



LIGHTHOUSES & SHIPWRECKS

Maps – Charting Australia’s Coastline Fact Sheet

The use of maps for the early exploration of Australia’s coastline was problematical, as very few existed at the time. In this document you will find some fascinating information on maps. This information is intended as a source and starting point for further online research. You will find an extensive number of online references to click through. Topics associated with the early charting of Australia’s coastline and forming part of this support document include:

- Significance of maps for Australia
- European theories of a large southern continent
- Charting New Holland’s east coast
- British and French coastal surveys
- James Cook
- Matthew Flinders chart of Terra Australis 1814
- Charting the Torres Strait
- Charting of Van Diemen’s Land

Introduction

- What are maps?
- Brief history of cartography
Note significance for Australian shipping and navigation. Variation in areas which were covered by charts eg Stanley’s chart of the Torres Strait (1855) shows his meticulous attention to survey detail. Whereas there was a lack of charts for Bass Strait – only a route mapped.
Parallel development and effect – development of navigational aids and lighthouses

WEBSITE RESOURCE

<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/about/pubs/great-southern-land.pdf>

Discovering the Southern Continent

European theories of a large southern continent

http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/southland/Backgrnd-Imagining_a_South_Land.html

Some fascinating facts to note:

- idea dates back to Pythagoras, 5th century BC
- Aborigines mapping the coastlines
- Terra Australis Nondum Cognita, Abraham Ortelius' world map
- Benito Arias Montano' s world map (1571) displays a portion of Northern Australia
- Portuguese and Spanish explorers opened a sea route to India and Asia and charted most of Indonesia, the northern New Guinea coastline and several islands in South Pacific
- Dutch at war with the Spanish, needing access to spices to fund war, Dutch merchants formed the Dutch East India Company, lead to Dutch exploration along Australia's shores (Duyfken 1606) and to the making of maps of Australia's north, west and south
- Australia had become known as New Holland by the time Abel Tasman completed chart of northern coastline; the findings from his voyages in 1642-1644 (Tasmania, New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji) were incorporated in Cornelis Danckert's double hemispherical world map 1648; the Dutch East India Company deemed Tasman's voyage unsuccessful
- British and French travelled to Australia and helped create a popular view of the continent; William Dampier reached Western Australia 1699
- Ferdinand Verbiest's Kunyu Wanguo Quantu, 1674, shows Australia based on contemporary Dutch knowledge
- French traveller Thévenot published chart of New Holland in 1644

Charting New Holland's east coast

- Struggle for maritime supremacy – theories of the east coast
- World maps and globes 1700-1740 (Nolin's & Thomas Bowles' world maps)
- Didier Robert de Vaugondy's chart of Australasia, 1756

British and French coastal surveys

- Exploration was revived after the Seven Years War between Britain and France
- John Byron circumnavigation of the globe to expand trade
- Scientific expeditions – expansion in British and French exploration, commerce and scientific interest

Exploring the Southern Continent

James Cook

“Cook’s chart of the east coast of New Holland was not only the culmination of a voyage of knowledge and discovery but also a demonstration of navigational and cartographic excellence”¹

Some fascinating facts to note:

- Increased government interest in science during eighteenth century
- Royal Society, a union between science and government, prompted numerous scientific enterprises and appointed Lieutenant James Cook RN (1728-1779) to lead a scientific voyage to the South Sea
- Left England on 26 August 1768 on *Endeavour*, with a copy of Vaugondy’s chart of Australasia on board
- mapped New Zealand for 6 months before surveying the east coast of New Holland
- Landed at Botany Bay and claimed British possession of the eastern part of the continent, which he named New South Wales
- Returned to England in July 1771 with more than 1000 species of dried plants, 500 preserved fish, bird skins, mineral samples, insect specimens and detailed drawings, expedition far exceeded expectations of the Royal Society
- Cook’s survey completed outline of Australia, defining northern limits at Torres Strait, it changed forever the perception of the continent as a harsh and unrewarding land
- Local coastal mapping added to Cook’s initial survey of the east coast in years to follow
- His diary was published in 1773 and became an immediate bestseller, was translated into several languages
- French expeditions were less successful than Cook’s, they did not yet adhere to the curative properties of citrus fruit for scurvy, Jean François Marie de Surville arrived in New Zealand within weeks of Cook, having lost more than half of his crew
- Jean-François Galaup de La Perouse’s expedition (1785 – 1788) was lost after exploring eastern, southern and western coast of Australia. Chevalier D’Entrecasteaux led unsuccessful search for La Perouse and parts of Van Diemen’s land, stopped short of detailed survey of Bass Strait

Matthew Flinders chart of Terra Australis 1814

Lieutenant Matthew Flinders (1774-1814) first circumnavigated Australia, charting most of its coastline from 1801 – 1803

<http://www.abc.net.au/navigators/captains/flinders.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/navigators/captains/journeymaps/default.htm>

Some fascinating facts to note:

- Flinders’ use of the term ‘Australia’ for the newly charted continent is considered to be the first time it was used
- His voyage was prompted by British Admiralty after it learned of preparations under way for a French voyage under command of Nicolas Baudin, both expeditions succeeded in producing maps
- Flinders had already been to New Holland and was aware of the absence of any good quality charts of much of its coastline. He was given command of the HMS Investigator in 1801 at the young age of 26.

- Surveys of Australia's coastline from early to mid 19th century are considered a valuable record to British Admiralty's earliest contributions to the maritime charting and safe passage of Australian waters
- Flinders' charts were used as base maps by the Admiralty well into the 1950s

Charting the Torres Strait

Some fascinating facts to note:

- Luis Vaez de Torres in 1606 first found his way through the strait. Willem Jansz in the Duyfken had previously concluded that the strait was connected with the "Landt vande Papuos" (New Guinea)
- Captain Owen Stanley in HMS Rattlesnake (1846 – 1850) reveals vastly improved knowledge of the Torres Strait, first sighted by
- Torres account remained unknown for 150 years. Alexander Dalrymple found one of his charts in the Manila archives during the occupation of Spanish Manila, made copies of the chart, one of which was used by Cook during the voyage of the Endeavour from 1768 to 1771.
- Cook landed on Possession Island on August 22 1770, determined to find a passage between Australia and Papua New Guinea
- Few attempts were made to establish new shipping routes in the years directly following Cook's voyage
- The Rattlesnake, captained by Owen Stanley, sailed from Dunk Island to the Torres Strait in 1848. Stanley's chart of the Torres Strait (1855) shows his meticulous attention to survey detail.

Charting of Van Diemen's Land

Some fascinating facts to note:

- Matthew Flinders and George Bass, in the sloop Norfolk in 1798, mapped the northern coast of Van Diemen's Land, located a site for future settlement (today's Launceston) and proved the existence of a strait (named after Bass).
- They were the first to circumnavigate Van Diemen's Land
- Louis-Henri de Freycinet's chart of the Derwent River (1802)
- Lack of charts for Bass Strait