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978-1-107-45200-8 - The Cambridge History of Australia: Volume 1: Indigenous and Colonial Australia

Edited by Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

AUSTRALIA

*

VOLUME I

Indigenous and Colonial Australia

Volume I of *The Cambridge History of Australia* explores Australia's history from ancient times through to Federation in 1901. It begins with an archaeological examination of the continent's Indigenous history, which dates back 50,000 years. This volume examines the first European encounters with Australia and its Indigenous people, and the subsequent colonisation of the land by the British in the late eighteenth century, providing insight into the realities of a convict society and how this shaped the nation's development.

Part I traces the dynamic growth in Australia's economy, demography and industry throughout the nineteenth century, as it moved towards a system of liberal democracy and one of the most defining events in its history: the Federation of the colonies in 1901. Part II offers a deeper investigation of key topics, such as relations between Indigenous people and settlers, and Australia's colonial identity. It also covers the economy, science and technology, law and literature.

This volume is informed by a geographic sensibility: land emerges as a central theme in Australian history, shaping its political, legal and social past; and the authors examine regional and Australian-Pacific ideas of history and identity.

ALISON BASHFORD is Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History, University of Cambridge.

STUART MACINTYRE is a Professorial Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

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'The Cambridge History of Australia provides so much more than a chronology of events... here are two volumes filled with wisdom that will inform those who make the choices for the future... Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, in their work as editors, have brought together a diversity of intelligent voices and presented them in a consistent and engaging manner which invites us to pursue further reading. There is something for all of us: teachers, researchers, students and curious laymen who wish to engage in and celebrate our shared story.'

The Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, former
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

'This impressive work includes contributions from 67 historians, a veritable Who's Who of Australian history, and covers the nation's past from its earliest people to the ways we live now.'

Anna Clark, *Sydney Morning Herald*

'Lucid, balanced, innovative and comprehensive, this book shows Australian historians at their best. At a turning-point in the national experience, Australians have a right to expect such a book as this, a report card on the long-term progress of their country.'

Emeritus Professor Alan Atkinson

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Abbreviations

AAAS	Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (later ANZAAS)
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGPS	Australian Government Printing Service
ANU	Australian National University
ASN	Australasian Steam Navigation Company
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary
BPA	Board for the Protection of Aborigines
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CO	Colonial Office
CSR	Colonial Sugar Refinery
GDP	gross domestic product
GPS	Great Public School
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
LMS	London Missionary Society
MP	member of parliament
NAEE	North Australian Exploring Expedition
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NZ	New Zealand
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSL	optically stimulated luminescence
P&O	Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SLV	State Library of Victoria
TNA	The National Archives, United Kingdom
UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UQP	University of Queensland Press
UWA	University of Western Australia
VDL	Van Diemen's Land
Vic.	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WCTU	Woman's Christian Temperance Union
years BP	(radiocarbon years) before present

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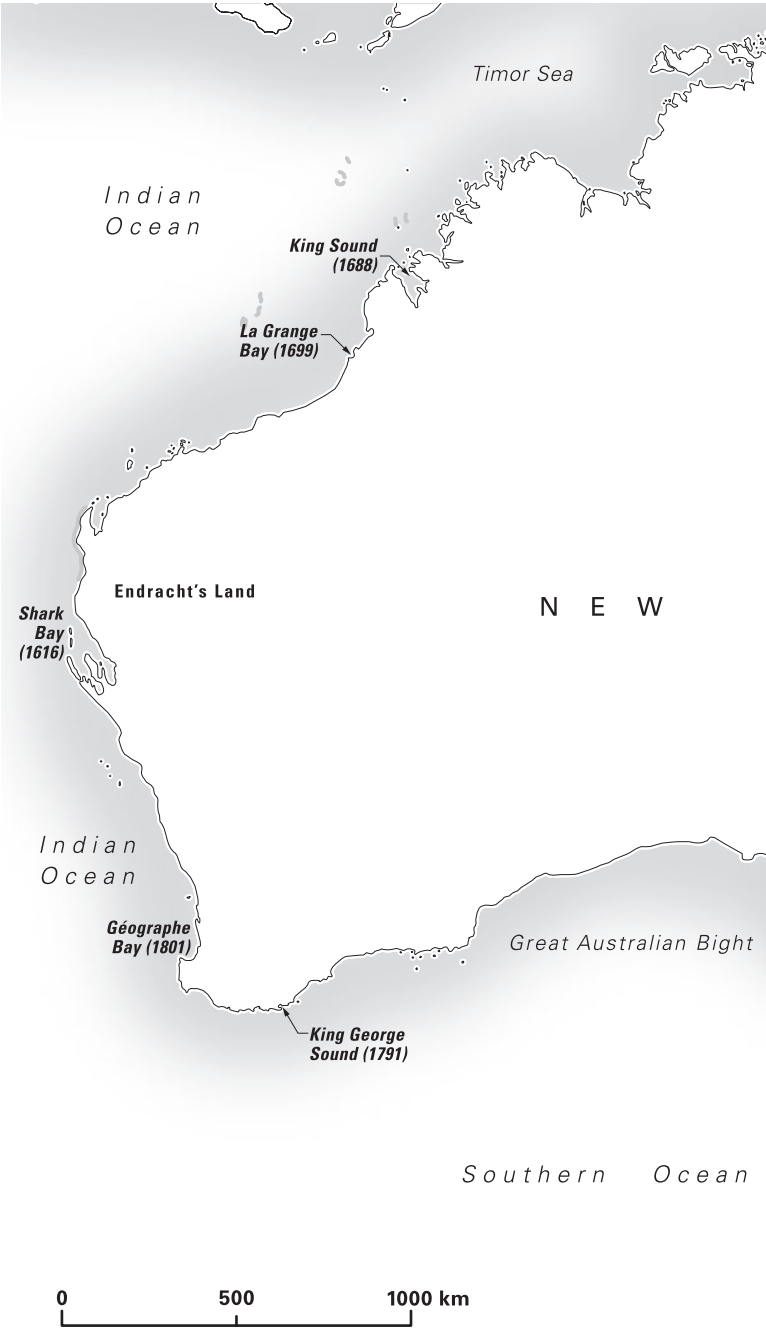
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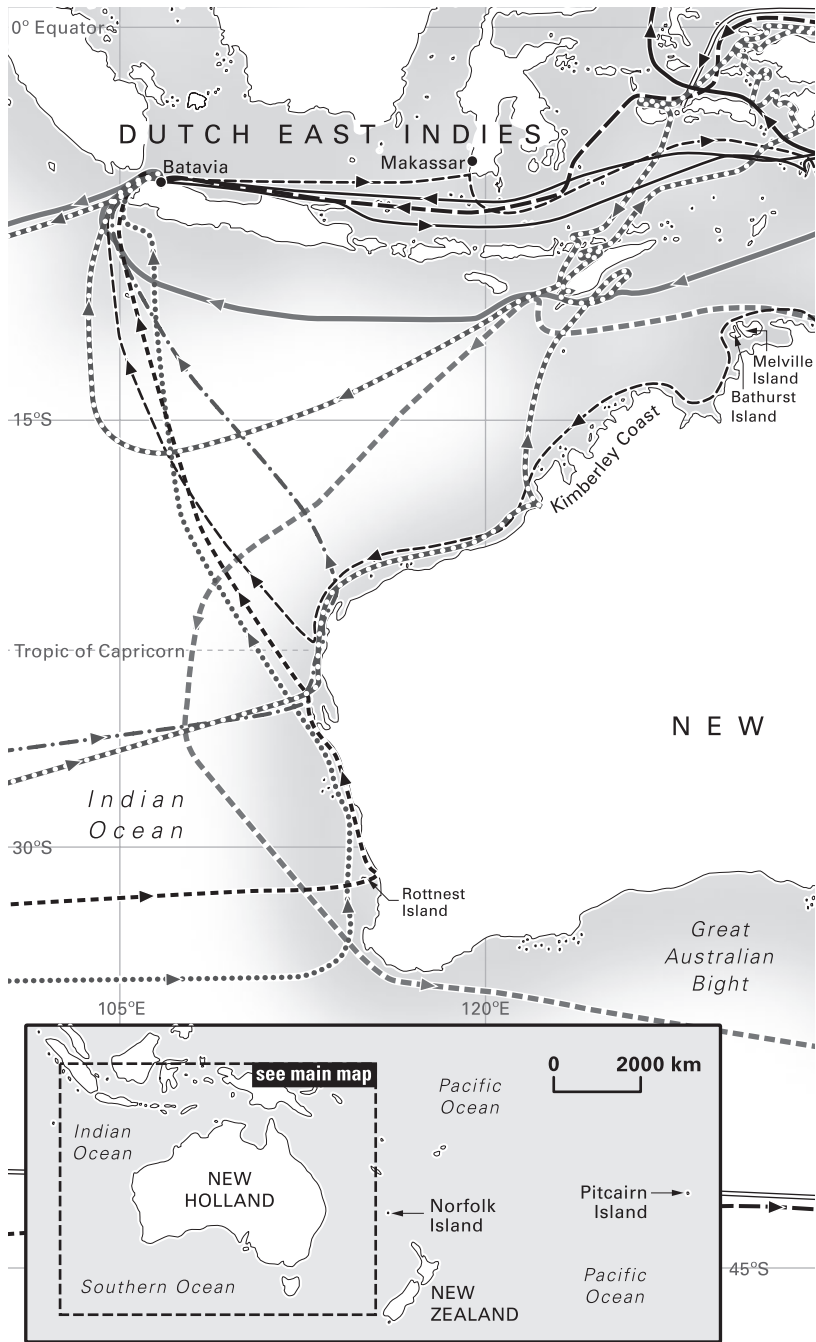


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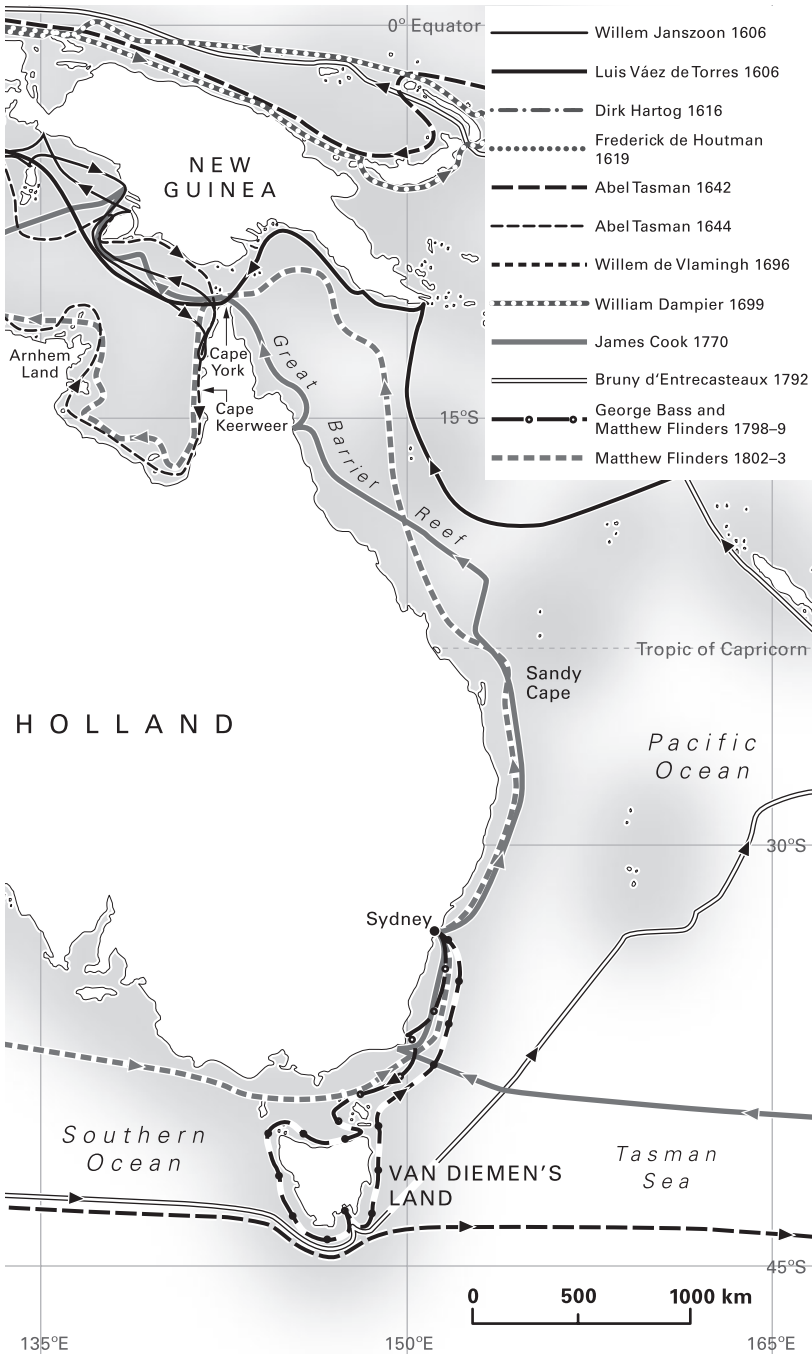


Map 0.1 Sites of early European landfall

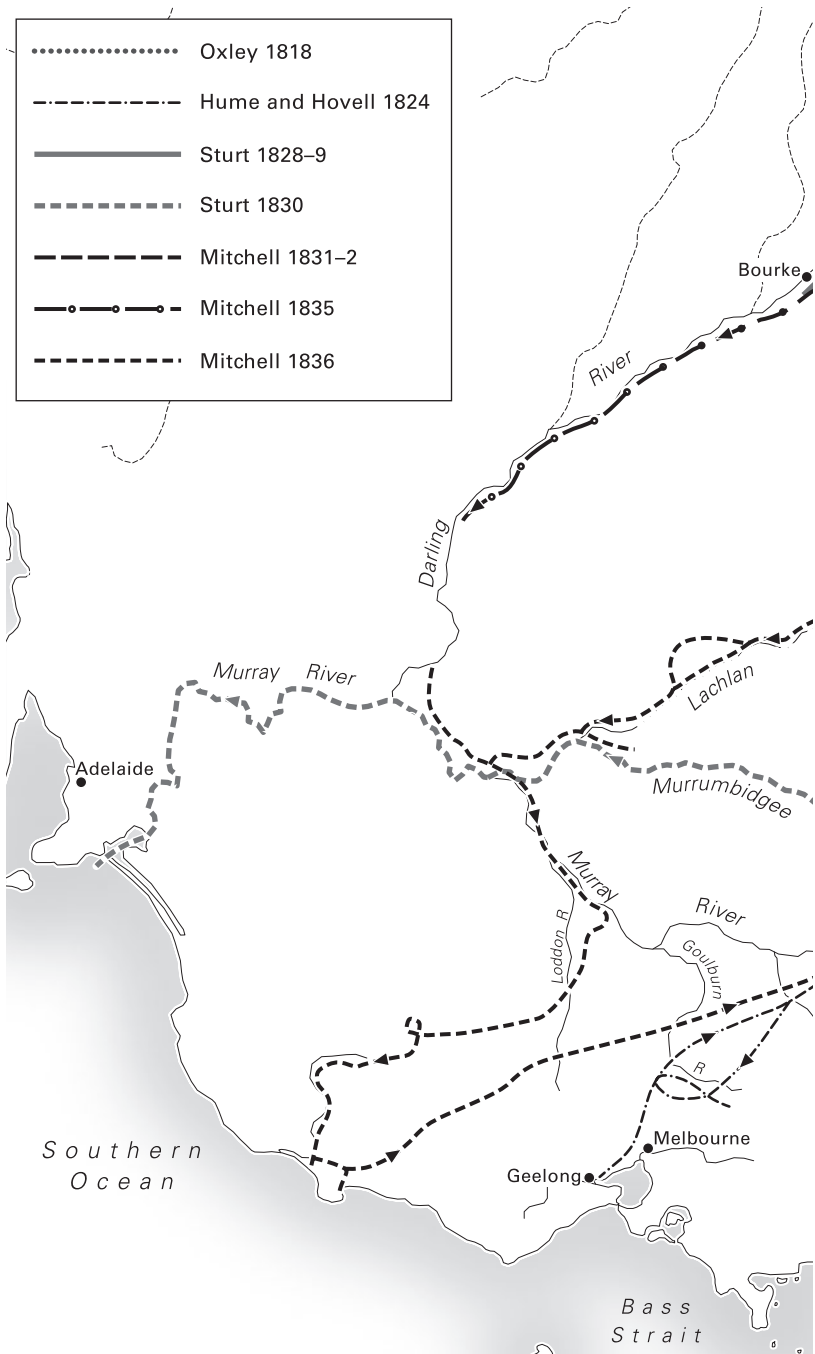
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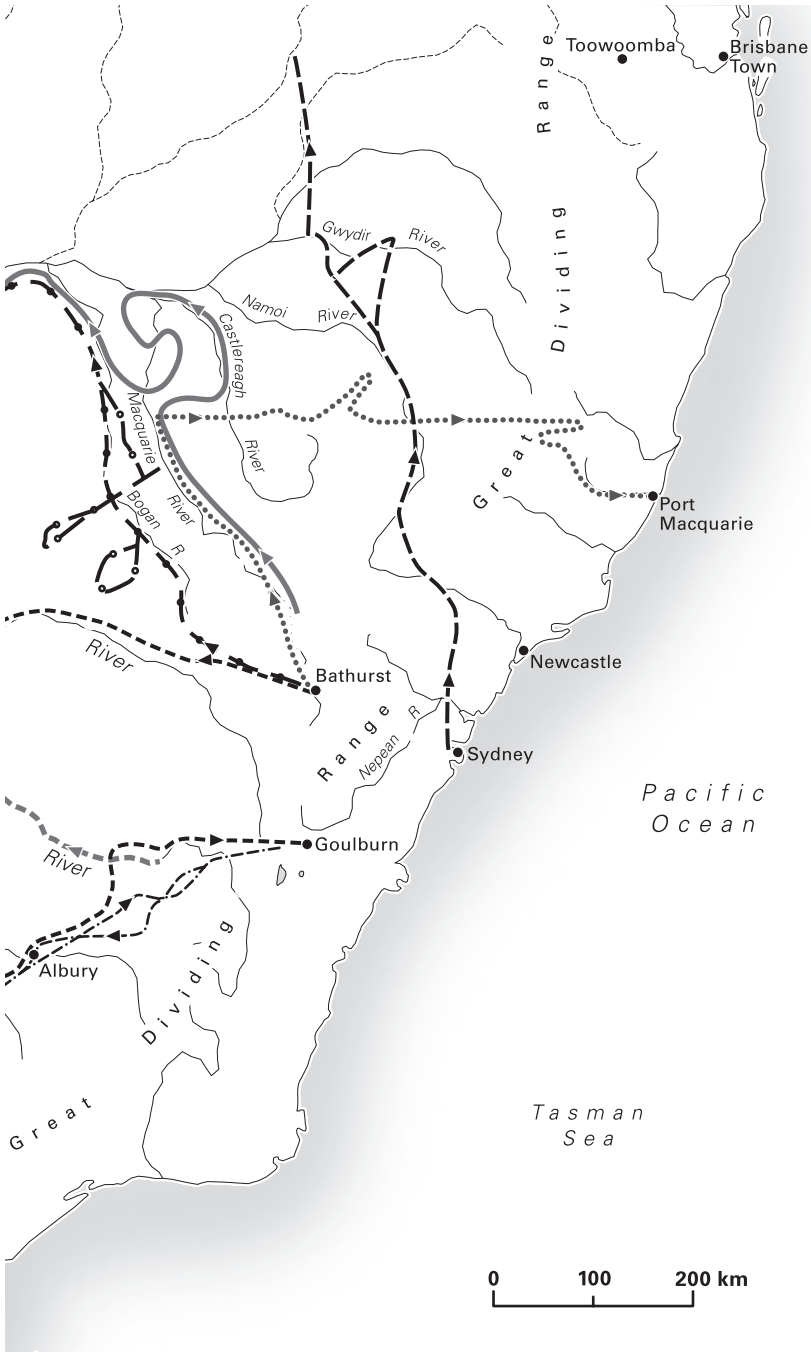


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Map 0.2 Maritime exploration, 1606–1803



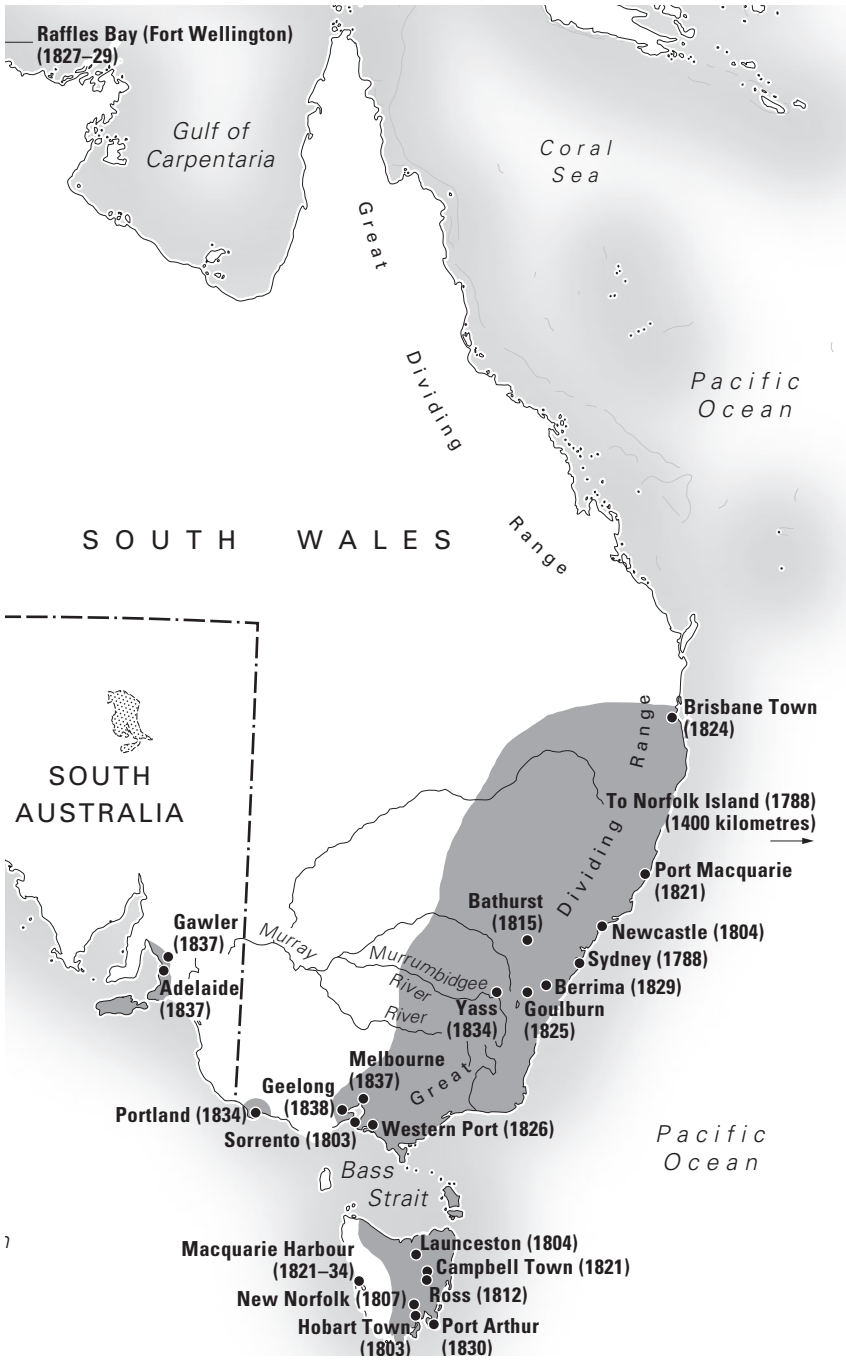


Map 0.3 Major inland expeditions, south-east Australia, 1818–36

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Map o.4 The Australian colonies showing colonial occupation, c. 1838

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Map 0.5 The Australian colonies, c. 1895

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The history of Australia is the past of a continent and a Commonwealth, of ancient and modern times, Indigenous people and settlers. The *Cambridge History of Australia* captures the expertise of 67 historians, across generations and fields of knowledge, to present a fresh account of the nation's past. Volume I, *Indigenous and Colonial Australia*, deals with Australia's history to 1901, when the colonies federated. The result of that Federation was the first new nation of the twentieth century. Volume II, *The Commonwealth of Australia*, encompasses Australian history as it has unfolded since 1901.

These volumes succeed a limited number of multi-authored antecedents, which form a telling historical sequence. On one view, the new *Cambridge History of Australia* follows the inter-war *Cambridge History of the British Empire*. Part One of Volume VII dealt with Australia, Part Two with New Zealand. Formally adviser to the three British editors of the eight-volume series, Ernest Scott of the University of Melbourne commissioned chapters from the fledgling Australian historical profession to produce a history that revealed the successful British settlement of Australia and the growth of a country coming to appreciate 'the responsibilities as well as the privileges which nationhood involves'.¹ Published in 1933, the book was used widely for two decades.

It was succeeded in 1955 by a new collaborative history edited by Gordon Greenwood of the University of Queensland, which was sponsored by the committee responsible for celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Australian Commonwealth in 1951. Its title, *Australia: A Social and Political History*, signalled a reorientation away from the *Cambridge History's* emphasis on exploration, settlement and constitutional development, and towards the growth

¹ J. Holland Rose, A.P. Newton and E.A. Benians, with Ernest Scott (eds), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. VII, part 1, *Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 624.

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of a distinctive society. Greenwood assembled younger practitioners in the emergent field of Australian history with the expectation that they could guide the student and provide the 'layman' with 'an intelligent understanding of the development of his own society'.²

Greenwood's history passed through eleven printings before it was superseded in 1974 by *A New History of Australia*, edited by Frank Crowley.³ This, too, was organised in a sequence of periods chosen to 'highlight the significant events and turning points in Australia's development'; it was conceived as a general history, drawing on the substantial body of research produced in the previous decades to integrate social and economic history with government and politics. Both the Greenwood and Crowley volumes spoke to the mood of confidence in the post-war decades of rising prosperity and also to the growing diversity of Australian society.

The Australian volume of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* was reissued in 1988, with a new introduction by Geoffrey Bolton – published, if not always read, as a period piece. That was the Bicentenary year, 200 years after Governor Arthur Phillip came ashore from his First Fleet at Sydney Cove in 1788. It was not surprising that the once-authoritative Cambridge history attracted little attention during the appearance in this year of shelves of national, nationalist and anti-nationalist history writing. It had emphasised the British origins of a burgeoning nationhood, whereas in 1988 the Australian government wanted to celebrate a far more diverse nation and withheld support from a private re-enactment of the voyage of the First Fleet. The Bicentenary was marked by uncertainty over the place of Indigenous Australians in the national story and heated debate over the legacy of the past. Neither the Greenwood nor the Crowley volume served the new mood of self-questioning.

The direct antecedents to the new *Cambridge History of Australia* were the ambitious collaborative works of 1988. Much of the historical profession was drawn into the preparation of *Australians: A Historical Library*, by far the largest historical project then or since. It consisted of five multi-authored volumes that dealt with slices of Australian history at 50-year intervals: *Australians to 1788*, *Australians 1838, 1888, 1938* and *Australians after 1938*. It also comprised five reference volumes: an historical atlas, a dictionary, a chronology, a guide to sources and a volume of historical statistics. The 'slicing' methodology adopted for all but the first and last of the five non-reference volumes, in

2 Gordon Greenwood (ed.), *Australia: A Social and Political History* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955), p. v.

3 F.K. Crowley (ed.), *A New History of Australia* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1974).

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which a cross-section of Australian society in particular years could be considered deeply, was designed to counter the narrative organisation of prior histories and to draw specialist fields of scholarship into an integrated whole.

Australians: A Historical Library employed high production standards and made extensive use of illustrations and graphical devices, as well as paying close attention to accessible prose designed to reach a popular audience. Along with many other Bicentennial publications and an extensive program of commemorative events, it foregrounded the politics of history in a settler colonial nation and stimulated historical debate in public and scholarly forums. Australian public life has been all the better for it. History was brought to the notice of an audience both more inclusive and more engaged than Greenwood's 'laymen', and with an intensity that perhaps would have surprised the post-war generation. Two hundred years of British colonisation was an anniversary simultaneously celebrated, criticised and debated as 50 years of national Federation had not been.

That the past held new significance for the present was evident on the shores of Sydney Harbour, where Indigenous activists and supporters protested 'Australia Day' as 'Invasion Day' on 26 January 1988. It was also evident in the history profession as *Australians: A Historical Library* was countered by four volumes written and edited by dissident historians as *A People's History of Australia*.⁴ That was followed by a further collaborative endeavour of national reassessment, perhaps unique in the genre of national histories anywhere. *Creating a Nation* was written by four leading feminist historians as a new interpretation in which the entire national story was recast with gender to the fore.⁵ The 1988 volumes, the people's history and the feminist history were all responses to a lack of confidence in earlier sequential narratives.

First published in 2013, the *Cambridge History of Australia* has the virtue of not coinciding with any official commemoration. In 1813 Sydney's Blue Mountains were crossed by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, a staple of an earlier national history, and in 1913 came the less-remembered naming of the new national capital of Canberra. But perhaps the key anniversary that marks this major venture in Australian collaborative history is its publication 25 years after the Bicentenary. It includes a number of eminent historians

4 Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *A People's History of Australia since 1788*. 4 vols: *Making a Life; Staining the Wattle; A Most Valuable Acquisition; Constructing a Culture* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988).

5 Patricia Grimshaw, Ann McGrath, Marilyn Lake and Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994).

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who played a prominent role in the Bicentennial ventures – but it involves more historians who were taught by them. It is thus a national history shaped by a new generation. It carries neither the celebration nor the stark critique of Australian nationalism that characterised the Bicentenary. It incorporates much of the postcolonial, cultural and feminist scholarship that has strongly shaped historical awareness, knowledge and methodology. At the same time, it has been conceived, discussed and written well after the cultural turn in history writing that privileged theory over investigative research, language over experience.

The histories edited by Greenwood and Crowley marked the growth of the Australian history profession and of Australian history as a field of research. Whereas the earlier *Cambridge History of the British Empire* contained chapters written by economists, lawyers, a geographer and a literary scholar, not all of them working in universities and several based overseas, the post-war histories relied almost entirely on the work being done in local history departments. That self-sufficiency allowed the contributors to delineate more confidently the stages of national development around which they organised their histories, and to highlight in their chapters the growing body of specialised research. Since then, however, the disciplinary boundaries have shifted as scholars working in cognate disciplines have turned to Australian history, historians have drawn on these disciplines in turn, and new fields of knowledge have emerged. While most of the contributors to this *Cambridge History of Australia* are historians, it includes chapters written by practitioners of archaeology, political science, economic, educational and literary history, environmental, gender and Indigenous studies. Part of its purpose is to bring these different ways of understanding the past into conversation.

The *Cambridge History of Australia* stands apart from previous collaborative works, in part because it is a national history written in global times. It is the work of a generation of historians for whom national history now means a combination of encounters located in time and place and the large-scale patterns that transcend national boundaries. While such a global outlook itself is not new – indeed, it is perhaps more longstanding in Australian history than elsewhere – it is now informed by new ways of exploring the relations between the global and the local. Australia's place in global history is reinterpreted after race, after Empire and after postcolonialism.

Part I of each volume of the *Cambridge History* presents Australia's history in a sequential summary of the important events and changes over stretches of time that range from one to two or three decades. Some decades have received concentrated attention, since they saw major turns or accelerations