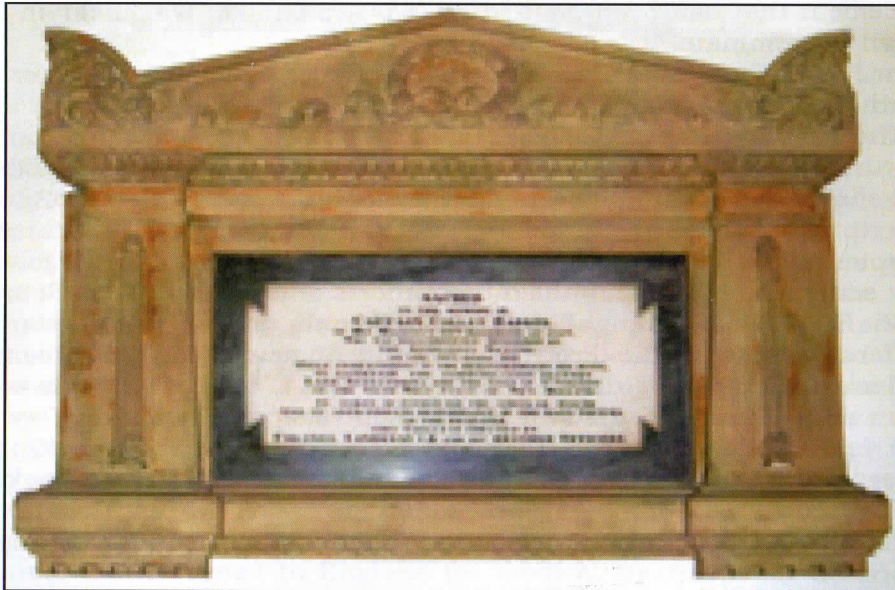


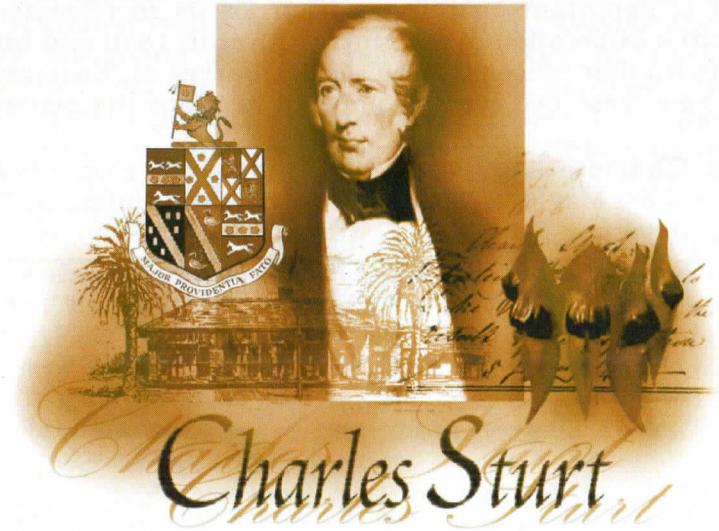
**CAPTAIN STURT'S FAMILY GRAVE IN PRESTBURY CHURCHYARD  
GLOUCESTER- ENGLAND**



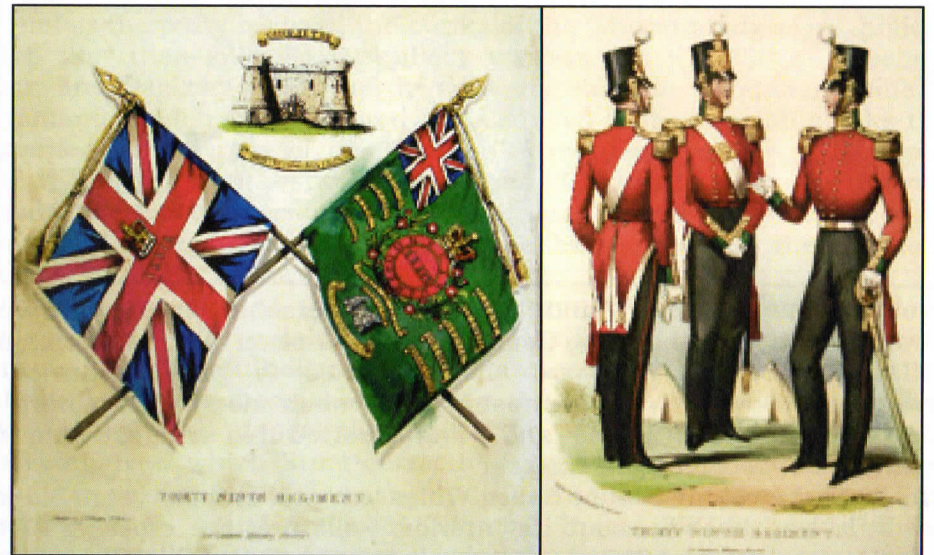
**THE MEMORIAL ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF CAPTAIN BARKER, BY THE OFFICERS  
AND MEN OF THE 39<sup>TH</sup> REGIMENT OF FOOT, IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, SYDNEY, IN 1832**



**CAPTAIN STURT AND CAPTAIN BARKER  
SOMETIME CAPTAINS OF THE 39<sup>TH</sup> REGIMENT AND AUSTRALIAN EXPLORERS  
BROTHERS IN ARMS - IN LIFE AND DEATH**



The Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc. gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Charles Sturt for the publication of this booklet.



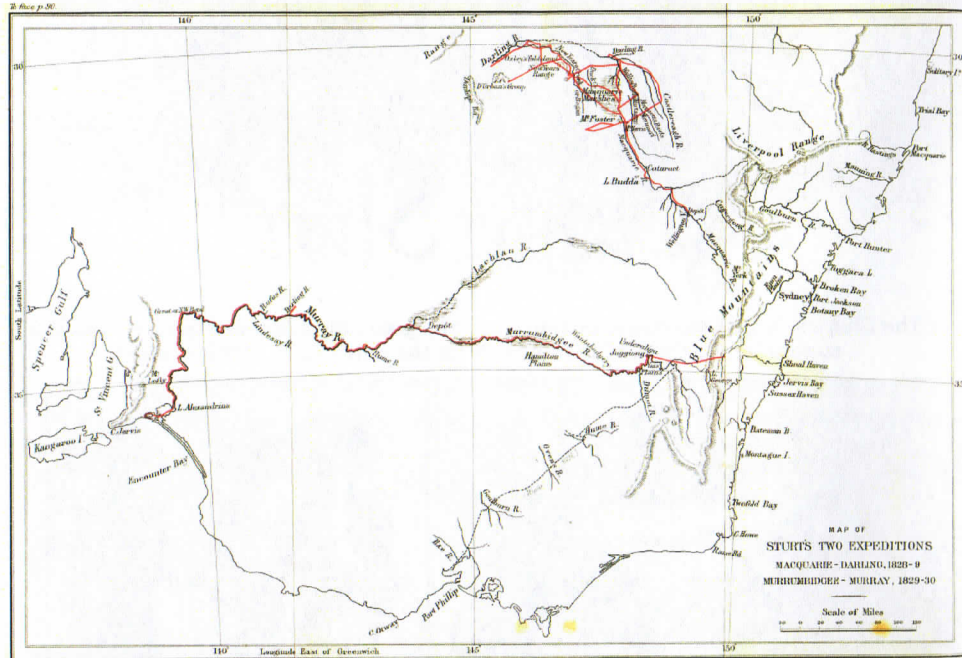
**UNION JACK & REGIMENTAL FLAG OF 39<sup>TH</sup> REG<sup>T</sup>    OFFICERS OF THE 39<sup>TH</sup> REG<sup>T</sup>**



## CAPTAIN STURT AND CAPTAIN BARKER - BROTHERS IN ARMS - IN LIFE AND DEATH

Given that in December the citizens of South Australia will celebrate the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the 'Province of South Australia' in 1836, it is important on this occasion for us to remember Captain Charles Sturt's exploration of the Murray River in 1830 and the untimely death of his brother officer Captain Collet Barker at 'Encounter Bay' in 1831, and how these two events combined to shape the history of South Australia.

**Captain Charles Sturt** arrived in Sydney with elements of the 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1827, to take up garrison duties in New South Wales. The Governor Sir Ralph Darling appointed him to be 'Brigade



Major', 'Military Secretary' and for a time his personal secretary. In June he was detached to the 'King George Sound' garrison where he remained until September of that year then returned to garrison duties at Parramatta. However his friendship with such notable explorers as Oxley, Cunningham, Hume and King diverted his interest into the advantages of becoming an explorer.

In 1827 the colony of New South Wales was still only 38 years old and very little was known about its interior. Following the crossing of the 'Blue Mountains' in 1813, explorers started to find rivers that flowed inland and away from the sea. In 1817-1818 Oxley had discovered the Macquarie and Lachlan Rivers and found that they ended in vast swamps.

In 1824 Hume and Hovell discovered the Murrumbidgee, Hume and other smaller rivers which flowed westerly and north westerly but where they ended remained a mystery.

In 1828, to resolve some of these questions, Governor Darling sent Sturt and Hamilton Hume with a party of men, wagons and a boat to explore the Macquarie Marshes noted by Oxley in 1818. On that expedition Sturt and his party penetrated and explored the marshes, traced the course of the 'Bogan' River and discovered the 'Darling' River which also flowed in a sou-westerly direction. This discovery further added to the riddle of where these rivers ended however there was a solution in the offing.

In June of 1829, Governor Darling received a report from the master of a sealing ship, the 'Prince of Denmark', that whilst sealing in the 'Gulf of St. Vincent' his men had discovered a vast inland lake that they had entered from 'Encounter Bay'. They also reported that it appeared to be fed from a very large source of freshwater. This information appears to have motivated the Governor to commission an expedition led by Captain Sturt to establish whether or not those various rivers flowed into 'Encounter Bay'.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1829, with his second in command, George McLeay, a party of soldiers, convicts, bullock wagons and a disassembled whaleboat, Captain Charles Sturt set out from Sydney. Governor Darling's instructions were clear and unambiguous; Sturt was to "follow the course of the Murrumbidgee River, wherever it led". On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November the party reached the banks of the 'Murrumbidgee' at 'Jugiong' which they then followed by bullock wagons. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December Sturt and McLeay rode northwards to examine a distant line of marshlands which they explored and deduced that the small creeks they contained formed part of the 'Lachlan' River. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December they reached a spot between 'Hay' and 'Balranald' near the town of 'Maude'. Here Sturt decided to end their land journey, establish a depot, assemble the whaleboat and make a smaller one to carry the additional stores needed on the journey.

On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1830 Sturt and MacLeay, accompanied by three soldiers, Harris, Hopkinson and Fraser and three convicts Clayton, Mulholland and Macnamee entered the whaleboat and embarked on their memorable journey. At a distance of twelve to fifteen miles below the depot they observed a river that entered the 'Murrumbidgee' which Sturt correctly judged to be the 'Lachlan'. Seven days later on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January the 'Murrumbidgee' entered what Sturt described as a "broad and noble stream". It was 350 feet wide, with a depth of 12 to 20 feet and it was flowing westward.



On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January they arrived near the present site of 'Wentworth' where they had their first serious encounter with an aboriginal war party but trouble was averted by the intervention of other friendly aborigines. It was at this time that Sturt observed another large river that entered the main river from the north which he again correctly deduced to be the 'Darling'. After rowing up this new stream for a distance of 2 miles Sturt returned to his "broad and noble stream", at the junction of which he raised the flag on the whale boat and named it the 'Murray' in honour of Sir George Murray who at that time was the Secretary of State for the Colonies and to whom he later unsuccessfully applied for promotion.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, they reached the place that we now know as the 'Great Nor-West Bend' at 'Morgan'. Seven days later, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, they arrived at the vast lake previously discovered by the crew of the 'Prince of Denmark'. It was here that Sturt named those waters 'Lake Alexandrina' in honour of the Princess who was later to become 'Queen Victoria'. Upon entering the lake he noticed a large mountain to the North which he mistakenly took to be 'Mount Lofty' whilst to the West he saw in the distance a large reddish sand hill and the sea mouth of the 'Murray'.

However he and his party were only able to remain on the lake for four days because their supplies were running low and the hostility of the local aborigines prevented them from exploring the area. They later learned that this hostility was a consequence of the treatment meted out to the aborigines at the hands of the sealers and escaped convicts who had been living on 'Kangaroo Island' since 1810. These people had long known of the existence of the lake and often came to this area, abducting aboriginal women and killing the men.

On the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> of February he and his party camped on the Sir Richards Peninsular, 6 miles from the sea mouth of the 'Murray'. In the early hours of the 13<sup>th</sup> they walked to the mouth, saw the 100 feet high sand hill that was to become known as 'Barker's Knoll', returned to their camp, embarked in the whaleboat and set sail for home. They re-entered the 'Murray' on the afternoon of that day and then had to row back the way that they had come. They arrived at 'Hamilton's Plains' on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April where they met their ground party and returned to Sydney where they arrived on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. They had been gone six months on their epic journey of discovery, had unlocked the riddle of the river system of Southern Australia, thereby opening new lands for settlement and influencing the course of Australia's colonial history.

Sturt reported his findings to the Governor and advised him that the area around the sea mouth of the 'Murray' was worthy of further investigation. The Governor heeded that advice and in the following year when he recalled Captain Collet Barker to Sydney, he instructed

him to divert the supply ship 'Isabella' to 'Gulf St. Vincent' and explore from 'Cape Jervis' to the mouth of the 'Murray' at 'Encounter Bay'. Those instructions were to sadly end in tragedy.

**Captain Collet Barker** was a remarkable man with a distinguished military record. He had joined the 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot as an 'Ensign' in 1805, served in the garrison of 'Sicily' in 1807, and fought in the campaign against the Kingdom of Naples' in 1809. He next served under



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**'RAFFLES BAY', COBURG PENINSULA, NORTHERN TERRITORY**

the "Duke of Wellington' in Spain', where he commanded a Company of the 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment in seven major battles of the 'Peninsula War'. In 1814, he next fought in Canada against the Americans following which he served on garrison duties in France and Ireland. In August 1828, he arrived in Sydney with the Headquarters Company of the regiment.

In September he was sent to command the penal settlement at 'Raffles' Bay on the 'Coburg' Peninsula in the 'Northern Territory', which was suffering from the effects of poor administration, isolation, disease, tropical lethargy and the attacks of hostile aborigines. With great enthusiasm and energy Captain Barker set about encouraging the cultivation of fruit and vegetables, cured the problem of 'scurvy' by the use of bush medicine plants, and by repairing the fort's buildings ensured the good health of the community during the ensuing 'wet season'.



Also by his personal example and innate respect for their customs he won the trust and confidence of the aborigines, thereby ending the hostilities that had long plagued the settlement.

In 1829 when the 'Raffles' Bay settlement was abandoned, Captain Collet Barker was appointed commandant of the penal settlement at

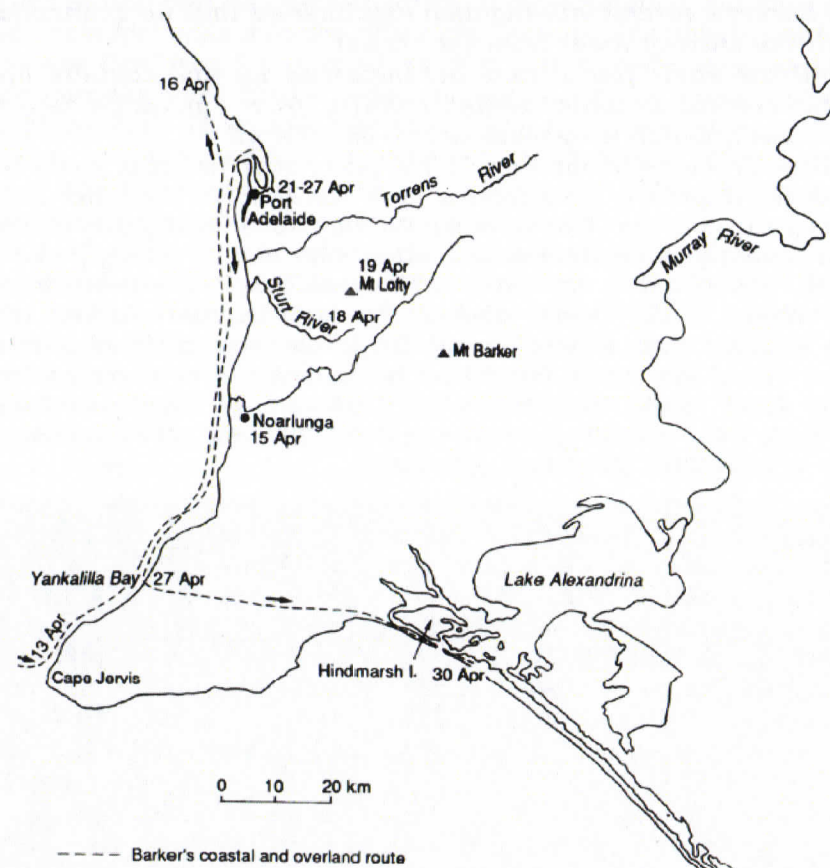


KING GEORGE SOUND, ALBANY, W.A. - c1827

King George's Sound, where he assumed command on 18 January 1830 and remained until its closure on 29 March 1831. During that tenure he again demonstrated his administrative abilities and unique rapport with the aboriginal people of the area. So impressed was he at Barker's ability to conciliate with native peoples, that Governor Darling decided to appoint him as the first Resident of New Zealand, but that was not to be. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1831, Captain Barker departed Western Australia on board the vessel "Isabella", with a party of soldiers and convicts en route to Sydney, which he was never to reach.

The following extract from the "**Commandant of Silence**", "**The Journals of Captain Collet Barker 1828 - 1831**", by John Mulvaney and Neville Green, tells the story of his last days and the tragic manner of his passing.

*"On the voyage from King George Sound to Sydney, Darling ordered Barker to divert the Isabella and undertake some land exploration. Only the year before Charles Sturt had navigated the Murray River to its disappointingly shoaled mouth. Sturt's otherwise promising report*



*of the land near the lower reaches of the river made further inspection necessary. In particular, Darling desired to learn whether there were alternative means of reaching the river from the sea, so Barker was given the task of examining the eastern shore of St Vincent Gulf.*

*The Isabella anchored in the gulf on the very day upon which Darling wrote so optimistically to Colonial Secretary Goderich. The first three days were spent exploring the coast in small boats between Cape Jervis and Port Gawler. The Onkaparinga River was discovered on 15 April and they established camp. Barker set off servant or batman, Private James Mills,*



and Kent, his tedious commissariat officer while at King George Sound. They walked to Mount Lofty and from there they viewed the peak which Sturt subsequently named Mount Barker.

The party returned to the *Isabella* on 21 April and spent the time until 27 April investigating the future Port Adelaide, which they had discovered from Mount Lofty and the adjacent coast; Barker named the Sturt River. Barker's careful investigation established that no connection existed with the Murray River from that coast.

On 27 April the same party, now accompanied by two soldiers and two convicts, set out to walk across country from Yankalilla Bay to the Murray mouth, which they reached late on 29 April.

On the following morning Barker told his party that he must cross the channel in order to gain a view from a high sandhill on the other side, and so survey the country. The river mouth was some 200 yards across and flowing strongly. As Barker and another man were the only persons able to swim, he decided to cross alone. This was despite the testimony of Assistant Surgeon R. M. Davis, aboard the *Isabella*, that Barker was 'indisposed for some days before he left the vessel, and suffered a great deal from pain of stomach and bowels on his journey'. The tragedy which followed has been retold variously. Sturt's account of events contains some confusion, not surprisingly as he was not present, although his phrases re-echo in later revamped versions.



**BARKER'S KNOLL, SKETCHED BY GEORGE FRENCH ANGUS IN 1845**

What actually happened depends upon reports supplied to the Governor by Kent and Davis, once the *Isabella* reached Sydney. Although Sturt acknowledged Kent's written notes, these have not survived; either has the log of the *Isabella*. Barker undressed (Davis referred to him as 'naked'), Kent 'fastened his compass on his head' and he plunged into the water. Davis stated that he crossed safely in three minutes, but Sturt claimed that the swim took nine minutes fifty-eight seconds. Possibly the latter is correct, because Kent may have timed his feat and it seems more probable. About five minutes later Barker had climbed the steep dune, estimated to be sixty feet high. That dune was sketched a few years later by George French Angus, who referred to it as 'Barker's Knoll'. Barker disappeared over the crest and his comrades never saw him again, although it is possible that they heard his agonised cries two hours later.

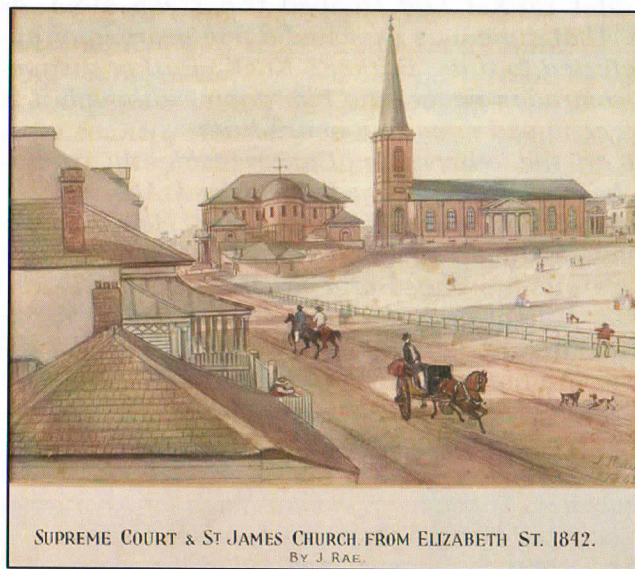
Out of sight on the other side, Barker evidently continued along the beach where he was followed by three armed Aborigines. The end came when he was struck in the left hip by a spear. He ran into the surf only to be pierced on his right side by another spear. A third missile entered his back and came out his chest and he fell into the water. According to Davis, he was pulled onto the beach and they 'drew their spears backwards and forwards through his body till he was dead'. Sturt has Barker struck in the hip, shoulder and frontally in the chest, followed by 'innumerable wounds' once he was dragged ashore. Both sources agree that they cast his body into the sea. These gruesome details were obtained a few days later, through co-operative sealers and their female Aboriginal associates. These were violent times for Aborigines on Encounter Bay, as they suffered the full impact of lawless sealers, who, based on Kangaroo Island, captured women and killed if necessary. Sturt probably was correct to claim that Barker's murder was in retribution for the mayhem inflicted on their people. Barker's safety cannot have been assisted by his nakedness, or the never-before-seen compass which he carried.

Barker's party had waited for twenty-five hours on the western side of the river, where the man who could swim refused to cross because Aborigines were visible. Unable to find any timber to construct a raft, they returned to the *Isabella*. Assistant Surgeon Davis must have been particularly saddened, because they had worked together since Barker's arrival at Raffles Bay. Davis took the initiative and sought assistance from a group of Aborigines at Cape Jervis. A woman called Sally, who had visited King George Sound with sealers, recognized some of the men aboard the *Isabella*, which aided her collaboration. She led Davis to a party of sealers on Kangaroo Island and two of them agreed to provide their services as guides. Together with Sally and her father, Condoy, and another Encounter Bay man, they crossed the Murray River



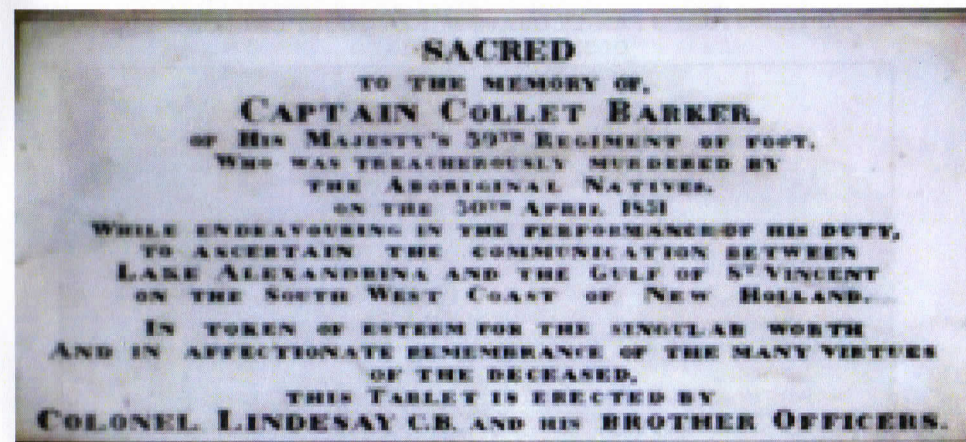
on a traditional reed raft and contacted the local people.

They ascertained that the names of the three spearmen were Cummingere, Pennegoora and Wannangetta. Davis paid the sealers £12.1s.6d., commended one of them to Governor Darling and handed the receipt to those officers handling Barker's affairs, whose estate was eventually settled by his London cousin, Edward Dobson. Barker's will was proved on 23 January 1832 his estate being shared equally between his sisters, Elizabeth and Mary."



SUPREME COURT & ST. JAMES CHURCH FROM ELIZABETH ST. 1842.  
BY J. RAE.

In Sydney on 23 May 1831, the Governor issued an order which combined a eulogy of Barker's service with a warning to officials "to be more guarded, when likely to meet with Natives who have not been accustomed to see or associate with Europeans." Unfortunately there were already many settlers willing to assume that Aborigines were treacherous savages to be 'guarded' against by carrying arms. In any case, Barker probably died because the 'natives' were accustomed to associate with Europeans. As the reader of Barker's journals must conclude, the Aborigines got it terribly wrong. They chose as a pay-back victim one of the most humane friends that Aboriginal people had encountered in a responsible post since 1788. Barker's brother officers collaborated in erecting a finely inscribed tablet in his honour, which survives in Sydney's St James church. It is one of the largest memorials in the church and at that time, it must have been very prominent in the recently completed building". That was to be the end of the matter until 1832, at which time they were brought to the attention of Captain Sturt who at that time had returned to England for medical treatment for a serious eyesight problem.



#### THE WORDING ON CAPTAIN BARKER'S MEMORIAL PLAQUE

Whilst undergoing that treatment Sturt set about writing a book about his adventures and explorations in 'Australia', in the course of which he was given a copy of 'Barker's' journals. He also corresponded with Mr. Kent who provided him with further details that included the manner of Captain Barker's death. Recognizing the importance of the 'Barker' papers, Captain Sturt included a synopsis of them in Chapter 8 of his book, in which he made the observation that "From the above account it would appear that a spot, has been found upon the coast of New Holland, to which the colonist might venture with every prospect of success, and in whose valleys the exile might hope to build for himself and or his family a peaceful and prosperous home". With those prophetic words the seeds of settlement that had been planted by 'Edward Gibbon Wakefield' in 1829 began to germinate.

In 1833, when Sturt's book titled "Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia" was published, it proved to be a best seller.

The first edition was followed by a second in 1834 and its contents captured the interest of such notables as 'Robert Gouger', 'Edward Wakefield' and their followers. In particular it was Captain Barker's description of the fertile lands over which he had traversed contained in Chapter eight that convinced them that this area was the place for their new settlement. They redoubled their efforts and on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1836 His Majesty, King William the Fourth, signed and sealed the 'Letters Patent' and the 'Province of South Australia' came into being. It is therefore timely for us, in this year of 2011, to recall that it is 181 years since Captain Sturt and his party arrived at 'Encounter Bay' and 180 years since Captain Barker and his party arrived in the 'Gulf St. Vincent'. For one it was to end in fame and fortune and the other death and obscurity, but those events and their respective endeavours and suffering influenced and shaped the unique history of South Australia.