

*Captain Bremer's Dispatch & Eyewitness Accounts,*

*The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW : 1803 - 1842) Saturday 1 April 1826*

About the time that this establishment was forming, a new settlement, by orders from home, was planted on Melville Island, at the northern extremity of New Holland, which, in a commercial point of view, as an intermediate station between the establishments of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land and the ports of India and China, is likely to become of great importance in the eastern world. It is in this neighbourhood that the annual fleet of Malay proas fish for the trepang or sea-slug, an article of great consumption in China, and sent chiefly to that market ; not, however, without passing through the hands of the Dutch, who beside laying high duties upon the article imported into their settlements fix an enormous advance on the prices of the goods given in exchange for it. This impolitic conduct will probably have the effect of driving the Malays to our new settlement of Fort Dundas, or Melville Island, where our merchants will treat with them on more liberal terms than they have been accustomed to at the Dutch settlements; and in this view we think it would be politic to allow these industrious people to establish themselves in the neighbourhood of their trepang fishery.

It has been said, that the Dutch feel annoyed at the formation of this new establishment so near to their own ; and the more so as they had themselves taken measures for anticipating us in the same quarter. We would not willingly impute to them such unworthy feelings ; for, without adverting to our ancient and only settlements on the island of Sumatra, which they know that we consented to transfer to them upon a plea totally unfounded in fact, they can scarcely have forgotten that we voluntarily surrendered to them every island in the great oriental archipelago, which the fate of war had wrested from them when in alliance with France, nor that to our generosity they are indebted for every foot of land which they now hold in the east.

**A Private Journal 24<sup>th</sup> August – 13<sup>th</sup> November 1824**

Much is identical to Bremer's Journal – too close – “celerity of deer” – although complete contradiction of trepang from Bremer's not found here to great quantities in Private Journal & Gentleman's accounts says no trepang.

They could be our useless black fish.

**THE NEWLY FORMED BRITISH SETTLEMENT ON THE NORTH WEST COAST OF AUSTRALIA.**

*The Australian (Sydney, NSW : 1824 - 1848) Thursday 10 March 1825*

Some tidings have at length been received of the expedition destined to the North-west Coast of this Continent, which it will be recollected quitted Port Jackson on the 24th August last, consisting of H. M. S. Tamar ( Captain Bremer, C. B.) the transport ship Countess of Harcourt, and the Colonial brig Lady Nelson. The following detail is gleaned from a private journal; which commences on the date above-mentioned and concludes on the 13th

November; on which day the Tamar, in company with the Countess of Harcourt weighed anchor; the former bound to Ceylon for orders, the latter destined to the Isle of France, whence the accounts now received have been forwarded.

The Lady Nelson, it appears, proved a very heavy sailor, and by crowding canvas to keep up, in a squall on the 27th Aug. in lat 29. 18, rolled her main top gallant mast over the side; an accident, however, which was speedily remedied. On the 29th, at 5 P. M., Cape Moreton bore W. three-quarter S. Sept. 3.—At noon, Cape Gloucester bore W. one-half N. when the lat. was 20. 17. S.—Noted as a remarkable cape, being the easternmost point of land in view, and cannot well be mistaken. No danger seen to prevent the largest ship from navigating this passage. Sept. 5.—At 6 P. M. the Tamar made the signal to anchor under one of the Frankland islands. Boats lowered in hopes of falling in with turtle, shells, coral, &c. No turtle to be found. Shells not worth picking up. Sept. 8.—At 8 A. M. past Cape Bedford; a most remarkable head land, having all the appearance of a large fortification; the top of it being perfectly flat, and the white sandy soil of which it is composed, shewing itself through the green verdure that covers the greater part of it. The sand hills along the coast, at the distance we sail from it, (3 miles) have all the appearance of white houses, and make the whole, by this diversity of prospect, very pleasing. The navigation now becomes very intricate. Several sand banks lying level with the water's edge, and only known as such by the discoloured water. A very near approach, however, maybe made to most of them, there being 6 or 7 fathoms water upon their extreme edge; when the weather is fine, they may be avoided with a good lookout at the mast head. To-day the boats went ashore again upon an unsuccessful search after turtle and shells. A number of fires seen here, along the coast.

**Sept. 11**—At noon Cape Melville bore S. E. by E. Cape Gill S. W. by W.; and Flinder's Group W. by S. There is an extensive reef to the southward of Flinder's group, quite visible from the deck, and may be very closely approached. We have passed a much greater number of sand banks, than Flinders has laid down. The trade winds have now apparently left us, and we have a land and sea breeze; the latter setting in about 10 A. M., and continuing until night fall. Sept. 14— At 5.30 P. M. came to anchor under Mount Adolphus, so named by Cook, being the largest of a group of islands. Here we went ashore, and not finding either shells, or turtle, by way of amusement we set fire to the long dry grass, and produced a scene no less awful than grand; for in less than two hours, the whole island was in flames. Another boat from the Tamar, doing the same service for an adjoining island, completely illumined the whole atmosphere. Upon this island I found a number of clay pyramids, about two feet in height, of a conical shape; whether they are placed there by the natives, or the work of insects, I cannot pretend to say; if the former, it must be to mark the spot where someone is interred. Sept. 15.—Crossed the Gulph of Carpentaria. We are now enabled to keep under weigh all night, steering a little to the southward of west.

**Sept. 20.**—At 2 A. M. wore round, and stood in shore. At day-light made sail, running along the coast at the distance of 3 miles, in 10 and 12 fathoms water. No danger seen, though some strong rippings occasioned by the tide setting out of the different bays, which line this part of the coast. Lat. observed at noon, was 10. 0. S. — A fine steady breeze from the N. E. all sail set. About 4 P. M. saw the bay of Port Essington; a very deep bight, apparently 4 or 5 leagues deep, sheltered from all winds except a northerly one, sufficiently spacious to contain all the ships in the world, if free from dangers. It lies N. and S., and is about 7 miles in width. We stood boldly on until we reached a projecting point in the bay, called by Capt. King Table Rock. Here we brought up in 5 fathoms water, when the officers were landed, and possession was taken of the same, in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty King George the Fourth.

— A union jack was hoisted on a staff, and three vollies of small arms fired, which was answered by a royal salute from the Tamar; the crew manning the yards and cheering. The whole moved on board again, the flag having been previously secured in a tree. The soil of this spot was of a red mineral quality, something like iron ore; but this, I expect, is confined to the seashore. The stand of the various bays, which lay within the port, consists of a fine white sand. The trees which range along having the appearance of cocoa-nut trees, but of a stunted growth. The land and sea breezes appear to be very regular; the latter setting in from the N. E. about 9 A. M., and continuing until sun-set, when it dies away, and is succeeded by light airs from the southward. The rise and fall of tide is about 8 feet perpendicular. Thermometer at noon, 90 in the shade.

**Sept. 21.**—Captain Bremer of the Tamar, accompanied by Captain Bunn, of the transport, went on shore to-day to make observations. Two natives were seen, who instantly took to the woods. A regular beaten track indicates their being numerous. Several kangaroos were also seen, and many birds shot—hen pheasants and wood pigeons; but no fresh water discovered, which was the principal object of search. The heat of the sun very great on shore, and the flies innumerable. The party returned on board very much fatigued. A boat was dispatched from the Tamar to the shore opposite also, in order to take possession. A seine hauled by one of the boats presented great quantities of fish, with which it appears the bay abounds. The kinds taken were chiefly mullet, carvaloes, sting-ray, and great abundance of a fish, somewhat resembling a gar-fish, which was excellent eating.

**Sept. 22.**—An accident to-day occurred by the up-setting of a boat belonging to the Countess of Harcourt, which proved fatal to two soldiers, the steward, and a boy belonging to the transport. Amongst those rescued from the watery grave, by the timely arrival of the Tamar's boat, whence the accident was seen, were the medical officer of the expedition, the Commissary, his clerk, the transport (McDonald) and four seamen.

**Sept. 24.**—At day-light made sail. At 11 A. M. saw Melville island. Anchored in the evening.

**Sept. 26.**—At day-light, weighed anchor, and made sail. Standing back to the S. E. and steering for the N. W. end of Bathurst island. Sounding very regular in 7 and 8 fathoms; depth gradually increasing, as we draw in with the land; when, entering a strait between the islands called Apsley's Strait, found shoal water on each side. Mid channel no bottom with 17 fathoms. At 2 30 came to anchor in 15 fathoms water, off Lucksmore Head, the place pointed out as the future settlement. Marines landed from the Tamar to take possession; union jack hoisted, and a feu-de-joie fired; answered by royal-salute from His Majesty's ship. This seemed greatly to surprise the fish. It was most amusing to see them leaping out of the water, numbers going to the height of 8 and 10 yards above the surface. The spot of land where the flag is hoisted is the highest part that I can see, not exceeding one hundred feet. The adjacent parts are apparently subject to inundation, or within the reach of spring tides, which makes it little else than a salt water swamp. On going ashore I found some deserted wigwams, and a place where fires had been made, though not recently. I suppose the natives must have moved for water, none being found in the vicinity.

**Sept. 27.**—This day a party of men landed from the Tamar, to seek for water; after digging twelve feet they procured a few gallons, a little brackish. Another party discovered several dry wells, as formed by the natives. Both returned in the evening very much disappointed. The soil is a loose kind of sand, with large stones at the distance of a few feet from the surface. However some good trees were discovered on the Bathurst side. Water now becomes an object of considerable interest to us; the whole of our water not being sufficient to last

another month. Should we fail, our only resource will be to proceed to Timor, obtain a supply, and then go on to India, and land the whole expedition. Land and sea breeze very regular; but it is excessively hot on shore.

**Sept. 29.**—We understand a run of water is discovered by Captain Bremer, who fell into it while endeavouring to get a shot at a cockatoo, of which there are great numbers here; as well as blue mountain parrots, quails, pheasants, &c. &c. &c.

**Sept. 30.**—All hands sent on shore from the ship to clear away the wood. A most eligible spot having been fixed upon for the establishment, to be called Point Barlow, in honour of the Commandant. The land near to the water side is low and marshy; but at a little distance consists of a fine dark loamy soil, capable, I should think, of producing anything congenial to low latitudes. On the whole as a run of water has been discovered, it appears to me to be a most desirable spot, having a fine spacious harbour, which is constituted by the Strait, and no hidden dangers within the Heads. Lucksmore Head stand on a point of land a little elevated above the other part; a point to the westward forming a small bay, within which we are anchored, in a soft muddy bottom. The whole beach being a soft mud, which renders it impossible to walk on the edge. Four hundred and fifty trees cleared away this day.

**Oct. 1.**—Labour of clearing resumed. Some hands procuring water. Serjeant Stewart and Joseph Loraine, missing; the latter a man of colour, and a prisoner. A corporal and two men went in search of the lost, but were unsuccessful.

**Oct. 2.**—This morning Serjeant Stewart returned alone; the unfortunate black by eating some of the berries which grow on the sago tree, having become so dreadfully afflicted with a retching pain, as to be unable to proceed any farther on his way back. The serjeant after travelling all night returned without him, having left him a large kangaroo dog, two pheasants, and a hatchet. The luckless negro is never more heard of.

**Oct 4.**— Ensign Everard, who went out with his gun to day, lost himself in the woods from noon until six P. M. when he had the good fortune to fall in with the Tamar's boat about 3 miles from the settlement. I need not comment upon the feelings of any one who is placed in such a situation.

**Oct 5.**—The Tamar's people commenced building a wharf for the convenience of landing. The soldiers, marines, and prisoners, are building a fort, clearing away the trees, and forming their huts, so that the whole is quite a scene of bustle.

**Oct. 6.**—Hauled the seine this morning, and caught 150 lbs. of fine mullet. Every person on shore employed about the fort.— Carpenters framing the houses for the reception of the officers.

**Oct. 7, to 14.**— Same operations continued. Weather very fine and pleasant. No labour is performed during the hours of the greatest heat; viz. from eleven to three. Captain Bremer superintending the formation of a garden.

**Oct. 15.**—This day a man found secreted in the hold of the transport, who stated he had been there ten weeks. His appearance was really heart rending. Greater part of the time he must have been in the coal-hole, which is as hot as an oven, and swarming with centipedes, and other vermin. He has since been recognized as Thomas Harris, a joiner.

**Oct. 17.**—The soldiers having completed their huts, most of them leave the ship to-day. The well which the prisoners have been digging, was discovered to have a large quantity of water in this morning, and very excellent it is.

**Oct. 18.**—Several fires seen on the Bathurst side, but no natives nor any kind of wild animals hitherto met with, except what have been already mentioned.

**Oct. 21.**—This being the anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, a very excellent dinner was given by Captain Bremer in one of the new houses. The guns were mounted on the battery, and a royal salute fired, after which the ceremony of christening the colours took place. An appropriate speech was made by Capt. Bremer, relative to the design of the expedition. The port was also named Port Cockburn; the fort named Dundas; and the anchorage called King's Cove.

**Oct. 22.**—A most immense shark was caught to-day, which, when suspended by the hook was attacked by another of equal dimensions ; and as we had ripped open the body of the one that was hooked, this monster made no ceremony of dragging the entrails out of him — nor would he desist when a sharp pointed knife was stuck into his head.—An exceedingly large alligator was also seen to-day in the water, and fired at but without effect.

**Oct. 25.**— This day a body of natives was discovered on Bathurst Island by Captain Bremer, to whom some trifling presents were made, and with which they appeared to be perfectly satisfied. They were all armed with spears, but behaved in a most peaceable manner. About 3 P. M. a party came down to the camp on Melville Island, and took away a woodman's axe. As their numbers were dubious, the soldiers were marched in double quick time.— Nothing possible appearing to be intended, several small presents were made to them, with which they departed apparently satisfied.

**Oct. 28.**—Pleasant weather, but musquitoes numerous. The natives came round the camp today, still behaving very peaceably. Some of them evince a strong disposition to thieving, which is so usual among savages.

**Oct. 30.**—This day, whilst the butcher was on shore cutting grass for the stock, he was surrounded by natives, who proceeded to rifle his person, taking away his knife. This transaction being observed on board the Tamar, the Second Lieutenant put off in the boat, when the natives instantly dispersed, and proceeded to the watering place. Here a very serious dispute arose between them and the boat's crew, in consequence of their endeavouring to take whatever they could get hold of. In this attempt they surrounded the boat, and began to throw spears, which was returned by the firing of two muskets. The firing being heard, other boats proceeded to the watering place, but arrived too late, the natives having all retired. It is supposed that some of them must have been wounded, if not killed. However, they were all got off. Several spears were found on the beach, and one of them, now in the possession of Capt. Bremer, having 14 barbs.

**Nov. 1.**—A very heavy fall of rain to-day, but the huts on shore being completed, very little inconvenience is experienced. Everything which has been sown thrives amazingly, with the exception of the potatoes, not one seed of these vegetating.— The maize was above ground on the fourth day. The soil of the island is excellent, and capable of producing most, if not all, of the valuable trees and shrubs of the Eastern Islands. The plants and shrubs, brought from

Sydney, flourish luxuriantly, particularly the orange and lemon, the lime, banana, and sugar cane.— Melons and pumpkins vegetate immediately. The bastard nutmeg has been found in the forests; also, a species of pepper, highly pungent and aromatic. The trepang or beche-lemmer, a sort of sea slug, and considered in China a very great delicacy of the table, is found in great quantities hereabouts. In their persons, the natives are generally above the middle size, their limbs short, and well formed—possessing also great elasticity. Their appearance indicates activity, rather than strength. The stoutest among them have but little muscle.— their agility indeed is astonishing; they bound through the woods with the celerity of deer. Their colour is nearly black; their hair coarse, but not woolly. They tie it occasionally in a knot on the back part of the head. We found several of them having their heads and bodies daubed with a sort of red and yellow pigment. They are tattooed or scarified over their bodies as low as their navels, and the males wear no kind of clothing whatever. We saw several of their women, who wore a kind of plaited grass of six inches square, as a fig-leaf; one or two having such as low as the knee.

Such are the principal details which the journal alluded to furnish. It would appear that British energy has been most successfully brought into action on the formation of this interesting settlement. The early annals of New South Wales will not, it is imagined, shew greater proportionate quantity of labour performed than that stated to be the result of the first day's operations—the clearing away of 450 trees. Already the construction of a respectable fort proclaims security from the attack of any ordinary foe. This fortification, situate upon Point Barlow, completely commands the harbour, the long guns (nine pounders) reaching Bathurst Island. Its dimensions are considerable. A ditch was digging 15 feet broad, and 10 deep. The works are formed of trees laid length ways, about 5 feet high, 7 feet broad at the base, and 5 feet at the top; the whole to be turfed over. Two very respectable habitations for the officers have already been erected within the fort, in which also the barracks are to stand.

Immediately in front is the wharf, and to the left is a store-house. King's Cove, Port Cockburn, lies in long. 130. 27. 30. E. lat. 11. 25. S. Port Essington in long. 132. 10. E and lat. 11. 07. S. The channel of King's Cove is represented as narrowed by sand banks, and it was feared that it could not be frequented at all seasons.

(Another account from a Gentleman in command.) A considerable portion of the land has been cleared, and a Battery erected. When the accounts left, twenty acres of timber were fallen, and the fort completed, with the exception of the ditch; it measures 100 yards by 80, the guns are mounted, consisting of two long nine pounders and four 18 pound cannonades. The magazine is also finished; Commissariat stores built, and provisions stored in it. Soldiers and prisoners hutted; a well sunk, and excellent water found at the depth of 30 feet. The most favourable mention is made of the island in most respects. The climate is not so hot as had been anticipated. At day light in the month of November the thermometer usually stood at 77, at twelve o'clock at about 84, at two 86, and at ten in the evening it sinks again to 80. The rainy season had not set in, though the period in which it was expected had arrived; heavy dews were very prevalent. The soil is excellent; clay is found five or six feet deep on a bed of sand. All the plants and seeds which were taken thrive and do very well. But the sugar cane is attacked by the ants, which do much mischief. The mosquitoes are very troublesome after sunset. All the sheep which were taken to the island, except one ram, died from having eaten some poisonous plant or berry, the first day they were left out to feed. The officers of the Tamar lost their live stock in the same manner. Pigs were thriving and increasing. The supply of fish is generally uncertain. Turtle is found at the distance of 15 miles from the settlement. Kangaroos do not approach the settlement, only one has been seen near it. The

natives are much like the Bathurst and Cow-pasture blacks; they have not introduced their women to the settlement, they readily accept anything offered them, and in return give owls, half roasted lizards, &c. On a more intimate acquaintance they become troublesome, and steal everything they can lay hands on. They lately surrounded a party sent from the Tamar to fill the water casks; though a few shots were fired over their heads, they continued to press on, shook their spears. &c three marines then fired, and one black was seen to fall. Many spears were thrown, but none took effect—the spears are 10 feet long; these natives do not use the throwing stick, and cannot do much mischief with their spears. Trees are of the same description as those in New South Wales; the eucalyptus, white cedar, stringy bark, are found. The timber is sounder at the heart. No trepang seen. The sharks and alligators are numerous; the largest measure 15 feet. The snakes are small and not poisonous; there are also opossums and bandicoots, a great variety of birds, plumage very rich, especially the parrot tribe.

**On the 22d of September** Edward Oakly and Joseph Churchill, privates of the buffs, were drowned, by the upsetting of a boat in which they were returning from the shore. The steward and a boy of the Harcourt were lost at the same time. Dr. Turner, Messrs. Mills and Wilson had a narrow escape, being picked up by some of the crew of the Tamar. One of the prisoners, Joseph Loraine alias Franks, has been lost in the bush since the 1st of October. The hours appointed for work are from day light to half past seven, from eight to twelve, and from half past three until sunset. Sergeant Stewart has been appointed overseer; has a great deal to do and is of much service. Captain Bremer appointed Mr. Williamson of the marines, to be engineer, subject to the approval of Earl Bathurst. Men were generally healthy. The master of the brig was seriously ill with inflammation of the brain. When the Tamar left Melville island there was not a sick person on the whole establishment. The Tamar and transport ship kept company, after sailing from Melville Island, until the 3d Dec. when they parted in lat. 16. 25. S. Long. 61. Their sailing being perfectly equal, and being the closest sea companions possible. The Lady Nelson was left at Melville Island.

*The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser (NSW : 1803 - 1842) Thursday 10 March 1825*

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## **MELVILLE ISLAND.**

By the arrival of the Philip Dundas, from the Mauritius, we are happy to congratulate our Readers on the receipt of advices from our new dependency on the North-west Coast. It appears that the Countess of Harcourt, Captain Bunn, which vessel accompanied H. M. ship Tamar, Captain BREMER, C. B. on the expedition, had arrived at the Isle of France on her way to England, by which means we are furnished with the present intelligence. She left Fort Dundas, Melville Island, on or about the 13th of November; and the settlement was then going on as prosperously and as well as could be expected from the shortness of time. The houses, that had been sent in frame from Sydney, were nearly all put together; the principal dwellings being framed after the model of the officers' quarters here. The erection of the different works went on with great rapidity, which was in a great measure owing to the able assistance afforded by the crew of the Tamar. A fort was finished, and 7 guns mounted. The

soldiers were all provided with dwellings, and the prisoners with huts. Mr. Millar, the Commissariat Officer, felt anxious in getting a store completed. The Countess of Harcourt remained off Fort Dundas nearly 7 weeks, in which interim the situation and climate were not disliked ; the days were hot, but the evenings and mornings were found to be cool and agreeable. At first, the moschetoos and sand-flies were annoying, but those and other inconveniences were diminishing daily; though almost everyone was laid up with swollen limbs, from the bites of the moschetoos and other insects - but no disease had visited the settlement. The Government of the little Colony was held in deserved estimation, as Captain Barlow is said to be "plain and sincere in his manners ; honourable and correct in his conduct ; and anxious that everything in the settlement should be carried on in the simplest manner." The utmost praise is due to Captain BREMER, for his gentlemanly and obliging conduct ; and for the promptitude with which he endeavoured to assist the views and promote the prosperity and comfort of the Colonists. One skirmish had taken place between the new settlers and the aborigines on Bathurst Island, from their predilection in favour of axes and other iron tools ; but after a few vollies of spears, and a discharge of some shot, they decamped, and were not afterwards seen. We have been obligingly favoured with the sight of a journal kept by an Officer of the Expedition, of which we have availed ourselves of the opportunity in making such selections as will, we feel assured, repay the Reader for a patient perusal :---

This *Officer of the Expedition* (Unknown) was in the boating tragedy at Port Essington – he says:-

Weds 22 – Dr. Turner, Mr Wilson, the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate, Mr McDonald, myself, the Captain's steward, 4 seamen, a boy (an apprentice) and 2 soldiers. (It seems that the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate is Mr McDonald)

Joseph Churchill & Edward Oakley (the two soldiers) – the steward & the boy all drowned

Unknown says that: the mate, Dr Turner, Mr Wilson & 3 sailors survived to be rescued – the fourth sailor, who had caused the sinking, had swum to shore.

From Bremer's Dispatch "Dr. Turner, Messrs. Mills and Wilson had a narrow escape" – so the *Officer of the Expedition* could be **Mills**.

### **Days of the voyage deleted**

**Sunday, 26.** -During the morning entered the Straits . formed by Bathurst and Melville Island, and anchored about two o'clock. Captain Bremer, with the officers of the Tamar and the marines, went onshore immediately after, and again went through the form of taking possession : went on shore with the chief mate towards evening, but did not like the place. In a flat between two hills, rising to no great height, the ground was quite marshy, and evidently in high tides is overflowed : no fresh meat seen; was bitten by a large fly, or rather bled by it ; a great many of them there; came on board much fatigued, and inclined to question the wisdom of anyone's volunteering to form new settlements ten degrees from the line ; went to bed; and found it so hot that the perspiration run of me in streams.

**Monday 27** -Slept off the fatigues and rose in better spirits; Captain Bremer and other parties went ashore in search of water ; found no running stream, but procured water by digging in the earth; was on board of the ship all day.

**Tuesday, 28** --Captain Bremer, while shooting in marshy ground, fell up to the middle in water, which upon tasting he found fresh, and a running stream; weighed anchor about three o'clock and went further down the bay, to the place where Captain Bremer had found the fresh water, and where he now determined to fix the Settlement ; anchored then in a well sheltered bay, with deep water almost close to the shore

**Thursday, 30**-Went on shore about eleven o'clock to see the place fixed on for our future residence ; found it a headland ; the soil two or three hundred yards rocky, but at that distance very good ; the beach rocky, and beyond the rocks toward the sea, slime and mud ; saw no good place for bathing Went into the country two or three miles; along shore the ground was covered with saltwater swamps, but beyond them the soil good. In returning lost our way, and travelled about for a long time; very warm and thirsty ; some of the party shot one of the birds called laughing jackasses. Quail and pheasants seen ; found our way back to the ships about four o'clock, very much fatigued.

**Saturday, Oct. 10.**-I shall conclude my Journal with the following statement :

Our Settlement is made on a point of land on the West coast of the island, in a large bay formed betwixt itself and another small island, called Bathurst Island, in which any number of ships may ride in safety. It is surrounded on both sides by low and marshy ground, which, in high tides, is covered by the sea ; a plentiful supply of good fresh water is however found in a running stream about a mile from the Settlement (but separated from it by a marsh), and in other places; and a well has been dug close to the Settlement and good water found. The soil is apparently good and rich, and the trees are the cabbage palm, stringy balk, and the apple tree, of New South Wales, and the marshy ground is covered with mangroves. No four footed animals have been found, with the exception of the native dogs, and opossums, nor have kangaroos been seen. The birds are parquets of various plumage ; black and white cockatoos ; pheasants; quail; wood pigeons, laughing jackasses; satin birds, owls, and some others, which I cannot name ; fish have been found, mullet, and those called old wives are the most plentiful.

The Thermometer has varied from 76 to 87 since our arrival, in the shade ; but it is generally found about 80" in the morning, rising about 5 degrees towards noon. No unhealthy symptoms have yet appeared, and should the rainy season (which, if we have, it will set in soon) pass by without creating any, we may pronounce the climate healthy and good, considering its proximity to the equator; a breeze from some quarter or another-commences in the morning, and generally continues during the day.

We have had as yet no intercourse with the natives, nor have any of them been seen, though their fires are visible every night.

**October 25th**, Captain Bremer and a party, having passed over to Bathurst Island, and having gone up a creek, on returning they were met by a party of the natives, about eight in number, with whom they had some intercourse, by signs, and to whom they gave some handkerchiefs, &c. Capt. Bremer, when passing alongside of our ship, came on board to tell us of his interview, and staid to dinner. Just as we had finished, and before the cloth was removed, they hailed us from Settlement, to say that the natives had come down and attacked them. We immediately armed and went on shore, and were told they had retreated into the

woods, but had carried with them one of the marines. This we found false, and we followed them, and about half-a-mile from the Settlement saw some of them retreating and looking behind ; they stopped after we had followed for a short time, and came towards us making signs for us to go back. Capt. Bunn went a little forward from our party, and one of the natives also came forward, and after a little time was followed by the others ; and they allowed some of us also to go towards them, and were shortly quite familiar, walking with us hand in hand. They came with us toward the Settlement hut would not enter it. We made them a present of some handkerchiefs which they seemed to care little for, but two or three hatchets being-given to them they were highly prized. Bread was offered them which some of them took, but they would not eat in any quantity, though we shewed them the example, and a surly suspicious looking dog made signs to me that it was poison, and would make him large bellied. Walking in the woods next morning, I found the bread they kept, laid by the side of a fallen tree; there were eight or ten of them, good looking men, and were in size somewhat taller than a middling sized European ; they had bushy beards and a robust appearance ; quite naked, mid tattooed very prettily down the back and belly, and armed with spears and waddies very similar to those used by the natives in New South Wales. They were much struck with our clothes, which I believe, at first, they thought were a portion of our bodies; one of the party took off his shoes, which they seemed astonished at, and two or three wished lo take off my boots, but they could not do it.

When we were near the Settlement, our men came out to see the natives ; and some of the prisoners who were men of colour with them, and having only then left their work, they had only their trousers on ; our new made acquaintances were struck at their appearance, and made signs to them to take off, their clothes, which one of them did, they shouting and examining him on all sides, and very much gratified to see him so much like themselves ; they were very pressing for more axes (which they called peerces), and stole one or two. They left us towards sunset, laying their hands over their ears, and placing that side of their head towards the ground, which we interpreted as a sign, they were going to sleep.

They looked with some fear upon our guns at first, and we were obliged to send them away previous to our first meeting ; but before we left them, they were only anxious to obtain them ; they likewise came forward unarmed, leaving their spears in charge of one who walked at a little distance, ready to distribute them should occasion require.

**On the 27th**, a boat from the Tamar, having gone to Bathurst Island to fish, was met by another party of the natives, and in the evening we set sail for the place, in hopes of meeting them, but had only left the ship for a short time, when we discovered a fire which they had lighted to guide us. We went on shore there, and being among the first who landed I was presented with a dead owl on the point of a spear, which I received as a token of good friendship; there were about seventeen men, and one female with a child at a little distance standing by a tree ; she was a short woman, and as they seemed anxious to screen her, we did not go towards her; she had a matt hanging down from her middle to her knees ; there was also a native dog with them, quite-tame. After mutual presents, we receiving waddies in exchange for old caps, bonnets, and handkerchiefs; and after laving (as in washing?), in imitation of them, crossed our arms upon our breasts, beat our sides, danced and jabbered, we returned to our boats, mid endeavoured to persuade one of them to go with us, but this we could not do; they seemed anxious for us to go away.

It appeared to me they were scarcely such stout men as those we had met on the Settlement side, but this might be from the circumstance of their being a whole tribe, while the others were merely a picked portion of one ; they were similarly tattooed with the others, and one of them painted yellow on one side, and powdered on the head and beard with the same colour. Being fond of ornament, he was anxious to obtain my Leghorn bonnet, and begged hard for it. Some of them had their hair tied up behind as ornamental. An old grey haired and bearded man was chief, und seemed a good natured fellow ; he came down to the water edge with us, and saw us off".

### **FURTHER PARTICULARS.**

Early yesterday morning we were obliged with the Official Despatch of Captain BREMER, C. B. of His Majesty's ship Tamar, which, from its amazing interest, most decidedly lays claim to the earliest attention. We have therefore put ourselves to considerable inconvenience in order to give the whole of Captain Bremer's Dispatch, at the expense of the foregoing Journal, which, in its more unessential parts, it was found expedient to abridge. But we are equally thankful to the Sources from whence they severally emanated :---

"Having completed everything necessary for the expedition, sailed from Port Jackson, on the 24th of August, the ship Countess Harcourt, and the colonial brig Lady Nelson, in company ; on the 28th passed Moreton Island, with a fair wind, and the weather remarkably fine; from this period running down the East coast of Australia, anchoring occasionally until the 17th of September, at which time we passed Torres' Straits, and on the 20th, anchored at Port Essington, in the Coburg Peninsula ; of which port, and the coast contained between 129° and 130° East, I took possession in the name of the King, [in the terms contained in the form No. 1.] On the 21st, at day light, commenced examining the surrounding shores of Port Essington, and despatched four boats under intelligent officers in different directions, in search of fresh water. On the East side the country was found to be much burned up, the soil sandy, and thickly interspersed with red sandstone rock, which probably contained particles of iron; the trees were not of great height, and were mostly like those found at New South Wales; no traces of water were found by any of our parties this day. On the 22d the boats were gain dispatched, and returned in the evening unsuccessful, as far as related water. However on the Western side the soil was found to be much better, the country more open, and the trees of magnificent height. On Point Record, a hole was discovered, fenced round with bamboo, containing a quantity of thick or rather brackish water. This was evidently the work of Malays, as the bamboo is not an indigenous tree in New Holland, and there were evident signs of those people having recently visited the place. Traces of the natives were also found everywhere, but none made their appearance. Our parties had penetrated in various directions considerably into the country, but never found any water : however there is no doubt, by digging deep wells, water might be obtained, yet the present apparent scarcity much diminished the value of Port Essington. It is nevertheless one of the most noble, and beautiful pieces of water that can be imagined, having a moderate depth, with a capability of containing a whole navy in perfect security, and is well worthy of His Majesty's Government, should they be pleased to extend their establishments on this coast. On the 23d, finding that water was not to be met with, and the season far advancing, weighed and made sail for Opsley (sic) Strait ; on the 24th made Cape Van Diemen, and on the 26th entered the Strait, and anchored off Luxmore Head, when formal possession was taken of Melville, and Bathurst Islands, [according to the form No. 2].

On the 27th, 28th, and 29th, boats were despatched in every direction in search of water, other parties sinking wells, both on Melville and Bathurst Islands, hitherto without effect (except in the wells), which produced a small quantity of water, muddy and slightly brackish; on the 30th, I had the good fortune to discover a running stream, in a cove, about five miles to the Southward of the ship; the south-east point of which presented an excellent position for the Settlement, as it was moderately elevated, and tolerably clear of timber ; the ships were immediately moved down to this cove, which was named King's Cove, after the first discoverer of the strait and islands : the point determined on to form the Settlement, Point Barlow; and the whole anchorage, Port Cockburn, in honour of Vice Admiral Sir George Cockburn, one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. 1st of October, a point being fixed to form the establishment, parties were sent on shore to clear the ground, and to lay the foundation of a fort: and as it was probable the Malays would visit the place in great numbers, and as much hostility might be expected from the natives, who were as we could judge, from the number of their fires on both islands to be very numerous, I was determined to render the fort as strong as the means of the expedition would admit. From the 1st to the 7th, parties employed clearing the ground, boats surveying, and the foundation of the fort going forward; the weather remarkable fine ; Thermometer from 40 to 88. On the 8th began a pier for the purpose of landing the provisions, heavy stores, guns, &c. A Commissariat storehouse was commenced; and the officers' houses, which were brought from Sydney in frame, were began to be setup. From this period up to the 20th, the various works were carried on with such zeal, and perseverance, that the pier, one bastion, and the sea face of the fort was completed ; and I had the satisfaction, on the 21st of October, of hoisting His Majesty's colours, under a royal salute, from two 9-pounder guns, and one 12-pounder cannonade, mounted on "Fort Dundas" which I named in honour of the noble Lord, and the Head of the Admiralty. The pier is composed of immense heavy logs of timber, and large masses of sand stone rock; it is sixty-four feet long, eighteen feet wide, and thirteen feet high, at the end next low water-mark, and from the solidity of the materials, will probably last many years. I had been a considerable distance (at different times), from the Settlement, for the purpose of examining the country, and the officers in pursuit of game, without ever having met a native. On the 25th of October, I had been several miles up a small river in Bathurst Island, and on my return near the entrance, was surprised by the sudden appearance of ten natives, who had waded (it being low water) across the river nearly to a dry sand bank, situated in its centre. They were armed with spears, and at first seemed disposed to dispute the passage with us. On our approach they retired towards the shore, which was thickly covered with mangroves, and throwing, down their spears, spread their arms out, to shew us they intended nothing hostile, accompanying the action with great volubility of tongue. Being very anxious to establish an intercourse, I rowed towards them, but they hastily retreated into the bushes ; however, after some time, they gained confidence, and advanced so near, as to take a handkerchief and some other trifles from the blade of an oar, which was put towards them ; I could not succeed in getting them nearer, and having exhausted our stock of trifles, I left them apparently well satisfied : I called the river, from this circumstance, Intercourse River, and the point, Point Interview.

" The same afternoon two of our men, cutting timber and reeds, were in an instant surrounded by a party of the natives, who seized them, but offered no other violence, than wresting their axes from them; they had probably been watching some of our parties in the wood, for they appeared to have a correct idea of the value and use of the axe. As soon as our men were at liberty they ran towards the fort, an alarm was given, the soldiers seized their arms, and the savages would have suffered for their temerity, had they not hastily retreated.

I immediately went on shore, accompanied by Captain Barlow, of the 3d Regiment, and after going some distance into the wood, we came up with the party of natives, consisting of eighteen or twenty, with whom we soon established a communication, by making signs of peace ; the natives on this threw down their spears, and came forward with considerable confidence ; they nevertheless kept some of the youngest amongst them in the rear, whose duty seemed to be to collect the spears, ready for action : we offered them handkerchiefs, buttons, and other trifles, which they accepted without hesitation, but after having satisfied their curiosity with an inspection of those new, and to them extraordinary things, their interest ceased, and they threw them away. They made many signs for axes, imitating the action of cutting a tree, and accompanying it with *fiW« ^oclWmflain*, and almost inconceivable rapidity of *sihi'e* ; they were given to understand, they should have axes if they came to the Settlement, and by these means we drew them near the fort, but no inducement could get them into the clear ground, or inside the line of cottages. They had, I found, stolen three axes, but as we were anxious to establish a friendly communication, no notice was taken of the theft, and three others were given to them, at which they appeared highly pleased, especially the chief, to whom a broader one than the rest was given, and who immediately examined the edge, and with much delight shewed his fellows that it was sharper than theirs. They now retired to the wood, making their fire about half a mile from us. On the 27th, the same party made their appearance, accompanied by a youth, who was evidently of Malay origin, (indeed he was rather of a lighter colour than those people generally are) ; in his manners he was exactly like the rest, and most probably had been taken by them when very young: they seemed very anxious that we should notice him, and thrust him forward several times when near us. I found they had surprised two of our men, and taken from them an axe, and a reaping hook ; these articles were of some value to us, as the former was a carpenter's broad axe, and our stock of the latter being very limited; it also became necessary to check the disposition of theft which was so apparent, and from which we were likely to suffer materially ; therefore, on their making the usual signs for axes, they were given to understand, that we were displeased, and that none would be given them. The young man, Malay, having the reaping hook in his hand, it was pointed to, and after some hesitation, was given up ; but the axe was irrevocably gone. I determined to convince them they had done wrong, and motioned them to go away, retiring myself towards the fort. Finding they could not succeed in getting the only object to which they seemed to attach any value, and our sentinels being on the alert, (with fixed bayonets of which they were much afraid), they retired ; but it was evident, from their brandished spears, they were dissatisfied, and most probably intended mischief. We saw nothing of them until the 30th, when our boat at the watering-place was surrounded by eighteen or twenty, who sprang from the bushes, but hesitated to attack, on seeing the arms the crew had. At the same moment another party, equally numerous, suddenly appeared at a cottage in a garden which had been made by the officers, at a small distance from the water. It appeared that only one of the young gentlemen, and a corporal of Marines, were in the house. They attempted to retreat, but were opposed by the natives ; the affair began to assume a serious aspect, and the natives preparing to throw their spears, the corporal thought it right to fire over their heads, (I had given the most positive order that, except in cases of absolute necessity, they should not be fired upon.) On this they drew back, and offered an opportunity of retreat.

The corporal loaded as he ran, firing repeatedly, until the young gentlemen reached the boat, when a shower of spears were thrown from both parties of the natives, some of which went into the boat, and one of them grazed the Midshipman's back ; it was now necessary to convince them they were inferior, and for the sake of sparing bloodshed, which would have followed another discharge of spears, the corporal selected the chief for punishment, and fired directly at him ; he immediately fell, or threw himself on the ground (which several others constantly did on seeing the flash of the piece), but it was most probable he was struck by the ball, for he did not rise so quickly as the rest, and the whole party ran into the thick wood; and, as since that period none have been seen in the neighbourhood of the settlements or watering-place, I am inclined to think that more than one have suffered. In their persons, these people are above the middle height, their limbs strait and well formed, possessing wonderful elasticity ; they were not strongly made, the stoutest amongst them having but little muscle; their activity was astonishing, and they bounded through the wood with the lightness and celerity of a deer; their colour is nearly black ; their hair course but not woolly, they tie occasionally in a knot at the back of the head ; and some of them have daubed their heads and bodies with red or yellow pigment. They were almost all marked with a kind of tattoo, generally in three lines ; the centre one going directly down the body, from the neck to the navel; the others drawn from the outside of the breast, and approaching the perpendicular line at the bottom. The skin appeared to have been cut for the purpose of admitting some substance into it, and then bound down until it healed, leaving small raised marks on the surface. The men were entirely naked, but we saw at Bathurst Island two women, at a little distance, who had small mats of platted grass or rushes round the body. Their arms are the spear and the waddy; the former is a slight shaft, well hardened by fire, about nine or ten feet long ; those we saw generally had a smooth sharp point, but they have others which are barbed, and which are deadly weapons ; one of them was thrown at us, and I have preserved it ; it is very ingeniously made, the barbs being cut out of the solid wood; they are seventeen in number, and the edges and points are exceedingly sharp, they are on one side of the spear only. As they have no iron implements or tools, it is wonderful they can contrive to produce such a weapon. We saw but few of these barbed spears, and it is probable that they cost to much labour in the making, that they are reserved for close combat or extraordinary occasions. They did not use the womerah or throwing stick, which is generally in New South Wales; the waddy or short painted stick was smaller than those seen in the neighbourhood of Sydney, and was evidently used as a weapon, in close fight, as well as for bringing down birds or animals for food ; they throw this stick with such wonderful precision, that they never fail to strike a bird on the top of the highest tree, with as much certainty as we could with our best fowling pieces. In their habits, these people seem to resemble the natives of New South Wales, but there are shades of difference which led me to think that they do not occupy quite so low a place in the graduated scale of the human species ; like them they wander about in search of the scanty and precarious means of preserving life, seldom remaining two nights in one place; like them they devour food of the most disgusting nature, of which we often found the remains, but they are superior in person, and if the covering of the women is general, which it most probably is, it is a mark of decency, and a step towards civilization perfectly unknown to the inhabitants of the East Coast. The hallowing and decoration of a sepulture is such an acknowledgment of a Supreme Power and a future state, that it appears evident the notions of these people, on this subject, are by no means so rude and barbarous as those we have been accustomed to find amongst the New Hollanders generally. On Bathurst Island we discovered the tomb of a native ; the situation was one of such perfect retirement and repose, that it displayed considerable feeling in the survivors, who placed it there, and the simple order which pervaded would not have disgraced a civilized people.

It was an oblong square, open at the foot, the remaining end and sides being railed round with trees, seven or eight feet high, some of which were carved with a stone or shell, and further ornamented by rings of wood; also carved on the tops of these posts, were placed the waddies of the deceased ; the grave was raised above the level of the earth, but the raised part was not more than three feet long. At the head was placed a piece of a canoe and a spear, and round the grave were several little baskets made of the fare palm leaf, which from their small size, we thought had been placed there by the children of the departed. Nothing could exceed the neatness of the whole; the sand and earth were cleared away from its sides, and not a shrub or weed was suffered to grow within the area. The pier, having been finished on the 21st, the party employed on that service, and the whole strength of the expedition was directed to the fort, and completing the different works of the Settlement. Second of November, commenced building a magazine; on the 7th, Commissariat store-house was finished ; and by the 8th, the whole of the provisions, stores, and necessaries, were landed from the Harcourt, and properly secured therein : this storehouse is built of wood, well thatched, and is fully equal to the occasion, until a more regular, and substantial one can be built ; it contains nearly eighteen months provisions, &c, for the Colony. The fort, which commands the whole anchorage (the shot from it reaching across to Bathurst Island,) was completed (with the exception of the ditch) on the 9th of November. It is composed of timber of great weight and solidity, in layers five feet in thickness at the base ; the height of the work inside is six feet, surrounded by a ditch ten feet deep, and fifteen feet wide: on it are mounted two 9-pounder guns, and four 18-pounder carronades, with a 12-pounder boat gun to shift on occasion, and to be put on board the Lady Nelson, when it is necessary to detach her to the neighbouring islands, or for other purposes. Those guns are provided with fifty rounds, of round and grape, and are part of the upper-deck guns of this ship. The fort is rectangular, its sides being seventy-five yards, by fifty ; in this square are houses for the Commandant, and the officers of the garrison, and a barrack for the soldiers is to be put into immediate progress. The soldiers, and convicts, have built themselves good and comfortable cottages near the fort. The climate of those islands, is one of the best that can be found, between the tropics; the thermometer rarely reaching eighty-eight ; and in the morning, at dawn, sometimes falling to seventy-six ; nothing can be more delightful than this part of the twenty- four hours. I was obliged, by necessity, with the whole of the ship's company, to be constantly exposed to a vertical sun, but fortunately few have suffered, and none very severely. (The soil of this island appears to be excellent). In digging a deep well for the use of the Settlement, we found a fine vegetable mould about two feet deep; then soft sand stone rock, occasionally mixed with stratas of red clay, until the depth of thirty feet, when we came to a vein of yellow clay and gravel, through which an abundance of water instantly sprang, and rose to the height of six feet. It is probable that this soil is capable of producing most (if not all) the tropical fruits, and shrubs of the Eastern islands ; the plants brought from Sydney, flourish luxuriantly ; particularly the orange and lemon, the lime, banana, napal, and sugar cane; melons and pumkins spring up immediately; and the maize was above ground on the fourth day after it was sown. We found the stream of water first discovered, to run into several large ponds near the beach, (which affords to ships an easy mode of watering), and no doubt hut valuable rice plantations may he fostered in their neighbourhood. Amongst the trees, some of which are of noble growth, I found a sort of lignum vitae which probably will be valuable for block sheaves, and several others, which appear to be well calculated for naval purposes.

The trees are almost inexhaustible; a sort of cotton tree was also found, in considerable numbers, but not being certain of its produce being valuable, I have sent a sample to England for inspection. We likewise found the bastard nutmeg, and a species of pepper highly pungent, and aromatic : the trepang has not been found here ; the fish, taken in the seine, are mullet, a sort of bass, and what is the most abundant is that which seamen call the old wife; our supply of fish is very precarious, being sometimes a week without taking sufficient for everybody; at Port Essington, on the contrary we filled the seine at a haul. The animals we have seen in this island, are the kangaroo, the opossum, the native dog, the bandicoot, the kangaroo rat, and the flying squirrel. The birds are pheasants, quails, pigeons, parrots, parroquets, curlew, a sort of snipe, and a species of moor fowl. The venomous reptiles are few ; some snakes have been found, which, from the flattened head and fang , were evidently poisonous ; centipedes, scorpions, and tarantulas, are also met with, but are by no means numerous ; the moscheto, as is usual in new and tropical countries, is exceedingly active and troublesome; and a sand-fly, not larger than a grain of sand, is so extraordinarily venomous, that scarcely any one in the ship, or expedition, has escaped without bites from these insects; which have, in many instances, produced tedious and painful ulcers. Port Cockburn is one of the finest harbours I ever saw, and is capable of containing almost an unlimited number of shipping of any draft of water, and is completely secured from every wind that blows. On the 10th of November, the defences of Fort Dundas, being equal to an attack from much more formidable enemies than the natives of Melville Island ; I determined to proceed in the farther execution of the orders I had received from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty : I gave charge of the Settlement to Captain Maurice Barlow, of the 3d Regiment, and placed Lieutenant Williamson, and his detachment of Royal Marines, under the command of that officer. Weighed, and dropped into the fair way, and was saluted by fifteen guns from the garrison; which was returned from this ship. 11th and 12th, employed getting ready for sea, and finally sailed from Port Cockburn, on the 13th; the ship Countess of Harcourt, in company ; the latter for the Mauritius, and England ; and the Tamar, for India.

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Alice. Cutter, 13, Port Dar, 1889. Wrecked Intercourse Island, NT, Dec 1891. [ASR]