

The Life and Antarctic Voyages of John Biscoe

by Ann Savours¹

Biscoe's early life

John Biscoe, who was to make history himself, came from an historic corner of England. He was born in 1794 at Ponders End, a settlement on the road from London to Cambridge. It lies to the south of the town of Waltham Cross and south-west of the market town of Waltham Abbey, roughly between the counties of Middlesex, Essex and Hertfordshire. His father Thomas Biscoe was a native of Waltham Abbey, while his mother, Anne (née Tibbs), came from Enfield. John was the second of their two sons. He was baptised at the Enfield parish church of Saint Andrew on 29 June 1794. He lived with his parents and elder brother James in a small cottage at Ponders End, which they owned for some ten years.² He may have been educated at the grammar school, Enfield, founded during the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth in 1557. The school became comprehensive in the 1960s.

The water mill at Ponders End, 'the most ancient industrial site in the parish', comprising a leather mill and a corn mill which still stands, would have been familiar to young James and John Biscoe. It is pictured on page 236 of the first volume of David Pam's *A History of Enfield. A Parish near London*, published by the Enfield Preservation Society in 1990. This first volume runs from the medieval village to 1837. In it one can read about the lives, schooling, occupations, dwellings and possessions of rich and poor, and how both national and occasionally overseas events impinged upon these. Describing life in the parish of Enfield, David Pam writes of the homes of the poor 'which might be dark, cold, damp and full of children, but light, warmth, company, with games like skittles, shove ha'penny, even billiards awaited the labourer in the public house' while at the Enfield races, 'lords and nobles rubbed shoulders with country folk, pickpockets and other criminals... everybody came, journeymen, undertakers, tailors, barbers and snobs, all eager to win a fortune on the horses. Rich and poor could also intermingle on Chase Green where cricket was taken seriously from the beginning of the nineteenth century.'³

¹ Collated, transcribed and partially edited on the basis of Dr Savours's manuscripts by Maurice Raraty. Edited and further prepared for publication by Raymond Howgego.

² Letter from the Reverend Graham Buston, Enfield Vicarage, 21 July 1964; A. G. E. Jones, 'John Biscoe (1794–1843)', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1964, p. 271.

³ David Pam, *ibid.*, p. 138.

The only mention of a member of the Biscoe family in David Pam's local history is one Sarah, who with her mother ran a Dame School at Enfield Highway. She appears in the records because a case was brought against her violent husband, who caused the little school to be closed. She belonged to another Biscoe family, that of William and Mary. She was baptised at the Enfield parish church of St Andrew on 8 March 1793. She had five siblings christened there between 1788 and 1795. Their father William had been baptised in April 1752 at Christ Church, Spitalfields, the son of Essex and Elizabeth Biscoe.⁴

We do not know whether young John Biscoe was ever sent on errands to some of the old-established and perhaps more imposing of the houses in Enfield – for instance, to Durant's Arbour at Ponders End, the home of the Wroth family, who were prominent in the community for nearly four centuries. The boy might have gone to the more distant Forty Hall, built in the seventeenth century for a Lord Mayor of London, now open to the public as a Grade I listed building. In James Thorne's *Handbook to the Environs of London* (1876, 1970) can be found accounts of many houses and localities within twenty miles of London, no doubt standing in young Biscoe's time. Old elm trees are often mentioned, as are gardens, forests and owners, some going back to Domesday. A treasure trove for Biscoe's background! Life in a cottage in Ponders End was doubtless different from that in the present Gentleman's Row, where the essayist Charles Lamb⁵ lived with his sister Mary, from which house they became wary of mad dogs, no doubt feared by residents elsewhere. One of the young Biscoe's joys may have been to visit the Ponders End lock to watch the barges carrying coal and other cargoes travelling along the River Lea Navigation, pulled by horses from the towpath.⁶ The young Biscoe would have been familiar with the medieval Eleanor Cross in the nearby town of Waltham Cross.⁷ The boy must have gazed up at the Cross, with its heraldic coats of arms bearing witness to Eleanor's ancestry: Castile and Leon in Spain and Ponthieu in France.

⁴ Research carried out by staff of *Achievements*, the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies, Canterbury, May 2014.

⁵ The author of *The Essays of Elia*, Charles Lamb, and his mentally handicapped sister, Mary, moved from Islington to Chase Side, Enfield in 1826 on his retirement from the East India Company. A very large number of his literary letters to correspondents such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth from May 1796 to September 1834 were published. Here are a few lines 'hit off' on strolling to Waltham Cross, presumably not long after their arrival. He explains that the cross was one of those built by King Edward I for his wife at every town where her corpse rested between Northamptonshire and London.⁷

⁶ J. G. L. Burnby and Michael Parker, *The Navigation of the River Lea (1190–1790)*; Pam, *ibid.*, pp. 314–17; Old Ordnance Survey Maps: Ponders End 1895, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Alan Godfrey, 1999.

⁷ This was one of twelve erected in 1291–4 by King Edward I to honour his wife of thirty-six years (she died in 1290). It was she who had sucked out poison from his arm off a Saracen arrow in the Holy Land, so that he survived. The crosses were erected at the places where the funeral cortege stopped overnight on the way from Lincoln to London. Apart from Charing Cross in London, an 1865 replica, and this one, there are two others left at Geddington and Northampton.

Charles Lamb, having retired to Enfield in the summer of 1826 from the East India Company, penned the verses below, inspired by the venerable cross:

A stately Cross each sad spot doth attest,
Whereat the corpse of Elinor did rest,
From Herdby fetch'd – her spouse so honoured her –
To sleep with royal dust at Westminster.
And, if less pompous obsequies were thine, Duke Brunswick's daughter, princely
Caroline,
Grudge not, great ghost, nor count thy funeral losses:
Thou in thy life-time had'st thy share of crosses.⁸

An even greater link with the Middle Ages lies further along the road – his father's native town of Waltham Abbey, whose historic parish church of St Lawrence stands proudly ready to welcome the visitor. Thomas Biscoe must have shown his sons the empty site of the former abbey, destroyed in the reign of Henry VIII and only the gatehouse of which survives today. The boys may have learned that the monastery, which stretched to the east of the parish church had been dedicated by King Harold II, the last of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs, to a certain Holy Cross, brought from Somerset. The family may have read in the *History of the Ancient Town, and once Famous Abbey, of Waltham*, by John Farmer, published in London in 1735, that Harold's foundation was for a dean and 'eleven secular black canons', all well provided for. Slain at the Battle of Hastings in October 1066, with 60,974 other brave Englishmen, 'King Harold's body being found upon Heaps of dead Men, Gytha, Mother of Harold, and two religious men of the Abbey *Oscgood* and *Aibric*, with Prayers, Tears and Supplications, could hardly prevail with the Conqueror (he at first denying him Burial, whose Ambition had caused the Death of many) to have *Harold's* dead body to be entombed in WALTHAM CHURCH, being of his own Foundation; but granted at last. He was then conveyed (with great Lamentation) by his said Mother *Gytha*, and a small dejected Remainder of the *English* Nobility, and therein solemnly interred.'⁹

In the wide green space behind the east end of St Lawrence's parish church (sometimes called the Abbey Church) the site of the former Abbey, there is a plain slab flush with the ground, on which is carved the following inscription:

⁸ Charles Lamb, letter to Bernard Barton, 1826. In: *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, London, Simpkin, New York, Scribner, n.d., p. 370.

⁹ Farmer, *ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

This stone marks the position / of the high altar / behind which/ King Harold / is said to have been buried / 1066 ¹⁰

John Biscoe was born five years after the storming of the Bastille in Paris, and one year after the National Convention of Revolutionary France had declared war on Great Britain. The years that followed were hard ones for the parishes of Enfield and Waltham Abbey. Besides the fear of a French invasion, there was also a fear that some of the ideas from across the Channel might take hold in England, especially after the hardship caused to the families on the edge of poverty by the enclosure of what had been common land. ‘The condition of the poor was desperate’, writes David Pam, the historian of Enfield, concerning the harvest of 1794, the year Biscoe was born. It was vastly below that of the earlier ten years and it was followed by another harvest failure, resulting in riots throughout the country when the price of corn almost doubled, causing even labourers in employment to fall on the parish for relief.¹¹ The price of coal during the winter of 1799–1800 became so dear that the children of the poor became both cold and hungry. More than £200 was collected by a committee of local landowners from the wealthier parishioners. With the rise of Napoleon, patriotic fervour swept Enfield in an effort to raise funds for a force of volunteers, even the one-legged bellows blower of Enfield parish church, hurling abuse at the tyrant in a poem. Here is one verse:

Before that tyrant e’er shall stain our land
I’ll perish in the combat, crutch in hand;
Before he shall come, or venture here to stop
I’ll lose my blood, e’en to the last drop.¹²

We cannot of course follow the fortunes of the Biscoe family during these momentous years, the peace of 1815, after the Battle of Waterloo, bringing only a post-war depression and no relief either to the poor or to the rate-payers, who often maintained the former in overcrowded workhouses.¹³ Since the young Biscoe had been well educated, his father, Thomas, must have been able to keep his wife and sons well above the breadline. Thomas appears to have earned his living as a horse

¹⁰ We learn from R. Allen Brown’s *The Normans and the Norman Conquest* that the day after the Battle of Hastings, Sunday 15 October, began the burial of the Norman dead and of such few English whose countrymen came to perform that duty. According to this author it was then that Harold’s life and death began to dissolve into legend. He quotes William of Poitiers as to the Conqueror’s orders that Harold should be buried on the shore near Hastings, and that these were carried out. However R. Allen Brown observes that the early and persistent tradition that Harold lies at Waltham, the body having been removed there, may make the question of his grave an open one.

¹¹ David Pam, *ibid.*, pp. 319–20.

¹² David Pam, *ibid.*, p. 324.

¹³ David Pam, *ibid.*, pp. 352–9.

dealer.¹⁴ In 1812, his younger son, John, entered the Royal Navy as a volunteer aboard HMS *San Domingo*, stationed in the North Sea.

The War of 1812

The date 1812 means two things to most people: either Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, or Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture, which in fact commemorates the first. As was to happen again in 1940, Great Britain then stood almost alone against a Europe which lay at the feet of a great conqueror – Napoleon Bonaparte. The victory of the Royal Navy at Trafalgar under Horatio Nelson, against the French and Spanish fleets, gave Britain command of the sea, although convoys were still needed for merchant ships travelling to and from the Mediterranean. Then came unexpected and scarcely credible news: the young republic of the United States of America had declared war on the United Kingdom with the principal aim of conquering what was known as British North America (now Canada), which had remained loyal during the War of Independence. It was with French help that an American victory had been won in 1776 and it was with the purchase of Louisiana that the balance shifted from maritime New England to the Mississippi and the cotton-growing, slave-owning quasi-continental south under President Jefferson.

During the war of 1812, so reluctantly entered upon by Great Britain, the bastions of the British naval campaign were Halifax in the north and Bermuda to the south, the length of the east coast of North America. John Biscoe was to play a very junior part in this war. At the age of seventeen he joined HMS *San Domingo* on 11 March 1812, as a volunteer, rated as a landsman and soon after that as flag midshipman, the vessel forming part of the Flushing squadron off the coast of France under the command of Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren. On 30 July the First Lord of the Admiralty, Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville (1771–1851; First Lord 1812–27 & 1828–30) summoned Admiral Warren to London in order to offer him command of the combined North American and West Indies squadrons. Thus it was that young Biscoe sailed in the flagship across the Atlantic to Halifax, where Admiral Warren hauled down his flag. His was no easy task, made more difficult because the Admiralty treated the the War of 1812 (which in fact lasted until 1815, when the Treaty of Ghent was signed), as a side-show. This meant that Admiral Warren, at first, rarely had enough ships to protect the convoys carrying munitions and men to Halifax and beyond, as well as those returning with goods (especially sugar from the West Indies) to the mother country of England.

¹⁴ *National London and Provincial Commercial Directory for 1834...*, London, J. Pigot & Co., 1834, p. 902, Middlesex, Enfield &c. Miscellaneous: 'Biscoe, Thomas, horse dealer, Enfield.'

On 30 December 1813 Admiral Warren wrote to Lord Melville requesting a reinforcement of the Blockading Squadron in view of the immense length of the American coast. He finished by saying that ‘Cruising upon the Edge off Nantucket Shoal off Rhode Island: the cold has occasioned me a Rheumatick Illness from which I am but just recovering.’ The Admiral cannot have been the only man aboard suffering from the cold! ¹⁵

In his history of the War of 1812, *The Challenge*, Professor Andrew Lambert provides us with a concise and thoughtful account of the earlier distinguished career of Admiral Warren with particular emphasis on his experience and knowledge of North America and the Americans, gained during the War of Independence. Not for nothing was he put in command of three stations, which enabled him ‘to make the most efficient use of his forces exploiting the highs and lows of the winter storms and hurricanes to shift resources between the Caribbean and the Atlantic.’¹⁶ Warren was able to place much of the American coast under blockade, thus greatly damaging its maritime economy. Privateers were a trouble, but their vessels were successfully dealt with. There were three single-ship actions, of which the best known must be the *Shannon* against the *Chesapeake*. It is beyond the scope of this essay, but nevertheless interesting to observe how Lambert demolishes the myth, argued by American historians, that the United States won the war. He vividly re-enacts the various sea battles, remarking in the caption describing the painting of the capture of the USS *President* by HMS *Endymion* that this was ‘one of the most notable single-ship actions of all time.’ He champions Sir John Borlase Warren’s conduct of the war, made more difficult by Lord Melville’s hostility, partly occasioned by Warren’s constant demands for reinforcements from a relatively unimportant and rather boring theatre of war and by his own need to retain his power of patronage.

On 28 January 1814 Admiral Warren learned officially that he was to be relieved of his post. The author of *The Challenge* considers and assesses Warren’s command with the verdict that his war ‘was effective, economical and above all successful.’¹⁷ Three months later, in Bermuda, Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, Melville’s fellow Scot and political ally took charge over ‘the ships, orders and intelligence’, after which Warren departed for Spithead, thus relinquishing ‘the slow grinding wheels of a war-winning blockade.’ Cochrane in fact extended the economic blockade north to the Canadian border. The land operations which took place while he was in command at sea, are beyond this sketch of John Biscoe’s life, whose part in the War of 1812 has been assiduously researched in the Public Record Office, now the British National Archives, and

¹⁵ Brian Vale, ed., *The Naval Miscellany*, vol. 8, London, Navy Records Society, 2017, p. 245.

¹⁶ Andrew Lambert, *The Challenge: Britain against America in the naval war of 1812*, London, Faber and Faber, 2012, pp. 83–5.

¹⁷ Lambert, p. 269.

elsewhere, by the late A. G. E. Jones.¹⁸ However, despite the necessary emphasis on the maritime aspects of the War of 1812, it may just be worthy of note to remark that another subsequent polar seafarer, Sir John Franklin (1786–1847) played a part in what his first biographer called ‘a brilliant dash at the gunboats of New Orleans and in the subsequent attack on the forts defending that city, in 1814.’¹⁹

Biscoe’s service during the war of 1812 has been well summarised, as we have seen, by the late A. G. E. Jones. Admiral Warren was succeeded by Captain John Thomson, and under his command, the *San Domingo* departed from Halifax, reaching Bermuda on 21 December 1812. For two months she attacked shipping off the United States’ coast

... boarding a schooner from Boston laden with plaster of Paris, plundering the schooner *Emily*, taking the *Elizabeth* (from Charleston to New York with cotton) and other prizes before returning to Bermuda on 14 February 1813. Apart from these minor actions, the rest of the time was spent in painting the ship, exercising the guns and ‘employing the people as necessary.’²⁰

Shortly after the *San Domingo* returned to Bermuda, Biscoe joined the brig HMS *Colibri*. During her time at sea, this vessel captured and destroyed ‘many of the enemy’s merchantmen which were carrying on a great trade by the inland navigation between Charleston and Savannah.’ However *Colibri* suffered shipwreck during a hurricane on 28 August 1813 on the bar at Port Royal, South Carolina. As Jones points out, Biscoe recorded similar extreme weather in the Antarctic in his journal of 8 March 1831 as ‘the hardest blow I have ever known, with the exception of the hurricane of 1814.’²¹

None of the ship’s company were drowned, but Biscoe lost his midshipman’s rating. He joined HMS *Moselle*, commanded by Captain John Moberly (1788–1848), which had been blockading the coast with *Colibri*, as a clerk. During the following two years the *Moselle* served in the West Indies calling at various ports and blockading the American coast, besides protecting British trade. Biscoe had three changes of rank between March 1814 and April 1815: quartermaster, acting master and midshipman again. He was to remember Captain Moberly, naming a mountain in Graham Land after him, while *Tula* and *Lively* sailed northwards off its west coast in 1832. ‘He is an active lad’, Captain Moberly recorded while recommending Biscoe for promotion in the West Indies; ‘keeps a

¹⁸ A. G. E. Jones, ‘John Biscoe (1794–1843)’, *Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1964, pp. 271–3.

¹⁹ H. D. Traill, *The Life of Sir John Franklin, R.N.*, London, John Murray, 1896, p. 50.

²⁰ A. G. E. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 272

²¹ A. G. E. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 272.

good reckoning, is attentive and promises to make a good officer.’²² It was too late in the War of 1812 for this recommendation to take effect. Biscoe returned in the *Moselle* in convoy to Sheerness, July 1815, being then discharged from the Royal Navy in Portsmouth on 25 August 1815 as a midshipman. His pay amounted to £40 : 19s : 10d after a period of service amounting to very nearly three and a half years.²³

The Enderbys

Biscoe’s abilities may have been outstanding, since in 1830 he was appointed by the merchant shipping firm of Enderby to command the brig *Tula* and the cutter *Lively* during a voyage of discovery, also in search of new sealing grounds, in high southern latitudes.

The history of the Enderby family and its enterprises has been researched in detail by Stewart Ash. It had early connections in London with Bermondsey and Southwark, and later with Greenwich and Blackheath. The firm of Samuel Enderby and Sons was founded in 1775 by Samuel Enderby senior (1719–97), becoming directly involved in the business of whaling in the Southern Ocean, and, like numerous Americans, in the South Pacific. The church of Saint Alphege in Greenwich is where a number of family members are buried. A memorial to Samuel Enderby (died October 1829) and his wife Mary (died 1846) can be found there. A more prominent memorial is situated further down the River Thames – Enderby House – built in the 1830s and grade II listed, which still stands, although isolated among modern housing and converted into a pub. After decades in business, chiefly whaling, the firm of Messrs Enderby Brothers was finally wound up in 1854 on the return of Charles Enderby from an unsuccessful attempt at the colonization of the Auckland Islands, New Zealand, ending in August 1852.²⁴ The site and wharf were subsequently taken over by businesses manufacturing submarine cables.

Earlier, five whaling vessels owned by Samuel Enderby & Sons had formed part of the Third Fleet in the Spring of 1791, carrying a large number of convicts from England to Sydney, Australia. In 1791 Samuel Enderby & Sons set up an office in Port Jackson from which frequent whaling voyages were made.²⁵ Gordon Jackson, author of *The British Whaling Trade* (1978) has pointed out that the southern whale fishery stagnated during the early nineteenth century because of the troubles created by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. He has also drawn attention to the importance of the development of whaling and sealing around the new British Colony of Australia

²² A. G. E. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 273.

²³ A. G. E. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 273

²⁴ Stewart Ash, *The Eponymous Enderbys of Greenwich*, privately printed, 2015, pp. 111–15.

²⁵ Ash, pp. 27–9.

and later, New Zealand.²⁶ He also compares the states of the Northern and Southern fisheries. He shows how the East India Company's privileges handicapped English whalers in comparison with Americans in the Southern hemisphere and South Pacific, in comparison with the vigour displayed by the Americans. However, for an extensive and detailed account of the nearly century-old enterprise of the Enderby family and its wider ramifications one must turn to Stewart Ash, as well as to Barbara Ludlow, 'Whaling for Oil: The Rise and Fall of the Enterprising Enderbys.'²⁷ This two-part essay describes Charles Enderby and the Auckland Islands, 1844 to 1852, so does not concern us here regarding Biscoe's voyages. On pages 780 and 781 the connection of George and Charles Enderby as founder members of the Royal Geographical Society in 1830 to advance geographical science, is pointed out, followed by a summary of Biscoe's voyage and mention of the *Hopefull* and *Rose*, not commanded by him. Stewart Ash's account of the Enderbys of Greenwich is very much a family history, so that their business ventures, household concerns and family relationships stretch along the near one hundred years of the period covered.

The Enderbys were an old established London firm, some of whose ships took part in the Boston Tea Party of 1773, which precipitated the American War of Independence. They pioneered whaling and sealing in the Pacific by sending the *Emilia* round Cape Horn in 1789 and by exploiting the waters of New South Wales, New Zealand and the Pacific islands. Whale and seal oil were used in those days as lubricants for machinery, and also to illuminate houses and sometimes towns. Fur Seal skins were important in trade with China, but the ruthless greed of the sealers, who killed tens of thousands of the animals regardless of age and sex, meant that each new sealing ground, for example in the Strait of Magellan and at South Georgia after Cook, or the South Shetland Islands after William Smith and Edward Bransfield was profitable only for a very few years.

Thus it was that the Enderbys, first under Samuel Enderby and then under his sons Charles, Henry and George, were always interested in geographical discovery, as well as in the exploitation of already charted coasts. It was an Enderby captain, Abraham Bristow in the *Ocean*, who discovered the Auckland Islands, south of New Zealand in 1806. Their vessels *Swan* and *Otter* rediscovered sub-Antarctic Bouvet Island (Bouvetøya), so named only in 1927 when claimed by Norway, but first seen in 1739 by Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Charles Bouvet de Lozier. The *Sprightly* and *Lively* also visited the same island in December 1825, Captain George Norris then naming it 'Liverpool Island' and claiming it for the British Crown. Then came Biscoe in 1830–33 with the discovery of Enderby Land and Graham Land in the Antarctic, followed by the abortive voyage of the *Hopefull*

²⁶ Gordon Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, London, 1978, pp. 134–5.

²⁷ Barbara Ludlow, 'Whaling for oil, the rise and fall of the 'enterprising Enderbys' c.1750–1855', *Journal of the Greenwich Historical Society*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2007, pp. 180–95; vol. 3, no. 5, 2008, pp. 246–61.

and *Rose*, in 1833–4. John Balleny, another Enderby captain, was first to sight the Balleny Islands (at the entrance to what is now the Ross Sea), together with Sabrina Land, part of the coast of Antarctica. The last years of the firm ended with the failure of Charles Enderby's whaling settlement on the Auckland Islands, which lasted from 1847 to 1853. One suspects that his enthusiasm as a member of various learned societies, in particular the Royal Geographical Society, of which he was a founding member, had overwhelmed his business acumen, since the firm lost a great deal of money and was bankrupted by the settlement and all these voyages of exploration, with little except prestige as a return. A lack of historic business records for the firm may be explained by their destruction in a fire at Enderby's Wharf on 8 March 1845, which ruined the sail and rope-making business, but for the history of the Auckland Settlement see William Augustus Mackworth and William John Munce, *Enderby Settlement Diaries...1841–1852*.²⁸

Biscoe's Voyage of 1830–33: Preparations

It is with the most notable of these voyages – that of Captain John Biscoe who was to make the third circumnavigation of the Antarctic, following after Captain James Cook of the Royal Navy and Captain Thaddeus Bellingshausen of the Russian Imperial Navy – that this publication is concerned. What information, one wonders, did Biscoe have when he set out for the far south? He speaks at the beginning of his journal of having received all the necessary instructions from Mr Charles Enderby relating to the voyage, but he does not say what the instructions were. From time to time he mentions them – for example on 27 November 1830 when he refers to having been asked by his owners, if not inconvenient, to visit the southeast corner of Sandwich Land and the Aurora Islands. From time to time he also mentions his charts, of which he evidently had a good selection. Both Charles and George Enderby had joined the newly founded Royal Geographical Society in the previous August. The owners' empirical knowledge, plus their contacts with the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Society and with several government departments, in particular the Admiralty, leads one to assume that Biscoe's knowledge was as complete as it could be at the time. He would surely have studied the relevant passages in James Burney's *Chronological History of the Discoveries in the South Sea or Pacific Ocean* (London, 1803–17), and also James Weddell's *Voyage towards the South Pole...* (London, 1825 and 1827, of which he must have had a copy). He would have taken with him J. W. Norie's *Piloting directions for the east and west coasts of South America* (London, 1828), which included the South Shetland and the Falkland Islands, together with the chart which accompanied this. There were at least two Admiralty charts at the time of relevance,

²⁸ William Augustus Mackworth and William John Munce, *Enderby Settlement Diaries...1841–1852*, edited by P. R. Dingwall, New Zealand, Wellington & Pakuranga, Wild Press and Wordsell Press, 1999.

neither of which were numbered. These were, firstly, ‘A Chart of New South Shetland, etc.... surveyed by E. Bransfield, Master R.N. in 1820’, published according to Act of Parliament by Capt. Hurd R.N. Hydrographer to the Admiralty 30th Novr 1822, and secondly ‘A General Chart of South America from a drawing by Lieut. A. B. Becher, R.N. combined with the best English and Spanish Surveys in the Hydrographical Office’, dated 4th November 1824. Two privately published charts were of relevance. The first was published by the firm of J. W. Norie: ‘A Chart of New Shetland with the track of Mr. Bransfield, H.M.S. *Andromache*, 1820’, published 1 January 1822. The same firm, two years later published ‘Piloting directions for the east and west coasts of South America. . . etc. also for the South Shetland, Falkland. . . and other islands’, London, 1825. The firm of R. H. Laurie, on 1 November 1822, published their ‘Chart of south Shetland from the explorations of the sloop *Dove*... 1821 and 1822 by George Powell, Commander of the same.’ Biscoe may have read the various articles in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* and in the *London Literary Gazette* ²⁹ all relating to discoveries by sealers and others in the southern regions. But above all he would have studied Captain Cook’s voyages, for it was the great navigator who sailed over the armchair geographers’ enormous, supposedly fertile and inhabited ‘Terra Australis Incognita’ and reduced it to a region of sea and sea ice, storms, fogs, icebergs, snow and far-flung ice-covered islands, with a possible frozen continent at its heart, where seals, whales and penguins were the only living things.³⁰

It seems improbable that Biscoe knew much of the great circumpolar voyage of the Russian Thaddeus Bellingshausen which took place between 1819 and 1821. Bellingshausen’s narrative and atlas were not published in Russia until 1831 and remained untranslated into English for more than a hundred years. However, there was a brief summary of the voyage in the *Literary Gazette* of January 1824, and there were various articles in French and German periodicals. Some details of the voyage must have been plotted on English charts since Biscoe refers to the position of Traverse or Traversay Island, one of the South Sandwich Islands. (There are three Traversay Islands: Zavodovski, Leskov and Visokoi, which were named by the Russians after the Marquis of Traversay, their Minister of Marine. However, Biscoe does not mention Alexander I Land (now

²⁹ See H. R. Mill’s Antarctic Bibliography in *The Antarctic Manual*, London, Royal Geographical Society, 1901, pp. 521–32. The article from the *Literary Gazette*, 1824, pp. 26–7, is reprinted as an Appendix in this volume.

³⁰ ‘That there may be a Continent or large tract of land near the Pole, I will not deny,’ wrote Cook in his journal on February 21, 1775, ‘on the contrary I am of opinion there is, and it is probable that we have seen a part of it.’ Later in the same entry, he described the lands they had discovered as ‘doomed by nature to everlasting frigidness and never once to feel the warmth of the Sun’s rays, whose horrible and savage aspect I have no words to describe...’ (James Cook, *The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure 1772–1775*. Edited by J. C. Beaglehole, pp. 643 & 646, Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1961. *The Journals of Captain James Cook*, vol.II)

Alexander Island) and Peter I Island (now Peter I Øy), both discovered by Bellingshausen, and relatively near to Biscoe's track.

What did Biscoe probably know of the southern regions when he sailed? To summarize this briefly we can say first that most of the islands encircling the Antarctic continent were known and sometimes exploited for their seals. But the icy continent itself, whose existence was suspected by Cook and whose coast was certainly seen, but not recognised, by Bellingshausen, was completely unknown. Only its isolation and its ice-infested seas and foul weather were near certainties in the minds of scholars and navigators.

The *Tula* and the *Lively*

With what vessels and crew did Biscoe leave England? He himself says little of them, but Lloyds Register of Shipping for 1831 gives a good many details. We learn that the *Tula* was a snow³¹ class E1 (i.e. second class of the first quality). She was sheathed with copper over boards and copper-fastened in 1830. She was single decked with beams, 157 tons. She had been built in Plymouth twelve years before. Some repairs were made in 1830, when her owners are given as Enderby. Her draught was 13 feet when loaded. She was surveyed in London, bound for the South Seas, and was fitted with two chain cables and one of hemp. The name *Tula* is a curious one for a British vessel of the time, since the town of Tula is situated nearly 200 miles south of Moscow. A mediaeval fortress in origin, it has an eighteenth-century cathedral and was visited by Tsar Peter the Great, who commissioned an arms factory to be built, with the eventual result that Tula became a great iron-working centre, producing both armaments and samovars in factories owned by the Demidov family of blacksmiths in the eighteenth century. The Russian circumnavigator of the Antarctic, (1819–21), Thaddeus Bellingshausen, named a Cape Demidov in South Georgia. Perhaps the town was famous for its flowers, since Ackermann, in a book about Russian costume of 1822, published a coloured engraving captioned 'Female gardener of Tula.' She holds a rake, not a shotgun and carries a water jug and not a samovar!

We glean similar details from Lloyds Register concerning the little *Lively*. She was a single-decked cutter of 49 tons, sheathed with copper in 1830. She had been built at Southampton and her damages were repaired in 1830. She was 27 years old, owners Enderby, eight feet draught when loaded. She was surveyed in London, bound for the South Seas, with two chain cables and one hemp. Her class was also E1. Lloyds Register does not give the number of men aboard each vessel,

³¹ According to C. W. T. Layton's *Dictionary of nautical words and terms* (Glasgow, 1955), a snow is 'a brig rigged vessel whose main trysail or *driver* is carried by encircling rings, on a small mast immediately abaft the main mast.' The *Tula* is usually described as a brig.

but the *Tula* is entered in the Hobart Town Report of Ships' Arrivals³² as having a crew of seventeen and the *Lively* a crew of four, although at the time these entries were made (in May and September 1831) there had been losses from illness and accidents during the voyage. Additional details from these same arrivals reports are that the *Tula* carried two guns and the *Lively* one. From Biscoe's journal we learn that the *Tula* was equipped for whaling, having an unspecified number of whale boats on board and also whaling gear.³³ She presumably had try-works amidships for rendering down the blubber of any captured whales or Elephant Seals.

Navigating instruments and methods

On the first page of his journal, Biscoe records that he was equipped with 'three chronometers of Mr. Arnold'³⁴ for the determination of longitude at sea. By 1830 the use of the chronometer had become fairly general. All ships of the Royal Navy were issued with at least one, as were many merchant vessels, particularly those sailing in uncharted waters. Three chronometers were useful as a check one against the other, as it could be assumed that if two maintained the same rate and the third varied, the third one was at fault. Both latitude and longitude positions were estimated by dead reckoning with the use of a log trailed astern of the vessels. Latitudes were determined by sextant observation of sun or stars when weather allowed. Biscoe had a third method of fixing his longitude position – that of 'lunar distances' now no longer used, which is inaccurate unless the calculator is both a first-class observer and a good mathematician. Examples of the use of combinations of these methods occur on most pages of his narrative, and of course are set out among his tables of

³² In the Tasmanian State Archives, Hobart. See Appendix I, page x.

³³ Biscoe's journal for 14 July and 5 August 1830.

³⁴ See chapter 7 of Rupert T. Gould, *The marine chronometer, its history and development*, London, J. D. Potter, 1923, for an account of John Arnold (1736–99) and of his son John Roger Arnold (d. 1843). On the first page of his journal Biscoe states that he was 'equipped with three chronometers of Mr Arnold' for the determination of longitude at sea. The history of the marine chronometer has been researched and published with great skill and attention to detail by Lt Cdr Gould. The foreword is by the then Astronomer Royal, Sir Frank Dyson, who quotes his first predecessor, John Flamsteed's words regarding the importance of finding out 'the so much desired longitude... for perfecting the art of navigation.' (p.i) The story is a long one, elaborated with numerous diagrams and quotations relating to the chronometer makers of long ago. The foremost was John Harrison (1693–1776), an obscure Yorkshire carpenter, self-taught, whose marine timekeepers won him the £20,000 reward offered by the Board of Longitude (set up during the reign of Queen Anne) the support of the Royal Society, and a successful trial at sea. Support was also given him by King George III. The machine that culminated was Harrison's no.4, finished in 1759. It can be seen today at Greenwich and is illustrated in Plates XI and XII of Gould's book of this time-keeper Gould declares (p. 49) 'that by reason alike of its beauty, its accuracy and its historical interest, must take pride of place as the most famous chronometer that ever has been or ever will be made.' He further declares no.4 to be a masterpiece 'which must ever remain Harrison's chief and unquestioned title to immortality, for with its construction the whole world became his debtor.' (p. 54) However, it was the later efforts of Thomas Earnshaw and John Arnold and his son that enabled over a thousand timekeepers, per annum, sold more cheaply to become available to the world (Gould, p.105) John Arnold senior died in 1799 aged 63. Gould points out the many good qualities, above all 'his reduction of the chronometer to a simple and efficient machine of moderate price, suitable for production in quantity' (p. 115). It must have been from his son, John Roger Arnold, who inherited none of his father's good qualities, that Biscoe (or the Enderbys) bought the three chronometers that circumnavigated the globe in the *Tula* (Gould, pp. 114–15)

observations. The observation columns and the text of Biscoe's journal indicate that a barometer and thermometers for both air and water temperatures were also taken. Measurements were made regularly and entered in the appropriate columns of the log. The barometer burst during a storm on 11 December 1830 and was replaced or repaired in Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). In more tempestuous weather, during the second half of the voyage, the barometer broke again. Among the observations are a few deep-sea soundings, 'no bottom' usually being noted.³⁵

1830–1831: The first half of the voyage

The *Tula* and *Lively* departed from Gravesend in ballast on 14 July 1830. The master of the *Lively* was Captain Smith, later replaced by Captain George Avery. In his journal, Biscoe records early in the voyage having difficulty in keeping company with the *Lively*, neither *Tula* nor *Lively* sailing as well as he had hoped. He discovered to his dismay that the fore rigging of the *Tula* was in a poor state (a matter which must reflect badly on the Enderbys), although her main rigging was new. Whaling gear having been fitted not long after departure, boats were lowered occasionally, but no whales were killed. During a fortnight's stay at the Cape Verde Islands, salt and provisions were loaded and an islander, John Antonio, taken on. Not long after leaving the Cape Verdes, a Dutch vessel was spoken, which confirmed news of the 1830 revolution in France. Biscoe found the *Tula* 'too short to scud well and very dull under canvas' (entry for 23 October 1830). He compared the rates of the three chronometers as they travelled south, finding them irregular quite early in the voyage. However this was perhaps not surprising in view of the violent motion caused by the intervals of rough weather in the Atlantic – for example, the *Tula* 'rolling and knocking about in so dreadful a manner it was impossible to manage her' during an interval of calm on 14 September 1830. They crossed the equator on 27 September when Biscoe was pleased to find that his calculation of the longitude that day by lunar distance observation agreed with No. 2 chronometer. The vessels bore up for the island of South Trinidad (Ilha Trindade) some three hundred miles east of Brazil, reaching it on 8 October, when Biscoe checked his longitude and made a sketch of the island which appears in his journal, but did not attempt to land. The sketch is entitled, 'Island of Trinidad SBW [South by West] 7 leagues.' It bears only a slight resemblance to one of two dramatic watercolours by Dr Edward Wilson entitled 'Approaching South Trinidad from the northwest before sunrise, Sept. 13 '01.' That was during the voyage of the *Discovery*, 1901–04, *en route* for the Antarctic. In his diary, Wilson describes first seeing the 'rugged broken outline' of the

³⁵ A paper by Morton J. Rubin, 'John Biscoe's meteorological and oceanographic observations in the Southern Ocean, 1830–1832', *Polar Record*, vol. 33, no. 184, 1997, pp. 39–46, presents 'a digest and assessment' of these data 'which substantiate Biscoe's reputation 'as an assiduous and careful observer', following after Captain Cook and Captain Bellingshausen. This paper is reproduced at the end of the present volume with the author's kind permission.

island and then a nearer view of its precipitous nature ‘chiefly a pale yellowish grey craggy rock, very steep and high cliffs, and a dangerous looking rock bound coast with a roaring white line of breakers along it – and between the higher peaks and cliffs and precipitous parts, slopes, which were covered by forests of tree fern and a coarse and fine tussock grass.’ Birds were nesting everywhere. Some were shot by the landing party, as scientific specimens.³⁶ In Biscoe’s simple sketch, the island’s jagged outline appears to be softened by clouds.

The Falkland Islands and beyond

Biscoe had been born in the world at a crucial time during the Great Wars against France. He arrived in the Falklands at another crucial time – after a series of events leading to their occupation by Great Britain in 1832 and 1833. These windswept islands, comprising two main areas of land: West and East Falkland, divided by Falkland Sound, were almost certainly discovered by Captain John Davis, after whom the well-known Davis Strait had been named, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was not until the reign of William and Mary, that they were named in 1690 by a later English mariner, Captain John Strong, after Viscount Falkland, treasurer of the Royal Navy. When sailors from St Malo on the coast of Brittany arrived in later years to hunt for seals, they called the islands Iles Malouines, subsequently the Islas Malvinas in Spanish.

Note: A detailed history of the discovery and colonisation of the Falkland Islands will be found in Appendix 6 at the end of this document.

The *Tula* and *Lively* reached the Falkland Islands in early November 1830. Despite strong contrary winds, the *Tula* was able to enter Berkeley Sound and work her way to Port Louis at its head. This had been the site of the French colony of Fort Saint Louis, established by the distinguished naval officer, Louis Antoine de Bougainville from 1763 to 1767, when, for diplomatic reasons, it was handed over to Spain and renamed Puerta de la Soledad by the authorities of the Vice-Royalty of the Rio de la Plata at Buenos Aires. Biscoe doesn’t describe the settlement, being preoccupied with getting his casks filled with water, during heavy gales, when it proved impossible to tow the rafts to shore. It was at Port Louis that Mr. Smith deserted the *Lively* ‘in consequence of my reprimanding him for want of attention on board that vessel.’ Mr. George Avery must have taken Mr. Smith’s place at this point.

³⁶ Edward Wilson. *Diary of the Discovery expedition to the Antarctic regions 1901–1904*, edited from the original mss. in the the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, by Ann Savours, London, 1966, New York, 1967, pp. 49–54, plate.

Biscoe had been ‘much surprised to find a small Colony at these Islands’ and disappointed not to be able to purchase inexpensive provisions. He found ‘Mr. Vernet, the proprietor selling his bullocks at 10 dollars each, which are small, lean and very badly killed.’ Others were available only further afield. Louis Elie Vernet’s interest in the Falklands had begun with the setting up of an enterprise to slaughter the wild cattle of East Falkland, believed to have been descended from Bougainville’s beasts. His dealings with both the revolutionary government of La Plata (now Argentina) at Buenos Aires and the British government in London (its consul-general being Woodbine Parish in Buenos Aires) would not have come into Biscoe’s ken during either of his stays in the Falklands, but he may have met some of the colonists including Vernet’s cultured household.³⁷

After searching in vain for profitable seal rookeries, the two vessels headed eastwards and south, frequently harassed by storms and sea ice. They reached the desolate South Sandwich Islands, discovered and named by Captain James Cook R.N. on 31 January 1775 during his second circumnavigation of the world in HMS *Resolution*. They were subsequently visited forty-five years later by Captain Thaddeus Bellingshausen and Captain M. P. Lazarev of the Imperial Russian Navy in *Vostok* and *Mirnyy*. Biscoe visited Montague and sighted Bristol and Saunders Islands,³⁸ then continued his south-easterly course, in the search for new islands. During the late afternoon of 28 February 1831, he sighted ‘several hummocks’ to the south and by 6 p.m. he was sure that he had found land. Entries in his journal for 1 and 2 March, describe how the two small vessels endeavoured to beat their way towards the new land through pack ice, but ‘after many fruitless attempts and some heavy blows, were always frustrated.’ Their position, logged as latitude 66° 7’ S., longitude 49° 6’ E. allowed them to scan about 12 leagues [36 nautical miles: 66 km] of coast. Overnight on 2–3 March the wind dropped and a calm spell lasting several hours caused the sea to freeze to a depth of one inch, further impeding their progress. On 3 March 1831:

... nearly the whole night, the Aurora Australis showed the most brilliant appearance, at times rolling itself over our heads in beautiful columns, then as suddenly forming itself as the unrolled fringe of a curtain, and again suddenly shooting to the form of a serpent, and at times appearing not many yards above us... At this time we were completely beset with broken ice, and although the vessels were in considerable danger in running

³⁷ See P. J. Pepper, ‘Louis Élie Vernet (1791–1871)’, in David Tatham, *Dictionary of Falklands Biography*, Ledbury, 2008, pp. 540–46.

³⁸ See Stanley Kemp and A. L. Nelson, ‘The South Sandwich Islands’, *Discovery Reports*, vol. 3, 1931, for the detailed survey made in 1930 by RRS *Discovery II* and featured in the first edition (1943) of the *Antarctic Pilot* when the three most northerly islands were discovered.

through it with a smart breeze, which had now sprung up, I could hardly restrain the people from looking at the *Aurora Australis* instead of the vessel's course.

Biscoe named his discovery Enderby Land in honour of his employers. The cape that he tried so hard to reach he called Cape Ann, probably after his mother.

Just off Cape Ann, *Tula* and *Lively* became separated during a violent three-day storm. At 6.30 on the evening of 4 March:

... a breeze sprung up from S.E. with squalls. At midnight freshened to a stiff breeze, and at 4 p.m. of the 5th blew a fresh gale with thick weather and shortly after we lost sight of the cutter, bearing about west by north two miles. The gale increased, and at 12 blew a perfect hurricane, which lasted without intermission until the morning of the 8th. The weather during the whole time was so thick that we could scarcely see twice our own length in any direction, and being so close to ice of every description, were in a very dangerous situation, the vessel being at the same time a complete mass of ice, and the wind blowing so intensely cold, it was impossible for the people to hold anything in their hands for more than a minute or two at a time.

During the gale *Tula* drifted 120 miles [192 km] north-northwest. She lost one of her boats, and the bulwarks, boats and quarterdeck rail on the starboard side were stove in; several of her crew were hurt, '...but by the blessing of God we drove clear of all the icebergs.' Of the cutter there was no sign, and in view of the damage to his own ship, Biscoe feared the worst. They again sighted Cape Ann on 16 March and saw more high land close by, but further gales, an ailing crew and a much-damaged and ice-encrusted vessel discouraged Biscoe from further exploration. On 4 April (late in the Antarctic season), when only three of his crew could stand, he decided to run for New Zealand. In late April his carpenter and the seaman from the Cape Verde Islands, John Antonio, died and *Tula* altered course for Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in the hope of saving the vessel and the lives of those who remained.³⁹

The *Tula* experienced great difficulty while endeavouring to approach the River Derwent for Hobart Town, the northwesterly wind, Biscoe wrote, 'blowing only at intervals and then falling calm,

³⁹ The *Tula* was not the only vessel to arrive in Van Diemen's Land from the South Seas in distress. Such a craft was the *Liberty*, 18 tons, whose crew sought succour at the penal settlement of Macquarie Harbour on the island's west coast, in January 1832. She had been built from the wreck of a whaler on the 'Island of Desolation' and sailed for nearly 4000 miles across the Southern Ocean. See Ann Savours, 'The wreck of the *Betsey and Sophia* on Iles Kerguelen, 1831', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 127, 1961, pp. 317–21.

which made it utterly impossible to near the land.’ What must have been most worrying was being carried away to the southeast on 8 May for some twenty miles, in the knowledge that there would be no chance of reaching any other coast should they be blown beyond Van Diemen’s Land. With the deaths of two of his crew from dysentery and scurvy, it was essential to find succour. ‘I endeavoured all in my power to keep up the spirits of those on board’, wrote Biscoe that day, ‘and often had a smile on my face with a very different feeling within.’

On 10 May, despite having merely a plan of Storm Bay which was found among other charts, *Tula* was able to enter the Derwent, making a distress signal as she passed the flagstaff which had been erected at Battery Point a few years earlier. This met with no response. The pilot only came on board near to Sullivan’s Cove, to be followed almost immediately by Captain James Weddell, whose cutter with nearly a dozen hands moored the *Tula*. Once ‘the proper authority’ had been on board, Biscoe went ashore to find an agent, first approaching the representative for Lloyds, who declined to do anything himself, but introduced Biscoe to Mr Anthony Fern Kemp. Having learned of the ‘circumstances of the voyage and the owners’, Fern Kemp agreed straight away to become the *Tula*’s agent. As such, he arranged for her people to be admitted to H.M. Colonial Hospital, so that by four o’clock that afternoon, Biscoe ‘had the pleasure of seeing them all admitted and taken care of.’ To put the first half of the voyage into context: although the Antarctic Peninsula had been discovered a little earlier in the nineteenth century (1820) by Edward Bransfield, or arguably (by A. G. E. Jones) two days earlier by Bellingshausen, Biscoe was the first to sight as land the coast of Greater [East] Antarctica, following approaches by his predecessors Cook and Bellingshausen. Nearly one hundred years later, Enderby Land was seen again by Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen in *Norvegia* and by Sir Douglas Mawson in *Discovery*. Biscoe’s landfalls in this area have been discussed by Dalton (1931)⁴⁰ and Cumpston (1963).⁴¹ Only in the twentieth century was it proved conclusively that Antarctica is a continent. It is therefore interesting to find that the Enderbys, on receiving Biscoe’s dispatches from Hobart Town, informed the Treasury on 21 January 1832 of his ‘discovery... of a very considerable extent of land in a high southern latitude and which he is of opinion is likely to be of great importance, believing it to be a continent.’⁴² Similarly a letter

⁴⁰ E. W. Dalton, ‘The first sighting of the Antarctic continent: a critical analysis of Biscoe’s discovery of Enderby Land’, *Isis*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1931, pp. 379–92.

⁴¹ J. S. Cumpston, ‘The Antarctic landfalls of John Biscoe, 1831’, *Geographical Journal*, vol. 129, no. 2, 1963, pp. 175–84. In this interesting paper, Dr Cumpston, the historian of Macquarie Island, illustrates the charting of Enderby Land, from the manuscript chart in the United Kingdom Hydrographic office (H678–4) on which Biscoe’s track can be found and his place-names – a range of mountains which he named after the three Enderby brothers – Henry, George and Charles, as well as Mount Gordon for their sister Elizabeth, who had married into the Gordon family (see map). One hundred years later, the *Discovery*, carrying the BANZARE.

⁴² Great Britain. The National Archives. P.R.O. Adm 1/4307.

forwarded by the Enderbys from Biscoe to Captain Francis Beaufort, Hydrographer of the Navy, declares, ‘I am firmly of opinion that this is a large continent, as I saw to an extent of 300 miles.’⁴³

The picturesque island of Tasmania where the *Tula* sought refuge in great distress, was at that time called Van Diemen’s Land. On the map or chart, the island can be seen hanging like a jewel some two hundred miles south of the Australian mainland, across Bass Strait. With its changeable weather, varied landscape and indented coastline, it resembles the British Isles. Hop gardens, rounded oasthouses, and apple orchards may have reminded the later visitor or settler of ‘home’, if he or she came from Kent.

Note: A history of the early settlement of Tasmania is given in Appendix 7 at the end of this document.

When Captain John Biscoe sailed up the Derwent River to Hobart Town, the settlement had been established for less than thirty years. Its primary purpose was to be a penal colony, receiving men, and a lesser number of women who had been transported mainly from the British Isles, after being convicted in the courts of various crimes, ranging from violent assault to theft and forgery. Largely English or Irish they were landed from relatively small wooden sailing ships at the end of a voyage across half the world. The reason for this extraordinary venture was the aftermath of the Declaration of Independence, which meant that felons could no longer be transported to the American colonies, once these aspired to become the United States. It is beyond the scope of this essay even to summarise the workings of the system of transportation and of its statistics relating to Hobart – the names of ships, the numbers of prisoners they carried, their health or otherwise on landing, the voyages they had endured. Such can be found (and more) in Charles Bateson’s comprehensive *The Convict Ships, 1787–1860*.⁴⁴ Many convicts were so disabled or ill on arrival in Hobart Town that they had to be looked after in the colonial hospital, where Biscoe’s remaining crew were also accommodated.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hydrographic Office, Ministry of Defence, Taunton. Letters prior to 1857, E213.

⁴⁴ Charles Bateson, *The Convict ships, 1787–1860*, Glasgow, Brown, Son and Ferguson, 2nd edition, 1969. See also Derek J. Oddy, ed., ‘A Surgeon-superintendent’s experiences on a convict transport: The voyage of the *Emperor Alexander* to Van Diemen’s Land in 1833’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 96, no. 3, 2010, pp. 303–16.

⁴⁵ It is interesting that whereas the historian of the Enderbys, Barbara Ludlow, cites Samuel Enderby as being ‘motivated by the idea of convicts out and whale oil home’, according to Charles Bateson (pp. 147 and 157), only three Enderby ships were employed in this way. The *William* arrived in Port Jackson (Sydney, New South Wales) in March 1794, the *Britannia* arrived there in May 1797 and the *Speedy* in April. But see also Barbara Ludlow, ‘Whaling for Oil, the rise and fall of the ‘Enterprising Enderbys’’, *Journal of the Greenwich Historical Society*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2007, pp. 181–2. However, Susan Lawrence, author of *Whalers and Free Men: life on Tasmania’s colonial whaling stations*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2006, p. 16, maintains that of the eleven ships of the Third Fleet of convict transport vessels, five were Enderby whalers, sent out to exploit the newly discovered Pacific whaling grounds. ‘Although the whaling proved unsuccessful on this occasion,’ she writes, ‘these were the first ships in what was to become an important colonial industry.’

Neither of the two existing copies of Biscoe's journal say anything of the months spent in recuperation and refitting in Van Diemen's Land. He must have liked Hobart Town, since some years later he settled there with his wife Emma and young family. It was a truly remarkable coincidence that two pioneering Antarctic explorers – Weddell and Biscoe – were in port at the same time. Weddell had penetrated one of the two great bights in the Antarctic continent (the other being the Ross Sea) in 1822–4, reaching the then record southern latitude of 74° S. He named the sea after King George IV, but this was later changed to bear his own name. A hundred years later, Sir Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* was to become beset and then sunk there. Weddell helped to moor the *Tula*, as we have seen, and he must have aided Biscoe during the latter's enforced wintering in Hobart Town, while the crew were in hospital and *Tula* was being repaired. Weddell was also one of the gentlemen who breakfasted on board at Biscoe's invitation before the reunited *Tula* and *Lively* departed from Van Diemen's Land on 10 October 1831. Weddell's stay in Hobart Town was also enforced, but far longer than Biscoe's. He was master of the merchant ship *Eliza*, which was detained until 22 January 1832, for reasons not entirely clear: 'The *Eliza* has gone at last and all the town has sunk down (as it were) to rest', recorded the local *Colonial Times* on 25 January 1832. Two character sketches of Weddell mention his warm personality. One of these is by the painter of his portrait and the other by a reviewer of his book (which Biscoe must have owned). This warmth presumably benefited Biscoe, whose own health, like that of the crew, was doubtless in a lamentable state. One can only imagine what absorbing conversations the two men must have had.⁴⁶

Two days before both *Tula* and *Lively* resumed their voyage, Biscoe wrote a letter to the Enderbys, written from Hobart Town on 8 October 1831, of which a draft exists among his papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.⁴⁷ It outlines, with considerable restraint, the sufferings and remarkable survival of the *Lively* and some of her crew, after being separated from the *Tula* in the Southern Ocean by the hurricane of March 1831.⁴⁸ The first part reads as follows:

[To] Messrs. Enderby,

Gent. I have the pleasure to inform you that leaving this Port according to the last advice at the Entrance of the River Derwent I fell in with the *Lively* Cutter. Mr. Avery came on board and inform'd me that on parting compy. with me on the 4th Mar. & after the Gale

⁴⁶ See Ann Savours, 'Biographical note on James Weddell, R.N. (1787–1834)', in *Polar Record*, vol. 11, no. 71, May 1962, pp. 155–7, with plate.

⁴⁷ Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. Papers relating to Captain John Biscoe, 1830–1893, ML MSS 1676, CY reel 494. These were studied by the late H. G. R. King, then librarian of the Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, in 1976 and kindly drawn to my attention.

⁴⁸ State Library of New South Wales, ML MSS 1676.

had abated, he found his crew in so sickly a state that it was absolutely necessary to bear up for the nearest land – he made the Western Coast of Van Diemens Land about a month before I arrived at Hobart Town & put into Port Phillip the Southern part of New Holland in distress, having 3 or 4 of his crew dead in the Forecastle & the remainder so emaciated he could scarcely find means of either burring [*sic*] them or, throwing them overboard. He got on shore with the survivors, & while endeavouring to recruit their strength by eating grass or any other herbage which came their way, the Vessel parted her chain in a heavy Gale & was blown several Miles further off leaving them for some days without any subsistence, at last after about a fortnight's absence they found her on a Sandy Beach in possession of the Natives who had plundered her of many trifling articles and who left her on their approach – they contrived to lighten her & get her off again & having recove'd a little from the effects of the Scurvey [*sic*] were endeavouring to proceed to New Zealand when they were blown to the Southward & obliged to put into this Port. I am certain the sufferings of Mr. Avery & the Crew of the *Lively* must have been very great.

Two of the newspapers of Hobart Town provide a little more detail of that gruesome and fearful voyage. The *Tasmanian* of 24 September 1831 called Captain Avery a 'plain, sailor-like man, but extremely intelligent and well-informed,' being the only one aboard who could read or write. However, he had only two surviving shipmates ashore with him at Port Phillip – one man and a little boy whose hand had been 'shattered to pieces by the accidental falling of the boat upon it.' The *Hobart Town Courier* of 17 September 1831 described how scurvy had caused the deaths of seven out of ten of the crew. The remainder were unable to lift two of the bodies from below deck to perform this 'painful and distressing task.' At length Captain Avery managed 'to make a rope fast round their bodies, and by the help of the tackle succeeded in hauling up first one and then the other, and launching them into the deep.'

Biscoe continued his letter to the Enderbys saying that he had had the *Tula* repaired and new sails made from the canvas already on board. He apologised for the unavoidable delays and expenses regarding the vessels and expressed the hope that 'the remaining part of the Voyage will be so far successful, as to make them of little importance.' Finding 'some good Seal islands' to the south-east of New Zealand should do the trick. He had been obliged to buy another boat for the Cutter costing £35 – 'an enormous Sum', but the lowest he could get it for. He implies that earlier he had replaced a boat lost from the *Tula*. Another heavy expense was having 'to ship six fresh hands' for the *Lively*

‘in lieu of those who are dead.’ He had loaded a large quantity of potatoes ‘to prevent a repetition of our past troubles’, presumably with scurvy. He hopes that ‘the Voyage will ultimately prove successful to meet your approbation, than which nothing could make me feel more honor’d.’ His agents in Hobart during the six months he spent there, Messrs. Kemp & Co., would forward to London in the *Duckinfield* (*sic* – perhaps named after John Dukinfield, Bristol merchant and slave trader (1677–1745) the ‘Protests’ for the *Tula* and *Lively*, as well as related documents.

The two vessels finally sailed from the Derwent on 10 October 1831. Two days later the *Colonial Times* of 12 October 1831 reported the departure of the ‘little discovery squadron... most heartily’ wishing ‘that success may attend the spirited exertions of the owners and that discoveries may be made’ to repay all concerned. The departure of the little *Lively* ‘upon so dangerous an expedition’ caused the newspaper ‘no trifling degree of astonishment and surprise’ – ‘What would our ancestors have thought of a vessel of 40 tons not only making a circuit of the globe, but also of having been exploring unknown seas, merely for the benefit of a mercantile house? Verily would they have been amazed at the march of intellect!’ Their destination was New Zealand, where Biscoe hoped to encounter sperm whales and seals.

1831–1833: The second half of the voyage

Having been seen off by Captain Weddell and several other gentlemen, who breakfasted on board *Tula*, Biscoe’s crews cut wood on the coast of Van Diemen’s Land. The *Tula* and *Lively* then crossed the Tasman Sea in very unsettled weather. No whales were seen, but the waves were too high in any case. On 1 November 1831, they entered the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, in order to complete wooding and watering, to obtain ‘refreshments’ if possible and to examine the cutter’s bowsprit which was sprung. Soon after anchoring, Mr Hansen, a white settler, accompanied by two Maori chiefs, came aboard the *Tula*. On their advice, the vessels anchored again near the chiefs’ village, where pigs might be procured. Mr Hansen told Captain Biscoe that the natives were harmless, so that they were allowed on board and trading began, muskets, blankets and tobacco being most in demand. Meanwhile a spar 37 feet in length was obtained, to replace the bowsprit of the *Lively*, which cost 36 lbs of Brazil tobacco. About 28 pigs were bought too, some of which were very large. There is no further mention of these animals in Biscoe’s journal – perhaps the majority were salted down into barrels and the remainder butchered at intervals. Together with the potatoes, the fresh pork would have helped to ward off scurvy.

Captain Abel Tasman, the Dutch navigator, commanding the *Heemskirck* and the *Zeehoen*, was the first European to sail New Zealand waters, in 1642–3. These vessels roughly charted the west coast

of New Zealand, naming the most northerly point Cape Maria van Diemen. One hundred and twenty-seven years later, HMS *Endeavour*, Captain James Cook, sheltered in the Bay of Islands, on the east coast of the North Island, the vessel being met by a large number of manned canoes. Friendly relations with the Maoris were established, and some trading was done. That well known fellow of the Royal Society, the young Sir Joseph Banks, who sailed in the *Endeavour*, left a description of the Bay of Islands in his journal of the voyage. Captain Cook, Banks and others climbed a high hill to get a good view, which revealed ‘that the bay we were in was indeed a most surprizing place: it was full of an innumerable quantity of Islands forming as many harbours, which must be as smooth as mill pools as they landlock one another numberless times. Every where round us we could see large Indian towns, houses and cultivations: we had certainly seen no place near so populous as this one was very near us.’⁴⁹

More than half a century after Cook, the Yorkshire missionary the Reverend Samuel Marsden began to convert many of the Maoris to Christianity. He first arrived in 1814 at the Bay of Islands in his little brig *Active*, accompanied by a friend, three missionaries, other helpers and several Maori chiefs, with whom he had become acquainted at Port Jackson, the convict settlement in Australia, where he was chaplain. In the words of A. H. Reed:

By the time Marsden, at seventy-two years of age, in 1837, had paid his last visit, a great change had come over northern New Zealand. The killing of babies, the murder of slaves at the passing of a chief, and even cannibal feasts, were becoming much less frequent. The Maoris were learning useful arts and crafts; they had been given a written language. The great and good missionary, who had won the love and respect of cruel savages, wise men and little children, lived to see the fruits of the harvest he had sown.⁵⁰

It appears that the missionaries angered the warlike Maoris by refusing to sell them muskets.⁵¹ However, the early whalers and traders, taking shelter in the Bay of Islands, had no such scruples. It may be for this reason that Biscoe received a cool reception from the missionaries. Although there were two missionaries ‘settled at the Small Village already mention’d’, he recorded in his journal, ‘neither of them had the politeness to hold the least communication with me (indeed one of them, a Mr. King I think his name was) was so taken up with his heavenly studies or something else that he forgot to return my bow as I pass’d him very close, but by the by he was in conversation with one of

⁴⁹ *The Endeavour journal of Joseph Banks 1768–1771*, edited by J. C. Beaglehole, vol. 1. Sydney, Public Library of New South Wales with Angus and Robertson, 2nd edition, 1963, p. 442.

⁵⁰ A. H. Reed: *The story of New Zealand.*, Wellington, A.H. & A.W. Reed, 7th edition (revised), 1955, pp. 92–3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

the Heathen.’⁵² The complaint of Mr Hansen, a man with a large family, who had first guided Biscoe, was that although there were several missionaries, both Anglican and Wesleyan, in the area, they refused to educate the white settlers’ children, ‘their excuse being that they were sent out to instruct the Heathen only.’ Perhaps in fairness to the missionaries, Biscoe adds that he was only recording Mr Hansen’s remarks. It seems the missionaries feared that a large number of white settlers would harm the Maoris, so this may have been the reason for their attitude. However, by the time the Treaty of Waitangi came to be signed in 1840 (at the Bay of Islands), which made New Zealand a British Crown Colony, the tide of settlers had become so great that the missionaries actively persuaded the chiefs to sign, so that in the future, order and justice should prevail.⁵³

The Chatham Islands

Continuous gales led Biscoe to give up the hope of catching sperm whales in the waters off the Bay of Islands. He decided that since ‘Chatham Island’ was on his course, owing to the prevailing winds, to have a look there. In fact there are a number of islands in the Chatham group, roughly 500 miles to the southeast of New Zealand’s South island. They had been discovered by Lieut W. R. Broughton commanding HMS *Chatham*, armed tender to Vancouver’s *Discovery*, on 29 November 1791, when a survey of the north coast of Chatham Island was made. The southern islands were seen and partly charted on 16 May 1807 from HMS *Cornwallis*, Captain Charles James Johnston, while *en route* for South America. Lying in the forties of latitude the islands are windy and wet. The main island, Chatham, is flat and swampy, with an extensive lagoon, while Pitt Island (Rangiauria) is hilly. It may be that Biscoe knew of these islands from a ‘Plan of Chatham Island’, published in

⁵² Regarding the identity of Mr King, a J. King and an S. H. King are listed in a ‘Schedule of missionary land purchases’ – Nos. 5 and 16 respectively – printed in a book of letters from the Bishop of New Zealand to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1837–47, in Canterbury Cathedral Library, H/LL–S–19. A Mr King embarked with the Reverend Samuel Marsden at Sydney, New South Wales, on 18 November 1814, with two other missionaries (Messrs. Kendall and Hall) in the brig *Active*, bound for New Zealand. (Robert McNab, ed., *Historical records of New Zealand*, vol. 1, Wellington, 1908, p. 330.) He accompanied Marsden during his first visit to New Zealand. On Friday 13 December 1814, a Mr & Mrs King were landed from the *Active* (McNab 1, p. 371). In a letter from the Reverend Samuel Marsden of 25 April 1826, there is a list of missionaries in the service of the mission in New Zealand, among them John King, a shoemaker by trade, employed as a catechist (McNab, *ibid.*, p. 659.) Mr. King’s son, Thomas Holloway born at Rangihoua Bay, 21 February 1815 is described by Marsden as being ‘the first white native of New Zealand.’ (McNab, *ibid.*, p. 392)

⁵³ A. H. Reed, *ibid.*, pp. 119–25. A number of these ‘Bay Whalers’ moved to one of the smaller Chatham Islands, at a time when there were numerous native people, the Moriori, predecessors of the Maori, living there. The whalers became the ‘curse’ of Pitt’s Island – ‘the greatest ruffians unhung’ – making raids periodically, and on one occasion, in an endeavour to carry off a Moriori girl and shooting her husband, shooting the girl and her child instead. Summary justice failed and the rascals are said to have got away unharmed. In contrast, later American whalers from New Bedford, Massachusetts, became welcome guests, liked as much as the ‘Bay Whalers’ were detested. (P. C. Anderson. *The Chatham Islands: with notes on a visit there in the months of July, August and September, 1882*, Christchurch, N.Z., Turner, 1882, p. 25.)

October 1816 by the Fleet Street (London) firm of Whittle and Laurie.⁵⁴ He refers to the charts, on which he says many reefs were not laid down.

The *Tula* and *Lively* spent much of November and half of December 1831 in the vicinity of the Chatham Islands, Biscoe experiencing the not uncommon difficulty of keeping the cutter in company. On the 19th, one of the few fine days, he sent three boats ashore, but no seals were found. However three Natives returned in them ‘who seemed willing to remain with us.’ They were sent back, since there were no seals to kill and they would only have been eating up provisions. These people would have been Moriori, who were dispossessed, massacred and enslaved or eaten in 1835–6 by an invasion of conquering Maoris⁵⁵ Biscoe describes his visitors in these words:

They were quite naked with the exception of a coarse mat over the shoulders, which seem’d to be used as a roof to them to turn the water off, as the moment they came on deck they squatted down like so many monkeys and the mat being stiff of course stuck out behind something like the Shell of a Turtle – added to this a strap of [the] same materials pass’d under their crotch and completely concealed everything which might have been considered indelicate.⁵⁶

Very few seals were taken during this visit to the Chatham Islands; the population must have been decimated by Biscoe’s predecessors. A sow was shot on one of the Cornwallis Islands, while a large black cat was sighted there, much to Biscoe’s surprise.

After this almost fruitless visit to the Chatham Islands, a course was laid for a much smaller group to the southeast – the Bounty Islands, which lie at 180° longitude on what Biscoe called a submarine ‘bank’, from the *Tula*’s soundings of a mere 60 to 100 fathoms. Despite its ‘considerable extent’, his hopes of discovering ‘some large island’ were disappointed. The Bounty Rocks, thirteen in number (Biscoe says eight or nine), lying some 300 miles south of the Chathams, whose summits were covered with penguins, gulls and other birds, yielded no seals. On top of one of the rocks, his men found a hut roofed with ‘skins and wings of birds’, a baking dish, an Irish provision cask and other items proving that Europeans had recently been there. Deciding to waste no more time on these ‘fruitless researches’ among islands already known, the vessels proceeded on a southerly course until on 4 January 1832 they were in Lat. 56° 26’ S. along which parallel they sailed eastwards amid some albatross and smaller birds in thick weather, steering various courses in the

⁵⁴ Reproduced in Rhys Richards, *Whaling and Sealing at the Chatham Islands*, Canberra, Roebuck Society, 1982, p. 87.

⁵⁵ A Moriori rain cape is pictured in Plate IX of *The coming of the Maori* by Te Rangi Hiroa / Sir Peter Buck, Wellington, Maori Purposes Fund Board / Whitcombe and Tombs, Wellington, 1958.

⁵⁶ Entry for 19 November 1831.

hope of finding the Nimrod islands, reported in 1828 by captain Ellbeck of the *Nimrod*, and as laid down on one of his charts, if these in fact existed. Having left the Bounty Islands and proceeding southwards, the vessels reached Lat. 56° 26' on 4 January 1832, keeping on that parallel in the vain hope of finding the non-existent Nimrod Islands, laid down in one of Biscoe's charts. Meanwhile Mr Avery was finding difficulty in keeping *Lively* in company with the *Tula*, having no second officer. Mr White went on board to help, but returned after only a short stay. In mid January 1832, Biscoe recorded in his journal his intention to cross Captain Cook's tracks, steering 'for a chance of making Land to the WSW of South Shetland', and giving Captain Avery the 'requisite Instructions in case of parting Company.' (Journal, 18 and 19 January 1832.)

New South Shetland (now known as the South Shetland Islands) had been discovered more than a decade before Biscoe's departure from London in 1830.⁵⁷ By then thousands of seals had been killed for their skins by British and American masters, the slaughter lasting for a relatively few number of years, a circumstance known to the Enderbys and no doubt to Biscoe also, hence his intention set out above – 'Land' of course inhabited, it was hoped, by colonies of undiscovered seals.

The waters he passed through in the South Pacific Ocean had been navigated by the ships of the Russian Imperial expedition of 1819–21 in the *Vostok* and *Mirnyy*, commanded by Captain Thaddeus Bellingshausen, in the wake of, after Captain James Cook, now named the Bellingshausen Sea. Far to the south lies the coast of Antarctica, not explored until the Twentieth Century. The only land that Bellingshausen discovered was a tiny, ice-encrusted island, which he called after the famous Russian Czar, Peter the Great. On the 29th, 30th and 31st January 1832 the *Tula* and *Lively* passed through 'large clusters of Ice Islands about 100 each day with some loose ice.' Soon afterwards in fine clear weather, a large iceberg was seen 'falling to pieces. . . with the noise of a Clap of thunder', reducing it to half its size and leaving the sea near the vessels strewn with fragments. The condition of the cutter's sails made it imperative to make as swift a northward passage as possible. Biscoe further emphasized this in a few lines of his journal of 4 February – even if land should be found further south, it would be impossible to reach it for ice 'and although it might answer the purpose of Discovery would not be beneficial to these vessels.' Fogs would lengthen the voyage, making the crews unfit for duty subsequently, supposing land were found near Palmer's Land or South Shetland, even Cape Horn 'throwing the remainder of the Season away to little purpose,' presumably for catching seals.

⁵⁷ A. G. E. Jones, 'Captain William Smith and the discovery of New South Shetland', *Geographical Journal*, vol. 141, Part 3, 1975, pp. 445–61; R. J. Campbell, ed., *The discovery of the South Shetland islands, 1819–1820: the journal of Midshipman C. W. Poynter*, London, Hakluyt Society, 2000.

In these words, which make mention of ‘Palmer’s land’, and ‘South Shetland’, Biscoe shows that he had some familiarity with lands to the north, south of Cape Horn, which he also mentions. He evidently realised, on turning north alongside what became known as the Antarctic Peninsula that he had again reached the ‘main Land’ of Antarctica of which he took possession ‘in the name of His majesty King William the Fourth’ who had ascended the throne in 1830. However, he makes no mention of the first discovery of the Antarctic mainland (in the form of the Antarctic Peninsula) by Edward Bransfield, a master in the Royal Navy in command of the merchant brig, *Williams*, who planted the union flag on one of the islands of the South Shetlands for King George the third, in January 1820. Amid frequent fogs, a number of islands, large and small were recorded from the *Williams*. On 30 January 1820, on the lifting of the mist, the first sighting of the Antarctic mainland – ‘a high and rude range’ occurred, while the *Williams* was still surrounded by islands. Perhaps they were about to discover the ‘long-contested existence [*sic*] of a Southern continent.’⁵⁸

The complex matter of place-names, both those now recognised officially, in the British Antarctic Territory, and those designated by other explorers or navigators, has been elucidated by the late Dr Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith and published in two large volumes by the British Antarctic Survey in *Scientific Reports*, Cambridge, 1991. Under the entry ‘Palmer Archipelago’ are listed the islands which make up the archipelago. Following on, we learn that its northern part and the north part of Trinity Peninsula were sighted ‘on 17 November 1820 by Capt. Nathaniel Brown Palmer (1799–1877), American sealer, in the sloop *Hero*, of Stonington Connecticut and the name Palmer’s Land was later applied to the land sighted. A subsequent entry, ‘Palmer land’, part of the Antarctic Peninsula, was officially adopted in 1964, ‘after Capt. N. B. Palmer.’

The discovery and naming of the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula, to Biscoe’s North, has been edited with great skill, and as the result of much research by Captain R. J. Campbell, R.N. for the Hakluyt Society and published in 2000.⁵⁹ The story is an intriguing one, to say the least, and begins with one William Smith, master and owner of the brig *Williams* of Blythe in Northumberland who was blown south of Cape Horn during a trading voyage from Montevideo to Valparaiso in 1819. There he discovered land in lat. 62° S, which he reported to Captain William Henry Shirreff, Senior British Naval Officer aboard HMS *Andromache* in the newly independent Chilean port of Valparaiso. He took Williams’ (Smith’s?) report seriously enough to charter the brig

⁵⁸ Charles Wittit Paynter, *Journal*, 30 January 1820, R. J. Campbell, *ibid.*, p. 132. This volume makes essential reading, because it deals with the discovery of Antarctica and the place-names designated by Edward Bransfield during the voyage of 1819–20.

⁵⁹ R. J. Campbell, ed., *The discovery of the South Shetland Islands: the voyages of the brig Williams, 1819–1820... and the Journal of Midshipman C. W. Poynter*, London, Hakluyt Society, 2000.

Williams, to investigate the matter, appointing the master of HMS *Andromache*, Edward Bransfield, to command this discovery voyage in the *Williams*, with her owner, William Smith, aboard. The voyage was successful, despite frequent fogs, resulting in the charting of the South Shetland Islands, King George Island and part of the west coast of the more northerly area of the Antarctic Peninsula.

On the return of the *Williams*, a number of accounts of this voyage of 1819 to 1820 were published and would presumably have been read by the Enderbys. Perhaps the most informative of these appeared in the *Literary Gazette* and *Journal des Belles Lettres*, of 3 November 1821, pp. 691–2, entitled ‘New Shetland.’ It was reprinted decades later in the Cambridge Journal *Polar Record*, vol. 4, no. 32, 1946 / April 1947, pp. 385–93. Through the Hon. Editor’s assiduous work a present-day narrative and assessment of Bransfield’s voyage in the *Williams*, not ignoring the part played by Captain William Smith has appeared. However the highlight of this Hakluyt volume is the restating/addition to our knowledge of the journal kept by Midshipman Charles Wittit Poynter of seventy-three pages, which is printed in chapter 6, pages 91 to 168. There are also views of a number of islands and charts reproduced in this very special volume.

Until the discovery of Poynter’s journal, no manuscript narrative of Bransfield’s voyage had been found. This has benefited today’s readers, but not of course the Enderbys and Biscoe. Nevertheless we can become aware of the accounts which were printed in the periodicals of the time, as were no doubt the Enderbys. A life of Bransfield by Sheila Bransfield, entitled *The Man who Discovered Antarctica* was published in 2019 by Frontline Books.

One of the disastrous results of Williams’ and Bransfield’s discoveries was the existence of countless herds of fur seals, already seen at South Georgia during the second voyage of Captain James Cook, 1772–5 and found once more on the South Shetlands, to be exploited during the next decade by British and American sealers. ‘It is estimated’, wrote the eminent Antarctic biologist, Dr Brian Birley Roberts in the second edition of *The Antarctic Pilot* (1948), p. 70, ‘that in 1821 and 1822 about 320,000 fur seals were killed at the South Shetland Islands and that all the pups – not less than 100,000 were left to die, so that the species was practically exterminated in that group.’ We shall see that although this voyage by Biscoe was geographically of great significance, neither he nor his owners made any profit. In fact for Biscoe and his men the reverse was true. Roberts saw the slaughter as an economic disaster. In the twenty-first century we now see it as an ecological mindless and completely ruthless one.

Navigation became dangerous during the next few days – passing through 150 to 200 icebergs daily, in thick weather ‘being obliged to heave to & bear up continually.’ Navigating was rendered uncertain in these perilous seas, Biscoe remarks, by a difference of 18° observed ‘when the Compass was placed on the Binnacle & when on the Quarter’ (Journal of 8 February 1832). The occasional albatross, Humpback and Finback whales were seen on 14 February, more clusters of icebergs – four or five hundred ahead and on each bow meant a change of course to clear them.

On 15 February 1832, land bearing ESE appeared at a great distance towards which the vessels ran all night. According to A. G. E. Jones, Biscoe had sighted Mt Gaudry, a peak 7,600 feet high, from a distance of 80 miles. Named by the French explorer Charcot during his second Antarctic voyage, it lies towards the southern end of the Antarctic Peninsula 200 miles south of the South Shetlands.⁶⁰ However, Biscoe had discovered more than an isolated peak, but the island he named after Queen Adelaide, the consort of King William IV. He described it thus:

It has a most imposing and beautiful appearance, having one very high peak running up into the clouds, and occasionally appears both above and below them; about one third of the mountains, which are about four miles in extent from north to south, have only a thin scattering of snow over their summits. Towards the base the other two-thirds are buried in a field of snow and ice of the most dazzling brightness. This bed of snow and ice is about four miles in extent, sloping gradually down to its termination, a cliff, ten or twelve feet high, which is split in every direction for at least two or three hundred yards from its edge inwards, and which appears to form icebergs, only waiting for some severe gales or other cause to break them adrift and put them in motion.

From the great depth of water close inshore, Biscoe concluded that Adelaide Island must have originally been a cluster of perpendicular rocks, and that Enderby Land, seen the previous year, had he been able to reach it, would have proved the same, like all other land in high southern latitudes. In clear weather, mountains could be made out, some ninety miles to the south – doubtless Alexander Island, discovered by the Russian navigator Bellingshausen. Proceeding northwards up the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, searching in vain for seals, he named Pitts Island because a nearby iceberg represented that great statesman, sitting down (erroneously charted by Biscoe about 25 miles WNW of what are now known as the Pitt Islands) No seals, only penguins could be found on the rocky coast of this mountainous mainland, where offshore soundings proved a depth of twenty fathoms at least.

⁶⁰ A. G. E. Jones, ‘John Biscoe’s voyage round the world, 1830–1833’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 57, no. 1, 1971, pp. 41–62.

On 21 February 1832, Biscoe recorded:

This being the main Land I took possession of it in the name of His Majesty King William the Fourth – the highest Mountain I named Mount William on the same occasion, the next in height I named Mount Moberly, in honour of Capt. John Moberly of H M's Navy.⁶¹

On 25 February, Biscoe gives the position of Mount William as 64° 45' S, Longitude 63° 51' W.

On 29 February Smith's or James's Island was sighted. Strong gales during the next couple of days cleared the ice, leading Biscoe to resolve to visit South Shetland, (early March) despite the lateness of the season, in case sea elephants could be killed for their oil. On the advice of Captain Kellock of the schooner *Exquisite* of London, Biscoe moored the *Tula* in what appeared to be a secure anchorage in New Plymouth, finding a number of sea elephants nearby. On 18 March, Biscoe left in the *Lively* to reconnoitre nearby islands in very bad weather, finding eleven young sea elephants on Snow Island and returning to New Plymouth on 2 April to prepare *Tula* and *Lively* for sea. However, on 10 April, shifting wind brought a 'considerable swell to the Anchorage,' while Biscoe even describes 'the breakers between Low Island and Ragged island' as 'terrific.' Although he had moored the *Tula* on arrival in New Plymouth with 45 fathoms of chain upon each anchor both vessels having been hauled close in shore, they began striking both fore and aft. Despite Biscoe's efforts, *Tula* struck still more heavily and the rudder became detached from the stern post. He got the crew, despite the breakers, into the boats and either aboard the *Lively* or ashore with provisions, having secured the chronometers as best he could. During the afternoon of 12 April, Biscoe anxiously watched the *Tula*, observing the breakers making a clear breach over her stern. A slightly calmer sea enabled him to board her again next day, to find that she had not struck during the night. The rudder was eventually part repaired and shipped, while on the 15th four anchors had to be taken up and fouled chains released, before *Tula* and *Lively* could get under way for the Falkland Islands where the rudder could be properly refitted. Delays caused by the storm, the detached rudder and the great damage done to the boats, one of which had been lost, made the much tried Biscoe give up any attempt to make what he called a 'Tolerable Voyage.'

After a rough passage, the two small vessels reached the Falklands and Berkeley Sound on 29 April, finding there the *Exquisite*, an American schooner, and the wreck of the American ship *Potosi*. The poor state of his own and the crew's health made it necessary to spend some time in recovering and in making final repairs to the rudder and repairs to the boats. Leaving Berkeley Sound in late June

⁶¹ John Moberly, 1788–1848.

1832 in *Tula* to examine the eastern coast of the Falklands, Biscoe found the *Lively* failed to make a rendezvous, it was necessary to search for her, in mainly rough weather, finding neither sea elephants nor the cutter, although the American ship *Martha*, Captain Young, was about to depart with about 1200 barrels of oil aboard. Gales and heavy, irregular seas hindered *Tula*'s progress. Then came another blow: having returned to Berkeley Sound, on anchoring *Tula* in Hog Island passage on 7 August, Captain Avery and some of the crew of the *Lively* came aboard. She had been wrecked on Mackay's (now Lively) Island, a total loss. Captain Couzins of the *Unicorn*, 'under the Monte Video colours' had taken them off.

With more mouths to feed, Biscoe worked out a reduced ration, but the whole crew refused work. He therefore increased their allowance and promised to find a port where further supplies could be bought. This was on 18 August 1832. Making the best of a difficult situation, he concluded this to be the wisest plan:

... as it would enable me to keep out the whole of the next season should my Crew not run away, but they [are] quite out of heart with the voyage & are dropping off one by one, as they find a chance & indeed I can hardly blame them.

With a supply of fresh beer, *Tula* set sail on the 20th August for the 'island of St. Catherines' on the east coast of Brazil, which Biscoe considered the best for his purposes. Proceeding northwards, the *Tula*'s tryworks (for rendering blubber) were struck by a heavy irregular sea which damaged the brickwork. A southerly current and heavy squalls hindered progress. On 9 September a cross sea 'did great mischief. Stove one Boat, carried away the Larboard Bulwark &&.'

On 17 September, *Tula* anchored inside Santa Cruz. She then proceeded to the town of 'Saint Catherines', where Biscoe began to make for fitting *Tula* to sail again southward of Cape Horn in order to seal on the Diego Ramirez and Ildefonso Islands, *Tula* then anchoring in St Catherines harbour on 20 September 1832. However on 29 September:

I soon found it was not the intention of either the Mates or Crew to proceed any further, for on the 29th Sept. the whole had deserted with the exception of 4 men and 3 boys, And well knowing could I succeed in forcing them on board again, they would be of no service on such a voyage as this, I gave them up & determined to proceed to England.

He had to sell at a loss much of the bread he had ordered and to meet other high costs by selling some of his own private property, plus other items belonging to the ship. At last 'with much satisfaction got underweigh for England.' On 3 November, almost a last straw, the *Tula* grounded

on the bar and lay there until 10 November. The next day she proceeded out to sea, in company with the 'Rio Janeiro Packet', Captain Leyton 'from whom I had received much attention' and several coasters, passing the island of Arveredo (now Arvoredo)

At noon on 11 November 1832, the island of Arvoredo lay ten miles off. It is mentioned in what may be termed somewhat casual sailing directions for Saint Catherine's, in Biscoe's journal for November 10th 1832. From 27 to 30 November, *Tula* lay becalmed off the island of Trinidad (Ilha de Trindade). On 14 December, she crossed what Biscoe calls the (south) 'Equinoctial Line', the day before having spoken the *Indus* of Glasgow, 'out 51 days, bound to Calcutta.' Biscoe constantly notes and often comments on the locations of currents, trade winds, courses, weather and other matters of navigation during this transatlantic crossing of December 1832 and January 1833. On 11 January at noon, Biscoe logged latitude by account 44° 11' N, longitude 17° 30' 45" [W], 'the sea for many days past has been very irregular and distressing to the vessel', squalls of wind making navigation 'very unpleasant and alarming.'

Approaching England on 28 January, in a strong wind all night, 'hove too with the Ship's Head to the SE' sounding every four hours in thick weather and heavy rain. 'At daylight of the 29th made sail, steering ENE at 11 AM saw the Lizard Point bearing NW 5 or 6 leagues. Amid heavy rain, in a 'Hard Gale', *Tula* 'scudded under the close reef'd foretopsail steering EBS and East to make up for the heave of the Sea.' On the morning of 30 January 'Land about the Island of Alderney' was seen, 'many vessels in sight.' 'At 11 PM made the Owens light At 3 AM 31st Jan^y saw Beachy Head light Noon wind Southerly Strong hauling to the SE with squalls to rain – took a pilot off Fairleigh – At 10PM Anchor'd in the Downs Daylight wind Northerly received on board a River Pilot.'

With these plain words ends Captain John Biscoe's journal of the *Tula*'s perilous and eventful Antarctic discovery voyage. Remarkably soon after the *Tula*'s return, a paper entitled 'Recent Discoveries in the Antarctic Ocean. From the Log-book of the Brig *Tula*, commanded by Mr. John Biscoe, RN' was 'communicated by Messrs. Enderby' and read to members of newly established Royal Geographical Society on 11 February 1833 and published in the *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 3, 1833, pp. 105–12. It can still be read there. Two members of the Enderby family, Charles and George, were founding members of the Royal Geographical Society of London.⁶² It was at a Council meeting on 20 April 1833 that Captain Francis Beaufort RN, Hydrographer of the Navy, spoke warmly of Biscoe's achievements, proposing that he should be awarded the Royal Premium

⁶² Clements R Markham, *The fifty years' work of the Royal Geographical Society*, London, John Murray, 1881, pp. 27–8: a list of members of the Geographical Society, 4 August 1830, includes Charles Enderby Esq., and George Enderby Esq., i.e. two of 460 original members.

Gold medal for for 1832 (the second recipient), for the ‘zeal and intrepidity with which he had examined the South Polar Sea at high latitude and in many meridians not previously explored and of his success, in consequence, in discovering considerable tracts of land.’⁶³ A book to be published in Edinburgh was proposed but never appeared. However accounts of the voyage were published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 3, 1833, pp. 103–12, in the *Nautical Magazine* and in the *Bulletin de la Société Géographique de Paris*, 1833–5.

Captain Beaufort had already been made aware of the discovery of Enderby Land, Adelaide Island and other areas in Biscoe’s letter to him from the South Shetlands of 10 April 1832, forwarded by the Enderbys, in which Biscoe declared ‘I am firmly of opinion that this is a large continent, as I saw to an extent of 300 miles.’⁶⁴ In postscript meteorological tables to this letter, Biscoe provided Beaufort with the data for 1 to 5 and 17 March 1831, (off Enderby Land including the Hurricane and frozen rudder, all in latitudes 65° or 66° S). For 1832, he only provides data for 16 and 19 February in latitude 67° and 65° S., the first being two miles off Adelaide Island. He expresses the opinion that the lower temperatures of air and water in 1831 must ‘in some measure confirm my opinion that the Land seen last year is a large continent and consequentially has more Ice about it.’ He adds that when he crossed Captain Cook’s track on 20 February 1831 in Lat. 67° S, the ‘Field Ice was in the same state as that described by him in that year.’

Only a month after the lecture to the Royal Geographical Society, on 8 March 1833, Charles Enderby forwarded a Memorial (see Appendix below for the full text) from Biscoe to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty and to their secretary, Mr John Barrow, who had distinguished himself in that role as one particularly active in encouraging the exploration of both geographical and scientific Arctic regions.⁶⁵ Then follows the Memorial, addressed more formally by Biscoe to the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, ‘The Memorial of John Biscoe formerly an Acting Master in the Royal Navy’, headed by the above. It ‘Humbly Sheweth’ (in Biscoe’s words) ‘That your Memorialist entered the Royal Navy as a Volunteer on board the *Saint Domingo* bearing the Flag of Admiral Sir Richard Strachan in the beginning of the year 1812 then stationed in the North Sea.’ Then follow two paragraphs summarising his service in the American War, during the whole of which he was ‘actively employed’, towards the end of which in the *Moselle*, Captain Sir John Moberly, he ‘had the honour of being appointed Acting Master’, (unconfirmed on his return to England after the end of the war being merely minuted ‘Read’).

⁶³ Quoted by A. G. E. Jones, ‘John Biscoe (1794–1843)’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1964, p. 275.

⁶⁴ Hydrographic Department, MOD, Taunton. Letters prior to 1857, E213 Received 15 December 1832. Now in Kew T.N.

⁶⁵ National archives, formerly PRO E.32, 1833, bundle 1 / 4570.

Since then, he had been ‘constantly engaged in the Merchant Service as Mate and Master, making many voyages to the East and West Indies and to most parts of the known World.’

His penultimate, most important and moving paragraph summarises his Antarctic circumnavigation. It reads as follows, but fell on deaf ears:

That in July your Memorialist was appointed by Messrs. Chas. Henry and Geo. Enderby to the Command of the Brig *Tula* and Cutter *Lively* on a voyage of discovery to the high Southern Latitudes and after much labour suffering and privation, and very great pecuniary losses, your Memorialist succeeded in discovering several Islands before unknown, and two large Tracts of Land which he believes form a Continent, which discoveries your Memorialist has had the honour to lay before the proper authorities.

Under these circumstances your Memorialist humbly prays that Your Lordships will be pleased to confirm his Warrant as a Master in the Royal Navy And your Memorialist as in duty will ever pray.

JOHN BISCOE

In the 1830s the Enderbys, with the co-operation of the Treasury, planned a similar voyage to that of Biscoe, buying the brig *Hopefull* and making alterations to the yawl *Rose*, which they already owned. The *Rose* was registered on 25 June 1833, when Biscoe was already master. He became master of the *Hopefull* on 8 July. However, for reasons unknown, possibly personal, possibly ill-health after the privations, hardships and responsibilities as master of the *Tula*, with the *Lively* in the Antarctic, he relinquished the command, being replaced by William Lysle by June 1833.⁶⁶

After some months of unemployment, Biscoe became master of the brig *Rival*, owned in Jamaica. She made six voyages from Liverpool to Jamaica in 1834, 1835 and 1836, with return cargoes of coffee, sugar, general cargo and passengers. In 1837 he resigned the command, having returned to Liverpool.⁶⁷ It was during these years, that Biscoe must have met his future wife, Emma Crowe, of No.2 Downham Road, Kingsland, London. He wrote the following letter to her from Union Street Liverpool on 12 December 1834. Because similar items of correspondence are of the utmost rarity (or non-existent) it is quoted below.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ A. G. E. Jones, ‘John Biscoe (1794–1843)’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1964, p. 276: by September 1834 William Lisle [*sic*] was back in England in command of the Samuel Enderby [1835 painting of the ship leaving Cowes Roads for London by W. J. Huggins.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁶⁸ Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, SPRI MS 511, Presented by Mr L. Hussey in 1932. Its provenance is interesting in that Dr Leonard.D. A. Hussey was meteorologist during Shackleton’s Imperial Trans-Antarctic

My dear Emma,

I received yours this morning but had made arrangements for being in London previous to receiving it – it was never my intention to say anything unkind to you but you must be aware my feelings must be much hurt at the disappointment your letter contain'd. I hope to have the happiness of seeing you about Tuesday when I will write you when to meet me, as I think it would be as well to say nothing at present of my intended ~~voyage~~ Journey. I have not time my dear love to say more now but hope and trust we shall see many happy days together –

God bless you and believe me yours ever truly, John Biscoe

John Biscoe and Emma Crowe were married on 8 September 1836 at Saint Mary's, Whitechapel, London, before he sailed again for the West Indies. She was the daughter of a Hackney bootmaker.⁶⁹

At the end of several months of unemployment, Biscoe took command of the A1 barque *Superb*, 354 tons, owned by the Liverpool merchant James B. Yates (1780–1855). She had been built at Leith in 1832 and her crew numbered 31 men. The *Superb* departed from Liverpool on 19 September 1837, arriving in Hobart on 13 January 1838. She then proceeded to Sydney, arriving there on 25 February. A. G. E. Jones gives us details of this long Antipodean voyage in a splendid vessel. Her passengers numbered 21, plus 33 steerage for Sydney, ten disembarking in Hobart. She carried a surgeon, essential even in the convict ships during all those months at sea. Her cargo consisted of a variety of merchandise, which A. G. E. Jones lists as follows: linen, paper, jellies, jams, mustard, salad oil, biscuits, cast-iron hardware, etc. with two casks of ironmongery, six tons of iron and ten bundles of spades – Biscoe's own venture. At Hobart the *Superb* took on skins, wheat, potatoes, hats, slops, pipes, hay, stout and pattens. Biscoe took a box of tobacco pipes as private cargo. However, the *Superb* sailed for England from Sydney on 20 July, under the Chief Officer, leaving Biscoe apparently unemployed.⁷⁰

Biscoe became master of the 146-ton 'first class schooner' or brigantine *Marian Watson* in November 1839 departing and arriving between Sydney and Hobart until September 1840, carrying

Expedition 1914–16, qualified in medicine after WW I and joined Shackleton's final 1921–22 expedition in the *Quest*. He was given the letter in 1921 while *Quest* was berthed in St Katharine's Dock, by Biscoe's great-grandson who was head stevedore there. He must have visited the newly established Scott Polar Research Institute soon after its foundation. He was later to present his celebrated banjo to the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

⁶⁹ A.G. E. Jones, *op.cit.*, p.281. On this page can also be found the names and ages of their four children: Emily, William, Thomas and James.

⁷⁰ A. G. E. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 277; Hobart marine Board, Report of ships' arrivals 13 January 1838.

‘sugar etc.’ and passengers, among whom, arriving in Hobart on 9 February 1840 were Mrs Biscoe and two children. The *Colonial Times* (Hobart) on 25 February 1840 commented on the speed and regularity of that ‘fine schooner.’ The Sydney newspapers of 1838 to 1839 provide the bare bones of what must have been Biscoe’s second Antarctic voyage in the newly-built brig *Emma*, 40 tons, formerly the *Lady Gipps*. The *Sydney Monitor* of 5 November 1838 reported:

At the end of the month, the *Lady Gipps* will make her maiden trip, under the command of Captain Biscoe, formerly of the ship *Superb*, and which vessel sailed from this port on the 26th July last, bound for Liverpool under the command of the chief officer. The *Lady Gipps* will be the first that has sailed from this port on a sealing voyage since 1835.

The same newspaper announced on 21 November 1838: the new brig, formerly called the *Lady Gipps*⁷¹ is now called the *Emma* (presumably after Biscoe’s wife). The *Sydney Herald* of 10 December 1838 recorded the departure of the brig *Emma*, the previous day, on a sealing voyage. Some six months later, on 15 May 1839 the *Sydney Monitor* recorded the arrival ‘of *Emma*, brig, Capt. Biscoe from new Orkneys. Cargo ballast. No news. Enderby exploring vessel is met.’

The *Sydney Gazette* of 14 May 1839 had more news: Arrival, from a voyage of discovery yesterday, having been out 5 months, the brig *Lady Emma* [sic], Captain Biscoe reached 75° S. Detained 1 month Orkneys to repair upper works. Other details kept secret. No vessels spoken.

The *Sydney Herald* of 15 May 1839 reported the brig *Emma*, Captain Biscoe’s arrival in ballast from a voyage of discovery. The only details secured were that she reached 75° S. She met a schooner and a cutter – probably Enderby vessels. The *Colonist* (Sydney) of 15 May 1839 reported the *Emma* brig, Biscoe’s arrival on the 13th ‘from a voyage of discovery.’

The *Sydney General Trade List* of 18 May 1839 reported the arrival of ‘the *Emma*, Biscoe, master, from the South Seas on 13 May; imports: 1 cwt [hundredweight] of whalebone and ballast. Refitting in harbour, R. Dacre, agent.’

The Sydney newspapers next advertise the ‘fine new brig’ *Emma*, burthen 120 tons, Captain Biscoe, sailing to Port Phillip (Melbourne). For freight or passage, Messrs. Campbell and Co. should be approached or R. Dacre, Jamison Street, Sydney. The *Emma* departed for Port Phillip on 6 July 1839 (with six passengers and four convict servants). Next arriving Sydney 2 September 1839, Biscoe master with 6 passengers and 15 convicts, from Port Phillip. The *Emma*, brig, 123 tons, was advertised among those ships in harbour on 12 October 1839 in the *Sydney General Trade List* of

⁷¹ After Sir George Gipps, governor of New South Wales, of whom there is a memorial in Canterbury cathedral.

that date. However the *Sydney Herald* of 16 October 1839 advises the ‘departure ...for the South Seas of the brig *Emma*, Captain Brown’, not Biscoe. She is listed in the *Sydney General Trade List* as having returned on 4 April 1840, Brown master from the Chatham Islands, with 144 seal skins for sale, Messrs. Campbell & Co. agents. She is advertised as having been sold on 17 April 1840 for £2900, plus surplus stores £600 in the *Sydney Monitor*, 17 April 1840.

Biscoe’s next and last command on 7 June 1841 was of the newly commissioned schooner *Truganina*, having been built on the River Derwent in Tasmania and apparently named after what was said to be one of the last full-blooded Tasmanian aborigines. (It is also the name, similarly derived, of a suburb of Melbourne.) She carried general cargo between Hobart and Port Phillip, making four voyages. The last ended in Hobart in early January 1842, since Biscoe was obliged to relinquish the command because of ill-health.⁷²

It was at about this time that three exploring expeditions – French, American and British – were sailing the southern seas. They coincided with the tenure of the well known British Arctic explorer, Sir John Franklin, as lieutenant governor of the penal colony known first as Van Diemen’s Land and subsequently as Tasmania. An officer in the Royal Navy, he had made two lengthy and difficult journeys to the shores of mainland North America after the French wars had ended in 1815. He and his party were no strangers to hardship – in fact Franklin became known in popular parlance as ‘the man who ate his boots.’ Nor was he a stranger to the new British colony of Australia, formerly known as New Holland, christened by the earlier Dutch explorers. He had travelled with his kinsman Matthew Flinders, charting many miles of the mainland coast of Australia. However, administering a penal colony, accompanied by his talented and remarkable wife Jane, was not really up his street. So that the news that Hobart was to become the magnetic headquarters of the scientific and exploring expedition in HMS ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, commanded by Captain James Clark Ross, was indeed welcome. Franklin was very much involved in setting up the observatories and accommodation for those naval officers who left the ships to man them.⁷³

Sir James Clark Ross makes no mention of meeting Biscoe in his two-volume narrative of this expedition of 1839–43 in the stout former bomb vessels HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, which sailed south of the Balleny Islands (an Enderby and a Biscoe landfall) into the Ross Sea. Their charting of the Ross Sea, Ross Island and the Ross Ice Shelf (Great Ice Barrier) bear witness to their discoveries. They were unable to reach the South Magnetic Pole, the main scientific endeavour,

⁷² A. G. E. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 280; Hobart and Sydney newspapers.

⁷³ Ann Savours and Anita McConnell, ‘The history of the Rossbank Observatory, Tasmania’, *Annals of Science*, vol 39, 1982, pp. 527–66.

because it could not be reached from the sea. Biscoe must have been very greatly concerned with these discoveries in particular, despite his struggle against ill health during his own lesser colonial voyages.

While in Sydney he met Commodore Charles Wilkes, the commander of the squadron of American vessels which put into that port. He must have followed the reports in the *Australian* (Sydney) of, for instance, 14 March 1840, reporting the success of the *Vincennes* (Wilkes) ‘as having coasted the land in lat. 64° for upwards of 1500 miles.’ However in consequence of the icebergs, she was said to have ‘found it impossible to take possession of the territory, or to effect a landing at any point.’ The newspaper’s editor expressed his regret for the secrecy maintained by the United States Exploring Expedition 1838–42. Some years after Biscoe’s death mention was made by Wilkes of his meeting with Captain ‘Briscoe’, who told him of the discovery of the Balleny Islands.⁷⁴

The French Antarctic expedition of 1837–40 put into Hobart because the crews of the *Astrolabe* and *La Zélée* were suffering from dysentery. Their commander, Jules Sébastien César Dumont d’Urville, described in his narrative how he had received a visit from ‘Capitaine Biscoe; ce capitaine dont le nom est désormais devenu célèbre dans les annales des découvertes, commandant à cette époque un navire de commerce...’, the *Emma*. He assured the French commander that he had met ‘le capitaine Wilkes avec lequel il s’était entretenu longtemps.’ Biscoe also said that he had tried to advance further to the south, following the meridian of New Zealand, but that he had been stopped by ice in lat. 63°. He added that several seafarers presumed the existence of land south of the Macquarie Islands.⁷⁵ Lady Franklin was eager for news of Biscoe’s conversation with Wilkes, inviting Biscoe to dine at Government House ‘to give Sir John [Franklin] some information relative to the late Amerⁿ expedn.’^{76,77}

Biscoe became very seriously ill. He and his wife decided towards the end of 1842 that they and the four children should return from Australia to England. The following appeal headed by Lieut. Governor Sir John Franklin appeared in the newspapers:

⁷⁴ Charles Wilkes, ‘Antarctic Exploration’, *American Journal of Science and Arts*, vol. 5, 1848, pp. 287–89. David Henderson, *The Hidden Coasts*, New York, William Sloane, 1953.

⁷⁵ Dumont d’Urville’s journal for 25 December 1839 in Hobart: J. S. C. Dumont d’Urville, *Voyage au pôle sud... Histoire du voyage*, Paris, 1845, Tome 8^e, pp. 110–11.

⁷⁶ Lady Jane Franklin, undated letter to Ronald Campbell Gunn of Launceston, Tasmania, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z., 1840, SPRI ms 489/2/25.

⁷⁷ For more on Hobart at this time, see Ann Savours, ‘Hobart and the polar regions, 1830–1930’, in Gillian Winter, ed., *Tasmanian insights*, Hobart, State Library of Tasmania, 1992, pp. 175–91.

CAPTAIN JOHN BISCOE

The Courier, Hobart Town, Friday, October 21, 1842.⁷⁸

To the Public. The Charitable Donations of the public are earnestly solicited on behalf of Captain John Biscoe, late of the *Marian Watson* and formerly of the schooner *Tula*, of about 120 tons, in which vessel, accompanied by the cutter *Lively*, of 46 tons only, he explored the Southern regions, generally for the space of three years; whose unexampled intrepidity, on that occasion, in the search for scientific knowledge, is admitted by public testimonials from the British and foreign governments, and whose tract (*sic*) is marked on the current Admiralty charts: the hardships and privations of that voyage gave a blow to his constitution, which, after a long series of illness, has at last incapacitated him from following his profession.

His friends now seek the means to enable him to return with his family to England, and confidently appeal to the benevolence of the Van Diemen's Land public to effect it.

Subscriptions received at all Banks, and by Mr. William Carter, Treasurer. October 21.

Sir John Franklin	£10.10.0	G. Marshall	£1.0.0
Sir John Pedder	£5.0.0	W. Kermode	£1 gn.
G. T. W. B. Boyes	£2.0.0	Nathan, Moses & Co.	£1.0.0
A. Turnbull	£2.0.0	J. Allport	£1.0.0
Wm. Sorell	£1.0.0	E. Macdowell	£1.0.0
J. Hone	£1.0.0	R. Cleburne	£2.0.0
John Price	£1.1.0	C. Seal	£1.0.0
Thomas Horne	£3.0.0	T. W. Rowlands	£2.0.0
Lieut. Kay	£2.0.0	W. Watchorn	£1 gn.
Lieut. Scott	£1.0.0	J. Swan	£2gn.
W. Walkingshaw	£10.00	D. R. Furtado	£1.0.0
T. Hewitt	£5.0.0	Capt. Ellis	£1.0.0
J. Steele	£5.0.0	T. W. Tennent	£1.0.0
G. Hunt	£3.0.0	H. Ashton	£1.0.0
G. F. Read	£10.0.0	G. Maclean	£1.0.0
H. Dry, jun.	£5.0.0	T. Young	£1.0.0

⁷⁸ Besides the *Courier*, the appeal was advertised in the *Colonial Times* (25 October 1842), the *Advertiser* (21 October 1842), *Murray's Review* (21 and 28 October 1842) and no doubt other publications.

T. Y. Lowes	£3 gns.	A. T. Maning	£1.0.0
F. Bryant	£2 gns.	D. Taylor	£1.0.0
J. & W. Robertson	£2 gns.	R. Wynne	£1.0.0
A. Garrett	£1.0.0	J. C. Walker	£1.0.0
W. Birkmyre	£1.0.0	A. Perry	£1.0.0
W. White	£1.0.0	C. T. Smith	£1.0.0
W. Rawson	£2.0.0	Hugh Murray	£1.0.0
T. Macdowell	£1.0.0	W. H. Dixon	£1.0.0
C. Driscoll	£1.0.0	Mather & Son	£1.0.0

[Total: £109.12.0]

Biscoe was to die at sea aboard the *Janet Izat* during the long passage home.⁷⁹

Family Home in Tasmania

Biscoe's affectionate letter to Emma Crowe can be found earlier in this text. She and John Biscoe were blessed with four offspring. Their first child, daughter Emily, arrived with her mother in Sydney, then in February 1840 Emma and two children arrived in Hobart, Tasmania, in the schooner *Marian Watson*, Captain John Biscoe. The family took up residence in Nile Terrace, New Town Road, North Hobart, a sought-after address for professional folk. It was here that Thomas MacMichael Biscoe was born as announced in the *Hobart Town Courier* of 20 October 1840, the son of Captain John Biscoe, sea captain and Antarctic explorer, whose subscription to the *Hobart Town Advertiser*, January to June 1842 survives among his papers, in the Mitchell Library, Sydney (MSS 1676, page 526). Biscoe was then master of the *Truganina*, as we have seen. It must have been somewhat later that their fourth and youngest child James Walter Biscoe was born. Emma Biscoe and her four children returned to England in 1843.

Among the Biscoe papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, are a number of attestations relating to the widowed Emma Biscoe. Among them is a letter dated London, 3 March 1848, headed Sydney Royal Mail Packets, referring to her 'application to place one of her children in your valuable foundation', the name 'James Walter Biscoe' appearing across the corner of the sheet. As the agents of the *Janet Izat* in the year 1843 they had been informed by Captain Goldsmith of Captain Biscoe's death. Other letters in 1849 (one from Charles Enderby) testified to Biscoe's service at sea on

⁷⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*, 24 November 1843.

behalf of his young son. Another (June 1852) is headed 'Greenwich Hospital Schools.' It concerns the summer vacation and his return in good health, any 'Shoes requiring mending when home must be mended with Gutta Percha.' A particularly notable recommendation to the London Orphan Asylum on behalf of James Walter Biscoe '(aged seven years) one of the orphan children of Capt. John Biscoe' in the January election of 1850, sketches the latter's celebrated career 'as the discoverer of Lands in the Antarctic Ocean, thereby adding to the Territories of the British Crown.' After noting the honours received from the Royal Geographical Society and from the Geographical Society of Paris, it was stated that the 'Hardships encountered in his perilous voyages so injured his previously robust constitution that he died at sea, leaving a widow and four children totally destitute.' Among the distinguished supporters are listed Lady Franklin, Bedford Place, Sir Roderick Murchison, Capt. Sir W. E. Parry, RN, Capt. Sir Geo. Back, RN, Messts. Enderby and Lieut. Col. E. Sabine, RA, FRS, all polar luminaries.

Owing to the generosity of readers of the *Nautical Magazine* who came to the rescue of herself and four young children, Emma Biscoe must have been able to rent a house in London: 2 North Terrace, Grays Inn Road, City, London. Here she lived until her death on 27 June 1893 at the age of 76. She was interred in Saint Pancras cemetery, Finchley, as Mrs Emma Buttery, the wife of her second husband and former lodger Mr Buttery.

One hopes that after so many trials and difficulties as the wife of Captain John Biscoe, the heroic Antarctic explorer and seafarer, she spent happier years in London, with her growing family. As their elderly mother, towards the end of her days, she must have been thankful to be able to rest in peace. The little card 'In Affectionate Remembrance' bears these words:

A light is from our household gone,
A voice we loved is stilled,
A place is vacant in our home
Which never can be filled.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Captain John Biscoe Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MSS 1676.

Appendix 1

Copy of a paper in the Public Record Office (Pro. E 32, 1833., bundle 1/4570)

Mr. Charles Enderby presents his compliments to Mr. Barrow,⁸¹ and has taken the liberty of enclosing Capt. Biscoe's Memorial which he trusts will meet with a favourable reception from the Lords of the Admiralty and Mr. Enderby will feel particularly obliged if Mr. Barrow will give it his support.

8 March 1833

To the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty The Memorial of John Biscoe formerly an Acting Master in the Royal Navy

Sheweth humbly That your Memorialist entered the Royal Navy as a Volunteer on board the Saint Domingo bearing the Flag of Admiral Sir Richard Strachan in the beginning of the year 1812 then stationed in the North Sea.

That on the breaking out of the late American War in that year Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren hoisted his Flag on board the San Domingo and proceeded to Halifax North America where your Memorialist acted in the capacity of Flag Midshipman.

That your Memorialist was actively employed during the whole of the American War being appointed to the Colibri Sloop of War, which was unfortunately wrecked in a Hurricane on the Coast of America, and lastly to the Moselle Captn. Sir John Moberly by whom your Memorialist had the honour of being appointed Acting Master.

That at the close of the American War your Memorialist returned to England and has been constantly engaged in the Merchant service as Mate and Master and has made many voyages to the East and West Indies and to most parts of the known World.

That in July 1830 your Memorialist was appointed by Messrs. Chas. Henry & Geo. Enderby to the Command of the Brig Tula and Cutter Lively on a voyage of discovery to the high Southern Latitudes and after much labour suffering and privation, and very great pecuniary losses your Memorialist succeeded in discovering several Islands before unknown, and two large Tracts of Land which he believes form a Continent, which discoveries your Memorialist has had the honour to lay before the proper authorities.

⁸¹ John Barrow (1764–1848), a secretary to the Admiralty for forty years, raised to a baronetcy by Sir Robert Peel in 1835.

Under these circumstances your Memorialist humbly prays that Your Lordships will be pleased to confirm his Warrant as a Master in the Royal Navy.

And your Memorialist as in duty bound will ever pray

JOHN BISCOE

Appendix 2

The crews of the *Tula* and *Lively*

Tula:

John Biscoe* Master

Henry Brown, Carpenter (died 24 April 1831, of scurvy)

William Williams* First Mate Francis Fell* Second Mate

John Antonio (native of Cape Verde Islands. Died 1 May 1831 of dysentery)

James Scundralt* Cooper ('Scandrett' in departures)

James Bonwick* Steward George Morant* Cook (left at Hobart)

William Holding* Seaman (left at Hobart) William Lee* Seaman (left at Hobart)

Edward Shepherd* Seaman (left Hobart) John Morris* Seaman (left at Hobart)

James Burwood* Seaman (left at Hobart) Edward Evans* Apprentice

John Sales* Thomas Burke* Charles Baxfield*

William Willson** William Cavill** James Mcgrath**

William Rowlett** J Kelby** John Edwards**

* Arrived Hobart 11 May 1831.⁸²

** Joined Hobart October 1831

Lively:

George Avery* Master. Signed on in London as Chief Mate; succeeded Mr Smith as Master at the Falkland Islands, November 1830

Thomas Brennan* Seaman William Jones* Seaman John Read* Boy

James Darling** Carpenter Thomas Dobinson** Seaman William Lean** Seaman

Samuel Pearce** Seaman Francis Wrightson** Seaman Thomas Young** Seaman

* Arrived Hobart 9 September 1831⁸³

** Joined Hobart October 1831

⁸² Archives Office of Tasmania. Report of Arrival, CSO 1/523, file 11350.

⁸³ Archives Office of Tasmania. Report of Arrival, CSO 1/555, file 12239.

Appendix 3

Biscoe's birds

(Information kindly supplied by Professor John Croxall CBE FRS)

References to seabirds in Biscoe's journal appear to comprise:

Penguin: not identifiable as to species, though at the Bounty Islands they would have been the Erect-crested Penguin, *Eudyptes sclateri* (not described until 1888).

On 23 December 1831 'other birds' mentioned in his journal could have been Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini*, Bounty Islands Shag *Phalacrocorax ranfurlyi*, Cape Petrel, Southern Black-backed Gull, Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata* and Fulmar Prion *Pachyptila crassirostris*, which all breed there.

Albatross: mostly not identifiable to species or genus, except in the journal on 15 December 1830, a 'small albatross with black wings' – probably the locally abundant Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*.

Nelly: the giant petrel *Macronectes* sp. The two species were not distinguished until 1966.

Cape Pigeon, Spotted Eglet: Cape Petrel *Daption capense* also known as the Pintado Petrel.

Brown Eglet: probably the Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica*.

'**New Eglet**': (23 April 1831) perhaps White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*.

Cape Hen, Sea Hen, Port Egmont Hen: the White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*.

White Petrel, Snowbird: Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*.

White Gull (19 December 1830): indeterminate, if not a Snow Petrel

Blue Petrel: almost certainly prion or whalebird *Pachyptila*, especially the Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*; perhaps the much rarer Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*, described in 1789.

Stormy Petrel, Mother Carey's chicken: most likely in the region Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, but also here are the Black-bellied Storm Petrel *Fregatta tropica*. The Madeiran Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* was likely the species seen at the Cape Verde Islands, (14 October 1830).

King bird: unidentifiable, though as a flying land bird possibly a South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*.

Snipe: unidentifiable, though most probably South Polar Skua.

Appendix 4

Biscoe's place names on the Antarctic Peninsula in order of sighting as recorded in his journal.

For their present confirmation of interpretation see Geoffrey Hattersley-Smith. The History of place-names in the British Antarctic Territory. *British Antarctic Survey Scientific Reports*, No. 113 (Parts 1 and 2), Cambridge, British Antarctic Survey, 1991.

ADELAIDE ISLAND Named on 14 February 1832 in Biscoe's words 'the island being the furthest known land to the southward I have honoured it with the name of H[er] M[ost] G[racious] Majesty Queen Adelaide' after Queen Adelaide (1792–1849) the consort of King William IV, who ascended the throne in 1830. While under the title of HRH the Duke of Clarence, he had earlier married Her Serene Highness Amelia Adelaide, daughter of the late Duke of Saxe Meiningen As the wife of the Lord High Admiral, and Duchess of Clarence, during his visit to Devon in July 1827, such was her popularity that she attracted a 'vast concourse of people' between Plymouth and Devonport, when 'attempts were made to take off the horses and draw the carriage to the Admiral's house.' A memorable shipboard ball later took place while the yacht *Royal Sovereign* and the *Lightening* steamer, were brought alongside each other. In Barrow's words, 'these were decorated in the most splendid manner, with the flags of all nations, intermixed with flowers and flowering shrubs, and the whole arrangement presented one of the prettiest sights I ever remember to have seen' Dancing continued until four in the morning.⁸⁴

One is reminded of the ball on board HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* in Hobart some twenty years later. John Barrow recorded the duchess's recollection of the poor people of Ilfracombe placing pieces of carpet or mats in front of their houses for her to step on.

After their marriage at Kew Palace in 1818, the couple lived quietly in Hanover. According to Sir John Barrow, 'the meekness of her disposition and the suavity of her manners, produced the best possible effects on her husband,' who had suffered from a rather rough and ready youth in the

⁸⁴ Sir John Barrow, *An autobiographical memoir... from early life to advanced age*, London, John Murray, 1847, p.333.

Royal Navy. No surviving children were born so that the future Queen Victoria became heiress to the British throne. Adelaide had been crowned Queen Consort in Westminster Abbey in September 1831, during Biscoe's Antarctic circumnavigation. King William IV died in 1837 and Adelaide lived on as Queen Dowager, for twelve years, having watched over him devotedly during his last illness. The city of Adelaide in South Australia was named after her at its founding in 1836.

MOUNT WILLIAM, named by Biscoe after KING WILLIAM IV (1765–1837), known as the 'Sailor King' because he entered the Royal Navy at the age of thirteen as a midshipman and served in New York during the American War of Independence, becoming a lieutenant in 1785 and captain of HMS *Pegasus* in 1786. His active service ended in 1790, having served in the West Indies under Horatio Nelson, of whom he became a good friend and who praised his professional conduct.

As HRH the Duke of Clarence in 1827, he was declared Lord High Admiral of England. The then Lords of the Admiralty continued not as a Board, but as the Council of His Royal Highness.⁸⁵ He served as Lord High Admiral from 2 May 1827 to 18 September 1828, delighting in hospitality 'to an extravagant degree.' As second secretary of the Admiralty, Sir John Barrow had much to do in the Lord High Admiral's period of office, accompanying him during naval inspections and recording same in a special book, as well as recounting them in the chapter of his memoirs devoted to King William IV. The first visitation was to Plymouth in July 1827, when the building of a lighthouse was discussed and progress already made with the breakwater noted. A second day was devoted to the Dockyard, when the whole establishment was mustered and a detailed and active inspection made from cellars to garrets. Another day was given up to the examination of the Royal Marines' barracks and the organization of the corps, followed by manoeuvres on the Hoe. 'The Lord High Admiral's great activity and kind disposition gave great satisfaction to all connected with the Navy.'

As the third son of King George III, and brother of George IV, William Duke of Clarence ascended the throne after the deaths of his father and two elder brothers in June 1830, aged 64. His reign lasted until 1837, when Biscoe was no longer employed by the Enderbys. William had earlier lived with the talented Irish actress Dorothy Jordan, with whom he had nine surviving illegitimate offspring. He later married Princess Adelaide of Saxe Meiningen in July 1818 'who was amiable, home-loving and prudent' with the couple's finances and even welcoming to William's nine children. Adelaide had no surviving children. Tom Pocock's biography *Sailor King: The Life of King William IV*, London, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1991, tells of William's very varied life from

⁸⁵ Barrow, *An autobiographical memoir*, section IX, Sir James Graham, Bart. Nov. 15, 1830– June 11, 1834.

midshipman to Lord High Admiral and beyond. At least some of the causes he supported would have impressed or pleased John Biscoe.

Mount William is now the official British Antarctic place-name in 64° 47'S, 63° 41'W, rising to 1515 metres. Biscoe found it the highest mountain visible from Biscoe Bay and roughly charted it on 21 February 1832.

GRAHAM LAND, part of the Antarctic Peninsula, was discovered by Biscoe, 17–18 February 1832, roughly charted and named Graham's Land after Sir James Graham (1792–1861) the British statesman, whose first period of office as First Lord of the Admiralty was from 22 November 1830 (some months after Biscoe's departure for the Antarctic) and 7 June 1834. He went on to have a long and distinguished career, both in and out of office, during the reigns of both King William IV and Queen Victoria, being concerned with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1849 and earlier with the great Reform Bill of 1832. He helped to secure the abolition of slavery in the British dominions. According to Sir John Barrow, Second Secretary of the Admiralty, he also 'undertook and completed a revision of the civil administration of the Navy.'⁸⁶ In a tribute after his death his nephew asserted that 'his actions were ever actuated by a desire for his country's good and not for his own advancement.'⁸⁷ The name was later applied to the whole peninsula.

MOUNT MOBERLY was sighted by Biscoe on 21 February 1832 and named after Captain John Moberly, R.N. (1788–1848), who was born in St Petersburg to an English merchant of the Russia Company. He entered the Navy on 20 August 1801 as a First Class Volunteer. He served under various commanders including Sir John Borlase Warren as Flag Lieutenant in the *Swiftsure* in the North Sea and North America. He proved his worth during the action between the *Little Belt* and the *President* in 1811 and during the subsequent gale. Biscoe served under his command in HMS *Moselle* in the West Indies, 1813–15, being recommended too late for promotion. Moberly's later life was spent in Yorkshire and Penetang-Uishene, Upper Canada, where he raised funds for the building of an Anglican church in whose churchyard he was buried in 1848.

⁸⁶ Barrow, *An autobiographical memoir*, ch. IX, pp. 404–439.

⁸⁷ Wikipedia

Appendix 5

Model of the *Samuel Enderby*, 1834 in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (NMM Cat. SLR 0748) Scale: 1:24.

A contemporary full hull model of the merchantman *Samuel Enderby* (1834) built plank on frame with a number of deck fittings including deadeyes and planking on the upper wales in bone or ivory. An incredibly rare feature of this model is that during its restoration in 1947, a note was found inside which read:

This model built by Sam White, West Cowes, Isle of Wight Completed Christmas one thousand eight hundred and thirty five presented to messrs. Charles, Henry and George Enderby being a model of the ship called 'Samuel Enderby' (their father) built by my father for the South Seas Whale Fishery in 1834. Sailed first voyage to South Seas Oct. 1834 and I am satisfied you who will read will say, well poor fellow he has been dead years, yes, and I remember your breath is in his nostrils, in a short time you will be remembered with Sam White therefore prepare while you live to die, that your death may be one which shall secure to you a lasting eternity of endless bliss – Goodnight Sam White born 1815.

The actual vessel was originally ship rigged and measured 107 feet in length by 30 feet in the beam and had a tonnage of 422 gross. She changed hands in 1839 and was converted to a barque and used exclusively as a whaler. After several more changes of ownership, the *Samuel Enderby* was finally broken up in 1870.

Appendix 6

The Falkland Islands. A History of Settlement & Colonisation

During the first half of the eighteenth century, a number of circumnavigations were carried out by the Royal Navy and by a number of adventurers, the most notable being that of Commodore George Anson in HMS *Centurion* from 1744 to 1747 which returned home, despite misadventures in the south of South America, with a captured Spanish ship full of treasure, one of the famous Manila galleons. Anson did not call at the Falklands, but he strongly advocated the carrying out of a survey, being aware of the strategic importance of their position.

In fact it was the French, having lost Canada to the British during the Seven Years War of 1756 to 1763, who established the first colony, This was on East Falkland at the head of what was later called Berkeley Sound, its present name. The distinguished naval officer, Louis Antoine de Bougainville sailed in 1763 from St. Malo, in command of two vessels, the *Aigle* and the *Sphinx*. The settlement consisting of a house built of stone for the Governor and a number made of turf sods for the Marines and the families from Nova Scotia (Acadians) was named Port Louis. Bougainville returned to France, leaving his kinsman, Bougainville de Nerville in charge, assisted by the chaplain Antoine Joseph Pernety, whose lively narrative was later published in Paris.⁸⁸ Unknown to the French, a British naval garrison landed on Saunders Island, West Falkland, in 1766, receiving the name Port Egmont. Lieutenant S. W. Clayton RN, commander in 1773 and 1774 wrote ‘An account of Falkland Islands’ which was published by the Royal Society under the name William Clayton in 1776. In fact his account of that ‘barren, dreary, desolate, boggy, rocky spot.’ is a most interesting one, covering a number of topics including the weather, especially the winds. These were mainly ‘boisterous and stormy’, meaning that the settlement’s gardens needed turf walls to protect them. The short-lived gusts from East to South were said ‘to cut the herbage down, as if fires had been made under them... The fowls are seized with cramps, so as to become lame, and never recover... Hogs and pigs are suddenly taken with the staggers, turn round and drop, never to recover. Men are oppressed... but they soon get over it, by due care.’ Clayton describes ‘all the natural vegetable productions’ observing that ‘nothing rises to any size, nor doth any tree grow, on any of these islands.’ One of the plants he mentions, growing ‘in very barren, craggy spots... an uncommon but pretty flower, shaped like a lady-s pocket,’ bright yellow, which he called ‘Queen’s Pocket.’ In sandy soil, near the shore, grew what he calls ‘Penguin Grass’, because those birds would make holes underneath it for their nests. Regarding a shrub ‘of the myrtle kind’, a footnote on p. 100 remarks that ‘Lieutenant Clayton ‘hath two or three of these shrubs in his garden at Peckham’ in South London. There were a number of antiscorbutic plants.⁸⁹ He lists four kinds of amphibious animal (sea lions, common seals, clapmatch [hooded] and fur seals). He considers the four kinds of penguins also to be amphibious animals, describing their characteristics and their eggs (beloved of the seamen). He distinguishes the three sorts of wild geese, plus snipe, ducks and smaller birds. ‘Of every kind our crew ate’ finding them ‘very good and nourishing.’ Clayton devotes more than a page to the ‘towns’ of hundreds of albatross nests, built in late September or early October. He

⁸⁸ Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde*, Paris, 1771 and 1772. This narrative of his circumnavigation of 1766 to 1769, includes the Falklands. Pernety’s book appeared in Berlin and Paris in French, 1769 and 1770, then two English editions in 1771 and 1773. An English translation of Bougainville’s narrative *Voyage around the world*, by the naturalist J. R. Forster, appeared in 1772.

⁸⁹ See D. M. Moore, *The Vascular flora of the Falkland Islands*, BAS Scientific Report no. 60, 1968.

describes the sharp bills of these birds, and how in breathing they would make ‘a sound like a trumpet which children buy at fairs.’ He briefly mentions ‘the only beast on these islands’ – the fox ‘very near resembling the English fox... now very shy and scarce to be got.’ Port Egmont was excavated in 1993, revealing a considerable archaeological site.⁹⁰ Lieutenant Clayton’s last paragraph looked to the future. ‘The coasts of these islands abound with whales of the spermaceti kind; the islands with immeasurable seals and sea-lions, from whence a valuable fishery might, if thought proper, be carried on.’ However, a footnote to these remarks, added presumably by the editor of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, observed that ‘there were ten vessels from North America employed in whale fishing’ during the year in which he left the Falkland Islands, 1774, with the rest of the garrison.

The British government had decided to abandon Port Egmont on the grounds of economy, despite nearly going to war with Spain in 1770, because a Spanish fleet had evicted the British garrison. Spain agreed however the following year that it could be restored. The colony at Port Louis was less fortunate. Bougainville was obliged to hand it over to Spain, whereupon the name was changed to Puerto de la Soledad in 1767. However, Spain withdrew from the Falklands (or Malvinas) in 1811 mainly because Napoleon had invaded Spain, leading to what became known as the Peninsular War. The situation in South America had also been changed by the unsuccessful British invasion of the River Plate in 1806–07. The fierce local resistance to this helped towards the establishment of the various republics we know today.⁹¹ The United Provinces of Rio de la Plata (the River Plate), subsequently Argentina, emerged from the former vice-royalties of New Spain as the nearest new political entity to the Falklands.

Meanwhile, during the last years of the Spanish Empire a major expedition had sailed from Cadiz in 1789, carried in the *Descubierta* and the *Atrevida*, and commanded by Alejandro Malaspina. The aim of this ‘political scientific and economic’ venture was to report on the overseas dominions of Spain. It lasted for more than five years. The ships twice put into Port Egmont after the British garrison had departed, finding not a plate of brass, such as Sir Francis Drake had left in California, but a plate of lead, bearing the British claim. A copy of its inscription was sent to the Admiralty on 20 May 1774 by Clayton.⁹²

⁹⁰ C. H. Layman, *The Wager disaster*, London, 2015, p. 262.

⁹¹ Ben Hughes, *The British invasion of the River Plate 1806–07, how the Redcoats were humbled and a nation was born*, Barnsley, Pen and Sword, 2013.

⁹² See Andrew David, entry under Samuel Witterwrong Clayton, in David Tatham, *The Dictionary of Falklands Biography...*, 2008, pp. 53–4. Another description of life at Port Egmont by Surgeon’s Mate Bernard Penrose is summarised in this article.

The Spanish expedition's first visit to Port Egmont was from 18 to 21 December 1789, during which days the inner harbour and a number of outer bays and islands were charted, despite the hindrance of an extensive peat fire.⁹³ The Spanish expedition's second visit to Puerto Egmont, as they called it, was from 2 to 20 January 1794. Gravity experiments were carried out and more charting was done; in addition the sick were able to recover in a tent on shore from the ailments suffered at sea, while wild celery and fish helped too. The presence of two American brigs caused Malaspina some anxiety, regarding Spanish sovereignty over the Malvinas, as the islands were known and regarding the immense slaughter of fur seals for their pelts and sea elephants for their oil. Other American sealing vessels were anchored in nearby harbours.⁹⁴ The figure of 20,000 sealskins and numerous barrels of oil as the cargo of a single American vessel, which Malaspina recorded, was indeed an unhappy harbinger of both American and British sealers in the decades to come. The writer of the present journal, Captain John Biscoe, in the early 1830s, was to find the beaches of the islands visited by the *Tula* and the *Lively* almost denuded of seal rookeries. However, we must assume that he may have been a novice in this gory and heartless trade.

Meanwhile from 25 December 1793 to 10 January 1794 the captain of the *Descubierta*, Jose Bustamente, charted Puerto de la Soledad (Berkeley Sound). He also described the settlement of thirty eight convicts and the 102 officers and men, criticising the absence of women and considering the future of the islands. Regarding women convicts, Malaspina, Bustamente and their ships' companies had been welcomed at the British penal colony, Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, New South Wales, where there were women convicts.

Perhaps it is fitting here to sketch a brief account of the islands during the years following the return to Spain of the *Descubierta* and the *Atrevida* with their captains Malaspina and Bustamente in 1794. For Spain and her empire, these were years of war and tumult. Because Napoleon Bonaparte invaded the mainland during what was named the Peninsular War of 1807–1814 the mother country lost touch with her lands overseas, so ably and painstakingly, and yet in the end so vainly, described by Malaspina and Bustamente. (Sadly, because Malaspina fell out with the authorities in Madrid and was exiled, it is only in recent times that the extensive results of the voyage of 1789 to 1794 were published in Spain and in English translation in London). The unrest in the viceroyalties of South America and New Spain led to the abandonment of Puerto de la Soledad in 1811. However, the slaughter of the fur seals and other pinnipeds by seamen from New England, France and Great

⁹³ Andrew David, et al., *The Malaspina expedition, 1789–1794*, vol. I, London, Hakluyt Society, 2001, pp. 100–108, map, botanical plates.

⁹⁴ Andrew David, et al., *ibid.*, vol. III, 2004, pp. 215–20, illus. map; Lola Manterolo Jara and Andrew David, Alejandro Malaspina's visits to Port Egmont in 1789 and 1794: *Falkland Islands Journal*, 1993, pp. 1–17

Britain still continued, although the stocks in the Falklands and on other sub-Antarctic coasts and islands declined year after thoughtless year. John Biscoe was one of these predators, although arriving on the scene late in the day.

What had been the Viceroyalty of La Plata during the years of the Spanish imperium in South America declared its independence of the mother country in 1816, the new Republic of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata supposedly inheriting the territorial claims or possessions of the former Viceroyalty, including the Falkland Islands or Malvinas. For nearly ten years after Puerto Soledad was abandoned in 1811, the islands remained, in Professor Gough's words, 'unlit, uncharted, unmarked' becoming a graveyard for shipping.⁹⁵ One notable wreck was that of the French corvette *Uranie* in February 1820, in Berkeley Sound, which Biscoe would have seen, thus sadly ending the scientific voyage commanded by Louis-Claude Desaulces de Freycinet (1779–1841) who published the first outline map of Australia in 1821. A later and more famous wreck was Brunel's *Great Britain*. (The founding keeper of the National Maritime Museum of Merseyside, Mike Stammers, made a survey and chart of many wrecks c.1995).

On 6 November 1820, only a decade before Biscoe's arrival, a formal act of possession of the Falkland Islands was carried out by one Colonel Don Daniel Jewitt of New London, Connecticut, on behalf of the young republic of La Plata, a proceeding witnessed by Captain James Weddell of Leith (1787–1834) and several other British and American sealers and whalers.⁹⁶ Jewitt soon sailed away and his successor, three years later as governor, was the remarkable Louis Vernet, with whom Biscoe dealt, as we have seen. Vernet's endeavours to preserve the seals led to hostile acts against three American sealing ships, their masters and crews. However, he did not take action against the far fewer English vessels. The reason for this partiality was doubtless his contact with the British *chargé d'affaires* in Buenos Aires, Woodbine Parish, Foreign Office Ministers Canning and Castlereagh having been first to send a diplomat to the young republic.⁹⁷ A chart was drawn up by Vernet for Woodbine Parish, during the latter's residence in Buenos Aires, and communicated by him to the newly established Royal Geographical Society of London early in 1833, the year of Biscoe's return.⁹⁸ In some ways it echoes Lieut. Clayton's descriptive paper of fifty years before. It was written shortly before Great Britain re-asserted her sovereignty over the Falklands, mainly for

⁹⁵ Barry Gough, *The Falkland Islands/Malvinas*, London, Athlone, 1992, p. 55.

⁹⁶ See Anthony B. Dickinson, 'Early Nineteenth Century sealing on the Falkland Islands: Attempts to develop a regulated industry, 1820–34', *The Northern Mariner*, IV, no. 3, July 1994, p. 40.

⁹⁷ Nina L. K. Shuttleworth, *A life of Sir Woodbine Parish*, London, Smith, Elder, 1910.

⁹⁸ *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 3, 1833, pp. 94–9.

the sake of trade with Latin America. It begins, 'East Falkland Island is favourably situated both for colonisation and for the refreshment of vessels bound round Cape Horn.'

Vernet's partiality for British repossession of the islands seems to shine through this 'Account of East Falkland Islands.' He continues: 'Its proximity to the Cape [of Good Hope, re-occupied by Great Britain in 1806], and its excellent harbours, most of which are of easy access, with good holding ground, and sufficient depth of water for even first-rate men-of-war, would alone make it a valuable possession..' Other advantages included the facility to exercise ships' companies ashore without losing them, an abundance of wild cattle and of anti-scorbutic herbs. Wild hogs, numerous rabbits, wild geese and ducks (providing eggs), fish and shell fish, potatoes, cabbage and turnips, flourishing in a generally temperate climate all contributed towards a healthy diet, while a decoction of the leaves of the low-growing and abundant 'tea-plant' made a good substitute for tea.

The author of the above account, Don Louis Vernet, whom Biscoe met briefly, had been born in Germany in 1792 of French parents, and later naturalized in South America. Jewitt having sailed away, in 1820, Vernet, that 'amazing man', having been appointed governor by Buenos Aires, 'settled about ninety persons in the Malvinas', between 1826 and 1831, turning Puerto Soledad [Port Louis] into a 'paying proposition.' However, we cannot chronicle here all the heartbreak suffered by Vernet, which led to the destruction of his colony and to his and his wife's abandonment of their solid stone-walled home, with its good library and grand piano. Nor can we follow the steps, after Woodbine Parrish's call on the British government for action, that led (on receipt of a favourable opinion by the King's Advocate General and Lord Palmerston's willingness to act on the Admiralty's initiative, anxious to survey and make safe the world's oceans for shipping) to the British reoccupation of the Falklands in 1832-33 by the sloop of war, 389 tons HMS *Clio*.

Before leaving this episode in Falklands history, the following seem worth noting, as perhaps of interest to the curious reader. Firstly, in the sketch of his life of 15 October 1799, written after the victory of the Nile, for the editor of the *Naval Chronicle*, Nelson tells us that (at the age of twelve) he first went to sea, with his uncle Captain Maurice Suckling in the *Raisonnable* 'on the disturbance with Spain relative to the Falkland Islands... But the business with Spain being accommodated' he departed for the West Indies in a merchantman.⁹⁹

Secondly, the 'disturbance with Spain' having been settled, without recourse to war, caused Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great eighteenth-century lexicographer and political pamphleteer, to publish

⁹⁹ Geoffrey Rawson, ed., *Nelson's Letters*, London, J. M. Dent, 1960, p.1.

his 'Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland's Islands' in 1771 (first edition). His aim was to defend this peaceful settlement in a robust yet carefully considered pamphlet, in defiance of the Whig opposition to the successful conclusion of negotiation with the Spanish king and his foreign minister, Grimaldi. After outlining the history of the islands, Dr Johnson describes the origins of the dispute with Spain (and with the future vice-royalty of Buenos Aires) *vis-à-vis* the English settlement or garrison of Port Egmont on West Falkland. He continues with an account of negotiations which resulted in the return of the British garrison to the islands and not very long afterwards to their abandonment for economic reasons. With splendid rhetoric, the great man asked what had Britain gained, apart from this restitution and the maintenance of the honour of the Crown.

What but a bleak and gloomy solitude, an island thrown aside from human use, stormy in winter, and barren in summer; an island which not the southern savages have dignified with habitation; where a garrison must be kept in a state that contemplates with envy the exiles of Siberia; of which the expence will be perpetual, and the use only occasional; and which, if fortune smile upon our labours, may become a nest of smugglers in peace, and in war the refuge of future buccaniers [*sic*].

In contrast, he observed, the Spaniards, by yielding Falkland's Island, have admitted a precedent of what they think encroachment; have suffered a breach to be made in the outworks of their empire; and notwithstanding the reserve of prior right, have suffered a dangerous exception to the prescriptive tenure of their American territories.

Not many decades after these words were penned by the learned doctor – 'the greatest literary character of the century' – the Spanish Empire was no more. He never visited the Falkland Islands, but did journey with Boswell in 1773 to the Western Isles of Scotland. Did he ever compare the two, one wonders.

Thirdly, it is interesting to read the entry under 'Malvinas' in the five volumes of the English translation from the Spanish of the *Geographical and historical Dictionary of America and the West Indies* by Colonel Don Antonio de Alcedo.¹⁰⁰ This states that the islands were discovered by 'some French of S. Malo in 1706, who gave them this name.' It refers to Bougainville's colony, 'subsequently ceded to the King of Spain, who claimed it as his right.' Two Spanish governors are mentioned by name, both naval captains. In 1707 Don Felipe Ruiz Puente (y Garcia de la Yedra) (1724–79), who was succeeded by Don Francisco Gil Taboada de Lemus, afterwards rear-admiral. The islands are said to be full of swamps and the land and cold climate unsuited to the plants and

¹⁰⁰ Trans. by G. A. Thompson, London, James Carpenter, et al., Oxford and Cambridge, printed for the author, 1812–1815, vol. 2, 1812, p. 433.

fruits of Europe and America. The English translator provided the latitude and longitude of the Falkland Islands, observing that the soil is bad and that the shores are beaten by perpetual storms. He ends by saying that the Spaniards now send criminals to these inhospitable shores from their settlements in America.

Appendix 7

Tasmania. Discovery and settlement

The island's present name is after that of the Dutch navigator, Captain Abel Jansz[oon] Tasman, of the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.), an experienced seafarer in Far Eastern waters, who sailed from Batavia in 1642–43 and 1644 on two discovery voyages to the 'Unknown Southland.' His voyages – or rather their motives - were not unlike those of John Biscoe's employers, for both the Enderbys and the V.O.C. sought profit from any discoveries that were made – the Dutch largely in trade and the Enderbys from new sealing or whaling grounds. The Dutch discoveries, during the 1642–43 voyage, of 'New Holland' (later Australia), Van Diemen's Land, called after the governor-general of the company, and of New Zealand, showed no signs of riches like those of the spice islands or Peru. They were largely left to their inhabitants, the Aborigines and the Maoris until the late eighteenth century. With regard to Van Diemen's Land, a number of French or British expeditions visited what is now Tasmania, among them those commanded by Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne (1772), Tobias Furneaux (1773) and Captain James Cook during his third voyage in 1777. The British brig *Mercury*, Captain J. H. Cox anchored near Tasman's Maria Island in 1789. The French Admiral Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, commanding the *Recherche* and the *Espérance* surveyed the channel, later named after him, in 1792 and again in 1793. The River Derwent, on whose banks the first settlement was to be made, was given its name by a Lieutenant John Hayes, commanding two ships of the British East India Company, the *Duke of Clarence* and the *Duchess* during the following years. The existence of a strait between the Australian mainland and Van Diemen's Land was proved in 1798 by Surgeon Lieutenant George Bass, R.N. (after whom the strait is named) and his friend, Matthew Flinders in a tiny vessel, the *Norfolk* of 25 tons. They circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land, carefully examining the River Derwent and its surroundings.¹⁰¹ Another French expedition arrived in 1802, in the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste*, commanded by Commodore Nicolas Baudin, having been sent by Napoleon. Its members carried out survey work to the south and east of the island, with the result that the French had surveyed by then all but part of the west coast of Van Diemen's Land. On the whole they got on well with the

¹⁰¹ A number of accounts of this voyage have been brought together and edited by Dan Sprod, with facsimiles of three Arrowsmith charts in the end pocket, 1800 and 1801 (Dan Sprod, ed., *Van Diemen's Land revealed: Flinders and Bass and their circumnavigation of the island*, Hobart, Blubber Head Press, 2009. See also Chart AUS0487 (2005).

Aborigines, some of whom are portrayed in a handsome volume, *Baudin in Australian waters*, not published until 1988.¹⁰²

Meanwhile in 1788, the British penal colony of Port Jackson, New South Wales, had been founded and maintained, despite numerous difficulties. The crews of the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste* were given succour there, since they were suffering badly from scurvy. Fearful that the French would lay claim to Van Diemen's Land, Governor Philip Gidley King (1758–1808) assembled what resources he had, first of all to make a formal declaration of possession actually on the island and secondly to form a settlement on the banks of the River Derwent. The first settlement, at Risdon, proved unsatisfactory. It was evacuated to the site of the present city of Hobart – Sullivan's Cove, whose fine harbour is overlooked by the mountain, first called Table Mountain and subsequently given its present name Mount Wellington, from which ran a pure stream, through land apparently suitable for cultivation. Convicts were sent to Van Diemen's Land from 1812 to 1853, when the name was changed to Tasmania.

It is remarkable that only forty years after the colonisation of Van Diemen's Land, a two-volume *History of Tasmania* by John West, a missionary, was published in 1852 in Launceston, Tasmania. In 2011 it was reprinted (recently also in Adelaide) by Cambridge University Press, as a book of 'enduring scholarly value' in their Cambridge Library Collection. Beginning with the Dutch and other European discoveries, the main historical narrative covers the establishment of the penal colony, followed by its development and administration during the periods of office of its lieutenant-governors, particularly those of Sir George Arthur and Sir John Franklin. There are separate sections covering Transportation and the Aborigines. This authoritative and indispensable study is said still to be the best early history of the island.

A wide-ranging and personal account of the island by one born there entitled *The Experience of Forty Years in Tasmania* was first given as a lecture to those who had emigrated there and then published as a pamphlet during the Great Exhibition in London, 1851. Its author was Hugh M. Hull, Esq. FRS Tas., a former police magistrate and at the time of publication coroner and clerk assistant of the House of Assembly of Tasmania. Although produced some years after the Biscoe family's departure and descriptive of much which would have been unfamiliar to them, the pamphlet provides more than just a glimpse of the land, its people and its administration. It includes the few remaining aborigines and their language, of which a full vocabulary had been set down by the Secretary of the Royal Society of Tasmania. Of convicts there were said to be a minority in penal

¹⁰² Jacqueline Bonnemains, *Baudin in Australian waters: the artwork of the French voyage of discovery to the Southern lands, 1800–1804*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988.

servitude, while the remainder earned a living as servants or as ‘ticket of leave’ holders. The paragraphs below provide a brief introduction:

I fear I cannot, in language sufficiently expressive, describe what one sees under our bright and sunny skies – in our evergreen woods and fields – of the views from the top of Mount Wellington – the roads – the farms – the bridges – homesteads – towns and villages; all marking the sturdy perseverance of the settler – or of the valley of the Huon winding its fertilising course for many a mile – or the view from the top of Ben Lomond, where one sees the noble valley of the South Esk, the thousands upon thousands of acres of the plains and gently rounded hills of Avoca, over which sheep and cattle are depasturing – or of the valleys of Fingal, rich in something more than flocks and herbs, – rich in that which, though called by philosophers the ‘root of all evil,’ is yet as eagerly coveted and sought for by those philosophers, as well as others who do not know Plato from Pluto, as if it was the source of all good.

I cannot properly describe to them the view from the Basaltic columns of Wylde’s Crag, where the giddy climber looks down, as I have done, on numerous lakes from which streams flowing through level country bear fertility along their course; and on extensive plains now occupied by myriads of sheep, and millions of acres yet to be occupied and improved in their turn by the settlers, but I will do my best to show them what an industrious man can secure in Tasmania.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Hugh M. Hull, *The experience of forty years in Tasmania*, London, Orger and Meryon, 1859, p.8.

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