**Australian Histories Podcast: Episode 75. Bass & Flinders part 6.**

*\*Note: citations included in this transcript are used more as memory prompts for me in writing the episode than for strict academic purposes.*

In the previous episodes we heard about Flinders’ circumnavigation of the Australian mainland. The second half of his explorations necessarily had to be rushed, as the ship was *literally* falling apart, and barely made it back to Port Jackson. Flinders and Governor King were of the opinion that better details could be discovered if he was able to secure an appropriate & completely seaworthy ship to more thoroughly explore, the sections he had rushed past. No such ship being available in Sydney, they both thought it best for Flinders to travel on the first available *passenger ship* to England, and there secure an suitable ship to continue the venture, should Banks and the Admiralty support the changed plans.

Last time we left Flinders in Port Jackson, readying to sail back to England to plead his case to be provisioned again, so he could finish his mission in the manner that was intended. Today we’ll hear how he fared and reflect on the conclusion of his career.

But before I begin Iwanted to flag an ABC Science Show podcast I listened to recently, for any Mawson fans out there. It was all about Mawson in Antarctica and his replica hut in Hobart. I’ll place a link to it in the show notes on the webpage for anyone interested. (ABC Science Show [no date]) <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/scienceshow/mawson-in-antarctica-and-his-hut-in-hobart/104465336>

Despite the very unpleasant and dangerous voyage Flinders had survived on the most recent leg of this circumnavigation mission, which we discussed in the previous episode, Flinders was intent on convincing the Admiralty that he should be supplied with a new vessel, to bring back to the Australian mainland, so he could continue to more thoroughly complete the investigations the original mission had intended. In order to make his case Flinders would set sail from Port Jackson for England, as a passenger on the *Porpoise*, in August of 1803, sailing in the company of the *Cato* & the *Bridgewater*.

It was always safer to travel in company. Should something happen to one ship, there may at least be another nearby to offer some help. And for this journey, help *would* be required, though not necessarily provided from one of the ships in the convoy. Indeed both the *Cato* and the *Porpoise* would come a cropper on the Great Barrier Reef, north east of Sandy Cape, while sailing at night. The *Bridgewater*, either failing to see the dramas, or possibly, clear of the reefs themselves and nervous, were unwilling to return to the danger zone to help. Either way, the *Bridgewater* soon afterwards sailed away without further close inspection, or attempt at rescue, sailing onwards alone.

The *Cato* had been entirely dashed and wrecked across the reefs, with the loss of three lives. The *Porpoise* became stuck on a reef nearby, ending up laying on it’s side, but at least stayed intact.

The survivors sprang into action, and used the small boats to ferry the 94 remaining men from the *Cato & Porpoise*, along with supplies & equipment, to a beach on a large sandbank above the waterline nearby. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 144) Fortunately, much was able to be salvaged from the cargo that would give them some shelter and hope of survival, even on the limited landbank they could retreat to. But many of Flinders important charts were lost, though he was able to rescue some, along with his necessary books. And of course Trim the cat was safely transported to the beach as well.

Though Flinders was only a passenger aboard the *Porpoise*, with no official role, as discipline began to break down on the coral cay, as a seasoned navy man, Flinders did take charge, with the agreement of the two ships Captains. He got everyone working with purpose, to construct a camp that would be able to shelter the 90plus men that were stranded, and to safely store the provisions they had managed to bring ashore.

Flinders recorded “The *Porpoise* now being lost I thought it proper to do away with the business of my being a passenger, and this morning took command of the whole party.” (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 144) He calculated they had sufficient water and food for upwards of 3 months if necessary.

They had expected the *Bridgewater* would return to rescue them when the captain deemed the conditions suitable, but after some days they seemed resigned to the fact that this was unlikely to happen. Flinders discussed the situation with the officers and they agreed they were likely now entirely alone. It was decided that some men must make the trip back to Port Jackson in the small row boat, and report their wreck, though they were aware such a round trip & rescue might take 8 weeks or so.

Flinders & Captain Park were to undertake the voyage, and Captain Fowler would remain and assume command of the camp. Further, they decided those left behind would attempt to build a couple of larger vessels out of the wreckage available, just in case Flinders failed to make it to Port Jackson and effect a rescue before their provisions ran out.

Flinders left his remaining precious charts in a chest at the campsite, both for safety, and to “increase the confidence of those on the bank that he would certainly return. His papers would be his pledge.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 301) With their travel provisions loaded, Flinders and his companions set off to row the 750 miles back to Port Jackson.

It was hard going, but they did make progress, and with great relief finally made it through the heads and into Sydney harbour after 12 days at sea, on the 9th of September. Their voyage and arrival was reported in the Sydney Gazette as “[a] remarkable feat of seamanship”. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 207)

Flinders recorded “The reader has perhaps never gone 250 leagues at sea in an open boat, or along a strange coast inhabited by savages; but if he recollect the eighty officers and men upon Wreck-reef Bank, and how important was our arrival *to their safety*, and to the saving of the charts, journals and papers of the *Investigator*’s voyage, he may have some idea of the pleasure we felt, but particularly myself, at entering our destined port.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 254) .

A couple of weeks later they had ships ready to attempt the rescue. Flinders wrote “The Governor ordered two colonial schooners (*the Francis and the Cumberland*) to accompany the *Rolla*, to bring back those who preferred returning to Port Jackson, with such stores of the *Porpoise* as could be procured.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 255)

The *Rolla* was a large merchant ship already bound for China, and the Governor suggested it was capable of carrying the survivors bound for England to Canton, where they might get a passage onwards to England without too much extra delay. The *Francis* would accompany the *Rolla* and would salvage everything they could from the wreck site and return with the goods and personal back to Port Jackson.

The locally built *Cumberland*, though not entirely suitable for the job, would be at Flinders’ disposal if he wished to recruit a crew to sail directly to England, after collecting the materials and specimens that had survived from their earlier explorations. It was a risk, because the *Cumberland* was small, verging on *too small* to make such a mammoth sea voyage safely, and it was already not in the best of condition, but it should get him to England months before the route the *Rolla* had to take. And only in England might Flinders find a suitable vessel to complete his navigational task, and accomplish the full exploratory mission discussed with Banks, and thus create the full and comprehensive set of reliable charts to make his name.

Six weeks after Flinders set out to obtain rescue, the ships from Port Jackson arrived at Wreck Reef, much to the relief and delight of the men there. Flinders wrote “the pleasure of re-joining my companions so amply provided with the means of relieving their distress, made this one of the happiest moments of my life.” (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 47)

On the 10th of October, 1803, 3 days after their arrival at the wreck site, the *Rolla* was loaded and ready to depart for Canton. Flinders collected Trim from the now aptly named Wreck Reef, gathered his charts, and was ready to take the *Cumberland*, and those wishing to accompany him directly to England. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 259)

Once away Flinders initially made good distance, but the *Cumberland* proved not to have been so well built in New South Wales, and she leaked excessively quite soon after they were under way. In a letter he composed to Governor King at the time, he noted that amongst it’s many failings, the *Cumberland* was “Exceedingly crank”!! Apparently ‘exceedingly crank’ meant the ship too easily healed over in the wind, (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 146) a most uncomfortable and somewhat dangerous characteristic.

Flinders noted “The small size of the *Cumberland* made it necessary to stop at every convenient place on the way to England, for water and refreshment; I proposed Coepang Bay in Timor, Mauritius, the Cape of Good Hope, St Helena, and some of the Western Isles; but Governor King objected to Mauritius, from not wishing to encourage any communication between the French Colonies and Port Jackson.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 256)

They arrived at Kupang in Timor, on November 10th, gathering supplies for the next leg of the journey and doing what they could to make the schooner more seaworthy. It was already leaking badly and maintenance was required to ensure the pumps could continue to be operated, as they still had to run the gauntlet of the tropical weather in the region. A rough trip might overwhelm the ability of the vessel to stay buoyant! But unfortunately there was no assistance available at Kupang to undertake the works needed, and the crew simply had to do the best they could without help.

“The schooner was leaky, more so than before, and the pumps were getting worse; but hoping to reach the Cape of Good Hope, I had wholly given up the idea of Batavia as lying too far out of the track; Mauritius besides was in the way, should the vessel become incapable of doubling the Cape without repairs.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 265) Every voyage a calculated risk, though most often with less information than needed to make any truly wise verdict. Flinders makes his decisions here, the same year that poor old Bass and his crew decided to sail for South America, never to be seen again. It was a risky old world. And Flinders did know he was taking a risk.

Earlier, on July 15th in Port Jackson, they had confirmation the Treaty of Amiens was still in force, following the arrival of a French brig into port. But the peace with France was always shaky, and Governor King had a letter to send with the *Porpoise* requesting military and naval reinforcements for Port Jackson. King gave those dispatches to Flinders to deliver in England, along with other papers, though such a political missive would have been contrary to the agreements for unimpeded travel under the scientific passport agreed to, when the two countries were still at war.

Those papers survived the wreck and were sent again with Flinders in the *Cumberland* and this was to bring Flinders some grief in the future. And sadly King had also failed to furnish Flinders with a copy the letter Baudin had earlier written, that might have to helped ease the travel of any Englishman through French waters should the Treaty collapse. And predicably it did collapse. While Flinders headed to England he was unlikely to be aware that, by that time, in fact the peace treaty had already collapsed and England and France were once again at war. Official news would not come to Port Jackson until after Flinders was already underway.

After the breakdown of the treaty, Napoleon had ordered that all Englishmen aged 18 to 60, who might be on French soil, should henceforth become prisoners of war. This was to include sailors from ships wrecked or captured at sea, and all such men were to remain interred for the rest of the war. Flinders was most certainly sailing into trouble, though he had no way of knowing it. Soon he would wish he *had* heeded Governor King’s cautions. But the condition of the *Cumberland* had deteriorated to such an extent, that he was concerned about *surviving* the final stormy leg of the voyage, even if he were to gamble on continuing without a resupply, and he and his crew were already experiencing some illness. Things were dire.

Three weeks after his last stop at Kupang the state of the ship and it’s crew was so perilous, he decided he would stop at Ill de France, or Mauritius as are calling it here, rather than risk continuing on in that state to the Cape of Good Hope, and he arrived there in Port Louis, mid December of 1803.

He recorded, “In the orders of Governor King, the ports to be touched at on the way to England were left to my own choice; but when Mauritius had been mentioned amongst others in conversation, the Governor had objected to it, both on account of the hurricanes in that neighbourhood, and from not wishing to encourage a communication between a French colony and a settlement composed as is that of Port Jackson. It was these considerations which had made me hesitate to take the step, though the necessity for it was pressing; and as, in the case of accident happening to the schooner, I might be called to answer before a court martial for going in opposition to the wish of a superior officer, it seemed proper to state in my journal all the reasons which had any influence on my decision.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, pp. 266–7)

Given that as he got closer he determined he *must* call in to Mauritius, Flinders went on to note some of those reasons, including the repairs needed to the pumps before they could attempt the wild seas around the Cape, and perhaps take some opportunity to forward some of his charts etc. via another vessel that might be heading to England, so that not all would be lost if they failed to make it back themselves.

Indeed, Flinders carried letters from King that were addressed directly to Governor Magallon in Mauritius, which he could deliver by hand, (though he would soon discover that Magallon was no longer Governor of Mauritius, replaced instead by the formidable General Decaen). Flinders gambled that in the event war *had* once again broken out in Europe, (which indeed it had, though he was unaware) his French Passport would be good for Mauritius. But had the Dutch actually taken the Cape of Good Hope, then he may have more trouble there anyway, arriving as an enemy alien. He felt “Mauritius was therefore much more certain than the Cape, since the necessary succour would be there obtained, even in case of war; whereas at the Cape there might be a risk of losing my charts and journals and being made a prisoner.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 268) Oh fateful words….

And so feeling like he had little choice anyway, Flinders optimistically headed for Mauritius. But his approach into Port Louis did not bode well. One source says, ‘being unaware of the Port himself and having no up to date charts, when they saw a schooner ahead making for port, they fell in behind, shadowing closely, grateful to be following a vessel which might know the local shoals and currents and might get them to port safely’. But unbeknown to Flinders, with the European wars raging again, the paranoid schooner thought *they* were being pursued by an enemy warship, and headed to a part of the bay where they could call on French troops to respond. (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 49) Another source suggested that it was the *Cumberland* itself that was stalked by a French Corvette following their progress in to the Bay. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 319)

Either way, on arrival Flinders soon became aware of the complicated situation he found himself in. “I began now to consider that my passport did not actually extend further than the *Investigator* *( remember, now he had limped into port on the Cumberland not the Investigator)* and how far the French might be indulgent enough to take the intention in preference to the letter of the passport I was doubtful”.

He thought it best to make his way immediately to the Governor and explain his situation. He would need to beg for medical assistance and access to repairs as quickly as possible, explaining *that* would see them on their way at the earliest. Flinders would be asking the French for the same assistance that King had graciously provided for their own French scientific expedition in Port Jackson, when they had arrived in trouble the last time the two countries were at war.

Dressing in his formal naval attire, complete with hat and sword, he waited for the French authorities to come aboard and accompany him to the Governor, as was the usual protocol. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 319) But when the officials did make contact, he was advised that the Governor was at dinner and he might be a couple of hours.

As he waited to meet the Governor, Flinders’ papers, journals, charts and official documents were removed from the ship, and Dacaen’s officials perused them all. His Passport of course did not match the ship he was now on, but there were more disturbing items discovered for the French. Within the political letter mentioned earlier, that King had unwisely sent with Flinders, was a paragraph that would have raised Dacaen’s hackles, where Kings asks for the Lordships to consider “the possibility in any future war, of the Government of the Isle of France annoying this colony, as the voyage from thence may be done in less than seven weeks. …. [continuing] But to defend this colony … it would be necessary that some regard should be had to the military and naval defences.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 328) Well, basically he’s asking for a military presence to be sent to the new colony. And Isle de France was certainly already annoying Flinders!

King continued, describing the number of canon & additional men needed and so on, so it *was* most certainly a political, if not military document, that Flinders had been carrying, and Dacaen was not amused. King’s letter had truly put him in harm’s way and Flinders’ excuse that he did not know what the despatch box contained, did not matter to the French. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 329) Having such a letter in his possession Flinders had technically breached the passport neutrality, even if such a passport had been valid, and Dacaen already felt justified in treating him as prisoner of war.

When he was finally taken to the Governor’s office, the officers there asked many questions of him before he had a chance to present himself to General Dacaen, and after the long wait, Flinders was by then a little wound up! Confusion & suspicion continued to increase. During the Officers questioning they apparently asked him about the voyages of “Monsieur Flinedare”. Not comprehending that they were in fact asking about himself, Flinders professed no knowledge of any such voyages. Later, when the penny dropped, it was too late. Being at war, and this man being their enemy, they had already concluded he was, for some reason, acting very suspiciously in not declaring himself. By the time he finally got to see the Governor, these misunderstandings and suspicions had clearly agitated the General, who failed to greet him with the expected civility, simply demanding his French Passport and commission papers. Offence upon offense!

Dacaen though would prove to get even grumpier, and he seemed to Flinders to be quite a petty man. Like Flinders, Dacaen was now offended in his own right, because Flinders had failed to remove his hat in his presence! Perhaps this accounts for his rude manner in dealing with Flinders? Estensen noted “antagonism apparently flared instantly between the two.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 320)

Though Flinders expected his explanations and documentation would be helpful, further confusions and inadvertent offences only served to create more trouble. Dacaen was already primed to expect the worst. Unfortunately, the spying Peron had earlier intimated to him that a small schooner, such as one like the *Cumberland*, might be just the kind of vessel an enemy might send to spy on Mauritius, before they decided on a full scale invasion. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 181) The moment the schooner was identified as English, suspicion rose in all the authorities, and this warning may well have contributed to the initial anxiety displayed by the officials. They imagined Flinders to be a British spy. The unfortunate coincidences and miscommunications just kept mounting up though, bringing more and more suspicion on Flinders.

Flinders had enquired if there was any news of the French scientific expedition. Indeed *Le Geographe* had made port there earlier in July, with many of the crew in bad shape, indeed poor Baudin died soon after their arrival. This was unfortunate not only for Baudin, but for Flinders too. The report that Ferycinet & Peron had given Dacaen, about the English at Port Jackson was very negative, implying Britain was plotting to acquire more colonies across the Indian and Pacific Oceans and had their eye on Maritius, and they advised the Governor to be wary of the English and look to his defences. Right about now Flinders could have used the glowing recommendations that Baudin had earlier written, for the express purpose of encouraging any French to treat them with the greatest respect and offer all assistance. Sadly he did not have that valuable document in his possession.

In time warn bad luck, Flinders arrived just one day *after* *Le Geographe* had departed for France. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxviii) So he had no chance to get support from any of the more grateful crew members aboard. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 148) This one day late curse, affecting many ill fated Australian explorers - Burke & Wills; rest in peace, Shacketon; settle in for another cold winter etc. seems to have started with Flinders then!

After some testy interrogation, Flinders and his officers were taken to a building known as ‘Café Marengo’ to be held there under guard while the rest of his papers were inspected. The following day he was once again questioned, this time by the Governor’s aid de camp, Monistrol. Flinders recalled “they generally tended to ascertain why I appeared here in so small a vessel and without my officers and scientific gentlemen when my passport was for the *Investigator* . . . And what were the objects that induced me to put in at this port” and so on. Flinders felt his explanations made everything clear, and expected they should act appropriately, release them all, and provide the help required. But it was not to be.

Monistrol had also brought Flinders a note from the general’s wife, inviting him to dinner. Still sulking about his rude treatment at the hands of Dacaen & his officers, perhaps unwisely, Flinders declined the invitation, sending a petulant message back saying that the General should invite him again when he was at liberty! Good lord. He had now added another offence to the scales Dacaen was measuring him by. He had, predictably, affronted the General with his rejection of his wife’s dinner invitation.

The general recorded “I sent him an invitation from my wife, to come to dine with us, although he had given me cause to withhold the invitation on account of his impertinence, but from boorishness or rather from arrogance, he refused the courteous invitation, which if accepted would indubitably have brought about a change favourable to his position through the conversation which would have taken place”. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 220)

So here we go again 2 *honourable* men acting like babies, sooking and causing each other’s fragile egos grief. This in no way mirrored the good will between Baudin & King at Port Jackson. Flinders was very unwise not to have read the tea leaves. But in matters of diplomacy Flinders appears to be a very slow learner. He continued to voice his outrage and make demands of the Governor, further irritating and offending him. How on earth he thought communications with such a tone might bring about his freedom, when he required the *cooperation* of this proud and easily offended Frenchman of great power and much superior rank, is a mystery.

The animosity between them was to become epic, directing much of the rest of Flinders life, though he did at some point become aware of his complicity in his situation. He was later to write to Ann acknowledging that his arrogance and impatience served nothing but to make all things harder for him with Decaen, and that some humility may well have seen his treatment much improved. (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 51)

Morgan noted that “Years later … Flinders admitted that his initial dealings with Governor Decaen could be criticised in so far as he was emotionally upset and zealously presenting his own claims with a certain amount of vanity, but he hoped his actions would be excused given the sudden and disastrous events that befell him… Daecan’s reply to Flinders indicated that *he* had taken offence …and that *Flinders* had overstepped the boundaries of civility and decorum. Decaen’s own papers include observations to the effect that … Flinders had behaved with arrogance and obstinacy…”(Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 151) Flinders started out badly, and continued to dig a hole deeper and deeper for many months, to the point no rapprochement was possible. Two stubborn jerks in evidence here I think, but Flinders had the most to lose, and would have been wise to take every opportunity to make amends.

After a short time kept under guard at ‘Café Marengo’, a sympathetic Frenchman, Captain Bergeret, was instrumental in getting Flinders moved to Maison Despaux – the Garden Prison, to be held in the company of other English officers awaiting prisoner swaps. As discussed earlier, Flinders did not appear to be able to compromise in order to make life easier for himself in those early days. When he was asked by the French officers to hand over his sword, he stood on his honour and refused.

Clearly he was aware now he was a prisoner of war, which may have been a good thing, since such prisoners were frequently exchanged. But while he saw many of his comrades released this way, such a opportunity was not offered to him. But by September 1804 he had got a little wiser, and finally relinquished the sword when asked again.

Flannery wrote “Flinders’ indignation, which occasionally bordered on arrogance, was maintained throughout his internment and expressed through letters and via his visitors. De Caen refused to see him and would only correspond through inferiors. On 25 December 1804 he wrote to Flinders demanding that he *‘cease all correspondence tending to demonstrate the justice of your cause; since you know so little how to preserve the rules of decorum.*’ Flinders saw only *‘embarrassment sheltering under despotic power’* in DeCaen’s ultimatum.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxix)

And we can see how such continued correspondence only served to nettle Decaen further. Take for example the following. “Sir, I would beg to ask you whether it becomes the French nation, even independent of all passport, to stop the progress of such a voyage which the whole maritime world are to receive the benefit. How contrary is this with the conduct some years since towards Captain Cook. I sought protection and assistance in your port, and I have found a prison. Judge for me as a man, Sir – judge for me as a British Officer employed in a neutral occupation – judge for me as a zealous philanthropist, what I must feel at being thus treated …. ”. (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 52) Oh yes, bound to get up Decaen’s nose!

He sent a letter to his family back in England to advise them where he was, which they received mid 18O4, and he sent letters to Banks and anyone else who might have influence to help him. Or course they were at war so there was very little the government could do to influence his release. But Banks did ask for assistance from the *Institute Nationale de France* and also from the President of the Royal Society, but with no result. Indeed some felt Flinders’ absence would afford benefit to the French’s scientific expedition so would not have lobbied very hard one imagines, as Flinders would be in no position to publish anything further from his charts and reports while in custody one assumes.

In fact the General did refer Flinders’ case to Paris, supplying a 48 page dossier of charges, including the serious charge that Flinders had carried military despatches from New South Wales Governor King while claiming the protection of a scientific passport. If Flinders was not aware of how much trouble he was in before, this development would have indicated just how seriously the French were taking his arrival. As Bastian wrote “Captain Flinders, a man prone to wrap himself in the British flag before so much as offering his hand to a Frenchman”, was getting himself deeper and deeper in trouble, and his attitude was continually agitating the man who had the most power to alleviate his problems. A little grovelling and respectful discussion might not have gone astray? But, you know, honour and all that…. At least he had his beloved Trim with him.

The Garden Prison was a more pleasant place than his previous lockup, but Flinders worried about the ongoing incarceration of Trim, his beloved cat, so he accepted an offer by a local French woman & her daughter, to care for Trim in their home. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 341) Flinders wrote that Trim was never as comfortable on land as he was on board ship, so never made an ideal housecat, but he was worried the guards in the prison might mistreat him, and so relinquished him to their care. (Flinders, Matthew, Sandall, Philippa, Dooley, Gillain 2019, p. 36) But only a fortnight later poor Trim went missing from his new home.

Flinders was distraught at the loss of his faithful companion, offering a hefty reward of 10 Spanish pounds for the return of the cat, but “all research and offers of recompense were in vain, poor Trim was effectively lost.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 341) And though just about anything could have happened to Trim, including that he made his way on to another ship, Flinders always imagined that it was “too probable that this excellent unsuspecting animal was stewed and eaten by some hungry black slave”. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxx) “This perished my faithful intelligent Trim! The sporting, affectionate and useful companion”. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 341) And if that was so, the poor cat had at least done a good service for a poor starving fellow I guess. Still, Flinders lamented “I can never speak of cats without a sentiment of regret for my poor Trim, the favourite of all our ship’s company.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 223)

Flinders later wrote a whimsical book called ‘A Biographical Tribute to the Memory of Trim’, a delightfully annotated version of which has been published in recent years and was available in my local library. Details will be in the Reference list, as always, if you’re interested! Included is an affectionate and quite lengthy tribute he wrote in memory of Trim, describing him as “the best and most illustrious of his race, [.] the most affectionate of friends, faithful of servants, and best of creatures, he made a tour of the globe and a voyage to Australia, which he circumnavigated, and was ever the delight and pleasure of his fellow voyagers. ….” (Flinders, Matthew, Sandall, Philippa, Dooley, Gillain 2019, p. 50)

Before long though Flinders began using his time more constructively. He requested and finally got access again to many, though not all, of the surviving charts and journals he arrived with, and began tidying and redrawing the charts and information he garnered on his circumnavigation voyages, revising and improving them. No doubt this prospect would have helped keep his focus on good possibilities rather than the devastating ones.

By mid 1804, though not his final version of his detailed works, he did finish his circumnavigation charts, which he titled, (and I have slightly abridged it here for brevity) “A general chart of Australia or Terra Australis shewing …. Such parts as were discovered or examined by … M Flinders, Commander, between 1798 and 1803 ….. made whilst a prisoner at the isle of Mauritius, 1804.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 225)

He also wrote papers on the use of marine barometers for forecasting weather, and on the variations of compass readings owing to magnetism from iron on the ships (Concerning the differences in the magnetic needle on board the *Investigator,* March 1804), which were read at the Royal Society 28th March 1805 (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 189)). Both papers were eventually published. And Bastian notes that later in the century, as more iron ships came into use, his work was recognised as important and was recognised by the adoption of the ‘Flinders Bar’ (a correction factor in compasses), (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 115) as a navigational aid. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 224)

Now his title for that first full version of his navigational charts & appendices: *A general chart of Australia or Terra Australis*, is an interesting one. Flinders is often credited with being the first to name Australia Australia. It’s true that in communications with Banks related to his publication of the *official expedition* he lobbied again for the use of the term *Australia*, or at least the encompassing *Terra Australis* (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 225) rather than the confusing New Holland for the western side of the country and New South Wales for the east. He’d already been describing the indigenous peoples as “Australian Natives” in his journals, and “these Australians” in 1802 as he travelled along the south coast. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. 88) (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 249) But Banks *initially* rejected both suggestions. (Morgan, Kenneth 2016. p187)

In time *Terra Australis* was approved though, and we see it used in the later *official version title* and on the maps. So we do tend to mark the name “Australia” for our country from that period, and thank Matthew Flinders. But interestingly, as I was working on this, I happened to stumble across a research article which showed the term ‘Australia’ in use on a much older map. Perhaps Flinders may have seen it expressed in earlier maps rather than inventing the term? Or the word may have been in use in various seafaring circles anyway, but I don’t mind giving him the credit for popularising it. Again, I’ll place a link to that interesting maps article in the notes too. (<https://theconversation.com/putting-australia-on-the-map-29816> )

When Flinders’ updated maps reached England with a returning prisoner of war, his prison companion John Aken actually, in July of 1805, Bastian notes these maps would be the first ever produced which showed the complete coast of the Australian mainland and the island of Tasmania correctly placed as such, ahead of any complete maps produced by the French after their explorations. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 225)

But still being at war, the British were not keen to publish such a valuable aid to navigation, which might be helpful to Napoleon should he turn his attentions to the southern continent. Also, they were pretty distracted by the efforts the war required, and with Banks a bit cooler on the whole venture, there was no champion pushing to get Flinders works out to the public in any big way, and so the valuable charts, in fact, remained gathering dust in the Admiralty until his return to England! (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 225)

Flinders was becoming aware that he might expect to be imprisoned on the island until war with France ceased. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 223) This was a devastating thought. It might be four or five years yet! He would be even longer separated from a wife he had barely got to know, and his navigating/mapping career might be over after so much time away, others passing him by while he languished on Mauritius. It was quite the depressing realisation. And as it turns out, one that pretty much came true.

In August 1805 the sympathetic Bergeret once again lobbied on Flinders’ behalf, for him to be allowed to live out of town altogether. He would stay on a coffee and ebony plantation called *Le Refuge* in the central highlands, in the care of a host family. Once in place there several other local families were also pleased to include him in their community, and from then on Flinders was at least able to facilitate quite a pleasant life for himself. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 227) (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, pp. 154–6)

Some members of that wider community had some of *their own* men folk held prisoner by the British, and Flinders would try to lobby the British authorities for better treatment of their sons and husbands, in response to the kindness he was now experiencing on Mauritius.

At the villa he used his time to learn the French language and to explore the region, observing his environment. He began teaching English and mathematics to his host’s children and joined in the meetings of a local literary society. Despite still being officially held as a prisoner of war, with Decaen still denying him the opportunity of prisoner exchange, he would at least have been in a pleasant and stimulating environment on the plantation.

Soon after resettling he received a bundle of letters from England, including a couple from Ann, in which she offered to travel out to be with him. He did consider it, but he worried too much about her safety travelling alone, particularly as the sea voyage would have required several stops, most probably travelling via India, given no British ships could sail direct to Ill de France. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 237) And at least at that stage, he was still optimistic about the possibility he might soon be released and sent home anyway. So it proved not to be an option.

He was initially much happier in general, living with the D’Arifat family, learning French, teaching the boys mathematics and navigation skills, socialising with the wider community, writing papers, exploring & botanising. He wrote “At two we dine, and afterwards I examine the English written in the morning by the two eldest young ladies, and they my French; we then read in both languages, and the whole family then walk out….. In the evening I read French or converse with the family. This is my most common routine, but it is occasionally varied by excursions to lakes, cascades, mountains and valleys, and by visits to the neighbouring gentry, who are very hospitable. So that you will see that I am as comfortable as a prisoner under my circumstances can well be.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 228) In fact we might imagine that *his* life was then more varied, entertaining and productive than Ann’s might have been, stuck at home, living as a second class window, with all the social and financial restrictions that must have placed on her.

There was some conjecture in some sources, on whether Flinders had taken to flirting with one of the elder daughters, but should the suggested evidence be treated with any more veracity that those suggesting he had a romantic relationship with Bass? I’m not sure. The said daughter seems to have been sent away to summer in someone else’s house at some point, (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 231) so that might have been a deliberate ploy to get her away from the attentions of Flinders, but it could have been for a myriad of other reasons too. Not sure, and to be fair, don’t really care. It was a lonely life. If a crush helped alleviate his loneliness and boredom, and assuming no damage was done to the reputation or emotions of the woman or women in question, sure, why not?

I cannot help but feel what an abysmal situation he found himself in and how *frustrating* those ‘wasted’ years might have been for him, and more particularly for his poor wife, when they might have been forging a family life in marital companionship. But all things considered, and especially compared to his early time on the island, he had managed to eak out a pretty happy life, albeit not of his choosing. He wrote to a friend “my letters have told you many times of the happiness I find here …. I do not think that I could find another family within the shores of Ile de France whose taste accords so well with mine.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 229) In contrast, for poor Ann, the deprivation must have been profound, but of course he was away at sea for many years at a time anyway. Perhaps exactly *where* he was, if not at home, was of little consequence?

During those years Flinders continued redrafting and refining his logbooks with help of the records Aken’s left behind for him, and he worked on the charts of Torres Strait and so on. These were all sent on to the Admiralty when another prisoner was repatriated in 1807, and then, limited by the data he had available, for the moment, Flinders considered his reports, maps and excursion data completed, as far as they had been able to explore in those first two voyages.

He still lobbied for a third attempt at exploration of Australia, which would have allowed the time and opportunity to investigate some areas more thoroughly and to make further headway inland, something that had always frustrated him, but as the years passed he must have been aware of how unlikely that prospect was becoming.

Still, he was kept confined on Mauritius by force not choice, and those important years for his career and for his development of a family were ticking away, unfulfilled. His health began to deteriorate, and he had spells of discomfort, perhaps suffering from the after effects of earlier diseases. He apparently had bouts of kidney and urinary discomfort, something he referred to as ‘the gravelly’. Some sources suggested this was residual damage from the venereal disease he had contracted in Tahiti in his youth, but more recent sources, like Estensen’s biography, suggest the symptoms might more likely be the residual problems related to the periods of malnutrition and scurvy he had experienced while sailing? (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 472)

Bastian noted that being unwell often drained Flinders of his purpose, and later he sank into a period of debilitating depression, in September of 1806. For some time he was “not fit for company”. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 232) But with the help of his friends, he did afterwards generally recover his equanimity.

At some point Flinders learned of Peron and Freycinet’s narrative and notes on *their* French Scientific Expedition and their explorations around Australia, which was published in 1808. Flinders was furious to note they had *claimed credit* for all of Flinders discoveries on that southern coast, and had named the landmass *Terra Napoleon*! He was extremely disappointed and agitated, writing to Banks, insisting that “the greater part of that coast was discovered by us. In my charts transmitted to the admiralty, the parts discovered by Mr Grant (that’s Port Philip Bay), by Mr Baudin (the coasts east of Encounter Bay) and by me, are distinctly and impartially marked; and what is more, I showed these charts to Mr Baudin at Port Jackson, and he raised no objection to the division. Every Officer of that expedition knew that I had previously seen and explored these parts before *Le Geographe*.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 238)

Now Flinders’ extended incarceration was beginning to look more strategic. Only after this, and the realisation that letting such fabrications lie, might strengthen any French claim on the continent, did the Admiralty finally get into gear at last. Flinders’ work was dug out and written about. Though he had produced the first and more correct version, the French had *officially* published first, the accompanying completed map officially published in 1811, and dispelling the mis/dis information of the French, took a very long while.

Bastian suggestsNapoleon’s assent to Flinders’ release may have been held up by the influence of Josephine. Josephine in her turn, may have been influenced by François Peron, who was keen to have his and Freycinet’s version of the achievements of the French Scientific Expedition officially published before Flinders might get his out. Remember that the honourable Baudin had died before they returned to France, and these men had undertaken to rework the official reports somewhat more favourably than Flinders would have expected from Baudin.

In December 1808 he wrote “I read a letter of Henri Freycinet; by which it appears that that part of the South coast of Australia discovered by me (*and note use of the term Australia here*), as well as that first seen by Lt Grant and Mr Baudin, is to be called *Terra Napoleon*; that Kangaroo Island is to be called Isle Decres, and my two gulfs (Spencer & St Vincent) are to be named Gulf Bonaparte and Gulf Josephine. I know not whether to attribute the encroachment to …. The French Government, [for] there is very probably some connection between them and my long detention in this island.” (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, pp. 95–6)

It is interesting to reflect on why Flinders was held for so long. It seems the French Minister responsible had in fact authorised Flinders release in July of 1804, and approval was confirmed by Napoleon himself in March (or another source saying August) of 1806. But despite Decaen receiving this information, and actually Flinders’ himself receiving a copy of the release document in July of 1807, Decaen conceded only that his release might be expected “As soon as circumstance permit”. Apparently Decaen “did not consider that the present moment was favourable for putting into operation that act of indulgence on the part of His Majesty”, (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 235) and so Flinders remained on Mauritius at the mercy of Decaen.

Sure, he might have had genuine security concerns over and above his commander in chief, but the level of spite and vindictiveness is unbelievable. Flinders was to remain against his will on Mauritius until June of 1810! Never dis a Frenchman!

Indeed the war was drawing to a close in 1809, with Ill de France all but cut off from French support since April. In December prisoner exchanges were being considered and Flinders hoped his time there might soon come to an end. But Decaen really strung out Flinders’ release to the very last minute. After 3 months negotiating, Flinders finally received a brief message on 28th of March, 1810, advising “His Excellency authorises you to return to your country in the cartel *Harriet*, on condition of not serving in a hostile manner against France or its allies during the course of the present war.” And it was signed off, surely with no hint of sarcasm “Receive, I pray you sir, the assurance of the pleasure I have in making this communication”. \*raspberry. Flinders had already recorded “It is inconceivable, the animosity of this barbarian (Decaen) to me. It seems as if he would never be weary of tormenting me.” October 24 1807 (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 92) And I think he was right!

It was a further six excruciating weeks before the *Harriet* was ready for boarding, and you can imagine the concern Flinders had about the rug being pulled out at the last minute. Bastian reminds us to consider just how hard his departure may actually have been, despite the joy of being released. Flinders, we know, was an emotional man and he had spent more settled years amongst these people and the country, than anywhere else in his adult life. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 241)

He finally departed Port Louis on June 6th 1810, recording “I at length had the inexpressible pleasure of being out of the reach of general Decaen”, (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 241) (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 101) years after arriving and naively expecting a reciprocally warm welcome to the one NSW’s Governor King offered to Baudin and his men. Four months after he departed the British landed on I’ll de France and General Decaen surrendered on December 1st 1810, though he was granted the freedom of the Island by the occupying force. Again, more leeway than he had afforded Flinders.

Baker wrote that, “in Flinders view, Decaen had shown himself to be ‘a military tyrant’ without law or principle, and solely concerned with gratifying his own caprices”. (Baker, Sidney. J. 1962, p. 82) One could try to be charitable and suggest that the General was just a man hell bent on protecting his country, who genuinely felt Flinders was a great threat, with all his maps and his navigating and charting knowledge, but animosity is a highly likely explanation for Flinders’ long incarceration given their mutual personal hostility. Bastian notes when Dacaen’s wife gave one last dinner, inviting the occupying British naval officers, they all declined to share a table with Decaen, after his treatment of Flinders. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 241)

There is some kind of irony I suppose in the fact that Napoleon himself woul live out his life in isolated exile on an island, living amongst a caretaker family and community, in much the same way as Flinders, though of course Napoleon actually was prepared to release Flinders earlier than Decaen so it really should have been him that experienced the reciprocal karma. Ha Ha Instead, according to Wikipedia and Napolean.org, Decaen was made a count on his return, served again in Spain, and lived comfortably, dying of cholera in his 70s in 1832. (Wikipedia: Decaen 2024)

Matthew Flinders finally arrived in Portsmouth, England on October 23, 1810. It had been 9 years and 3 months since he had left the Wreck site in the Barrier Reef to make his way to England, and indeed it had been three long years since he had even heard from anyone from England. What and who would he find waiting for him? He made his way directly to Admiralty House in London, to report in, but also to enquire about his requests for another ship to finish his initial task of that earlier expedition.

He learnt that he had been promoted to Post-Captain, dating from May 7th 1810, the cheap option for the Navy rather than backdating it to his capture date. But he was warmly greeted by all who saw him, the news of his return was obviously well known in London circles. He even received a nice letter from Banks and an invitation to be a guest at the Royal Society. Flinders was delighted to discover he was “reciev[ing] more patronage than I dared to expect, considering that both my voyage and myself were strangers to the present people in power.” (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 243)

He desired to reunite with Ann as soon as possible, and was delighted when she arrived to meet him in London. He was then to spend six weeks in Lincolnshire reconnecting with his family and friends there, and attending to the affairs of his late father, (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 179) before returning with Ann to London to settle in Soho.

He followed up on the status of any family members of the people who had been so generous to him on Mauritius who were still French prisoners of war in Portsmouth, and was instrumental in helping their release, (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxxi) five men soon afterwards repatriated to Mauritius. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 248) (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 183)

His immediate chores done, once Flinders settled into his new home he had to complete the *final* detailed version of his account of the *Investigator* voyages, before he might be posted to any other Naval ship, or be granted the opportunity to finish the exploration desired of Australia. Getting his official account published and correcting the record after the French publication was imperative, and was a great motivation for Flinders. Still, though he was very keen to get it done, he found the work very difficult and tedious, not least because all the drafts now had to be approved by Banks of course. As mentioned earlier, his health had been failing for some time, and back in England this also slowed his necessary work.

While he would have to fund the publication of the book on his own, and hopefully reap the rewards of it’s sales, he was still paid by the Admiralty while he was deskbound, attending to the charts and writing, albeit on half pay, (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 181) so financially things remained tight for the couple.

He was keen to complete his writing but was just as attentive to spending time with Ann and his friends, from whom he’d been parted so long. In late 1811 they moved house again to the outskirts of the city, a quieter more picturesque home. After nearly a decade apart Ann was finally able to spend time with her husband and to their delight, Ann was to become pregnant. Always a dangerous state in those days, at her age of 42 (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 110) their pleasure was tempered with grave concerns for her health. Fortunately, the baby girl was safely delivered on April 1st 1812, to the very great pleasure of Ann and Flinders himself. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxxii) (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 250) Flinders wrote to Madame D’Arifat on Mauritius “I am now indeed as near to perfect happiness as is usually permitted to man.”

After her long wait for her husband’s return, married life did not disappoint. Ann wrote “ I have nothing unpleasant to call forth for my forbearance. Day after day, month after month passes, and I neither experience an angry look nor dissatisfied word. Our domestic life is an unvaried line of peace and comfort. (*Though she’s not acknowledging here the financial stress that they endured always)* And o, may heaven continue it such, so long as it shall permit us to dwell together on this earth.” (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 116) Sadly though, at only 38, Matthew was progressing into very poor health indeed.

As his publication deadline approached Flinders was working hard all hours to complete the work, and a cruel winter was weakening him, noting in his diary late November of 1813 that he was not very well, suffering from a cold and from “inflammation of the kidney”. This condition would continue to plague him – this “stone or gravel in the bladder”. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 251) It sounds terrible and most unpleasant, making his work difficult and all his days altogether uncomfortable. His health seemed to deteriorate in relation to the closeness to the final version in his writing.

He turned 40 on March 16th, 1814, and he wrote to a friend, that on completion of his work he was likely to have to retire to the country, so it seems his ill-health had caused him to at last abandon the idea of completing another exploration.

The old ‘gravelly’ seemed to give him great discomfort. This referred to crystals which formed in the bladder and which were extremely painful to pass, and even made sitting at his desk a trail. (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxxii) Flannery notes by February of 1814 his doctor visited every few days, though the ‘calcined magnesia’ treatment he offered actually made the condition worse and the passing of the ‘gravel’ even more painful, Flinders recording every gruesome physical detail in his journal. “…. The detached pieces feeling to be too large for the passage. Had more pain today, and the urine more red than lately… ” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxxii)

He some times he had to “make water” up to 52 times in 24 hours. (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 120) He must have been exhausted from that effort alone! and no doubt every attempt would have been a painful ordeal. Ann described him as “worn to a skeleton and …aged so rapidly that he looked like a man of 70.”(Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 121) But he had to complete his work and see his life work published.

By June, he was taking opium pills to reduce the constant pain, (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 121) as the last of his editing was being undertaken, though he spent much time in bed resting. His friend reported on June 1814, that his draft was given to Banks and he was able to rest, awaiting the publication.

On July 19th his friend brought him a copy of the new leather bound volumes, which he held in his hands at last, (though some sources suggest he was already unconscious at that time, and may not have recognised what was being placed in his hands). (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxxiii)) After so much effort, his great work finally complete, he passed away in his bed, sometime during that night, his cause of death assumed as Kidney Disease. (Desk 2022)

Ann later wrote that after his death, a post mortem showed his bladder to be inflamed and shredded by the crystals that had formed there. In his last months this once vigorous and adventurous man had aged spectacularly, and was nothing more than skin and bone in his last days. Morgan wrote “It seems that he suffered from chronic nephritis, which included kidney and bladder inflammation and cystitis, leading to symptoms of fever, dehydration, exhaustion and renal failure. …. The fact he had been [affected] by scurvy more than once would have lowered his resistance to infections and increased the discomfort of his complaint.” (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 193) And indeed, his discomfort must have been great.

But Ann noted “He just lived to know, the work over which his life had been spent was laid before the world, for he left this earthly scene of things, a few days after it’s publication.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 470).

The snappy title of this final publication was “*A voyage to Terra Australis: Undertaken for the Purpose of Completing the Discovery of that Vast Country, and Prosecuted in the years 1801, 1802 and 1803, in His Majestys Sloop Investigator, and Subsequentially in the Armed Vessel Porpoise and Cumberland Schooner. With an account of the Shipwreck of the Porpoise, Arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and Imprisonment of the Commander during six years and a half in that Island. – By Matthew Flinders, Commander of the Investigator”*  And note that once again *Terra Australis* pipped *Australia* in the final title. Banks came some way towards a new name, but not too far….

Flinders felt *Australia* to be “more agreeable to the ear, and an assimilation to the names of other great portions of the earth”. (Bastian, Josephine 2016, p. 249) Still, we know how that story ends so all’s well…. The publication consisted of 2 volumes with many illustrations, and an atlas containing his charts, and included valuable appendices. Sadly, sales didn’t make the fortune he’d been hoping for, but it was very well received, and only increased in respect and worth over the years. While his hard extracted publication was not considered a financial success in Ann’s lifetime, it was certainly appreciated by those with an interest in *Terra Australis* over the years, and the charts and maps were an excellent foundation for more modern surveys, as the country developed and the waters around Australia were more heavily travelled.

Flinders was buried at St James Chapel graveyard, in Hampstead Rd, Piccadilly, though it was not too long before his *actual* burial place was lost, his daughter visiting years later and finding all the tombstones had been removed! (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 123) So his individual grave site was afterwards unidentifiable. More recently it was suggested his last resting place was likely then to be lying under Euston train station.

Excavations at that site in recent years brought good news, when Flinders burial site was identified, and his verified remains were respectfully reinterred, after a service at the Church of St Mary and the Holy Rood in Donington, Lincolnshire, with great ceremony, on July 13, 2024. (Thompson JA 2024) (BBC 2024) (BBC 2019) Sadly, his early exploring friend Bass’ final resting place remains, presumably, in his unknown watery grave.

After Flinders’ death Ann struggled to support herself and her daughter, the meagre navy pension not always making ends meet. Joseph Banks, despite not being a fan of marriage, did finally show some compassion and lobbied for additional funds for her, but his influence by then had waned somewhat, with the new generations of Navy men in place, and she was not granted much more help in her lifetime.

Dying in 1852 she failed to benefit from the generosity of the colonial governments of NSW & Victoria, who, learning of their hardship, in 1853 each granted them a generous #100 additional pension. That pension was afterwards granted to her daughter, also named Anne, (Morgan, Kenneth 2016, p. 194) in recognition of her father’s contributions to the colonies, later to become the federation of Australia.

Anne, the daughter, married William Petrie and would use the Australian funds to help educate their son, William Matthew Flinders Petrie, who would go on to become an accomplished archaeologist and Egyptologist.(Wikipedia: Matthew Flinders 2024) (Retter, Catherine, Sinclair, Shirley 1999, p. 127)

Estensen sums Flinders up by saying “He was …a man of strong affections and loyalties. He loved his wife with, on the evidence, absolute devotion. He was a considerate son and, despite differences in character, an affectionate and supportive brother. In a relaxed atmosphere he was genial and warm, with a whimsical sense of humour that expressed itself in the fond ‘biographical tribute’ he wrote on his cat, Trim, and in funny and imaginative letters to his young sister-in-law.” (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 477) He was without a doubt, an expert navigator, hydrographer and map maker, and a respected leader of men under his command. The six years he was held on Mauritius robbed him of a potentially greater impact on the exploration and study of Australia, and quite possibly other discoveries too.

George Bass had surmised there was a strait running through southern Australia and his journey with Flinders around the Island of Van Diemens Land, charting Bass Strait, put that notion beyond anyone’s doubt, and resulted in a shorter and arguably safer route between the Indian and Pacific oceans. (Estensen, Miriam. 2002, p. 479)

Flinders went on to prove that the entire land known as New Holland & New South Wales were in fact a single landmass, promoting the use of *Terra Australis* to identify it. With no gulf separating east from west, Flinders did us the favour of popularising the term Australia in time, the term being used in official documents in 1817 for the first time. While he did not manage to chart every part of the mainland coast, he actually filled in a great many of the blanks, corrected a lot of the older charts and really accomplished an amazing and important feat, though conditions outside of his control meant appropriate recognition for his work was a long time coming.

Reflecting on Flinders death, Flannery noted “And so the world lost one of its most intrepid explorers and most celebrated hydrographers. Flinders, the man whose maps gave the great south land its shape, was gone. In his forty years, four months and three days, he had achieved far more than most of his compatriots who served out their allotted 3 score and ten. *A Voyage to Terra Australis* is a monumental work. It documents the exploration undertaken by previous vessels around Australia, reports Flinders own immense contribution and concludes with a lengthy and detailed account of the authors imprisonment on Mauritius.” (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. xxxiii)

He attempted to always be a good and careful commander for his crews, like his hero Cook, keeping his men as healthy as possible, though sometimes the condition of the substandard ships he was given, and the circumstances they experienced beyond his control, meant they did experienced risk and discomfort and ill health, and even loss on some voyages.

He acted ethically in acknowledging the work of those that contributed to the maps before him, and in giving credit where due to the French, who were exploring at the same time, with the resulting corrected charts becoming invaluable for many years to come.

He and his friend Bass did great work to add to global geographical knowledge though fate was cruel to both men in the end. Both are commemorated in multiple sites across Australia, the UK and even Mauritius, including Flinders University using his name, various Australian islands, mountains, rivers & ranges using their names. Statues can be found, again in Australia and the UK, and their faces are commemorated on various Australian currency pressings. Even Trim the cat has been memorialised in places, including the statue at the Mitchell Library, NSW. (Flinders, Matthew, Sandall, Philippa, Dooley, Gillain 2019, p. 16) (Flinders, Matthew. 2012, p. vii) I hope you enjoyed reflecting on a more detailed view of the famed Bass & Flinders and their lives.

I have no podcast recommendation for you this episode. Thanks so much for listening. We’ll move on to an entirely different topic next time so please keep an ear out for that.

Take care, and I’ll talk with you again soon. Cheers.

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OTHER LINKS:

* Image: St James’s Gardens, tinted green and shown west of Euston railway station, on an 1890 Bacon Traveler’s Pocket Map of London by George Washington Bacon (from Wikipedia)
* Image: Australia 10 Shillings 1961–1965 ND banknote. (from Wikipedia)
* Image: The church in Donington, Lincolnshire, where the remains of Flinders are now buried. (<https://www.theguardian.com/science/article/2024/jul/13/matthew-flinders-body-rediscovered-buried-donington>)
* Image: Archaeologists working on the HS2 high-speed rail project in Euston, London, where they found Flinders’ remains. (<https://www.theguardian.com/science/article/2024/jul/13/matthew-flinders-body-rediscovered-buried-donington>)
* Image: Monument Ill de France (Gillian Dooley via <https://firstvoyages.history.sa.gov.au/locations/flinders/22-world-mauritius/index.html>)
* Image: Ill de France by Jacques Milbert (<https://firstvoyages.history.sa.gov.au/locations/flinders/22-world-mauritius/index.html>)
* <https://www.matthewflinders.net/>
* <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-919744411/findingaid>

MUSIC:

* Intro/Exit music modified from: *‘Grand Canyon’ by Löhstana, DAVID [CCFM Music]*
* Sounds: <https://freesound.org/people/iainmccurdy/sounds/645968/>
* <https://freesound.org/people/Supertyv2/sounds/166753/>