received their own regulated uniform.

Lucy would be able to accompany Joseph when he next set sail the following month or uncertainty about the ship's departure date.

Since 1799 another ship, *HMS Buffalo*, had joined the colonial service, being manned by the Commander and officers of the *Supply*, which had been condemned. Whether Joseph indicated an interest in the *Buffalo* is not known but, in any event, he was appointed Purser of this ship and ordered to take passage out to join the ship in Sydney Cove. As Purser, Joseph was one of five Officers warranted to the ship by the Navy Board. In exchange for his warrant a financial surety would have been deposited. This raises the question who might have paid it. The will of a James Sherrard⁴⁴ of the Parish of St. George, Southwark, dated March 25, 1811, left a bequest of 50 pounds to "Joseph Sherrard, my nephew". It is possible that this James Sherrard was an uncle of Joseph and, accordingly, may also have assisted him earlier in life.

The Purser was the ship's supply officer, responsible for food, clothing, heat, lighting and bedding. It was a very responsible position with expenditure being charged to the Purser's account at fixed prices. Most of the expenses involved food and drink and the Purser had to account very carefully for their consumption by keeping an accurate muster book, showing exactly how many men were victualled each day. Detailed accounts had then to be produced for every transaction and variable before the purser could be paid. He was, however, allowed one eighth for wastage on all items except meat. As Purser, Joseph would have had rights to mess and berth in the wardroom alongside officers holding commissions from the Crown.

In May 1802 Joseph's first captain, Nathaniel Portlock, had recommissioned *HMS Glatton* from a guardship in protected waters to a convict ship. This is the ship that Joseph and, it would appear, Lucy also⁴⁵ joined on June 11, 1802 for its journey out to Australia. The *Glatton* carried 270 male and 135 female prisoners and some 30 Free Settlers. The ship sailed via a re-supply stop at Rio de

⁴⁴ James Sherrard married Ann Woodfall on February 14, 1765 and appears to have been born in 1744.

⁴⁵ Lucy Sherrard was in Sydney in time to depart on the *Buffalo*, which left Sydney one month after the arrival of the *Glatton*, in April 1803.

Janeiro to the penal settlement where she arrived on March 13, 1803. On arrival, about 100 of those on board were found to be suffering in varying degrees from scurvy. *Glatton* was one of only two Royal Navy ships used to transport convicts to Port Jackson.

Joseph joined the *Buffalo* immediately on arrival, on March 14, 1803. He would instantly have been struck by the carved kangaroo figure at the ship's head, which particularly amused the Aboriginals. On April 21, the *Buffalo*, under Commander William Kent, was ordered to take supplies to Norfolk Island and thence continue through the islands exploring possibilities for the supply of cattle and forage. A record of this voyage has survived in the letters that Mrs. Eliza Kent wrote home to her mother between May 13 and October 13, 1803⁴⁶. From the first letter, we know that Lucy Sherrard was also on board. Mrs. Kent wrote that "all appear comfortable, cheerful and happy - Mrs. Sherrard, the Carpenters and Corporals' wives [a branch of the N.S.W. Corps was also on board], Nanny [the Kents' child's nurse] and your humble serv't. are the only females on board."

There was no harbour or anchorage for shipping at Norfolk Island and Mrs. Kent wrote wryly, "Don't you think they deserve much credit, that first proposed making a settlement in such a place. Infamous! Shocking!" It was only with great difficulty that Mrs. Kent made it onto the Island, where she enjoyed the hospitality of the Governor, and Lucy Sherrard did not leave the ship. Joseph, however, did go ashore. Mrs. Kent recounted that her return boat rowed three miles in the open sea, then, having safely reached the *Buffalo*, "I only detained the boat to reward the men for their trouble, and to write a few lines, and then arranged everything for our departure the moment the cutter with the master and purser returned, for which we were very impatient, and wished to put an end to the anxiety which must always prevail from the perilous situation all ships are in at that place. A signal gun was fired to hasten their return, but there was no appearance of the boat till nine o'clock the next morning, when she came off, and informed us that the surf had risen so high in the evening, before the boat that

⁴⁶ Kent Family Papers (Eliza Kent Journal), CY1267 (frames 1-54), Mitchell Library, Sydney; also found in edited form in *The Universal Magazine*, 1809, "Voyage from New South Wales to Prince of Wales Island" pp. 14, 105, 194, 294, 391.

brought me off returned, that the coxswain was washed overboard three times, my letter lost, and the boat very nearly wrecked.”⁴⁷

On the west coast of New Caledonia, on May 19, Kent found and charted “one of the finest harbours in the world”, Port St. Vincent. The *Buffalo* remained at Port St. Vincent for a number of weeks. While moored, they met some of the local natives and bartered with them, receiving in return fine mullet, yams, two turtles, sugarcane, spears and *bagos* (clubs) in return for cloth and linen. Captain Kent sent the pinnace and cutter boats in search of a watering place (the number of persons and stock on board having considerably depleted the *Buffalo*’s supply) but, in attempting to land, one of the pinnace men received a spear in his thigh. The spear-thrower subsequently showing contrition and making peace offerings, they were regularly afterwards visited by canoes of natives for barter. A number of them came onto the *Buffalo* and were entertained by some of the seamen dancing and Captain Kent and Mrs. Kent’s brother both playing the flute. Sometimes those on board caught fine, beautifully coloured snapper with hooks and lines.

On leaving the harbour, they kept as near to the shore as possible, all the while keeping a wary eye on the reef which extended for 300 miles along the New Caledonian south-west coast and “occasioned us several very unpleasant alarms”. On July 10, those on board were surprised by the strange appearance of the sea “which, on a nearer approach, we found to be pumice-stone floating on the water”, which they presumed to be the issue of two nearby volcanoes. Mrs. Kent wrote, “The moon was obscured by black, heavy clouds; and vivid flashes of lightning with loud peals of thunder, accompanied the rain which fell in torrents. Sheets of pumice-stone almost stopped the ship’s way, which laboured through them with a crushing noise. It was an awful night, and anxiously did I watch for the approach of day...The variety of the islands we fall in with, makes this Voyage an interesting one; but the Anxiety attending it lessens in a great degree the pleasure - particularly to the Commander, who has passed the greater part of every Night since we left Harbour upon Deck”.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Kent family papers

⁴⁸ Kent family papers

Passing the coast of New Guinea, the ship next drew into Simbo in the Bougainville Straits (Solomon Islands). Upon anchoring, they were immediately surrounded by canoes bearing upwards of 100 men. Mrs. Kent described them: “the whole of these people had their teeth, probably from their constant use of the beetle nut, dyed as black as their skins...Many of them had their hair powdered. This powder was excessively white...it gave many of them a terrific appearance, by their eyebrows being filled with it, and circles being likewise drawn round their eyes and mouths, made them, at a little distance, look like masks...Their weapons were spears and bows and arrows. With these they must do dreadful execution from their having a long barb of the tail of the sting-ray, which has a sharp point.”⁴⁹

At Amboyna (present day Maluku, Ambon Island, Indonesia), which they reached on August 19, they were greeted by a population comprising a mixture of Batavians, Germans, Japanese, Chinese, Malays and indigenous Amboynese. There Mrs. Kent visited the local bazaar. On leaving Amboyna, she was presented by local dignitaries with a writing desk “made of a beautiful wood called Kayoo-booke”, two cassowary eggs and “a beautiful tortoiseshell betel-box” (the inhabitants were accustomed to chewing on the betel-nut and the betel boxes were exquisite objects finely wrought with silver or gold clasps).

This suggests that Joseph and Lucy Sherrard must have returned from the voyage with their own collection of souvenirs which, presumably, later featured in their homes in both London and Walmer. Joseph had a very warm spot in his heart for his great niece Lucy Sherrard Finley and it is not hard to imagine her listening entranced to the stories he delighted to share to such an appreciative audience. The *Buffalo* did not tarry at Amboyna because it was unable to obtain any provisions there, either fresh or salted.

The next stop was Kupang, Timor, which Joseph had of course visited in 1792 but which they now found “reduced to nearly a mess

⁴⁹ Kent family papers

of ruins from the firing of the *Assistance* in the late War⁵⁰ in consequence of the Inhabitants of Kupang having in the most treacherous and dishonourable manner decapitated the Surgeon of the *Assistance* who had been sent on Shore by Captain Pecknam with a Flag of Truce - accompanied by the Purser - the latter made his escape and related the horrid transaction - to avenge which the *Assistance* fired on the Town...attacking with precipitancy into the country - blew up the Fort and Castle - and demolished the principal buildings - the ruins of these have nearly been swallowed up since by Earthquakes - so that there is scarcely [sic] a vestige remaining of its former Respectability".⁵¹

When they were preparing to leave, the Governor of Kupang, who was gravely ill, presented the Surgeon of the *Buffalo*, who had sought to render assistance, with the "Rajah's Crown of pure gold". Mrs. Kent continues her tale: "Captain Kent having determined not to stay an hour longer than the Stock could be procured and got on board which he thought might be two days, I was desirous of availing myself of the first opportunity that offered for the child [the Kents' son, William] to go on Shore - therefore I allowed him to go under the care of Nanny and a Man servant in the Pinnace, [also] the first Lieut., Purser, Surgeon and a Midshipman (the latter my Brother)...they left the Ship at four o'clock and were desired to return by Sunset. My Mind was tolerably easy for some time after the Sun's Decline - then ten o'clock came and no appearance of the Boat- every Minute was I listening for the distant sound of Oars - nothing was heard but the dashing surf against the ruins of the Castle - Eleven o'clock arrived and I was little short of Distraction... Captain Kent's apprehensions were now I believe as painful as mine - the general opinion was that the Boat had swamp'd in the Surf and every Soul had perished...The Jolly Boat was now hoisted out and four hands with Mr. Caldwell sent in her. Poor Mrs. Sherrard (the Purser's Wife) was nearly as bad as myself - but she was relieved by tears - I could not shed one. The Ship's Bells now rung twelve - an awful Stillness succeeded - at length it was interrupted by the joyful Sound of Boats approaching - they were hailed from

⁵⁰ Kupang had been under the control of the Dutch East Indies Company until the French revolutionary armies occupied the Netherlands in 1795

⁵¹ Kent Family Papers

the Ship - two answered...Before they were aware, the Boat was left dry half a Mile up the River - nor could every effort remove her till assisted by the Tide - this was the cause of their detention.”⁵²

The *Buffalo* proceeded to Anjer Road, Java where they procured poultry at a very low price and “an hundred pine-apples for a Spanish dollar” but they did not stay there on account of the “Java fever” that prevailed. Despite that, on October 3, Mrs. Kent wrote, “Since we left Java, many of the ship’s company have been affected with intermittent fevers and dysenteries. And, ten days later, “If you know any persons that have an over-abundant stock of patience, it would be an act of charity to prevail on them to convey it to us poor mariners, who are exposed to a scorching sun, off the coast of Malacca, without being able to proceed but in a very slow degree...What complexion, indeed, could retain any brilliancy after being (if you will allow the expression) parboiled for six months.”⁵³

Kent was unsuccessful in obtaining adequate cattle in the islands but, the *Buffalo* proceeding to India, he subsequently shipped 84 head, four mares and two stallions at Calcutta.

On June 9, 1803, Matthew Flinders in the *Investigator* returned to Sydney Cove, having successfully circumnavigated Australia. After 14 months at sea, the *Buffalo* returned on June 12, 1804 and, on August 11, Joseph again appears on public record, this time on the list of grants and leases, as having been granted a lease of 58 rods in “the township of Sydney” at a rent of ten shillings per year.

In preparation for the *Buffalo*’s next voyage, Joseph is shortly after found advertising in the Sydney press, as follows:

To the Bakers residing at Sydney,
“Wanted about 10,000 Pounds of BISCUIT for the use of His Majesty’s Ship *Buffalo*, any Person willing to supply the same are to deliver in Tenders to Mr. Joseph Sherrard, Purser of the said Ship, at his House near the Barracks, on Monday next 10th instant...”⁵⁴

⁵² Kent family papers

⁵³ Kent family papers

⁵⁴ The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, September 9, 1804

Not only is this advertisement useful in giving us a glimpse of Joseph in the discharge of his duties, it also reveals where he lived. There is in the Mitchell Library, Sydney a view of Sydney Cove in 1802/04 (artist: Edward Dayes) which shows the Barracks building on high ground on the west (right) of the cove, to the left of the tower for St. Philip's Church (located at today's Lang Park). It is very possible that Joseph's house was one of the two humble dwellings between the tower and the Barracks. (The convict barracks are to the right of the tower and the Governor's house is on rising ground at the far left.)



View of Sydney, 1804 (Edward Dayes)

That Joseph was not immune to the endemic problem in the colony, namely, theft, is shown from the below:

"Ten Pounds Reward

A most daring Burglary having been committed on the Premises of Mr. J. Sherrard, by forcibly breaking the lock of his chaise house on Thursday last between the hours of 7 and 8 in the evening, and the

hammock and bedding of one of his servants stolen thereout and the Robbery repeated again last night, a quantity of wearing apparel having been then stolen out of the same place.

Any person who can give information of the said depredations, so as to lead to conviction, shall receive the above Reward from me. J. Sherrard”⁵⁵⁵⁶

The servants referred to would have been convicts, officers being allowed “two convicts each, to be maintained out of the public stores for two years longer but after that period they should maintain such as they are desirous of keeping.”⁵⁷

Late in 1804 *H.M.S. Buffalo* was one of four ships which sailed south to make land on the River Tamar at the northern tip of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania). The convoy comprised 146 officials, soldiers and convicts, together with equipment, sheep, cattle, pigs and one mule. On November 11, Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson landed from the *Buffalo* and, with a salute from the *Buffalo* and a volley of muskets from the soldiers of the NSW Corps, took possession of the northern territory of Van Diemen’s Land in the name of King George III. The following day the party was approached by a group of about 80 Aboriginals. A scuffle ensued until the guard, to defend itself, fired on them, killing one and wounding another. The Aboriginals retaliated with spears and stones and, although they caused little damage, Paterson decided that any future explorations would need to be well armed.

If there were any doubt about Joseph being there, he wrote a letter to Henry Waterhouse, dated July 20, 1805⁵⁸, which mentions it:

⁵⁵ The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, April 13, 1806

⁵⁶ Two months later one Michael Caffedy was brought to the bar on a charge of having received knowing to be stolen, five pairs of shoes, the property of J. Sherrard, Esq. Purser of His Majesty’s Ship *Buffalo*. (The Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser, June 22, 1806)

⁵⁷ Dundas to Grose June 30, 1793, HRA, Series 1, vol. 1, page 442

⁵⁸ Henry Waterhouse Papers 1786-1811, 1813-1819, MLMSS6544/3 Safe 1/187, CY 3970, Mitchell Library, Sydney

“You must long before this have heard that Colonel Patterson [sic] has been sent to Port Dalrymple in Bass Straits [sic] to form a new Settlement, we have already made two Trips to it and, though not settled nine months, is in great [indecipherable] exclusive of the Barracks for the Civil & Military Officers, Storehouses etc. Three streets of neat Weatherboarded houses are erected - indeed they have every advantage as the timber there is, I suppose, the finest in the World for the purpose of Building. The entrance of the River you know is very forbidding but it is not so dangerous as we were led to expect - particularly in the instance of Tides - they neither run with that rapidity nor are they so irregular as they have been described - at least we did not find them so. Perhaps Captain Flinders went in at the time or shortly after a Flood - during our stay there at two opposite Seasons of the Year we never found the Tides to exceed more than Four Knots an hour. Mr. Collins who took a Survey of it a few Months before we went down, remarks the Tide to run Seven Knots - there are certainly many dangers but they surely may be avoided by placing Buoys and when a Ship is past Green Island, she is in as much safety as if she was laying in Blackwall or Limehouse Reaches in the River Thames.”

In this same letter, Joseph mentions George Bass who had sailed into the Pacific from Port Jackson on a trading venture on February 5, 1803 and, with a complement of 24 men, had disappeared. Joseph wrote:

“You are no doubt anxious to hear any information respecting Mr. Bass. He has now sailed from this place very near Two Years and a half and I am sorry to say no certain information has as yet been received concerning him but as we are all happy to ease our apprehension for the safety of those we esteem, however improbably, I cannot avoid informing you that from the account of Mr. Aitken, who was in the *Supply* with Captain Kent, there is a possibility of his safety. Aitken a few months ago went in a small vessel belonging to Mr. Lord to some Islands that lay to the Northwards for the purpose of procuring a Cargo of Sandal-wood, the Natives of which Islands informed him of a Small Vessel that had recently touched there and from their description he says he has every reason to think it might have been Mr. Bass in the *Venus* - among other things they mention the Captain wore Spectacles

[Bass wore spectacles from 1802]. Should it have been him, which I sincerely hope it may, he will no doubt run to China [Bass had engaged in an exploratory trading voyage to China in 1799].”

Two hundred years later, Bass’ disappearance remains a subject of mystery and conjecture.

Joseph concludes his letter by saying, “Mrs. Sherrard joins me in best wishes for your health and prosperity and hopes you will oblige her by accepting a Pair of Pheasant Skins...we both still hope to have the pleasure of presenting them personally to you in less than Eighteen Months.”

Joseph’s hopes of being in England by January 1807 at the latest were not fulfilled. The ship remained based in Sydney and his duties continued. In May 1806 he is found appealing as Agent for the Office and Seamen of the *Buffalo*, claiming as lawful prizes two Spanish vessels, the *Estramina* and the *St. Paulo and St. Francisco*, captured in the Spanish Ports of Coquimbo and Caldero on the coast of Chile by the brig *Harrington* in September and October 1804. What had happened was that, as the captain of the *Harrington*, William Campbell, later attested, he had heard from American whalers that Britain and Spain were at war and taken the opportunity to seize the ships and bring them back to Australian waters as prizes. When it transpired that war with Spain had not been declared until 12 December 1804, the vessels were treated as the property of the King of Spain until that date, at which point they were taken possession of by the *Buffalo*. Joseph was now asking the Court to condemn the two vessels, together with all Spanish property found on board the *Harrington*, as lawful prize to the *Buffalo*. The outcome was that the Court decided that the two vessels should be sold by public auction and the monies arising therefrom lodged in the Governor’s hands, to be placed in public funds until a final adjudication should take place. According to historian George William Rusden, proceeds from the sale of the ships were eventually handed over to the Spanish government so, on this occasion, the men of the *Buffalo* were to be disappointed.

In August, 1806 the new Governor, William Bligh, was welcomed to Sydney and *H.M.S. Buffalo* played its part in the ceremony, saluting

him when he went on board with 15 guns and three cheers from the ship's company. The *Sydney Gazette* and *New South Wales Advertiser* takes up the account: "The ceremony of the Governor's commission was read immediately afterwards, in front of Government House where the Military were drawn up, with the Civil Department and Inhabitants. After His Excellency had taken the Oaths, he addressed the Inhabitants in a short but impressive speech, which was received by the spectators with three cheers; when the New South Wales Corps fired three rounds the Battery saluted with 19 guns, which His Majesty's ships *Buffalo* and *Porpoise*, with the *Sinclair*, *Fortune*, and other vessels repeated with 15 guns each."⁵⁹

With the arrival of Governor Bligh, Governor King was now relieved of his commission and preparations began for the return of the *Buffalo* to England. On August 24, 1806, Joseph advertised his property as follows:

"To be sold by auction by Mr. Bevan,
On Monday the 1st of September next,
A Handsome, commodious, bricked and weather boarded, shingled Dwelling House with two good store rooms, a kitchen, stable, chaise house, and a garden well fenced and in a high state of cultivation; most eligibly and desirably situated with a lease of which Twelve Years are unexpired - the Residence of J. SHERRARD Esq. purser of His Majesty's Ship *Buffalo*.
Also a capital strong Bay Gelding warranted safe to ride and drive; a capital strong Gig with English wheels, springs and axle tree and a compleat [sic] set of plated Harness, sundry Household Furniture, a number of Books, &c, &c, &c....
Possession may be had of the premises on the 28th day of September next."⁶⁰

The above shows that Joseph and Lucy had a reasonable standard of living. Writing in 1795, Daniel Paine had recorded that, "The Houses of the Principal Officers and Superintendents are built of Brick but confined to a Ground Floor and other Houses in general

⁵⁹ The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, August 17 1806

⁶⁰ The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser

are built of Posts stuck in the Ground at convenient distances to support Wattles and plaistered [sic] both inside & out.”⁶¹ Daniel had his kitchen at the end of his garden and Joseph probably did too, to reduce the risk of fire.

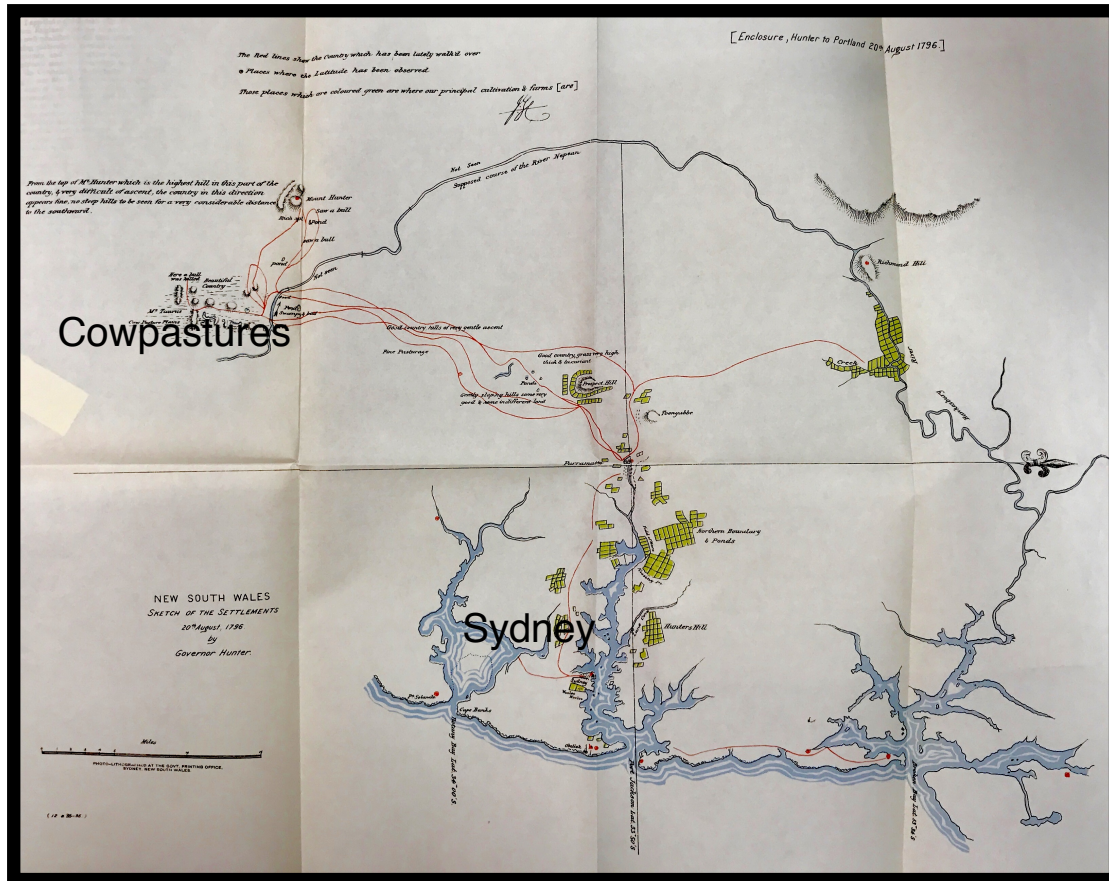
The 28th day of September had been set because that was the day the *Buffalo* was due to sail but the departure was delayed because Governor King, who was to return on the ship with his wife, became seriously ill and then delayed again by the loss of grain in the Hawkesbury River floods and the possibility that the *Buffalo* would have to fetch food supplies from the Cape.

This being so, on January 1, 1807, Joseph was still in the colony when it is recorded that Governor Bligh made him a grant of 100 acres in the district of Cabramatta (rent: 2 shillings per year commencing after 5 years). Joseph was about to leave the colony and, while he could not have known at the time that he would not return (there is no evidence that he did), it is pretty clear that he wanted the land at least as an investment, as others, no longer resident in the colony, had done before. In this respect, his 1805 letter to Henry Waterhouse⁶² quoted above, also included: “I am exceedingly sorry it has not been in my power to procure you a plan of your Farm...Captain Rowley has now got some person to live in it - and it has been put in better condition, I should really think of some respectable Settler who may be coming to Port Jackson to rent it of you.” Joseph was to retain the Cabramatta lease until 1832.

It is noteworthy that, during his (albeit truncated) tenure, William Bligh only made three land grants, so, Joseph, who of course knew Bligh from the breadfruit expedition 16 years back, might be considered very fortunate. Non-commissioned Marine Officers were allowed to receive 100 acres over and above the 30 acres allowed to ex-convicts so Joseph’s grant complied with the regulation.

⁶¹ The Journal of Daniel Paine, page 34

⁶² Captain Waterhouse had left Sydney in the *Reliance* in 1800. He died in England in 1812 and never returned to Australia.



1796 map of New South Wales commissioned by Governor Hunter

The 100 acres that Joseph received was, however, located in the most coveted grazing land in the colony. In 1788 the First Fleet included black Cape cattle (four cows and two bulls). Five months after the landing, they strayed off, their loss being a great blow to the struggling colony. They were lost for years until, in 1795, reports of sightings from Aboriginals reached the ear of the Governor. He was quick to send a party out which discovered that the original six had multiplied in number and a large herd was now grazing on the rich, well watered slopes and alluvial flats of the Nepean River. Governor Hunter labelled the area Cowpastures. It can be clearly seen in the north-west corner of the map of New South Wales commissioned by Governor Hunter in 1796 (see above). The Cowpastures is where the Australian agricultural and pastoral industries began, and it is where Joseph Sherrard was granted his land.



Mrs Anna Josepha King (watercolour by William Nicholas)

We know this because in 1891⁶³ the Evening News published the following notice under the Real Property Act: “Applications having been made to bring the lands hereunder described under the provisions of the Real Property Act, Certificates of Indefeasible Title will issue...No. 8326. County of Cumberland, Parishes of Melville and Cabramatta, 3560 acres on the Cowpasture-road, comprises... 100 acres to Joseph Sherrard.” In 2016 Sherrard Avenue in the new suburb of Elizabeth Hills, adjacent to Cowpasture Road, is named for Joseph Sherrard.

Finally, on February 10, 1807, after the departing Governor and Mrs. King gave a farewell dinner party on board ship, the *Buffalo* set sail for England. A number of the Kings’ friends, including John Macarthur, accompanied them in small boats three miles outside the Heads. The *Buffalo* sailed across the Pacific via the coasts of

⁶³ Evening News, November 21, 1891

New Zealand and Cape Horn. Among other passengers were the Reverend Samuel Marsden and his wife, on their way to England to promote New Zealand as a mission field and to enlist preachers and teachers for New South Wales.

The passage experienced its usual quota of gales, with towering seas recorded as slamming into the passengers' living quarters. On one occasion, as recorded by Mrs. King in her journal, "At eleven o'clock at night a Fire ball fell on the Quarter deck - made its way down the Hatchway - the stream dispersed in many directions where it made its escape God only knows - the officer of the watch...and three men were knocked down to all appearances for dead - every person felt the shock. I saw the Flash of Fire and heard the report which was as loud as a Cannon - thank God the ship was safe. The pumps were tried but for more than 20 minutes we were all expecting that we were all in the greatest danger - supposing that the Ball had gone through the ship - the pumps were sounded constantly...The poor little calf 4 sheep 2 pigs and other stock died from the shock of the before mentioned thunder bolt. We are deprived from having any milk as the cow is gone dry - from the death of the calf."⁶⁴

After Cape Horn, as the ship entered the southern Atlantic, they also entered the area where they might expect to encounter the ships of the enemy, Napoleonic France. On May 5th, Mrs. King recorded in her diary⁶⁵:

"at half past Eleven at Night a sail was Discovered - we wore and observed she was coming towards us. She appeared a large Ship...The appearance of this great ship put us all to the rout. The Women and children were all ordered to the Breadroom, where to my great concern I was obliged to go, with my young ones. On my entering the place a great Rat saluted me - which by the bye frightened me more than the fear of coming to action - never did I experience such a heat and had we not been released by the Commanding Officer I think I must have fainted with fright and fear -

⁶⁴ Mrs. Anna Josepha King memorandum of passage from New South Wales to England in H.M.S. *Buffalo* 1807, King Family Papers, 1800-1903, B774, CY 3167, frames 46-67, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

⁶⁵ Mrs. King's memorandum of passage

When she came quite near us Captain Houston hailed her which was not answered the first time. When she was close alongside she answered and said she was the *Thisbe* Frigate 28 guns - Captain Sheppard going to the River Plat. She is taking out Forces under the Command of General Whitlock and General Gower to take the place in case it was not already in our possession. As soon as each ship understood each other, the officers of the *Thisbe* came on board the *Buffalo* - They brought us a few English Newspapers - after exchanging the Latitude etc. the officers returned to their ship - Captain Sheppard waited on the Governor at an early hour next morning. He took breakfast and then returned to the *Thisbe*. The Governor returned with Captain Sheppard to pay his respects to Major-General Whitlock that gentleman felt our situation extremely...he was so good to send me 4 or 5 pounds of nice gingerbread, 2 pounds of tea and a very fine leg of English mutton, 21 bottles of Sodar [sic] water...In the evening the *Thisbe* cheered us, which was returned by the *Buffalo* and we parted company."

The gifts of Major-General Whitlock were very welcome because, by now, the ship's supplies of food and water were severely reduced. They were further delayed by head winds, and the *Buffalo* was both leaking and swarming with rats. Mrs. King wrote that the tea was gone and rats had consumed the greater part of 11 Flitches of Bacon, 9 Hams and 3 casks of Potatoes; on one night alone the vermin consumed 6 pounds of meal from the Gunroom Mess. A bad leak was found in the Bread Room which spoiled a good deal of the bread. Joseph Sherrard was clearly now managing the Mess on starvation rations. One morning the ship trembled violently, there was a terrific crash and the fore top-mast, the main yard and the top gallant yard were all carried away. Mrs. King wrote, "I pray God that we may soon have a fair wind - God only knows what will become of [us] the ship is in a very bad State increasing the Leaks and the Rigging Dreadfully bad - a something is gone every puff of wind."⁶⁶

One hundred and seventy miles from Rio de Janeiro, with less than a week's half-rations on board, the *Buffalo* gratefully received gifts of four fowl and 28 oranges from a small coastal vessel. As they

⁶⁶ Mrs. King's memorandum of passage

approached the harbour, the ship encountered another storm, one of the worst of the entire voyage, obliging the captain to put to sea again. But at least, when finally in Rio, there was opportunity for repairs and re-provisions and, thus re-equipped, the *Buffalo* crossed the Atlantic safely and finally dropped anchor on Sunday, November 8th. The timing was felicitous for the officers and men because we know that, before the end of the year, the *Buffalo* was one of some seventy vessels that shared in the proceeds of the seizure of two Russian ships then in Portsmouth harbour, following declaration of war by Russia on Britain. The ships happened to be carrying the payroll for the Russian Mediterranean fleet.

But the *Buffalo*'s days of sailing the oceans wide were now behind her. In 1808, the ship was refitted as an Army prison ship, based at Cowes and eventually hulked in 1814.

The next official record we have of Joseph Sherrard is his appointment in August 1818 as Purser of *H.M.S. Creole*, which was immediately followed by an advertisement in the press (August 22) as follows: "A Purser's Steward for His Majesty's Ship *Creole*, now fitting out at Sheerness, for South America. Apply...to Joseph Sherrard, Esq".⁶⁷ So, what did Joseph do between 1808 and 1818? A warrant officer to a ship that was not in commission, was usually assigned to the dockyard (as part of the Ordinary⁶⁸) and employed in maintenance work. In 1799 there were five victualling stations along the south coast of England, at Deptford (the biggest), Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Devon. By 1810 two more yards had been set up - at Deal and Sheerness. We know from various documents dated between 1832 and 1835 that, at least during those years, Joseph was living in Walmer, the next village to Deal. Could he have accepted a position in the Deal victualling yard? While such an hypothesis is tempting, there is one piece of evidence that would appear to run contrary to it.

⁶⁷ Hampshire Chronicle, August 24, 1818

⁶⁸ "In ordinary" referred to those vessels out of service for repair or maintenance. Over time it came to refer to a reserve fleet. A ship that was no longer required for active service, or was no longer seaworthy, would be left "in Ordinary" until returned to duty or broken up. Royal Navy officers ashore on half-pay were also considered "in Ordinary".

In January 1819 a subscription was raised in New South Wales to alleviate distress caused by recent flooding of the Hawkesbury River. It was decided that the subscriptions should take the form of horned cattle and that a deputation be made to the Governor to locate certain lands belonging to the Crown for the pasture and maintenance of the stock so procured. The first name on the list was William Cox Esq., Residence: Clarendon, No. of horned cattle: Three. The ninth name was: Joseph Sherrard, per Mr. Cox, Residence: London, No. of horned cattle: One.

This is interesting for two reasons. First, if Joseph was in London after 1808, there is a high possibility that he was present at the marriage of his niece Mary Ann York to Matthew Smith Finley in 1810 and also present to meet his first great nephew, born the following year, so cementing relationships that were to be so spectacularly confirmed in his 1835 will. It could be that he was working in the Deptford victualling yard or, perhaps, at Somerset House. He may have again lived in Southwark because there is an entry in the Southwark Rate Books for 1821 for a Joseph Sherrard of Westmorland Row, Newington.⁶⁹

The other interesting aspect is Joseph's association with William Cox because, after the discovery of a passage across the Blue Mountains, it is William Cox who was commissioned by Governor Macquarie in 1814 to build the first road over the Mountains. This 101 mile road, built by convicts over a six months' period (they were promised their freedom), meant that the west was finally open for further expansion and settlement. (Cox was to receive the first grant of land west of the Mountains, near Bathurst, where Joseph's great nephew, Matthew Smith Finley, would later settle.). While we cannot know the extent of correspondence between Joseph Sherrard and William Cox, Cox was in the colony from January 1800 and, as it is known that he returned to England for a time in February 1807, it can be assumed that he was a passenger on the *Buffalo* where Joseph, if not before, would certainly have got to know him.

⁶⁹ The burial records for St. Mary Newington (Southwark) reveal another Joseph Sherrard also living in Westmoreland Row who died in 1816, aged 62 years (i.e. born about 1754). It is possible that the relationship could be that of uncle and nephew.

In September 1822 the New South Wales Land & Stock Muster recorded the following: Joseph Sherrard Esquire, of Windsor; Grant Not Resident, 71 horned cattle. The 1819 appeal had been made “to the several Gentlemen possessed of Landed Property, **or Stock**” in any of the Districts of Windsor, Richmond, Wilberforce, Pitt Town and Portland Head. Clearly, Joseph had stock but there is no evidence that he had any land in these parts. Clarendon, the property of William Cox, was a very successful estate which grew to assume the size of a small village. It would appear that Joseph’s cattle might have been grazing at Clarendon, which would confirm communication between Sherrard and Cox. The so-named Windsor Benevolent Society was the first endeavour in New South Wales to establish a local, permanent fund for the aid of those in distress.

On December 22, 1820 *The Morning Chronicle* reported that *H.M.S. Creole*, which had left Lisbon on September 10 bearing news of the Porto liberal revolution, had arrived in Rio de Janeiro on October 18, with the delivery of its news creating consternation in that city. This was because the Portuguese royal family had lived in, and governed from, Brazil since 1807, when it had been forced to flee there to escape Napoleon. The escape had been effected under the protection of the Royal Navy, in consequence of which Portugal had opened all its overseas colonies, including its most prosperous colony of Brazil, to British trade. This was the beginning of the expansion of British interests into Latin America. From 1810, with the Spanish government immersed in the struggle against Napoleon, a number of revolutions broke out throughout South America, with the newly independent nations seeking British recognition as one of their prime diplomatic priorities and, as part of that, granting British commercial interests access to their ports. By 1825, when most of Latin America had achieved their independence from centuries of Spanish or Portuguese rule, South America had become one of Britain’s most important markets.

It was in this context that the *Creole* was to spend more than five years in Latin American waters.⁷⁰ On May 16, 1821, she is reported⁷¹ as arriving in Valparaiso, Chile. Throughout this period

⁷⁰ *Northampton Mercury*, February 14, 1824

⁷¹ *The Caledonian Mercury*, September 8, 1821

Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy, who had commanded *H.M.S. Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar, served as Commander-in-Chief of the so-called South American Station and travelled on and used the *Creole* as the base of his operations. (Did he glory in recounting the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar to a new audience?) *The Morning Post* reported the ship finally arriving back in England on January 25, 1824, the journey from Rio de Janeiro having taken 56 days.

South America would appear to mark the last chapter in Joseph's maritime career. There is a brief reference to his being appointed Purser of *H.M.S. Ramillies* in October 1824 but, before the month was out, another name was published, suggesting that Joseph's tenure was of a very brief duration.

Joseph owned two properties in Deal/Walmer from at least 1832. In that year, his memorandum of transfer of the lease at Cabramatta described him as being "of Walmer, Kent". He is also listed in a number of taxation assessments between 1832 and 1835, one describing him as possessing "two houses in succession at Walmer and Lower Street, Deal". Others identify the Lower Street address as no. 34, name a tenant at the property located "near the Deal Turnpike Gate" and refer to one of the properties as being located near the Navy Hospital.

Lucy Sherrard, "the beloved wife of Joseph Sherrard, Esq. R.N." died at Deal in October 1832 in her 58th year. Her death notice reported that "her loss will be most deeply regretted by a numerous circle of relatives and friends". Joseph cherished his wife. In his later Will, he left to her sister a miniature painting "set in gold" that he had had commissioned of Lucy. It would appear that she had no children but, in a time of high infant mortality, perhaps she had no surviving children.

Joseph survived her by three years, dying on 14 April 1835, at the age of 62, and being buried on Good Friday, 17th April. Two months before his death, he wrote his will. Remembered in it were his friends, his sister-in-law and his "old servant, Maria Piddock" who had rendered "kind and faithful services to me particularly during my severe illness". The chief beneficiaries, however, were his niece Mary Ann Finley and her two oldest children. To Mary Ann

and her daughter, Lucy, he left 500 pounds⁷² each and to Mary Ann's son, Matthew, was left 300 pounds plus the whole of his herd of horned cattle in New South Wales. Mary Ann's eight younger children were also not forgotten, receiving an equal division of the residue of the estate.

Joseph Sherrard was a forerunner for his great niece, Lucy, and great great nephew, Alatau. Each accepted life as they found it and, within those constraints, each chose their own path and pursued it with purpose, intelligence and vigour. They were not daunted by the unknown but, rather, intrigued by it so that foreign travel and far flung lands were embraced as opportunities, even when they involved danger and separation from loved ones.

Joseph's life intersected the lives of the major figures of the early colonial era; indeed he knew these men and, in some cases, knew them very well. However, his enduring legacy was the firsthand knowledge of the colony that he passed to the descendants of his sister, Elizabeth, which, together with his bequests to them, eventually resulted in his niece, Mary Ann, and seven of her ten children - Matthew Smith, Joseph Sherrard, Maria Louisa, Horatio Samuel, George Frederick Augustus, Thomas Wilson and Mary Ann - settling in Australia, where they joined that great band of men and women - the Pioneers - who, labouring in the first century after settlement, laid the foundation for today's Australia.

⁷² According to the measuringworth.com website, 500 pounds equates in 2015 to 41,890 pounds in terms of purchasing power, 397,300 pounds in terms of labour value and 794,000 pounds in terms of income value.

APPENDIX

As well as the York Sherrard who married Elizabeth Robinson in 1773, the records reveal another York Sherrard who was the husband of Elizabeth and father of John. John was baptised at St Mary Rotherhithe (Southwark) in 1744. This York Sherrard could possibly also be the father of York Sherrard (who married in 1773), Joseph Sherrard, born 1754 (who lived in Westmorland Row), James Sherrard, born 1744 (who left the 50 pounds bequest) and Samuel Sherrard (who had a son Joseph in 1773). All had Southwark links.

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