

The
Mermaid & Bathurst Letters
of
John Septimus Roe
1817-1823

... at breakfast) and by keeping as much as possible on the tops
of, & the 3 Seamen, reached the ... at about 6 PM; which the Bo
t, who had imprudently quitted a ... company, preferring their own na
is not arrived in Town till ... next morning. They had not
for upwards of 24 hours, & were treated into the bargain with a
re all, as you may suppose, heatily, fatigued, at the conclusion of
used for all, by its happy termination; & at having penetrated
into that were before considered impracticable, & on which sea
repulsed. - We were to have been provided with a guide, but b
altho' could not procure one. The Botanist found many new
...



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1817–1823



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I have written to George by Reddie Castle Fort, that sails a day or two for Bombay, & intending to touch at The Diamond's Head. I mentioned your anxiety to hear from them both, as also the heads of news in your last letters to me, - but I must your excuse this excuse is long & satisfactory address - By the time this reaches you we shall have sailed on our last voyage to explore the inaccessible coasts of this country after which we shall think of returning home by the 1st of Nov. that sails - You had therefore better not wish the sending of any thing more to me than address & I must again repeat our sincere acknowledgments for your last truly welcome parcel - I will write you before we sail -

SKETCH
DEPT. TER

The General's Office

Director of Newbury

11/7

10/22/1790

1790



A brief introduction

The present volume makes available transcriptions of the letters of John Septimus Roe written during his time serving with Phillip Parker King on the *Mermaid* and *Bathurst* voyages to survey parts of the Australian coast (1817-1823). Roe's letters relating to these voyages are some of the most detailed, dramatic and personal narratives of this, or indeed any other comparable voyage known to be extant, and taken together represent a full and lengthy alternative account to the published version of King, the *Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia* (1826). More, Roe's letters to his family give an often candid and sometimes unflinching perspective on the rush to colonise, of central importance because the voyages provided the template for most of the new Australian settlements that would be established in the 1820s. As primary documents of this era they are surely unparalleled, recording Roe's private history of their often violent interactions as they sought to map and lay claim to stretches of the coast all but unknown to Europeans. The coastal charts and harbour plans they would publish would provide the key to the next phase of settlement.

Although King is now remembered as one of the great hydrographers, the successor to Cook and Flinders and a veteran of both Australian and South American exploration, as the Roe letters prove in depth the expedition can scarcely have looked up to much when it was cobbled together in London in early 1817. News had reached England that the French King Louis XVIII had commissioned a voyage of exploration in the southern hemisphere, giving command to the veteran of the Baudin voyage Louis de Freycinet. To the British this was ghastly and alarming news, not least because Freycinet was really only known to them as the cartographer behind the notorious *Terre Napoléon* map, delineating a great swathe of the southern coast of Australia centred on Spencer Gulf which, among its many disturbing aspects, had seemed to play fast and loose with the discoveries of Flinders. Was Freycinet's command the long-feared French voyage that would finally mark out a settlement in some stretch of New Holland?

Despite the flap, in post-war London there was neither time nor money to match Freycinet's lavishly appointed ship the *Uranie*, with its team of scientists and professional artists, leaving the Admiralty the task of quickly scouting some likely officers to be sent out to counter any French ambitions, ultimately commissioning King, Roe and Frederick Bedwell with orders to continue a survey of the Australian coast. These three, a 26-year-old Lieutenant and two 20-year-old Midshipmen, were not even given a ship of their own

but were sent out to Sydney as passengers on a troop ship with little more than their orders to Governor Macquarie to rely on. In the letters, Roe details the indignities of scrambling for his passage and having to scrape together the money to pay for it out of his own pocket – an eye-watering 60 guineas – but is clearly so glad of the appointment that he does not dwell on the distinct absence of grandeur about it all.

Roe would spend six-and-a-half years serving as the third-ranking officer of the *Mermaid* and then the *Bathurst* on King's survey voyages, the details of which are revealed in the vivid and detailed letters transcribed here. Although a skilled topographical artist and serious naval officer, it was as a cartographer that he excelled, meaning that he was central to the work done on the eight major coastal charts issued by the Hydrographic Office in the 1820s, and was actually personally allowed to sign some of the smaller harbour plans and surveys he oversaw, including his superb 'Survey of Port Jackson' published on 15 November 1826, all the while nursing his fragile eyesight, which troubled him his entire life, with simple eye-shades and his mother's homespun recipe for Hungary Water.

Central to what survives of Roe's correspondence is the series of letters to his Father, the Reverend James Roe, rector of St. Nicolas in Newbury (Berks.). The bulk of this correspondence is now held in the State Library of New South Wales, with an important complementary series in the State Library of Western Australia (which includes letters as well as many of Roe's journals and notebooks). The letters to his father were clearly treasured by the family from an early age, because the SLNSW collection includes dozens written when Roe was a schoolboy, the earliest dating from June 1807, when Roe first enrolled as a ten year-old at Christ's Hospital, the "Bluecoat" school, then still in the centre of London. The care with which Roe's family looked after the letters means, to cite the central example, that the complete series of 16 major voyage letters to his father have not only survived, but are now in public hands (14 in the SLNSW, two in the SLWA).

Working on board ship seems to have been particularly conducive to Roe's letter-writing, and although his workload was often arduous, he evidently took his correspondence very seriously indeed, staying up late and writing voluminously. The sheer volume of words would be impressive enough were it not also the case that he had tremendous powers of description. He wrote neatly and fluently, and often – particularly in his letters to his Father at home in Newbury – there is a tangible sense of a final draft, as Roe worked up his logs and journals into a compact narrative reviewing the events since his last letter home.

Interspersed in the series are some important additional letters sent to his siblings William and Sophia, although it is apparent that parts of this correspondence are missing, and hopefully will be discovered in due course. In fact, despite the impressive haul of letters still extant, it is evident that much of his correspondence is still unaccounted for, such as those he regularly wrote to his two brothers serving in India. The rediscovery of any of these would be significant because those that survive to William, for example, are more personal and revealing than the slightly formal tone Roe adopted when writing to his father, not least because the two brothers were thick as thieves in terms of collecting natural history and curiosities for their joint “Museum” at the Rectory in Newbury.

From the letters it is also possible to reconstruct what mail he received (not nearly as much as he hoped for), but basically none of this other half of the correspondence has been unearthed. Also missing are the letters he sent to his Father from Perth as the newly-appointed Surveyor-General to the colony between 1829 and 1838 (when his father died) which are now only known from some printed excerpts in the Berkshire newspapers of the day. Despite this, the quantity of what remains is close to unparalleled. Indeed, perhaps nothing sums Roe up better than the letter in which he complains of not having heard from his brother George (in India) since January 1815 (this is in 1820), but nevertheless concludes with the comment that “I shall continue to write...”.

Sydney
February 2021

JOHN SEPTIMUS ROE

18 May 1797 – 28 May 1878

John Septimus Roe was born in London on 8 May 1797, the son of the Reverend James Roe MA and his wife Sophia, née Brookes. At the time James was curate at All Hallows, Barking, where his son was duly christened as the seventh child, and in fact the seventh son, as his name records. Three more children came after; of the ten, four died young or in childhood.

The family was not unconnected, and as a young man Roe liked to trace his lineage back to the swashbuckling Jacobean voyager and author Sir Thomas Roe (c. 1581-1644). In the earlier eighteenth century the family had been particularly associated with Cheshire, his great-uncle Charles a prominent and very wealthy merchant in the town and his grandfather James (1711-1765) long established as the Minister of St. Michael's, Macclesfield. This James died young, and a selection of his sermons was published posthumously for the benefit of his widow Elizabeth Harpur and two surviving children Hester Ann (1756-1794) and James (1758-1838): the book is a testament to his position, listing the extraordinary figure of more than 1200 copies subscribed, including a great number to Oxford fellows and MAs, the largest number of whom were from Brasenose.

Hester later recalled that she and her brother had a strict but very good education – she wrote that her father was fond of saying “it was the ruin of youth to suppose they were only free to spend their time in diversions.” She would marry the Wesleyan preacher James Rogers and become posthumously famous as a Methodist memoirist. In her memoir she described her father as a man of tremendous piety with a real interest in her religious upbringing, who discouraged the reading of novels and dancing, and who had been rather prone to anger until sometime around 1763, when he had a “very remarkable dream” of the throne of God, and was ever after more patient and humble.

As a boy James, as is recorded by an early school history (*Remains, Historical and Literary, connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester*, 1866) attended the Manchester School, being nominated to an exhibition in 1778 and then went up to Brasenose (BA 1781, MA 1793). He was instituted to the perpetual curacy of Dorchester in 1787 and a decade later was also appointed to St. Nicolas Newbury, which was at the time in the prerogative of the reigning monarch and the patronage of the Bishop of Oxford, which must suggest that he was not friendless. Although he basically remained at the Rectory of St. Nicolas for the rest of his life, some 40 years, he does not appear to have left much of an impression on his contemporaries. He does not, for one, crop up in the correspondence of Jane Austen, which is a little surprising given his important position in Newbury, the natural centre for both her father's rectory at Steventon, which is only about 20 miles to the north of the town, and the house at Chawton, around 25 to the south-east:

that they had a similar milieu is neatly shown by the fact that an elderly James Roe and a great swathe of the Austens were subscribers to Fulwar William Fowle's *Ten Plain Sermons* (1835).

On 28 November 1786 the Reverend James married Sophia Brookes (1759-1833), daughter of the Reverend Dr. Thomas Brookes, another grandee of the church long associated with Oxford University, for decades the rector of St. Mary's at Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire. Unlike James, whose personality does give some shape to the correspondence, there are not as many references to Sophia in the letters, which makes it quite difficult to create a particularly full portrait of her. Her one constant refrain related to the care of Roe's eyes, which troubled him his entire life, and she was clearly keen to physic him with some "Hungary Water", a topic which he discusses regularly. There are also a handful of specific references to botany and gardening, which seems to have been her bailiwick: in one letter (16 February 1819) Roe specifically asks whether she would like some seeds for her hot-house, and in another (6 June 1821) he writes to his brother William that it is his mother who has pressured him into sending a seed collection to her friend "Dr. Smith" (presumed to be the Linnean Society founder, James Edward Smith). When Roe later returned to Sydney on board the *Tamar* in 1824, he was carrying some of her preserved gooseberries to give to Anna Maria Macarthur, the wife of Hanibal.

To be fair, nor is it possible to get many real insights into the Reverend James who, despite his interesting connections, remains a rather ill-defined character. Reading the letters Roe sent home it is tantalising to ponder the shape of his replies to his son's sprawling epistles. Only two letters written by James to Roe are currently known, but if his letter of March 1817 is in any way indicative, it suggests that James was droll and affectionate towards his son, while also driving him to succeed and particularly to follow up on matters of patronage. It will come as no surprise to see that James was deeply politically conservative. Of equal importance, by the time of the *Mermaid* voyage James was clearly not in perfect health, meaning that much of his side of the correspondence on the family side fell to Roe's younger brother William – his letters also apparently lost – but their father nonetheless still lived for another twenty years, living to be almost 80 years old. In their old age Sophia and James are known to have made trips to the Isle of Wight for their health, and Sophia actually died at Ryde on the island, although her body was brought back to Newbury to be interred in the chancel of St. Nicolas. A memorial plaque to James and Sophia is on the wall of St. Nicholas church, and the church also has a silhouette of him in later life, currently hanging in the vestry.

Of the six Roe children to reach adulthood, the eldest Thomas (b.1789) served for many years with an infantry regiment in India, his wife Eleanor (née Bennett) dying there in 1828, meaning that their surviving children were brought back to Newbury as young girls. The next boy, George (c.1790-1819), also went to India, being gazetted a Lieutenant in the Army of the East India Company on 12 October 1812 but dying at Kopergaon seven years later; on hearing the news Roe sent home genuine but rather formulaic condolences, admitting that he barely knew his brother (29 January 1821). Next was Charles (1792-1829), from 1811 an officer in the Royal Marines who saw a good deal of active service in India, Roe by chance spending a week with him in Macao in early 1816 (13 January 1816). Charles' health does not appear to have been particularly good and he seems to have been stationed at Plymouth for many years, Roe excitedly visiting him on his return from Australia in November 1823 and again as he stepped off the *Tamar* in late 1827. In February 1829 Roe wrote to Charles inviting him to join him at the Swan River, but Charles had already been dead for a month, dying on board HMS *Magnificent* at Port Royal, Jamaica, in January.

Given that the three oldest brothers were all on military service, in the event the brother that Roe had the most to do with was William (1795-1885), who did serve in the local Berkshire Militia but mostly seems to have rattled around Newbury, establishing a bookstore and general emporium in 1834, pushing Roe to help build the museum of curiosities that they were building in the Rectory, joining political groups and societies and, apparently, being the amanuensis for his father. Several of Roe's letters to William are known, and they do show a more unbuttoned Roe than the more proper letters to his father. The last child was Sophia (1801-1894), adored by Roe and frequently singled out in his letters, and the known recipient of some herself. She married in 1850 the Reverend Francis Ellis Jervoise, Rector of Lasham (Hants.), becoming his second wife. He was not young – the 1861 census listed his age as 84 (that is, born circa 1777, and around 73 when he married Sophia) – but the Jervoise family was influential, including figures such as the parliamentarian George Purefoy Jervoise (1770-1847) who once danced with Jane Austen (History of Parliament, UK, online). Sophia does seem to have a very comfortable thirty-year widowhood, in later life living with the widow of her brother William, Matilda Elizabeth (née Hills), and their son, Sophia's nephew, William Brooks Roe.

While it is not surprising that all five of the Roe boys served in the military in one way or another, considering that they all came of age in the shadows of the Napoleonic Wars, it is still something of a surprise that none apparently went to university and none followed their father into the Church. Roe him-

self seems to have been long destined for the Royal Navy, being just a few weeks past his tenth birthday when, in the summer of 1807, he was enrolled at Christ's Hospital, the famous "Bluecoat" school, then still in the centre of London at Grey Friars on Newgate Street. His remarkable correspondence begins, as a result, with his very first letter home, a 7 June 1807 letter written in a looping childish script which describes some social visits to relatives and having been to the Tower to see the cannons fired. His letters home from the six years Roe spent at the school are utterly disarming, full of boyish descriptions of childish delights: fetes, food from home, silkworms and holidays, all interspersed with the occasional apology for running through his allowance. At the same time, it is also clear that Roe was a little over-awed and perhaps even rather bullied by some of the racier older children.

Roe was not an unruly boy but clearly struggled on occasion to do what he felt was expected of him. In fact, he seems a rather brittle, rather lonely youngster, and there are hints that he quarrelled with the others in the wards. Reading the juvenile letters is genuinely quite affecting, whether it is the touching letter to his brothers in April 1810 in which he mentions the Sir Francis Burdett riots convulsing London and how he thought it best if he stayed indoors throughout, or one to his father from later in the year in which he wrote that he "must confess" he was "very much frightened" when a fire broke out a few doors down from the school. Best of all is the lovely pen-portrait of him parading about in his new breeches, which come up high on the breast and "hinder the stomach ache which I was accustomed to have" (1 July 1812).

Most of all, it is obvious that he missed home tremendously and cherished the few rare weeks he was allowed home for a vacation (by my count not much more than two months in six years). Nowhere is this unhappiness more pronounced than regarding his mid-1809 enrolment into the Mathematical School, founded in the late seventeenth-century specifically to train young men for the sea and navigation. Given his later pre-eminence as a cartographer, it is surprising to see that he took the posting with tangible reluctance, especially as it meant going into the King's Ward, a development which he contemplated with dread. Nor did he ever seem to completely reconcile to it: in April 1810 he was enduring it but still preferred his previous situation; in September admitting that he "cannot say with truth that I like the school very much"; in February 1811 was clearly being teased by an older boy but didn't want to say too much in case he became known as a tattle-tale; in July was pushing ahead with his work in hopes of being granted the chance of being able to go home to Newbury for a break; and by October was desperately hoping that his parents will take him out of the school. It is also around

this time that Roe stops addressing his letters to both of his parents, writing formally instead to his father only.

Despite this, Roe was evidently working very hard indeed, and the results were beginning to be noticed. In early 1812 the man who would be the great patron of his naval career, Sir Richard Keats, spoke of taking him out in his own ship, HMS *Implacable*, and Roe was cock-a-hoop: he was commensurately downcast when nothing came of it. Roe returned to his ill-fitting life, still allowing the occasional plaint about his school chums to surface in his letters home, or finding some solace in his little kitten “Tippo,” but mostly just buckling under. In July 1812 he wrote a letter which seems to sum up his position: “You say in your letter that you fear that I do not derive the same pleasure from my school business as formerly; that is true, but still I have no reason, nor do I complain.” If nothing else, there is certainly something to encourage in the story: Roe the master draftsman complaining about the difficulty of his work in maths and only getting second prize for drawing on matriculation.

In the England of 1812 Roe’s position was starting to weigh on him. Still careful, buttoned down, slightly nervous, it is also apparent that schoolmate after schoolmate was being taken out to go on active service, developments which he watched with a jealous eye. His letters from this period are still forlorn, but it is also clear that the end is in sight, and he began to talk of final exams and being fitted out for a uniform. Finally, in May 1813, having passed with flying colours, he is interviewed by the flamboyant Sir Christopher Cole, captain of HMS *Rippon*. A month later he was sent to Plymouth, his naval career having finally begun.

What is remarkable about the Roe archive is that it is so complete, not least in terms of his childhood development and early career. One struggles to imagine a letter from Captain Cook or Matthew Flinders about nurse putting the hard word on him about writing home, but in fact it is equally remarkable to read the letters of Roe as a 16-year old on his first command, worrying about impressing the skipper and agonising about the louche manners of his comrades. By the time he had lived to become the doyen of Western Australia, Roe might have hoped – like many a writer or professional who lived long enough to have second thoughts – that this early material might better have gone into the bonfire.

Roe first went to sea in July 1813 as a “schoolmaster” on board HMS *Rippon*, seeing a year’s service but always underwhelmed by the mental acuity of his young charges and still very worried at the low company many of his fellows are keeping (some of them are still spending time with “bad women,” he writes in one letter home, preferring himself to collect seashells for his sister

Sophy). The War, in contrast, seems to have delighted him, and in the letters from this period he is quite the fire-breather, whether it is his dramatic account of the capture of the *Weser* (44 guns) or running the blockade at Brest. It is in the *Rippon* letters that it is possible to see Roe's powers of observation and reluctant but almost overpowering enthusiasm for gossip really take hold. Significantly, Cole was delighted with Roe's ability as a draftsman.

In August 1814 Roe transferred to HMS *Horatio* (Capt. William Dillon), just in time to provide convoy escort for a fleet of 109 ships sailing to Newfoundland (September 1814-February 1815). By the time they were back in port the Royal Navy was already beginning to look to a peace footing, and after a few months of indecision at Portsmouth and Spithead, and a brief reconnoitre of Cherbourg, Roe felt himself lucky to be taken along when the *Horatio* was ordered to China carrying £200,000 stg. for the East India Company. His descriptions of that voyage (July 1815-December 1816) are particularly interesting, and he also executed a very fine journal with a number of beautiful watercolours (SLWA).

Back in London at the end of 1816, Roe was at something of a loose end and like all of his colleagues must have known that positions were drying up. Once again it was the patronage of Sir Richard Keats which salvaged his career. Both Captain Dillon and Roe's father wrote to Keats, winking out a reply in the first week of January 1817. The letter was sent down to Newbury and the Reverend transcribed a copy to send on to his son, particularly noting that Dillon had written "very favourably of your son's conduct and abilities, particularly as a navigator" (6 January 1817). Although Keats is well aware that finding a position will be difficult, he continued optimistically:

there was a time not distant when young men capable of being usefully employed in Maritime Surveying were much wanted. I have wrote to enquire of Captain Hurd - the Head of the Hydrographic Office at the Admiralty - whether there is any Situation vacant in which if Mr Roe's abilities are equal he could be employed and in which his time as Midshipman would be allowed to go on, and I think you had better desire him on every convenient opportunity to call on Capt. Hurd (using my name) with any Specimens of his own work in the branch of Surveying - Drawing - or Delineations.

Quick to take the hint, soon after Roe again met with Dillon (on 16 January 1817) who agreed to accompany him to visit Hurd, while around this time he also had "a very flattering letter" from his former commander Cole.

In a little-explored aside from this time one of the correspondents – a man called Barnes – wrote that Roe was really not looking terribly well, but his supporters and his work was too strong to be ignored. By 3 February 1817,

Roe was being introduced to his new Captain, Phillip Parker King, at a meeting chaperoned by Hurd at the Admiralty. King, his wife Harriet, Roe and the other appointee, Frederick Bedwell, were all on board the transport ship *Dick*, anxious to sail, within a fortnight. The rush to get everything organised in time and get on board is described in a series of shorter letters from this period, including no less than three written as they waited to sail, the result of being continually caught by bad weather and forced to return to anchor.

For those who study Australian voyaging and history the King voyage is a benchmark of close and arduous surveying, the heir to Cook and Flinders, but as Roe's letters from this period attest, it can scarcely have looked up to much at the time: a 26-year-old Lieutenant and two 20-year-old Midshipmen are hastily commissioned and their work sketched out. There is no time for a crew to be assembled in England, and not even a boat for them to sail in. Instead, they are sent out as passengers in a troop-ship for the 48th Regiment, with not much more than some useful letters of introduction, a decent library and some mid-range pieces of technical equipment (Roe's eyes nearly bulged out of his head when he saw the top-of-the-range London-manufactured kit that a Russian voyage of exploration that visited Sydney was adorned with).

Nor were things particularly more advanced in Sydney, not least because Lachlan Macquarie was already petitioning Bathurst to be allowed to quit his position as Governor, quite apart from being embroiled in some typical colonial sagas (a haughty conflict with Colonel Molle and the officers of the 46th Regiment; a bitter inquiry into accusations that Macquarie had connived at female prostitution on convict ships; or the reams of paperwork relating to the newly arrived convict ship *Chapman*, the Captain of which was accused of having created a vicious atmosphere of reprisals on the voyage). His attention may have been elsewhere, but Macquarie certainly acknowledged the importance of King's project, and acted quickly in the purchase of the *Mermaid*, even though the expedition did not take up a huge amount of his mental real estate. Nor, for that matter, did King and his entourage particularly take Sydney society by storm. An interesting metric in this regard is the *Sydney Gazette*, which barely noticed the three young officers when they arrived and watched them sail for the north coast on their 54-foot long cutter, complete with a motley part-convict crew, with no fanfare at all.

King quickly appreciated the cartographic abilities of his young midshipman, and Roe consequently was given the lion's share of the survey work while the other midshipman, Bedwell, took over most of the boat-work. The letters collected in the present volume speak for themselves, but are a revealing portrait not only of his own experiences, but as an unimaginably thorough picture of colonial Australia on the cusp of the explosion of European

settlement after 1815, a process which in no small part relied on the wanderings of their survey not only for reliable information on the seaways, but for close study of the harbours of many of the future outposts, notably Macquarie Harbour, Port Macquarie, Port Essington, Melville Island and King George's Sound. It is difficult to imagine a surviving archive of comparable scope and interest which relates to every part of colonial Australia, nor an officer better suited for writing just such a detailed account of his experiences.

Over the years he and his fellow officers would become old hands. Roe danced at John Piper's house, socialised with Hannibal Macarthur and his family at Vineyard Cottage, went shooting with the Army officers and the sons of merchants (once losing a valuable rifle, a gift from French explorer Nicolas Baudin to Governor King, when his boat capsized on the harbour), tried not to look a complete novice on his rare adventures on horseback, and all the while drew his charts until his eyes failed. As the letters make very clear he became quite close to Elizabeth Macquarie, who encouraged him in his pursuit of natural history specimens and other curiosities – enough to eventually fill two rooms or more at the rectory in Newbury – and at different times entertained hopes of being granted land in New South Wales, none of which came to fruition.

As quickly becomes apparent, the sheer length of these detailed and personal letters – the more important of which stretch to eight and ten pages of closely-written script – can almost be overwhelming. So rich are the letters that to describe his interests is almost impossible, his attention ranging over subjects as diverse as his unease about life among convicts (14 August 1817), his martial assessment of the seasonal visits of large Malay fishing fleets to the north coast (8 June 1818), his ragged ascent of Mount Wellington (16 February 1819), or his frank hope to be able to name a suitably imposing landmark in honour of his patron Keats (“William will say that I have an eye to windward at the same time. And he is probably not far out of his reckoning”; 22 March 1819). The letters also provide a true sense of the physical rigours of the voyages, not least his breathtakingly lucky survival after a fall from the rigging on the *Bathurst*, off the north-east coast (7 July 1821). Roe's ability to tell a dramatic story is beautifully captured by his recounting of the events as they neared Sydney at the end of the third *Mermaid* voyage in December 1820 (29 January 1821). He describes being asleep below when he was woken at three in the morning by the despairing cries of one of the old sailors on board, and how he stumbled on deck in pitch darkness to the sound of a roaring surf. As they drove on towards the rocks Roe was so convinced they were lost that he even condescended to speak to his garrulous shipmate Dr. Hunter for the first time in many weeks, if only to shake hands

“like men going to be hanged.” King himself, after they weathered the first danger, burst into tears but quickly regained his composure and called an urgent conference, relying on the periodic flashes of lightning to try and get their bearings. With each successive strike they became increasingly confident that they must indeed be between the heads of Botany Bay, and that there was nothing for it but to drive through, ultimately coming to anchor and sending news of their arrival and lucky escape overland to Sydney.

Roe, that is, had an enviable ability to describe a scene, but it is also true that he could still be remote and aloof. One could wish that he was more revealing of the crew, the motley but remarkable group comprised of ticket-of-leave convicts, rough but experienced whalers, the occasional Navy man from a ship lately arrived in Port Jackson, and a handful of locally born men – and indeed one woman – that King cajoled or allowed on board, but like most of his era Roe’s attention only rarely wandered forward of the mast. In this light, one of the most curious omissions is that in his letters home he does not mention the occasion in 1823 when four men under his command drowned when their small boat overturned just outside Sydney Cove, a story told here through Roe’s drafts of letters he sent to King and the notes he put together for the coronial inquest.

In much the same way, the letters also reveal a good deal of his bristling English chauvinism. Roe seems close to bewildered by the great majority of foreigners with whom he comes in contact, whether it be Italian doctors, French officers, Portuguese dignitaries, Irish soldiers or any of the various nationalities he meets on farther shores. His feelings in this regard are significant in terms of one of the most revealing aspects of the letters, his thoughts on the indigenous inhabitants of the various parts of the Australian coast. His thoughts on Aboriginal life in Sydney are not terribly sophisticated, rarely going beyond his schoolboy giggles about some of the naked men and women he met on the streets, although some of the letters do include frank but not uncritical comments, almost amounting to a sort of mocking affection, for his shipmates Bungaree (on the first voyage of the *Mermaid*) and Bondel (on the *Bathurst*).

To be blunt, however, the most obvious aspect of the letters is his growing belief in a sort of fundamental treachery in all his dealings with them. Reading the letters it becomes apparent that Roe’s hard-nosed opinion was set in the remotest stretches of the Australian coast, inflected with his frequent and tangible anxiety about situations where their small ship was in danger of being overwhelmed. Roe’s account of the times when he and his fellows were at risk of being roughly handled or attacked are due close attention for what they reveal about these early contacts in parts of Australia then little known and little visited by Europeans. Such a review would include, to cite only the

more obvious examples, his letter describing a running battle they nearly lost on the north coast (8 June 1818), his remarkable account of being held prisoner in the Endeavour River (5 November 1819), of being attacked again at nearby Cape Flinders two years later (28 September 1821), or how he and the crew raged after the spearing of their surgeon Andrew Montgomery and took retribution at Hanover Bay (28 September 1821). All are testament to the prickly nature of most of their interactions. This makes it all the more unfortunate that there is no letter written by him late in the *Bathurst* voyage, which might at least have leavened the mix by mentioning their happier dealings in King George's Sound (Albany) in early 1822. Roe was, that is, too close to events to be able to pretend that they had not been usually met with frank and sometimes open hostility by several different tribes: here, in unfiltered detail, are the events but also the beliefs that would inaugurate Roe's complex relationship with the Australians. As Thomas Braidwood Wilson would later ruefully comment, regarding his own visit to Perth in 1829, he once saw a "considerable number of natives in the town," adding that his great friend "Lieutenant Roe could not endure the sight of them; recollecting, I imagine, the uncivil chase their brethren of the north coast, had given him, some years ago" (*Narrative*, 1835, pp. 219-220).

Roe made his voyages with King, four major surveys and a risky jaunt to Tasmania, counted himself lucky to be alive on more than one occasion, and even reported home, with almost excessive coyness, as having been unlucky in love although, with more than usual tact, he does not even name the woman in any of his letters. It may be that she was the same woman whom he was writing notes to from India under covers addressed to Piper, in the mid-1820s. That woman, named only as "my friend Sophia" (Roe to Piper, 7 December 1824, SLNSW), may prove to have been Sophia Garling, not only because of the very few details Roe lets slip and the fact that he mentions the "Miss Garlings" on a later occasion (Roe to Piper, 31 May 1826, SLNSW), but also because she was known to have been a friend of his shipmate Bedwell (she was a witness to Bedwell's 1832 marriage to Susanna Matilda Ward at St. James). It is only speculation; the letters are candid, not private.

After they returned to Sydney in mid-1822 they were all relieved to have orders allowing them to return to England, the *Bathurst* finally arriving safely early the following year heavily laden with gifts, specimens and curiosities, including great boxes of material for Roe's private "Museum", the project he had undertaken with his brother William at home in Newbury. Back in London, Roe soon called on Sir Richard and Lady Mary Keats at Greenwich, dining with them three times before the end of the month: Lady Keats was particularly pleased with the gift of a pair of lorriquets. Over the ensuing year Roe spent a great deal of time and money on his natural history collec-

tions, including travelling to London in the hope of having a kangaroo stuffed, and visiting, with his brother William, the house of the botanist Aylmer Bourke Lambert (whose “wife is unfortunately not quite right in her upper story,” he wrote home at the time). He tried to keep up contact with people like the Macquaries and the Kings, but again he found himself struggling to get the right promotion, his repeated attempts to be sent on the Arctic expedition of Captain Parry coming to nought, elbowed out, Roe believed, by the better connections of Henry Foster (the Copley Medal winner). It was also in January 1824 that he made what seems to have been his first visit to the Linnean Society in London.

By January 1824 Roe was appointed to HMS *Tamar* under Captain Bremer, the voyage which first attempted to establish English settlements on the northern coasts of Australia, and within the month he was on board. His letters relating to the *Tamar* voyage are of great interest as Roe had evidently been taken on as a sort of de facto pilot for Bremer because of his great expertise in Australian coastal navigation, not least in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. The *Tamar* arrived at Port Jackson via the Cape of Good Hope in late July 1824, and Roe was soon ensconced at Vineyard Cottage and calling on his many acquaintance, including Governor Brisbane himself. Although not immune to the desire of being appointed to a formal position in northern Australia, Roe played his cards very close, and soon decided against making any application, partly because of a belief that Bremer would not release him mid-voyage, but perhaps also because he is none too sure of what was being planned (it is hard not to think that his account of a traverse of 15 miles to find fresh water at Port Essington might well have swayed him).

Roe would describe the voyage of the *Tamar*, *Countess of Harcourt* and *Lady Nelson* in great detail in these later letters, including a description of the proclamation that he personally read out and of the bottle he buried at “Point Record.” From Port Essington they sailed to Melville and Bathurst Islands, duly proclaiming “Fort Dundas” at King’s Cove on Melville Island. Roe was optimistic about Fort Dundas in particular, which he clearly believed likely of success, but seems not to take into account his own description of the difficulties in watering, nor the implications of a series of pitched battles which took place between the English settlers and the local Australians. It was while anchored in these waters that Roe announced that he would approach the Admiralty about being given the sort of command as was earlier given to King in order to make further voyages in the region, but by the time he had reached India he was already convinced that the posting would not eventuate. At least he was able to spend some time, at long last, with his

brother Thomas and his wife Eleanor, before setting sail for England again, the *Tamar* finally returning to Plymouth in November 1827.

During this period Roe must have remained in touch with his old captain, certainly sending him some notes on Fort Dundas although, of course, with Roe still in Indian waters in 1826 he could not therefore even be considered – nor even particularly apprised – when King was appointed commander of the *Adventure* and *Beagle*, dispatched to South America. No doubt, six years in adjoining cabins was sufficient time together anyway. King did, at least, make sure that both of his old comrades received advance copies of the book he wrote on their experiences, the *Narrative of a survey of the intertropical and western coasts of Australia*, as Roe’s lightly annotated copy is now in the rare books collection of the University of Western Australia (Roe himself gave the copy to G.W. Leake whose descendant Dr. Eleanor Leake presented it in 2008), and one slightly battered volume (of the original two) with Bedwell’s bookplate is now in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

In late January 1828 Roe was back in London, where he was introduced to the Duke of Clarence at a levee (“Oh, I recollect”, Roe recorded the Duke as exclaiming, “you are the Draughtsman”). He moved into lodgings in the Haymarket and went to work at the Admiralty on the *Australia Pilot* (eventually published in 1830). In April 1828 he had the melancholy duty of meeting the two young daughters of his brother Thomas, Eleanor and Matilda: the children had been sent home from India after the death of Thomas’ wife Eleanor. Roe was busy, and threw himself into London life with some zeal, attending sermons, lectures, and becoming more seriously involved with the Linnean Society, his membership formalised in May 1828. It was also around this time that he mentions “his friend Mr. Hope” as visiting Newbury to help “overhaul his collection” – this was Frederick William Hope, the great entomologist, and the happy recipient of many non-descript insects from Roe.

By mid-year, Roe seemed settled into London and the Admiralty. He was employed on the *Australia Pilot* and imagined the work would take quite a deal more time before it was completed, his health was improving, and he was really beginning to feel rather expansive. A large group of letters from the second half of 1828 (SLWA) tells the dramatic tale of how he ended up en route to western Australia the following January. In July, Roe moved into new lodgings in Lambeth, the house of a landscape painter called Mr. Wate and his wife. He thinks of taking up painting in earnest again, has numberless wrangles with tradesmen about things he is having made to order, learns of the likely collapse of the Melville Island settlement through the “decided hostility of the natives”, and reports that he has heard that King had been in 1824 intending to return to the north coast of Australia (and is correspondingly rather hurt at the implication that King was fibbing to him at the time).

Almost incredibly, that is, in August 1828 Roe was single with few prospects, had heard the first rumours of a plan to settle Swan River but did not think he was really likely to be involved, and had never met his future wife Matilda. Only in September did he run down to Newbury on the coach and meet Matilda Bennett, who was visiting. Roe certainly knew of her, as she was the sister of the late wife of Thomas, Eleanor, and he comments that he had heard much about Matilda when he was staying in India at the tail-end of the *Tamar* voyage. During a visit of several weeks he and Matilda became very close, and began a rather sweet and sedate courtship: once Roe returned to London at the end of the month, this was chiefly conducted through the medium of her serving as an amanuensis for the Reverend James in the letters he sent up to the city.

While all this was happening, and not for the first time, Roe seriously circled the possibility of emigrating to New South Wales if he could be considered as the replacement Surveyor-General following the death of John Oxley. Only in late October does the Swan River opening hove properly into view: Stirling has been talking to Roe's boss Parry, and Roe has been asked if the position interested him. It did. He has a vision, he writes, of remaining on half-pay while at the same time being able to "turn farmer as well as surveyor."

The SLWA letters give a remarkable account of the next two or three months, as Roe sends letters, wishes and commands down to his father in Newbury, all filled with a level of distrust for his new superior Sir James Stirling ("I must say I do not like the man") and literally begging for permission to be allowed to marry Matilda in time to sail. In the event, Roe and Matilda were married at St. Nicolas Newbury on 8 January 1829, the Reverend James officiating. The next day the couple posted down to the sea to be ready to go on board the *Parmelia*. One final letter in the SLNSW collection is written from the *Parmelia* en route, and gives a typically subtle account of life on board and the first days of married life. Roe would arrive in Perth in June 1829 to begin his long career as Surveyor-General and pioneer settler. Curiously, given that his father lived until 1838, the whereabouts of letters home to Newbury over the ensuing decade or so is not formally known: without doubt Roe continued writing, so their discovery would add a good deal to the story so far. All that has so far surfaced are a few substantial excerpts printed in the local English newspapers.

The *Parmelia* duly arrived off Rottnest Island in June 1829, and Roe was soon ashore and busier than ever. Roe's career as a pioneer in the West is well-known, especially since the biography of Burton-Jackson (1982) and the publication of his exploration journals by Hesperian Press (2015).

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Notes on the transcriptions

Quite apart from the sheer scale of Roe's letters and the fact that he writes with great verve, perhaps the most incredible aspect of his correspondence is the almost unfailing neatness and legibility of his hand. Transcriptions are more a matter of patience than tremendous ability, although it is occasionally necessary to indulge in what I once read described as the process of "meditating" the word back to sense (Scholem on Walter Benjamin). This is particularly true of the handful of letters which have been crossed by Roe in red ink, which must have stood out like a beacon when originally written but has faded dramatically, sometimes becoming partially illegible.

The letters rumble along, with only occasional errors or misprisions, in a clear and modern style, making the task of editing them really relatively simple. As a rule, I have not expanded any of Roe's abbreviations, the bulk of which are perfectly clear from the context of each of the letters. Most refer to his immediate family or crewmates: "Wm." for brother William, "Lt. K." for Phillip Parker King, and so on. In the rare case that I believe the exact meaning may be unclear I have added a note. The only one of his regular abbreviations about which I had any doubts was his use of "Dr." to be short for "Dear": this can be offputting at first, as it seems that his family is full of medical men and women ("Dr. Mother"), but once established it is easy enough to keep in mind.

It may also be worth pointing out that his shipmate Allan Cunningham is rarely mentioned by name, and is almost universally, and mostly fondly, referred to as "the Botanist". Similarly, any reference to "the Admiral" will relate to his great patron, Sir Richard Goodwin Keats.

I have italicised the names of all ships mentioned in the text.

I have only rarely added notes on his geography, again because it is commonly quite clear from the context of the letter. Nor have I annotated most of the nautical terms, except where I believed absolutely necessary.

In my notes Roe is usually referred to as JSR, Phillip Parker King as PPK.

Many of the letters have areas of small loss, ranging from a few words missing where the original seal has been roughly torn, through to longer passages now illegible through water or insect damage. Missing words are marked throughout []; if any word remains unclear but can be established with any likelihood it has been included in the same square brackets; if the supplied word is not much more than a best guess, it is preceded with a question mark. In one or two letters these problems of loss and legibility have left pas-

sages where the meaning is doubtful or even completely unresolved. I hope that readers who notice any errors or are able to add anything will get in touch. Reproductions of the originals can readily be seen on the online catalogues of both the State Library of New South Wales and the State Library of Western Australia.

Frequently used references

ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography (online)
DAAO	Dictionary of Australian Artists (online)
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online)
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
RNB	John Marshall, Royal Naval Biography (1823-1835)
Trove	Online newspaper project at the National Library of Australia

Key dates

10 March 1817 – 3 September 1817

The voyage out of King, Bedwell and Roe as passengers on the troopship *Dick*, sailing via Cork and Rio de Janeiro.

22 December 1817 – 29 July 1818

First voyage of the *Mermaid*: north-east Tasmania, Recherche Archipelago, King George's Sound, Exmouth, Goulburn Island, Timor, Bass Strait.

25 December 1818 – 14 February 1819

The run to Tasmania, calling at Hobart and particularly investigating Macquarie Harbour on the west coast.

8 May 1819 – 12 January 1820

Second voyage of the *Mermaid*: Great Barrier Reef, Wessels Islands, Port Keats, Admiralty Gulf, Timor, Bass Strait. They returned just too late to meet Freycinet on the *Uranie*, who was in Sydney from 19 November through 25 December 1819.

13 July 1820 – 9 December 1820

Third voyage of the *Mermaid*: Great Barrier Reef, Cape van Diemen, Cassini Island, Prince Regent River, Careening Bay, Bass Strait.

26 May 1821 – 24 April 1822

First voyage of the *Bathurst*: Great Barrier Reef, Cassini Island, Careening Bay, Mauritius, King George III Sound, Shark Bay, Dampier's Archipelago, Cape Leveque, Bass Strait.

24 September 1822 – 23 April 1823

The voyage home on the *Bathurst*: King George's Sound, Cape of Good Hope, Plymouth.

FEBRUARY 1817

HMS *Horatio*
[The Downs]

“I waited on Captn. Hurd yesterday morning, who introduced me to Lieut. King.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Two pages.
[No address]
Postmarks: none.
Location: SLNSW, no. 132.

Not long returned to London from his voyage to China on the *Horatio* under Captain William Dillon, JSR has been casting about for employment in the much-reduced Royal Navy, with particular urgency because he dreams that his lieutenancy is just over the horizon. Having enlisted the support of Dillon, Sir Richard Keats and Sir Christopher Cole, he has met with the Admiralty Hydrographer Thomas Hurd and met his future commander, Phillip Parker King, for the first time. All is bustle as they rush to get on board as passengers for Botany Bay: he records, without undue comment, that his proposed method of sailing, as a passenger on the troopship the *Lloyds*, will cost almost his entire annual salary.

Stovett February 6, 1817
5th. A.

My dear Father

You will perhaps think by this
line that I am lost which has induced me to give you
a short account of my movements, and when it is probable
I shall revisit Kentucky. I waited on Capt. Mudd
yesterday evening who introduced me to Lieut King,
and informed me that the Clay is the ship I must
go out in (direct to Bussan Bay with Troops) which ship
I have since learnt sails from this place about Monday
next, touches at Portsmouth for the Troops, where
I am recommended by the Agent of Transports to
join her, of which I will not fail to make my self
perfectly acquainted before I leave this place.
The Resident Agent of Transports at this place will do
every thing in his power to get me comfortable
- He delivered out² and this day went with me
onboard the L - to come to an agreement with
the Captⁿ about my mess, which he supposes
will be about £5 for the passage. - & I
waited for him till ½ past 4, when he sent
word by the Coxswain of his Boat that he
was not going onboard this evening, having
some business to transact which detained him
in London, and I could not gain the least
information by which I could find him out, so

Horatio, February 4 1817.
5 P.M.

My dear Father.

You will perhaps think by this time that I am lost, which has induced me to give you a short account of my movements, and when it is probable I shall revisit Newbury. I waited on Captn. Hurd ^[1] yesterday morning, who introduced me to Lieut. King, and informed me that the *Lloyds* is the ship I must go out in (direct to Botany Bay with troops) which ship I have since learnt sails from this place about Monday next,^[2] touches at Portsmouth for the Troops, where I am recommended by the Agent of Transports ^[3] to join her, of which I will not fail to make myself perfectly acquainted before I leave this place. The Resident Agt. of Transpts. At this place will do everything in his power towds. getting me comfortably situated onbd., and this day went out with one onboard the *L.* to come to an agreement with the Captn. about my mess, which he supposes will be about £40 for the passage.

I waited for him until till 1/2 past 4, when he sent word by the Coxswain of his Boat that he was not going onboard this evening, having some business to transact which detains him in London, and I could not gain the least information by which I could find him out, so [page 2] I shall be detained anor. Day in accomplishing every thing, and hope in the mean time Mor. will use every exertion in getting my things ready.

Captn. H. informs me that the 2 Mids are to be rated Mates onboard the Guard ship at Sheerness, and receive the pay as such (42 pr. year) and are to receive six months advance. When the service commences we are all to receive additional pay. The particulars of which & every thing else we will [waive] till a future opportunity. I slept here last night & intend doing so this night in readiness to go on board the *L.* early. In great hurry a person standing waiting for my letter. Kind love to all hands. [Affectionate] Son.

J.S. Roe

[1] The Admiralty Hydrographer, Thomas Hurd.

[2] The captain of the transport ship the *Lloyds*, who JSR felt had attempted to gouge him for his passage, was Captain Peter McPherson (his name is confirmed by the *Sydney Gazette*, 13 September 1817).

[3] The Agent for Transports was an important if not terribly glamorous role. Captain William Young served as a young man in the American War of Revolution, was made Lieutenant in 1783, served in the West Indies, was principal agent of transports in the Egyptian campaign, and promoted post captain in April 1802. He served at Deptford for many years (RNB).

FEBRUARY 1817

Transport Board, Deptford

“I rather regret you could not get ready in time for the Dick, to accompany Lieut. King.”

William Young to JSR. Two pages.
[No address]
Postmarks: none.
Location: SLNSW, no. 133.

The Agent of Transports at Deptford advises JSR that his passage on the *Lloyds*, rather than, as originally thought, being £40. was actually twice that figure: 75 guineas. The writer hints – very broadly – that passage on the *Dick* with PPK might have been preferable.

September 12th 1847

Sir,

Since my letter of yesterday, I find the
Transport Board have agreed with the Owners of the
Albatross, for that ship touching at Louisa, & becoming
Tropics for the Cape of Good Hope - the Deck will therefore
sail tomorrow for York. - I had some difficulty in
prevailing on the charter of the Albatross, to accept of less
than £100 ^{or Guineas} for your Vessel, if he went to the Cape it will
now meet with you, and your friends, whether you accede
to his terms in seventy four Guineas - I rather regret
you could not get ready in time for the Deck, to accompany
Lieut. King -

I am Sir,

Your Most Obedient
Humble Servant
Wm Young

Mr J. S. Rowe -

Deptford. 12th February 1817.

Sir,

Since my letter of yesterday, I find the Transport Board have agreed with the Owners of the *Lloyds*, for that ship touching at Cowes, to receive troops for the Cape of Good Hope. The *Dick* will therefore sail tomorrow for Cork. I had some difficulty in prevailing on the Master of the *Lloyds*, to accept of less than £100 or guineas for your mess, if he went to the Cape. It will now rest with you, and your friends, whether you accede to his terms viz seventy-five guineas. I rather regret you could not get ready in time for the *Dick*, to accompany Lieut. King.

I am Sir, Your most obedient humble servant.

Wm. Young.^[1]

Mr. J.S. Rowe.

[1] Captain William Young served as a young man in the American War of Revolution, was made Lieutenant in 1783, served in the West Indies, was principal agent of transports in the Egyptian campaign, and promoted post captain in April 1802. He served at Deptford for many years (RNB).

FEBRUARY 1817

Dick, Running down Queen's Channel

“We have a very comfortable mess, with good bottled Porter and 3 or 4 glasses of wine at dinner.”

JSR to the Rev. James Roe (letter begins “My dear Father”). Two pages.
[No address]
Postal marks: none.
Location: SLNSW, no. 135.

The first letter relating to JSR’s active service under the command of King, following a number of letters which describe his travails in getting on board and his rushed appointment. JSR was doubly pleased to get on board the *Dick*: firstly because it meant that he could sail on the same ship as King and Frederick Bedwell, his two fellow officers, and King’s new wife Harriet who joined them (“a very fine West country Girl”); and secondly because it meant he did not have to sail on the ship he had first booked, the *Lloyds*, whose captain he did not like, and passage on which would have been much more expensive. Thus, it is with some satisfaction that JSR notes that he is safe and sound on board the *Dick*, after rushing across from Deptford to Gravesend by coach, and that they are looking to sail soon. The letter has some brief notes on life on board but is chiefly just to let his father know what he is up to.

Feb. - Crossing from Lewis Channel
February 7, 1877 -

My dear father

As I have no doubt taken long pains in writing you
you great satisfaction and see your mind perfectly at ease as to my
last station, I have set down with the intention of writing you
in every respect as far as I can in a letter. - In the first place I
hope you receive my last letter with an enclosure after in which
informing you of some things that are attached to my going
on the ship but on my journey with me people will talk to
that effect that purpose, I was informed by the Chief Mate that
the Captain was in town and "he goes for passengers and papers
has been secured" without which it was of no use for me to come on board
and that was to wait until next morning for passengers, I had no
time to go back to the office which being against the captain's
and on going back to the office for passengers and papers he
said that had happened he said that E. Osborn has been sent on board
which is not necessarily was on the Captain's objection but that he
wants most willingly make out another which to prevent all
convents and mistakes I don't take out with myself. - By the way
he had hardly finished making it out himself it was past 4 o'clock in
the evening, I therefore gave up the idea of going on board that night
as the tide has gone in and against me and went out with my
boat the boat where I had a most comfortable night's rest. - On
going on board at 7 o'clock morning no signs of the ship appeared at
Pardner's, I therefore went ashore without delay, and in ten minutes
was on a Government coach. - I paid 5 shillings for my passage and
arrived at Gravesend at 12 o'clock, being 2 or 3 hours after the ship
but on board, passed my time as it was then light in the
afternoon. - I did not get from Gravesend before yesterday morning,
being detained for the latter (Gravesend) to pay the duty. - I did
not have any business afterwards, and had been to Pender's but felt
for my passage to New South Wales. - I had a very regular boat
which I had promised to do so, there in his power towards making
it. - I don't mind myself comforted by possessing me a letter of introduction
in his power, on our arrival at Cork, when he incurs obligations to the
agent for passengers at that place to take off a sufficient share of

Dick, Running down Queen's Channel
February 17. 1817.

My Dear Father,

As I've no doubt but a line from me will give you great satisfaction, and set your minds perfectly at ease as to my present situation, I have sat down with the intention of satisfying you in every respect, as far as lies in my power. In the first place, I hope you received my hasty letter, with an enclosure of £20, on 13th. instant, informing you of there being then no apparent obstacle to my going on board the *Dick*, but on my proceeding with all possible dispatch to Blackwall for that purpose, I was informed by the Chief Mate ^[1] that the Captain was then in Town, and "No order for providing me a passage had been received", without which it was of no use for me to come onboard. As the ship was to sail early next morning for Gravesend, I lost no time in going back to Deptford, (which, being against tide, occupied 3 1/4 hours) ^[2] and on seeing Captn. Young, the Agent for Transports,^[3] and informing him of what had happened, he said that 2 Orders had been sent onboard, which in all probability were in the Captain's possession, but that he would most willingly make out another, which to prevent all accidents and mistakes, I should take onboard myself. By the time he had kindly finished making it out himself, it was past 9 o'clock in the evening. I therefore gave up the idea of going on board that night, as the tide had again turned against me, and went onboard my old Ship the *Horatio*, where I had a most comfortable night's rest. On going on deck at 7 next morning, no sign of the *Dick* appeared at Blackwall.^[4] I therefore went onshore without delay, and in 20 minutes was on a Gravesend Coach. I paid 6 shillings for my passage, and arrived at Gravesend at 1/2 past one, being 1/2 an hour after the *Dick*.^[5] Went on board, produced my Order, and all was then right in that respect. We did not sail from Gravesend before yesterday morning, being detained for the Captain (Harrison) to pay

[1] In a later letter he refers to a "Mr. Hanibal" as Master's Mate on the *Dick*.

[2] As JSR implies, he has had to be rowed across the Thames to Deptford and, by implication, to the Royal Navy Dockyard there.

[3] The Agent for Transports was an important if not terribly glamorous role. Captain William Young served as a young man in the American War of Revolution, was made Lieutenant in 1783, served in the West Indies, was principal agent of transports in the Egyptian campaign, and promoted post captain in April 1802. He served at Deptford for many years (RNB).

[4] The important ocean port east of London, on the north side of the Thames.

[5] JSR has had to chase the ship overland some 30 kilometres down the Thames. The Gravesend Coach was a regular service by this time.

the Crew.^[6] I saw him on Saturday afternoon, and paid him 60 Pounds, his full demand, for my passage to New South Wales. He appears a regular built, good hearted fellow, promises to do every thing in his power towards making Mr. Bedwell and myself comfortable, by procuring us a Cabin if it lies in his power, on our arrival at Cork, when he intends applying to the Agent for Transports at that place to take off a sufficient space [page 2] allotted to the Troops. At present we have plenty of room in a Cabin formed by an old sail nailed to the beams. We have a very comfortable mess, with good bottled Porter and 3 or 4 glasses of wine at dinner. We could I dare say drink more if we chose to sit longer, but as Lieutt. King pays £80 for himself, and £80 for his wife, we judge it proper that some distinction should be made. He has only been married about 3 weeks to a very fine West country girl, about 18 years of age, who is going out to settle in some family house in New South Wales. We expect to be in the Downs this afternoon, where it is very probable the Ship will remain some time, for the wind now blows strong from the Westward, right in our teeth for proceeding down Channel, and Capt. H[arrison]. says he shall wait there for a fair wind. The pilot will take this letter on shore at Deal for me, and I hope if the wind continues from the Westward, that I shall be able to receive a line from my ever dear friends at Newbury. I need not say my Dearest Father that it often costs me a sigh of regret to leave them and my Native country for so long a period, but at the same time am persuaded that my line of life demands it, and never fails to yeild tenfold happiness at the next happy meeting. If I proceed farther on the subject, I may unwillingly fall into melancholy reflections, therefore, having nothing worthy of notice to communicate, I must reluctantly conclude this short letter, desiring to be remembered kindly to all friends, whom I had not an opportunity of bidding farewell to. Pray give my kindest love to Dr. Mother, Sister & Brothers, wishing you all health happiness, prosperity & every Blessing Heaven can shower down upon you, and believe me, my Dear Father, to remain your affectionate Son

J.S. Roe

P.S. The wind blows very strong against us and I begin to think will not allow us to get into the Downs tonight, or at any rate, in time to save post.

[6] The captain of the *Dick* was William Harrison, who played a recurring part in JSR's life, not least during the first part of the voyage of the *Bathurst*, when Harrison sailed in convoy with them. JSR was tremendously fond of Harrison, and easily forgave the older man for leaving him rather in the lurch at the Endeavour River in 1821 (see JSR's letter of 2 June 1821).



Detail of JSR's title-page for his Log of the voyage to NSW. SLWA.

FEBRUARY 1817

Ship *Dick*, Downs

“The wind still hangs from the Westward, blowing very strong at times, and I do not at present see any likelihood of its changing, without which we can not stir an inch from the Downs.”

JSR to the Rev. James Roe. Four pages with address panel.
The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.
Postal marks: dated Deal 23 Feb. 1817 and ‘B’ 24 Feb. 1817.
Location: SLNSW, no. 136.

Only six days after the previous, and with not much to report: Roe and his messmates have made it no farther than the Downs. Roe, King and Bedwell have been ashore at Deal in the rain, and Roe continues to congratulate himself on outwitting the captain of the *Lloyds* in gaining passage with Captain Harrison on the *Dick*. He also asks his father to send his birth registration in case it will help him meet the formal requirements for promotion to Lieutenant while he is still in NSW.

Ship Capt. Amos. February 21. 1772.

My dear Father.

You will perceive by the date of my letter that we have got no further than Dublin. We sailed from Georgetown on Sunday morning, arrived here on Tuesday evening with the wind, when we were detained by westerly winds till the day before yesterday, when a shift of wind having taken place to the N. E. we weighed with a very fine wind and moderate current towards the windward the better freshness of the fair, but such heavy clouds were fast gathering to the westward which began to damp all our fond hopes of being able to clear the Channel. At 3 in the morning our crews were afflicted of some wind from the Westward, which soon increased to a great degree, and at five o'clock afterwards having got just about of Buxby Head, half way to Portsmouth I then a complete gale accompanied with such a heavy swell rolling up towards us we were under the necessity of heaving up and our more sinking shells in this place, where we arrived about 9 o'clock and have ever since been riding at anchor as well as we can with 2 anchors aback. The wind still hangs from the Westward, blowing very strong at times, and I do not at present see any likelihood of its changing, without which we cannot stir an inch from the Haven. It is the most dangerous place for a ship to anchor at, that ever I was in in any life, the sea running as high as if so late was in sight. As I never was ashore at that place, and a doubt was heard for the purpose of attending on the Ship, I went ashore this afternoon with the Captain and Mr. Sturges for a couple of hours to see the Town. It is remarkably clean and neat forming an agreeable contrast with that dirty hole for an island, but it resembles every other Sea Port with respect to fence, and in walking the streets scarcely a Prison is to be seen. As the wind was very high, you may well imagine we got completely soaked going on shore, and

Ship *Dick*, Downs, February 21 1817

My Dear Father,

You will perceive by the date of my letter that we have got no farther than Deal. We sailed from Gravesend on Sunday morning, arrived here on Tuesday evening after dark, where we were detained by westerly winds till the day before yesterday, when a shift of wind having taken place to the NE we weighed with very fine wear and moderate breeze. Towards the evening the breeze freshened, still fair, but dark heavy clouds were fast gathering to the westward which began to damp all our fond hopes of being able to clear the Channel. At 2 in the morning, our fears were verified, of having wind from the Westward, which soon increased to a great degree, and a few minutes afterwards, having got just abreast of Beachy Head, halfway to Portsmouth, it blew a complete gale accompanied with such a heavy swell rolling up Channel that we were under the necessity of bearing up and once more seeking shelter in this place, where we arrived about 9 o'clock, and have ever since been riding it out as well as we can with 2 anchors ahead. The wind still hangs from the Westward, blowing very strong at times, and I do not at present see any likelihood of its changing, without which we can not stir an inch from the Downs. It is the most rascally place for a Ship to anchor at, that ever I was in in my life, the sea running as high as if no land was in sight.

As I never was onshore at Deal before, and a Deal boat was hired for the purpose of attending on the Ship, I went onshore this afternoon with the Captain, and Mr. Bedwell, for a couple of hours to see the Town.^[1] It is remarkably clean and neat, forming an agreeable contrast with that dirty hole Gravesend, but it resembles every other Sea Port with respect to Trade, and in walking the Streets scarcely a Person is to be seen. As the wind was very high, you may well imagine we got completely soaked going onshore, and [page 2] returning, as there was such a sea running which would preclude the possibility of a Ship's Boat floating. The Deal Boats are without exception the finest in the World for rough weather, and the Men that handle them, the finest set of fellows in existence, upon the water, being trained to it from a few inches high, till sickness and the afflictions peculiar to their line of life, lay them on the shelf. The *Lloyds* is not yet arrived from the River, but is expected every day. I think a e i o u must feel particularly disappointed and chagrined and my not taking a passage in his Ship, by his demanding such an exorbitant sum, when he thought I had no alternative,^[2] and I have since

[1] That is, JSR has gone ashore with his two fellow officers. Deal boats were the small vessels which ferried everything from pilots to mail out to shipping in the Downs.

[2] The captain of the *Lloyds*, who JSR felt had attempted to gouge him for his passage, was Captain Peter McPherson (his name is confirmed by the *Sydney Gazette*, 13 September 1817).

learnt from Captn. H[arrison], endeavoured to persuade him to pursue the same plan, but by trying to catch at too much, has lost all. It shews the low meanness of the Scotchman, and what I have since heard of him, gives me infinite cause to rejoice at not being obliged to keep company with a Man that sails so close to the wind. On the contrary I am happy to say that I could not be more comfortably situated that I am at present, with every prospect of remaining so, having a superfluity of Voyages, Travels &c. &c. &c., with the whole line of [cas.] to read,^[3] a fine light cabin to write & draw in during fine weather, no Watch to keep, and pleasant company, which you are well aware tends to lighten an otherwise dull heavy hour, and during our absence from the Land, to make the voyage appear shorter.

I am sure my Dear Father, no time ever rolled over my head so quick as did the happy hours I was at home, to which many an anxious thought will recur before I once more have the happiness of beholding all that are dear to me. Reluctant as I feel to quit my dear Native Country, I am still impatient to be gone, knowing that this is all lost time, and that the sooner we get out to commence our laborious task, the sooner we shall in consequence return to England. Lieutt. King I find a very good worthy young man, about 4 or 5 and 20, and Bedwell likewise, who is about 20. His patron, as I before suggested is Earl Montnorris.^[4] He draws very little indeed, consequently the heaviest [page 3] part of that work will fall to my lot, a work which I shall undertake with great readiness, both as it will improve myself and be the means of recommending me more strongly to the Admiralty. He has already applied to me for some instructions in that line, in answer to which I frankly told him that I had really so much to do for myself and had wasted so much of my time for others, that I could not positively undertake to teach him, but that whenever I could put him in the way, or my advice would be of any assistance, it should be freely given, but that absolute attendance I could not promise. Now whenever we are near land I desire him to sketch the headlands at the same time as myself, and we afterwards compare notes. He appears perfectly satisfied, and so am I.

There is a great chance of our being obliged to put into Portsmouth, in the event of which, and of our being there on the first Monday in next month, I

[3] PPK's library was evidently of some scope: he is known to have works related to James Cook, Nicolas Baudin, and Matthew Flinders to cite only the most obvious. It would be intriguing to know exactly which titles were carried on board; they do not appear to have had many natural history books, as JSR later commented.

[4] George Annesley, Viscount Valentia and the second Earl Montnorris (1770-1844), was a peer and MP. He was indeed Bedwell's great patron, and was still writing letters of support when Bedwell immigrated to New South Wales in 1827. JSR would later admit to becoming rather tired of hearing about the Earl.

shall try what the Royal Naval Academy is made of, and hope I shall be successful in being able to pass, but you [must] consider it is all chance. The principal object of my writing at this moment is to request you to send me a Certificate of my age, where born & when, such certificate being necessary, I find, for me to produce when I have served my time, to enable me to prove I am 19 years of age, when I want to pass my final examination for a Lieutt. in Seamanship, and without which I cannot pass. It is to be obtained from the Minister of the Parish I was born in, and must be an extract from the Registrar. The greatest dispatch is necessary, for I shall in all probability complete my 6 years in New Holland, and if an opportunity offers, wish to pass any examn. there. You had better direct it to me on board the Ship *Dick*, Captn. Harrison, Cove of Cork, Ired., where it will reach me before we sail from there. When at Deptford last, I spoke to Mr. Hughes the Boatswain of the *Horatio*, who promised to send you some sea biscuit, which you all expressed a wish for, and upon receipt of it, hope you will send him a letter of thanks, both for it and his kind behaviour to me while on board, in always giving up his cabin for me to draw, &c. He is a very worthy good man & much above his situation in life.^[5] Having no more room, I shall pray to God to bless & preserve you all till my return, and with kindest love to dr. Mor., Sister, Brors., &c. dr. Far., yr. affectionate Son,

J S Roe.

NB. As a letter is 2 days in reaching you, and 2 days returning, I am almost afraid to ask you to write to me here, and if the wind is at all to the Eastward of NbW or SbW, we shall sail immediately. Pay land postage to Cork.

[5] As JSR clearly states, Mr. Hughes, Boatswain of the *Horatio*, was an old shipmate: the two had sailed to China together under Captain Dillon.

FEBRUARY 1817

Ship *Dick*, Downs

“I was very sea sick during the whole of the rough weather in which we were attempting to clear the Channel.”

JSR to the Rev. James Roe. Four pages with address panel.
The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.
Postmarks: Deal 27 Feb. 1817 and ‘B’ 28 Feb. 1817.
Location: SLNSW, no. 137.

Yet again the ship *Dick* has been forced to turn back to Deal in bad weather. JSR is pleased that it has allowed time for him to receive a flurry of letters, including one from his brother William forwarding his birth certificate, but he is clearly irritated at the delay. He does take the opportunity to clear up a few technical points for his landlubber Father, chiefly that being rated as a Master’s Mate is a great advance on a mere Midshipman, and also writes to send through some of the formal notices from the Admiralty. He remains, as does PPK, largely in the dark as to what will happen when they take on troops in Cork.

Ship Seal, 2000, February 28, 1871

My dear Father

I have this instant received your kind letter of 21st instant, by the Boat employed by the Crew to attend on the Ship. You may perhaps be apprehensive of its safety, having doubtless heard of our having sailed the day of my last, which was the day before yesterday, & by 10^o to you has hardly run on shore a quarter open beam, when she was seized suddenly round in a squall from the N.W., when we immediately pursued the receipt of most of the Outward bound ships and sought, the weather being very unsettled and squally, & towards night the wind gradually hauled round to the Eastward, and we had some more the indiscreet pleasure of beating against a strong Westerly wind and heavy sea. - Being partly ashamed to return again, we held out during the whole of yesterday and last night, endeavouring to weather Brashy Head, but in vain, and at 11 o'clock this forenoon finding we had lost 9 miles during the night, with our prospect of having left wind, that unpropitious Brashy Head was in sight to windward when we bore up, our course to seek shelter in this unsafe hole. - The anchor is not yet let go, but I am in haste to write this and send it on shore this evening, although late for Post, in case any thing should happen in the night and oblige us to be off. - You see by my letter of the 21st how little confidence is to be placed in any estimate time of our way here, whilst the weather is so unsettled, and it was very fortunate for you, in the same letter that we were obliged to put back again, otherwise I should not have received it properly, and you would have remained in anxious doubt and uncertainty respecting a circumstance of some importance, which I thought you was fully acquainted with already. - I mean my sailing, continued in this ship's company, and prospects of future promotion, both of which I am happy to say are fully established, so as not to

Ship *Dick*, Downs February 24.1817.

My Dear Father,

I have this instant received Wm.'s ^[1] kind letter of 21st. instant, by the Boat employed by the Owners to attend on the Ship. You may perhaps have been apprehensive of its safety, having doubtless heard of our having sailed since the date of my last, which was the day before yesterday. My letter to you had hardly been onshore a quarter of an hour, when the wind shifted suddenly round in a squall from N.N.W. when we immediately followed the example of most of the Outward Bound Ships, and weighed, the weather being very unsettled and squally. Towards night, the wind gradually hauled round to the Westward, and we had once more the indescribable pleasure of beating against a strong Westerly wind and heavy sea. Being partly ashamed to return again, we held out during the whole of yesterday, and last night, endeavouring to weather Beachy Head, but in vain, and at 11 o'clock this forenoon finding we had lost 9 miles during the night, with no prospect of having less wind, that inauspicious Beachy Head was in sight to windward when we bore up, once more to seek shelter in this rascally hole. The anchor is not yet let go, but I am in haste to write this and send it onshore this evening, altho' too late for Post, in case any thing should happen in the night and oblige us to be off.

You see by my letter of the 22nd. how little confidence is to be placed in any estimated time of our stay here, while the weather is so unsettled, and it was very fortunate for your, or William's letter, that we were obliged to put back again, otherwise I should not have received it, possibly, and you would have remained in anxious doubt and uncertainty respecting a circumstance of some importance, which I thought you was fully acquainted with already. I mean my rating, continuance in His Majesty's Service, and prospects of future promotion, all of which I am happy to say are fully established, so as not to [*page 2*] leave the least shadow of doubt. Captain Hurd ^[2] not only repeatedly explained every thing to me, but told me (what I am not obliged to believe unless I like) that if I behaved well, my promotion was so sure that I must not write and ask for it, but it would be already done for me as soon as the Admiralty received my name as having passed. On his recommending me to Mr. Nelson, Secretary to the Navy Board at Somerset House,^[3] to put me in the way of getting my six Month's pay in Advance, he (Mr. N.) not only explained every thing fully to me, but likewise several of the Clerks through whose hands the affair passed, and the Pay List was headed in the

[1] JSR's brother William.

[2] Captain Thomas Hurd (1747-1823), the successor to Alexander Dalrymple at the Hydrographic Office.

[3] Mr. Nelson, Secretary to the Navy Board: Richard Alexander Nelson, Esq. Somerset House was the Georgian building on the Strand which housed the Navy Board.

following manner, or very nearly so: “List of 2 Master’s Mates belonging to HM Ship *Bulwark* who are lent on a Survey of New South Wales and are to receive six Month’s Pay in Advance pr. Admiralty Order dated Feby. 3. 1817”.^[4]

My appointment from the Admiralty which I shewed you while at home, will clear away every apprehension, independent of the above. The following is a copy. Admiralty Office, 5 February 1817. Sir, I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that they have ordered you to be borne as a Supernumerary Master’s Mate for wages on the Books of the Flag Ship at Chatham and that you are to follow the Orders of Lieutt. Philip Parker King who is about to be employed on a Survey of New South Wales, I am &c. &c. (signed) John Barrow.^[5]

To Mr. J.S. Roe, Mid.

Mr. King, who is certainly the person who ought to know all about it, informs me the same, and there is not the least doubt remaining in my mind, on the subject. You appear to think that the rating as Master’s Mate will not entitle me to promotion, so much as that of Mid. but my dear Father it is quite the contrary, for the former is given to those Senior Mids. who are thought deserving of it, and in Time of War is very desirable, as they receive nearly 3 times more prize money than a Mid. As I am in hopes every doubt is cleared up in your minds by what I have said, no further explanation is necessary, and I will drop the subject. In answer to your enquiries about our stay at Cork, I am sorry to say [*page 3*] that I cannot give you any certain information on the subject. The Captain even does not know, as it is quite uncertain how many Troops we shall have to take out, but he supposes 3 or 4 days at the least, and in all probability upwards of a week. Cork being I think the safest and surest place for you to send my Certificate of Age to, I would advise you to direct it to Cork to be left till the *Dick* arrives, and after the Ship’s name, on the direction, mention the Captain’s name (Harrison) to prevent all mistakes, as it is of great consequence. I was very sea sick during the whole of the rough weather in which we were attempting to clear the Channel, owing to the smallness of the *Dick*, in comparison to the *Horatio*, the latter being 1099 Tons burthen, and the former 437 Tons, by which you may form a pretty accurate idea of the difference in the size of the 2 Ships, and

[4] HMS *Bulwark*, launched in 1807, was a 74 which took part in several actions in the Napoleonic War. JSR and Bedwell were officially listed as part of the ship’s complement for the duration of their Australian survey. JSR had earlier been on board the ship to see a play when he was serving on HMS *Rippon*.

[5] Sir John Barrow, second Secretary of the Admiralty from 1804-1845, one of the founders of the Royal Geographical Society. Barrow was one of the driving forces behind exploration, notably in Africa, the Arctic and Australia, and “actively fostered the careers of the explorers Phillip Parker King, Allan Cunningham, and Charles Sturt, among others” (ODNB).

consequently of the quickness in the motion, but I hope in a few days to get over it, and weather it out as well as in my last Ship. Pray return William many thanks for his kind letter, and assure him of my good lookout for his promised letter concerning Sr. Richd. Keats,^[6] Sr. Geo. Hope,^[7] Captn. Hurd &c. as I am extremely anxious to know all about it.

[I] [] hear of such a successful commencement at fishing up the [can] [] would by all means advise you to rouse both Wm. & C[has.]^[8] out [each mor]ning at 6 o'clock, to follow up the sport, for it []do them [] deal of good, make Chas. grow, and prevent the unpleasant task which Wm. must find it in being obliged to hurt tender feelings so much as to distress Chas.'s sweet slumbers of a morning but I rather suspect that Wm. is much the same was inclined, but [] very sly about it. Chas., did you hear what Willm. said of you? That you are a good for nothing dog, a lazy fellow, and no Soldier. What a shame it is! If I was in your breeches I would not stand it, but give it to him well, and not suffer him with impunity thus to scandalize my character and under run my reputation. I wish I could get alongside of you for a few nights, I would not suffer you to lay snoring while Wm. was wishing you good night, and you are not worth your salt if you do not give it to him well. Do you hear what I say to you? Having now spun out my yarn, and no interesting news to communicate, I must conclude for want of more room, with the assurance of your hearing from me if we touch at Portsmouth, with the detail of our movements, and my success at the Academy, if in time. In your next, pray explain the cause & effects of all this correspondence on my account, at the Admiralty, &c. &c. Give my kindest affectionate love to dear Mother, Sophy & Brothers, wishing Chas. many very many happy returns of his approaching Birthday, and wishing you all health & happiness, accept my dear Father, the sincere love & regard of your affectionate Son

J.S. Roe

P.S.^[9] In great haste I acknowledge the receipt of Wm.'s copies, &c. this moment which with this I hope will entirely clear up all doubts. I'm obliged to Captn. H. for his testimony, & hope my future actions will merit his [regard] as much as the past. Have no more room. Boat returns immediately. Kind love to all. I will write as often as opportunity offers.

Feby. 26.^[10] Since writing my letter, the weather has been so bad as to cut off all communication with the shore, but having cleared up and moderated this morning, I hasten to explain the cause of this not been sent before.

[6] Sir Richard Keats was JSR's greatest patron.

[7] Sir George Hope (1767-1818), a friend of Nelson and veteran of Trafalgar.

[8] JSR's brother Charles.

[9] JSR postscript on the first page

[10] JSR postscript on the third page.

MARCH 1817

Newbury

“I had nearly forgotten to express, heartfelt Exultation we all feel, be assured, at the very flattering & honorable Testimony [which] our anxiety on your Account has drawn from Capt. Hurd to your real merit, which we doubt not will be extended by your future Exertions to the highest Summit of your Professional Career.”

Rev. James Roe to JSR. Four pages, missing a large part of the first leaf of the bifolium.
Mr. J.S. Roe RN | On board the ship *Dick* | Capt. Harrison | New South Wales |
~~Portsmouth~~ | ~~Hants.~~
Postmarks: ‘Newbury’ and ‘A Paid’ for 3 June 1817.
Location: SLNSW, no. 138.

The only recorded letter from the Reverend James to JSR as an adult: it is addressed to “Mr. J.S. Roe R.N. On board the Ship *Dick*”, the “Portsmouth” part of the address has been scratched out and “New South Wales” added. The letter’s interest is sufficient that we can regret not having more of this side of the correspondence, particularly as it would help unravel a few small queries in JSR’s own letters, as well as giving an insight into how JSR’s remarkable descriptions were read at home. The fact that the Reverend James has a number of baptism certificates to hand for all of his children may suggest an inherited preparedness, but the letter – pious, sincere, warm, inclusive, politically chauvinistic – is equally important for giving a glimpse of homelife in Newbury. The picture of the inhabitants of the Rectory toasting JSR’s health after every meal is poignant, while the kitten “dancing” up and down as James writes must have broken JSR’s heart.

Newbury, March 1. 1817

My Dear John — I thank you for your welcome letter rec^d this
morn^g. You are right in supposing us anxious for your safety during
the late blowing weather & what Progress you are enabled to make
especially as the Papers announced your unsuccessful essay from
Dart on Sunday last — & you will have been, I hope more for-
tunate since, & there is a chance of your succeeding in your Exami-
nations at Portsmo^u where your Bapt^{is} Certificate may be required.
I have sent the Above to meet you there — as also another ^{of the same} directed
for you as you desired at the Cove of Cork. I have been enabled to
do this by having extracted Copies from the Registers of you all
(Whom I baptiz^d myself) at Allkattows Parish whilst Curate there,
expecting they might be hereafter useful, & to some Exp^{ts} as well as

Newbury, March 1.1817

My Dear John,

I thank you for your welcome letter recd. this mornng. You are right in supposing us anxious for your Safety during the late blowing Weather & what Progress you are enabled to make, especially as the Papers announced your unsuccessful Essay from Deal on Sunday last. As you will have been, I hope, more fortunate since, & there is a Chance of your succeeding in your Examination at Portsmo. where your Bapt. Certificate may be required, I have sent the Above to meet you there – as also Another, a few days since, directed for you as you desired at the Cove of Cork. I have been enabled to do this by having extracted Copies from the Registers of you All (Whom I baptized myself) at All Hallows Barking whilst Curate there, expecting they might be hereafter useful, & to save Expce. as well as Trouble.^[1]

[page 2] Not Laziness but Necessity, my Dr. Boy, induced me to resign my Pen to William in Answer to yr. former Letter. Last Sunday in particular, when (Mr. Slocock ill)^[2] the three full Duties devolved on me, which has occasioned a severe bilious Attack in my Head still very weak and giddy: but not so bad as your Sea Sickness, which we all condole with you upon, tho' hope it will prove of eventual Service to you.

I have just finished a very long Letter to Sir Richd. Keats, with a Copy of Capt. Hurd's & a Part of yours recd. this morning, which will I trust set his mind at Rest as they have ours, which I need not say were not a little disturbed by Doubt of Such high Authority. Your Brothers have read your Hints on early rising &c., & will I hope improve from them. The completion of their Casting Net is at this time an additional Prompt, as It has occupied a considerable share of nearly Every Day since you left us & will take anor. Fortnight I suppose to finish It.^[3]

I much fear our Political Troubles will baffle the Utmost Vigilance [page 3] & Rigor of Governmt., & are more likely to increase than subside on the unpopular Adoption of the Suspension Bill.^[4] The whole Country seems ripe for Revolt & desperate measures, in Defiance of every Tie human & divine.

[1] The Reverend James Roe was a curate at All Hallows by the Tower before going to Newbury. JSR and some of the other children were born and baptised there, and two of JSR's brothers were buried there too.

[2] The Reverend Samuel Slocock was the Rector of Waring and "afternoon preacher of the parish of Newbury", as noted on the title-page of *A Sermon preached in the Parish Church of Newbury, in the County of Berks, on Sunday, January 18, 1818...* (London, 1818).

[3] Presumably, from the context, they are keen fishers.

[4] The Habeas Corpus Suspension Act of 1817 (57 Geo. III, c. 3), in response to the Luddite protests and what the government called "a traitorous conspiracy".



*The Old St. Nicholas Rectory in Newbury (Berks.), the two-storey building with dormer windows on the canal, immediately behind the modern Costa coffeeshop. It is now a Grade II listed building.
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Where it will end God alone knows! We shall be all anxiety, recollect, to know if you reach Portsmo' in time for your Examinn., & how you speed upon that occasion. By your last Letter next Monday is the Day. We thought from wt. you said here [the] 1st. Wednesday in Every Month was the invariable Rule. You have not told us whether you procured yourself a new Hat, or got your cot from the *Lloyds*, the latter being not an unlikely Forfeit to the Disappointmt. of the Scotchman.^[5] Some of his Countrymen, I understand, have been nabbed in their Hatch of Treason &c. & will, I hope, reap their due Reward.^[6] Charles desires me to thank you for your intended Recollec-

[5] That is, the much maligned captain of the *Lloyds*, McPherson.

[6] Arrests were made in Edinburgh in February 1817.

tion [] his Birthday, which we all sincerely regret you [][] be able to spend with us. Your Health, depend [][shall] be bumpered on the occasion, as indeed it is after Every meal.

We all unite in earnest wishes for your Preservation & Happiness, & I remain, my Dear John, your ever affectionate Father

Jas. Roe.

P.S. The Kitten has danced over this Letter & left Marks of her Talons on the Back of your Certificate. I had nearly forgotten to express, heartfelt Exultn. we all feel, be assured, at the very flattering & honorable Testimony [which] our anxiety on your Acct. has drawn from Capt. Hurd to your real merit, which we doubt not will be extended by your future Exertions to the highest Summit of your Professional Career.

MARCH 1817

Ship *Dick*, in the Downs

“... the Captain is talking about getting under weigh for the purpose of making a fourth attempt, and I wish to give you a line previous to leaving dear Old England.”

JSR to the Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: Deal 10 March 1817 & indistinct circular red stamp.

Location: SLNSW, no. 139.

JSR is trying his best but is starting to get positively irritated that they are still stuck at anchor; he cannot help lamenting that he could have had three more weeks at home at Newbury rather than being thrown about at anchor or driven backwards by contrary winds. The *Dick* is, he notes with a little note of awe, one of 250 ships struggling for a berth in the anchorage. In the letter he is also able to send a few more details about his employment, including the important fact that he and his colleague Frederick Bedwell will earn an extra five shillings a day as surveyors, as well as showing he is very conscious of the voyages of Nicolas Baudin and Louis de Freycinet, commenting that they are to take “particular notice of those islands, rivers, harbours &c. &c. which the French either did not see, or were at too great a distance to obtain their accurate positions.”

Ship stuck in the Downs, March 10th 1817.

My dear Father,

You will perceive by the date of our letter that we are at our old place, the Downs, still, having made our second attempt since the date of my last to fetch down Channel, but the shifted wind preventing over the night and we had from the 1st. circumstances with very heavy and severe squalls of wind drove us well down into the Downs, but as there is at this moment an appearance of a change, the Captain is talking about getting under weigh for the purpose of making a fourth attempt, and I wish to give you a line previous to leaving dear old England. — How comfortably pastored it is dear Father, that I should not have been I wish to boast doing nothing, while I might have been comfortably enjoying myself among my dear friends at a Rectory, had I known what would have happened, but it is dangerous to leave the Ship even for an hour, for fear of the wind coming round from the Eastward, and blowing us back, which I would not have happen for the World, and therefore do not intend making the trial. — I suppose you must have experienced a slight touch of the severe weather we have lately experienced here, especially on Monday, this day week, Wednesday and Thursday last, during which several vessels lost anchors & cables, got foul of each other, and otherwise experienced considerable damage, but we fortunately escaped it all and without receiving any injury. — The Lloyd lost an anchor and cable during a very severe squall on Monday night and was very nearly driven on the Goodwin sands before they could bring her up again. — She is not yet released from making her last attempt for Portsmouth, and doubtless is uncertain whether she will be able to reach Portsmouth, or to under the

Ship *Dick*, in the Downs, March 10th. 1817.

My Dear Father,

You will perceive by the date of my letter that we are at our old place, the Downs, still, having made one more attempt since the date of my last to push down Channel, but the Westerly wind prevailing over the Light air we had from the NE, accompanied with very heavy and severe squalls of wind & snow, drove us once more into the Downs, but as there is at this moment an appearance of a change, the Captain is talking about getting under weigh for the purpose of making a fourth attempt, and I wish to give you a line previous to leaving dear Old England. How confoundedly provoking it is, dear Father, that I should now have been 3 weeks on board doing nothing, while I might have been comfortably enjoying myself among my dear Friends at Newbury, had I known what would have happened, but it is dangerous to leave the Ship even for an hour, for fear of the wind coming round from the Eastward, and leaving us behind, which I would not have happen for the World, and therefore do not intend making the trial.

I suppose you must have experienced a slight touch of the severe weather we have lately experienced here, especially on Monday (this day week) Wednesday and Thursday last, during which several vessels lost anchors & cables, got foul of each other, and otherwise experienced considerable damage, but fortunately we rode it all out without receiving any injury. The *Lloyds* lost an anchor and cable during a very severe squall on Monday night, and was very nearly driven on the Goodwin Sands before they could bring her up again.^[1] She is not yet returned from making her last attempt for Portsmouth, and doubts are entertained whether she will be able to reach Portsmouth, or be under the [*page 2*] necessity of bearing up for this place. In the event of the latter we shall have the laugh against them, but in case of the former, they will have the laugh against us. It was a very grand sight on Saturday morning to see upwards of 250 sail of vessels under weigh together, proceeding down Channel, and to see the scramble there was to get back again first, for the purpose of securing a good birth, when the wind chopped around, every vessel cracking on with as much sail set as they could possibly carry, but there are some of the headmost vessels not yet returned, which will in all probability get round as far as Portsmouth.

I am anxious to know something about the Certificate of my age, which I am inclined to think you have sent to Cork, or else I am persuaded you would have given me a line here, and I think you may venture to write me at this place, for if we have sailed, on arrival of the letter, the Postmaster will for-

[1] The dangerous sandbank on the Deal coast, Kent.

ward it. You will of course inform me if any thing farther has transpired about my situation, and whether you are all perfectly at ease in your own minds concerning it, which I trust is the case. I have read Lieutt. King's Orders from the Admiralty, in which it is expressly stated that from the time of his taking command of his vessel till the Survey is completed, he will receive the additional Salary of 15 Shillings pr. Day and each of the Mates (Mr. B. & myself) 5 Shillings pr. day, independent of the pay as Officers in His Majesty's Service. It further adds that on our return to England we are all to join the *Bulwark*, unless by promotion or Counter Orders from the Admiralty, we are prevented.^[2] As it is not to be understood that any one has seen the above orders, it would not be adviseable to make this Extract from them public, but hope the inspiring word, PROMOTION, will fully clear up all doubts, and that part of it concerning the Emoluments of my situation will not prove unacceptable. The remainder of the Orders are merely directions for his conduct in fulfilling the Service, together with a recommendation "to exercise the 2 Mates as often as possible during the passage out, in the use of the instruments, pencil & Brush, that they may be fully qualified to fill your situation in case of accident, and pursue the object of the voyage!!

The principal parts of the coast on which we shall be employed, will be from Port Jackson Northwd. to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and from Cape Van Diemen to the North West [*page 3*] West Cape, taking particular notice of those islands, rivers, harbours &c. &c. which the French either did not see, or were at too great a distance to obtain their accurate positions. Lieutt. K. intends to run down the coast from Port Jackson to Cape Van D., then stretch across to the Id. of Timor, put into Coupang a Dutch Settlement on its South end for refreshments &c. &c., from thence make Cape V.D. again, run down the coast to the NW Cape, back again, and either into Coupang, or some port in the island of Java, as he has letters of recommendation to all Governors from the late Governor of Java (Raffles),^[3] so in all probability I shall again see my friend General Pardoo, the whole account of which you shall have.^[4] I have thus endeavoured to give you a slight sketch of our movements, which upon reference to a map will be much plainer, and you must understand that after all the coast is run down, & unknown places taken possession of in the name of His Britannic Majesty, we then commence a care-

[2] Launched in 1807, the 74-gun HMS *Bulwark* took part in several actions in the Napoleonic War. JSR and Bedwell were officially listed as part of the ship's complement for the duration of their Australian survey.

[3] Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, of course, colonial governor and founder of Singapore, author of *The History of Java* (1817).

[4] General Pardoo is mentioned by JSR as having an interview with Captain Dillon of the *Rippon* in a letter sent home dated 13 January 1816 (SLNSW).

ful Survey of the whole over again, but as a variety of circumstances may change his intention on our arrival, it [is] quite uncertain whether this plan of operation will be stric[tly] [ad]hered to.

I received a Letter from Mrs. Taylor on Saturday morning in answer to one of mine dated the latter end of last month, and am sorry to say she has been confined to her room for the last fortnight by a severe cold, caught by getting wet while coming from Church, whither she had ventured for the first time during Winter.^[5] They intend making a Surgeon of their Son Wm. whom they took out of Christ's Hospital, as advancement in the Navy is at present so difficult that they have given up all hopes of it, and intend reserving an offer from his last Captn. (Caulfield of the *Malta*)^[6] to take him in about 18 Months when he gets a Ship, for John, who they expect will be ready for him about that time. His Mother says Wm. is too good natured for a Man of War, and she carries on the farce by adding the satisfaction they feel in having taken Wm. out of School, to prevent the danger which might happen from those whom he might chuse for companions, with a great deal more nonsense, too tedious for repetition. Being pinched for room, I must reluctantly conclude, hoping you will give me an early line to let me now how you all get on, &c. and with kind & affectionate love to dr. Mother, Sophy & Brothers, I remain, dr. Father, your dutiful Son

J.S. Roe.

P.S. It is now remarkably fine wear., too good to last long, the wind NWbN, and we are getting under weigh, but if the wind comes from the Wd. and blows hard, you may venture to direct to me here, but if we have fine weather, we shall in all probability get on.

[5] The Taylors (of Greenwich) were well known to JSR, and he gossips about them with some frequency.

[6] HMS *Caulfield* (80) was a captured French ship, originally called the *Guillaume Tell*, taken after the battle of the Nile in 1800. Captain Thomas Caulfield took command in early 1816.

MARCH 1817

Ship *Dick*, Cove of Cork

“I have at last the satisfaction of informing you of our safe arrival here.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages, missing part of second leaf (but textually complete).
The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.
Postmarks: indistinct post office stamp for “Cove”.
Location: SLNSW, no. 140.

The first letter to fairly describe the voyage of the *Dick*, taking in the crossing to Cork and the initial settling in phase on board. There is not a great deal to report, but JSR stretches it out and doesn't forget to include a plea for mail from home.

Ship Deck, Cove of Cook, March 14, 1817.

My dear Father -

It is with the greatest pleasure I have
as had the satisfaction of informing you of our safe arrival here,
having sailed from the Downs in company with a very large
Fleet of Merchants on the evening of the day on which
my last was dated. 14th - Immediately after I sailed, the
wind shifted round from the S.W. to S.W. with which we weighed,
but as usual got a foul wind the same night - As the weather
was very fine and wind moderate we continued sailing till the
13th at noon when being off the belthole unsubmergible Beachyhead
the wind again came from the S.W. but was very strong at noon on
14th we were off the Schoflight, on 15th off the Star Bunt near Plym
on 15th to the Redoubt of the Loxas, by midnight of 15th clear of the
Channel, on 17th about 5 leagues to the S.W. of the Whilly Islands, then
crossing at 1 o'clock the Light on the Old Head of Kinsale, and at 2
past 9 o'clock anchored in the Cove. It is impossible for any vessel
to have had finer weather than we had since leaving the Downs,
although not quite wind enough - The Captain has just gone
on shore and sent off several letters, amongst which I am very
happy to find one from you, dated 21st Febry, with the address
of age &c. although 3 weeks old it is very acceptable, and I
hope you will give me a line as soon as possible upon receipt of
this, which will be an act of great civility as the last I have had the
happiness of receiving from you for some time - I am thank
kindly for his share of your letter of 25th ult, as also all friends
for their kind enquiries & remembrance of me, assuring you
that it will give me no small pleasure in personally returning
them thanks when I come next visit Dear Aunt's Domain, to
which happy news I must not forward with great pleasure and
recognition, although, as you must naturally suppose, with
great eagerness and anxiety - I hope you have received my

Ship *Dick*, Cove of Cork, March 18. 1817.

My dear Father,

It is with the greatest pleasure I have at last the satisfaction of informing you of our safe arrival here, having sailed from the Downs in company with a very large Fleet of Merchantmen on the very afternoon of the day on which my last was dated, (10th). Immediately after I sent it, the wind shifted around from the N.E. & N.N.E. with which we weighed, but as usual got a foul wind the same night. As the weather was very fine and wind moderate we continued beating, till the 13th at noon when being off the hitherto unpropitious Beachy Head the wind again came from the N.E. but was very scant; at noon on 14th we were off the Isle of Wight, on 15th off the Start Point (near Plym.) on 16th to the Westward of the Lizard, by midnight of 16th clear of the Channel, on 17th about 6 Leagues to the N.W. of the Scilly Islands, this morning at 1 saw the Light on the Old Head of Kinsale, and at 1/2 past 9 A.M anchored in the Cove. It is impossible for any vessel to have had finer weather than we have had since leaving the Downs, although not quite wind enough.

The Captain has just gone on shore and sent off all our Letters, amongst which I am very happy to find one from you, dated 25th Febr. with the certificate of age &c. Although 3 weeks old it is very acceptable, and I hope you will give me a line or 2 as soon as possible upon receipt of this, which will in all probability be the last I shall have the happiness of receiving from you for some time. Pray thank Wm. kindly for his share of your letter of 25th ult., as also all friends for their kind enquiries & remembrances of me. Assuring you that it will give me no small pleasure in personally returning them thanks when I once more visit dear *Dulce Domum*,^[1] to which happy period I must look forward with great patience and resignation, although as you must naturally suppose, with great eagerness and anxiety. I hope you have received my [*page 2*] last of the 10th instant, and that its contents will not prove unacceptable or unavailing in quieting your minds. I cannot account for my letters fir. Deal not reaching you sooner than 3 days, in any other way than by inattention probably in the Boatmen putting them in the Post, but you must recollect they went to London first. The post office at Deal always closed at 5 P.M., the letters reached London, 72 miles, next morning, remained inactive I imagine all that day, and proceeding by the evening's post was delivered on the 2nd morning after leaving Deal: that is the progress of them in my opinion, which is founded upon the length of time which elapsed before I received a letter from you.

[1] "sweet home."

In your next, if you will let me know the name and address of Tom & Geo.'s agents at Bombay, I will send them letters by this Ship, which goes to Madras after leaving Port Jackson, to be forwarded to them; that being I think the surest plan for their safe delivery, and Captn. Harrison has promised to take them for me.^[2]

The *Matilda*, a ship going out with us, arrived here yesterday, the troops & Baggage are all ready I understand for embarking, and will come on board as soon as arrangements can be made for that purpose.^[3] We are not to take a single convict, there being several ships here, and more yet to come, that will take them all, which I can assure you I am not at all sorry for. The only Men of War here are the *Martin*, sloop of war, *Muscovedo*, schooner, under the Command of Rear Adml. Hallowell in the ~~Ma~~ *Tonnant*, 80 Guns.^[4] There is a frigate coming in now, and a small vessel being towed in by a Pilot Boat dismasted. You would almost have split your sides with laughing to have seen what a broth of a boy we had for a Pilot this morning: He was a regular built rank Irishman and made as many Bulls & Blunders in 1/2 an hour as 20 Englishmen would make in a Month.

My dear Father I have not the smallest particle of news for you, therefore hope you will excuse this being so short, and at present it is entirely out of my power to let you know what length of time we shall remain here, as the Captn. is no expected on board again till after this will be gone, but expect it will be at least a week, however [*page 3*] however I will make a point of writing again before we sail. Till then I must desire my kind affectionate love to dear Mother, Sophy & Brothers, with remembrance to all Friends, and with my sincere wish for the health & happiness of all hands.

Remain, dear Father, your affectionate Son

J.S. Roe

P.S. Pray give me a line as soon as possible, for being the last I need not add how very acceptable it will prove.

As you have mentioned about the Biscuits in your letter of 25th. ult. I have not said a word about it any of a subsequent date, I apprehend you have not received them which I should not be at all surprized at, for I received a line

[2] JSR's brothers Thomas & George were both in India in 1817. Harrison and the *Dick* did make the round trip via Port Jackson and India before returning, just as JSR noted here.

[3] The *Matilda*, Captain Somerville, carried Colonel Erskine and a large contingent of the 48th Regiment to Port Jackson.

[4] HMS *Martin* (18) was a small Sloop of War, while the *Tonnant* (80) had been captured by Nelson at Aboukir at the Battle of the Nile in 1798 and saw service at Trafalgar and in the War of 1812 in the United States. Sir Benjamin Hallowell Carew was a veteran of the Napoleonic War, and one of Nelson's "Band of Brothers".

t'other day from Mr. Hughes acquainting me of t[he] *Horatio* [havi]ng been hauled into dock, and the *Ho[ratio's]* Officers [bein]g obliged to live on shore, which will per[haps] prevent him from performing his promise as soon as he could wish, but from his gentlemanly conduct you have nothing to fear.^[5]

[5] The *Horatio* was JSR's former ship on the Newfoundland and China voyages he made; Hughes was the Boatswain.

MARCH 1817

Ship *Dick*, Cove of Cork

“Mr. Bedwell and myself have at last got a cabin between us, which we slept in last night for the first time, having just finished painting the sides and white washing the top, the smell of which is not quite gone.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: indistinct post office stamp for “Cove”.

Location: SLNSW, no. 141.

The *Dick* is about to sail, at last. JSR’s excitement about what is to come is tangible as he describes the coming on board of the contingent from the 48th Regiment. The letter includes a detailed description of the cabin he shared with Bedwell – all 48 square feet of it – and the stocks of glass they laid in while in Cork, all meant to form part of their mess. JSR is very pleased with the money they have saved on these normally very expensive items.

Ship Clerk. Cove of books. March 23. 1817.

My dear Father,

It is with great pleasure, and at the same time with infinite regret, that I again receive your pen; on the former account because I am writing to my dear Friends, and on the latter, because I am apprehensive that it will be the last time for a period. — The Troop, to the amount of about 160 of the 80th Regt. embarked yesterday evening only, and it is expected we shall sail on the day after tomorrow, wind and weather permitting, as it will require a day to get our stock, &c. on board. I hope you have, ere this, received my last of the 16th inst. the day on which we arrived here, and it is with great anxiety that I look out for arrivals from England to bring me a few lines from Newbury, which I trust I shall receive before we sail. — Mr. Barwell and myself have at last got a cabin between us, which we slept in last night for the first time, having just finished painting the sides and white washing the top, the smell of which is not quite gone. — The dimensions are 8 feet by 5, being just room to hang up our 2 Coats, but in bad weather I rather suspect we shall thrump against the Bull heads, which of all things will be the most delightful ~~the~~ sensation in the World, especially in rough weather when it is the wish of every one to get to sleep; in which case we must endeavour to get it altered. — Cork being the cheapest place in the World for Glass, Mr. B. & myself have laid in a stock of it for our use in the Schooner,

Ship *Dick*, Cove of Cork, March 23. 1817.

My dear Father,

It is with great pleasure, and at the same time with infinite regret, that I again resume my pen; on the former account because I am writing to my dear Friends, and on the latter, because I am apprehensive that it will be the last time for a period. The Troops to the amount of about 150 of the 48th. Regt. Embarked yesterday evening only, and it is expected we shall sail on the day after tomorrow, wind and weather permitting, as it will require a day to get sea stock, &c. on board.^[1]

I hope you have, ere this, received my last of the 18th inst. the day on which we arrived here, and it is with great anxiety that I look out for arrivals from England to bring me a few lines from Newbury, which I trust I shall receive before we sail.

Mr. Bedwell and myself have at last got a cabin between us, which we slept in last night for the first time, having just finished painting the sides and white washing the top, the smell of which is not quite gone. The dimensions are 8 feet by 6, being just room to hang up our 2 Cots, but in bad weather I rather suspect we shall thump against the Bulk heads, which of all things will be the most delightful ~~the~~ sensation in the World, especially in rough weather when it is the wish of every one to get to sleep; in which case we must endeavour to get it altered. Cork being the cheapest place in the World for Glass, Mr. B. & myself have laid in a stock of it for our mess in the Schooner, [*page 2*] consisting of a dozen very substantial tumblers, a dozen wine glasses, 2 decanters, 2 salt concerns, and a cruet stand complete, the whole composed of very thick cut glass, and for the comparatively small sum of 2*£*. 14*s*. The decanters alone would cost that in England (there being no duty on glass in Ireland) for they are very neat, and would last for ever, unless they happen to come athwart hawse of a 32 pounder, which it would be death to them to stop. We likewise for the same reason purchased 3 Bull's eyes (Chas. will explain) made of glass, for our own ship, which cost 1*l*s. each, and in England or any where else would cost a guinea and a half or more.^[2]

This day has been one of the finest we have had since the 18th, and I have been dining on board the *Tonnant*, where an old Shipmate of mine in *Rippon* is now one of her Lieutenants. His name is Aldridge, and he is the young man you may recollect my mentioning to you as having saved a man's life

[1] The 48th (Northamptonshire) Regiment, commanded by Colonel James Erskine, was stationed in New South Wales from 1817-1824.

[2] "A hemispherical piece or thick disc of glass inserted in the side or deck of a ship, or elsewhere, to light the interior" (OED).

that had fallen overboard, and succeeded in bringing him up after diving 3 times. Sir. Chr. Cole wrote to the Admiralty on his account & he was immediately promoted.^[3] He is a very gentlemanly young man, sent me a very pressing invitation, and was as happy to see me as I was to see him.

Every thing on board is at present all hurry & bustle, the Soldiers not being perfectly settled, but one of them managed this afternoon to settle himself down the fore hatchway into the Hold, about 20 feet, and I am sorry to say has received very serious injury. Major Cemeteire (I believe, a Frenchman) is commanding Officer [*page 3*] onboard.^[4] He has a wife about as big as the side of a large house, as also a Captain his wife onboard, though not quite as large, and I understand there is another to come. The number of Women & Children I fancy are about 40, & of Officers 9 or 10. They fully expect to be about 16 or 18 years out of England and some of them do not appear to half like it. I am happy to say that we are to take out no Convicts, but as it is expected we are to take a few more Troops on board, I will not close this till tomorrow afternoon, for at all events it cannot go till 3 P.M. when they all go up to Cork, & from there I believe to Dublin.

Having no more news I will conclude for the present, hoping by the time this reaches you that I shall be some distance advanced towards Madeira. Till the time arrives which is to witness our next happy meeting [] dear Father, my constant prayer sha[ll] be for [the hea]lth and welfare of you all, trusting in [the] Almighty to spare my Life and safely restore me once more into the bosom of my dearest friends. All which yet remains for me to offer is the sincere & affectionate love of a Son & Brother, and with every fervent prayer for your happiness & welfare.

Remain, dear Father, your affectionate Son

John S. Roe.

24th 2.30 P.M.

In great haste I can add only a few lines to say that we have to receive 20 more men & 1 officer this afternoon. With every hearty wish & prayer for the Almighty's protection to you all, my dr. Far. yours &c. &c.

J.S. Roe

[3] JSR's friend Lieutenant John W. Aldridge was taken onto the *Tonnant* (80) on 22 September 1815. Sir Christopher Cole (1770-1836), a veteran of the East Indies, was made commander on the *Rippon* in 1813, JSR's first appointment.

[4] Gilbert Cimitiere was a French-born career soldier, a West Indies and Peninsular War veteran, who was posted to Port Dalrymple (Launceston) in 1818, and later at Macquarie's pet project, George Town. Cimitiere had rather a turbulent time of it in Tasmania, and returned to Sydney as commander of the 48th and acting lieutenant-governor throughout 1823, before sailing with the Regiment to India in 1824.

MARCH 1817

Ship *Dick*, Cove of Cork

“No more time dearest Father adieu all.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. 2 pages.

[No address]

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 142.

A last scribbled note sent home. His comment that the best he can do by way of address in Port Jackson is “His Majesty’s Surveying Vessel” (unnamed), is rather telling, as is the fact that he is already anxious about the notorious prices of goods in New South Wales.

My dear Love of both March 27. 1847.

My dear Father.

It is so lately that I wrote to you
it makes me apprehensive that they will both be
in together, but as we are now at this instant getting
under way, I cannot refrain from giving you a line
in acknowledgment of your last very kind letter of 12th
with 2nd certificate only, and there is now one due
before that, which you directed to Portsmouth, that has
not arrived. — Hope you will remember as
I have only 5 minutes to write and thought
a knowledge of the Receipt of yours of 12th
would prove acceptable — Hope you received
my last from Deal and find from Cove Coast
neither of which you have as yet acknowledged
us also one 2 days ago — Hope to write
you will not fail waiting by any opportunity
directing to me out? — Messrs. — Suscepting
beget at Post Jackson at S. Sales — where
I shall receive it — I will write as often
as possible — No more kiss Aunt father
Adieu — also, Mr. Sister — Best all hands
affectionate remembrance of

John R.

S. R.

Not waiting

Ship *Dick*, Cove of Cork, March 27. 1817.

My dear Father,

It is so lately that I wrote to you it makes me apprehensive that they will both tumble in together; but as we are now at this instant getting under weigh, I cannot refrain from giving you a line in acknowledgment of your last very kind letter of 12th inst. with 2nd. certificate only, and there is now one due before that, which you directed to Portsmouth, that has miscarried. Hope you will excuse [all] as I have only 5 minutes to write and thought a knowledge of the Receipt of yours of 12th would prove acceptable. Hope you received my last from Deal and [fins?] from Cove Cork neither of which you have as yet acknowledged as also one 2 days ago. Hope likewise you will not fail writing by any opportunity directing to me on bd. His Majt.'s Surveying Vessel at Port Jackson N.S. Wales – where I shall receive it. I will write as often as possible. No more time dearest Father adieu all, Mo. Sister Bros. all hands affectionate remembrances of affectionate Son

J.S. Roe.

Boat waiting.

[*page 2*] I am afraid by all accounts New S. Wales that I shall be obliged to draw upon you when get out there to enable me to [] [], on acct. of dearness of every thing, but will avoid if possible.

Your affectionate Son

J.S. Roe.

APRIL / MAY 1817

Ship *Dick*, At Sea

About 300 miles from the Cape Verd Ids.

“The second dinner over, it is generally near 4 o’clock, when I amuse & improve myself by reading voyages & expeditions to the South Seas & Pacific Ocean, of which we have a great many on board, belonging to the Captn., Lieut. King, & Mr. Bedwell.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Eight pages. Some damage and staining, with some loss to the text.
The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.
Postmarks: green oval ship letter “Eastbourne” and circular “F” for 6 August 1817.
Location: SLNSW, no. 143.

JSR really gets into his stride. The letter describes events on board the Dick during the voyage from Cork to Rio de Janeiro, basically taking in all of April and May 1817. This letter has several intriguing passages, including a moving description of the death of a soldier’s wife and, a few days after, of her young son. JSR also stretches his legs in a few descriptive passages which are quite helpful in imagining life on board one of these transports, including a reasonably racy (keeping in mind both JSR’s upright nature and his intended audience) description of the crossing of the line. It is also in this letter that there are the first insights into his developing relationships with King and Bedwell.

Ship *Dick*, At Sea, Lat 19°30"N. Longt. 13°12"W.
being about 300 miles from the Cape Verd Ids.

April 21st 1817

My dear Father,

I doubt not but you have felt equally as much disappointment at not having heard from me from Madeira, as I felt at not being able to write to you from there. We made Porto Santo (abt. 30 miles to the Northward of Madeira) in the night of the 12th inst. with a fine breeze right aft, and if the Captn. wished to put into Funchal, we should have been obliged to lay to all night for fear of running past the island, and should have lost upwards of 100 miles by it, which was a sufficient reason for inducing him not to touch there at all, and we accordingly shaped our course for the Cape Verds, the Northernmost of which called St. Antonio, as it lies in our track to Rio Janeiro, we intend to make, but not touch at, in order to be satisfied as to the correctness of our Chronometers. I had written a long letter about 350 miles on your side of Madeira, directed to William,^[1] in return for many I have received from him, and was in hopes of being able to send it onshore at Madeira, in which having been so sadly disappointed, I will do my best in inclosing him a few lines in this, which I am in hopes of sending you from Rio Janeiro, where it is proposed to touch; if not before, in case of falling in with any homeward bound ship, on board which Captain Harrison has promised to send a boat with our letters.

I hope you received my last fr. Cove of Cork, dated 27th ult. which was written in a very great hurry and merely to acknowledge receipt of Wm.'s of the 23rd, which I thought would be satisfactory; but although we were at that instant getting under weigh, it was not our good fortune to get clear out of the Harbour, being obliged to anchor again in the evening; at which time it was out of my power to stop my letter from proceeding on its destination. The reason of our not getting to sea that night was the wind coming round from the south westward, in which quarter it remained till the 2nd of this month (you see foul winds are determined not intirely to direct us) when after 2 attempts to put to sea, we fortunately cleared the Harbour with light easterly winds, which gradually died away towards the evening, and at 9 o'clock tapered off to a complete calm. The tide ebbing at the time, was in our favour, and we drifted out a considerable distance, but were at length obliged to come to an anchor again within 2 cables length of a Rock, called Dant's Rock, which has only 11 feet water on it, and as I was not just then inclined to experience a repetition of the *Horatio* on the Russell Rock off Guernsey, I

[1] This letter to brother William is unrecorded.

was not sorry for it, as we had no command over the ship, & the tide was settling us towards the danger very fast.^[2] It is not far from the position we occupied in the *Horatio*, when outward bound to Newfd. land with a convoy, being my first voyage in that ship, and had been obliged to anchor there just as the *Alpheus* arrived from England with Chas. on board on his first trip in her: you may probably recollect the circumstance from the great disappointment expressed by both of us, at not being able to converse with each other, although so close as to enable me to distinguish him with a glass.^[3]

While at anchor here, about 11 o'clock in the night, a poor sloop was drifted so close in shore, that her stern was just touching the rocks, & there being a little swell at the time, she was in eminent danger of being dashed to pieces. They let go their anchor, and Irishmen-like, had not enough cable to reach the bottom, although only 10 fathoms deep; when they all began singing out blue murder to us in Irish, and we sent a boat with a small anchor & hawser which eventually relieved them out of their unenviable situation, when a breeze springing up from the Eastward, they proceeded towards Kinsale, whither they were bound, and at one o'clock in the morning of the 3rd inst. we weighed also, and by daylight were out of sight of Paddy's land, with a fine breeze from the N.E.

On the 3rd day, the wind again hauled round from the westward and continued from that direction for 2 days, during which & previous, we passed a great many vessels of all descriptions, outward & homeward bound, some of which passed pretty close to us, as we were just opposite to the Entrance of the English, St. George's & Bristol Channels, and consequently exactly on the Track of merchant ships. On the afternoon of the 7th, the wind veered to the N.E. which was fair, and we again proceeded at a fine rate, with every prospect of its continuance, which was a persuasive argument with the Captn. against putting into Funchal. This fine N.Easterly wind we were in hopes was the Trade wind, which is generally laid hold of at Madeira and carried nearly to the Equator; but on the 14th our hopes vanished by its falling away, and shifting dead in the opposite direction, which was of course completely in our teeth, and we have ever since been teased with light baffling winds, contrary to [page 2] to our expectations, and of course to our inclination also.

We crossed the Tropic of Cancer on the morning of the 19th at 4 o'clock: its colour, blue & white, turned up with green. We amused the soldier officers

[2] Dant's Rock is a well-known landmark off the entrance to Cork Harbour, recorded as being about three-quarters of a mile off shore (*The New Seaman's Guide, and Coaster's Companion*, 1809).

[3] JSR has described his anguish at seeing the ship of his brother Charles in a letter home dated 9 October 1814 (SLNSW).

very much and they amused us, by looking out for it, but some of them were too old soldiers, and sailors likewise, to be crammed. Two of the Officers have already been seized up in the rigging, while going aloft, and were not liberated till the promise was made of a bottle of rum. The circumstance highly diverted the others, some of whom I rather think will before long be subjects of a repetition, for most of the them are fond of running about the rigging, in fine weather, when fish or any thing extraordinary is to be seen. As yet we have seen only one shark, and that one very small, being only about 6 feet long; and although a very enticing piece of pork, with every inducement for him to grapple with it, was thrown out to him, he rejected all with disdain, and after following the ship for abt. 4 hours, very closely watched by the soldiers, who thought it a prodigy, he thought proper to sheet off, and we have not seen one since.

The ladies were very much amused and entertained yesterday, with the sight of a shoal of porpoises which passed very close to the ship: but as they do not take bait, we could not catch any, and they are too swift to be harpooned, being the swiftest fish that swim, and live entirely on suction. Another great source of amusement to them, is to watch what we call the Portuguese Man of War, which are a small fish ~~whi~~ that blow themselves up like a bladder, with a little blue & red about them, and on the top, something resembling a cock's comb. They are nothing like a fish in any one respect, but in fine weather they blow themselves up, and sail along with the wind very beautifully, with long blue & red strings attached to them, abt. 2 fathoms in length. They sting worse than a bunch of stinging nettles, and several of the soldiers were very much taken in, by laying hold of them with their hands, which are not yet well, although the circumstance happened about 4 days ago.

The weather is very warm, owing to the scantings of the wind, and grows warmer and warmer every day as we approach the Sun which is now advancing to the Northwd. as we go to the Southwd. and will be vertical when we get about 8 degrees farther to the Southward, when the weather will grow cooler, and by the time we arrive off the Cape of Good Hope, we shall be glad enough to wear warm clothing again, as it will be then Winter. I cannot here omit returning thanks to Chas. for his kind supply of warm clothing, especially the Jackets & Waistcoats, without which I think it very probable that I should absolutely melt; for it is almost hot enough to fry beef steaks on the anchors! (Remember I have doubled the Cape!). In every other respect I am very comfortable; the Captn. keeps a very good table, & makes every thing as agreeable as possible; Mrs. King I find a very pleasant affable woman, and we all live together in a most comfortable manner.^[4] The Army Officers are a

[4] PPK's wife Harriet was travelling to New South Wales with them.

remarkable good set, and we are all on very good terms with each other; but as that is more properly in William's department, I will talk of soldiers to a soldier, and in the mean time give you some idea of the manner in which I occupy my time, which I can assure you passes away quick enough, and that I have always understood to be a sign of its passing away pleasantly; but I am only at present like a young bear, all my sorrows being yet to come.

To give you an insight into every day, with little variation, I will begin with its commencement, which with me is about 1/2 past 6. (don't laugh & look at each other, Chas. & Willm.) enabling me to get on deck by 7 or 1/4 past, where I walk up and down, or take a trip to the mast head, till 8, when the observations on the Sun commence for finding the Longitude of the Ship, and variation of the compass, which generally occupy 1/2 or 3/4 of an hour, when breakfast being ready, we (I particularly) obey the summons very cheerfully, and after blowing out our Jackets with Hot rolls & butter, cold meat, boiled eggs, (stowed away in salt to preserve them), tea, or coffee, the Table is again spread for a second breakfast, which the 2nd and 3rd mates demolish, there not being room at the table for all 3 at once, and at 1/2 past 9 & sometimes 10 o'clock, the Table is clear. During this 2nd set to, I generally take a walk on deck till it is over, and then set to work completing the drawings and sketches in my Logs, till 1/2 past 11, which is the time for observing the alt. of the Sun for finding when it is 12 o'clock, which being done, and the meridional alt. obtained, 8 Bells are struck, the day's work and morning observations together with the meridional altitude of the Sun worked to find the ship's place on the Chart, which amongst us is fully settles by 1/2 past 12, and I again resume my brush till 2 o'clock, when cloth is laid for dinner, and I again take a little exercise on deck.

The second dinner over, it is generally near 4 o'clock, when I amuse & improve myself by reading voyages & expeditions to the South Seas & Pacific Ocean, of which we have a great many on board, belonging to the Captn., Lieut. King, & Mr. Bedwell, till blind man's holiday, and then go on deck for [] [*page 3*] to breathe; at the expiration of which time, I commence writing my Log for this Ship, or a Journal of our Proceedings in the *Horatio* outward bound to China, in which I am at present engaged, for the purpose of putting it at the end of my last Log Book, with what remarks & observations which came within my knowledge, to fill up about a dozen vacant leaves, wh[ic]h would otherwise be useless, and I think could not be better disposed of. Although it will not b[e one] of the first rate performances from a pen, I will endeavour to make it as correct & useful as possible, and shall not be very fearful of the scrutiny of the few who will read it, as there is not the smallest chance of its ever being made public. I am either occupied as above, or in writing to my dear Friends in England, who I know are always very

glad to hear from me, till 1/2 past 10, when having enjoyed a little social chat over a glass of grog, 1/2 an hour's walk on deck generally brings 12 o'clock close on its heels, which is time for all honest sober people to go to bed; and that's the time which recalls fresh to the memory all evil actions of the day past; or affords that real pleasure to the mind conscious of having acted right throughout the day, which naturally follows from an answer to the following lines I picked up the other day, I believe in Cotton's *Visions*, or in Fables for the Female Sex;^[5]

I commune with myself at night,
And ask my heart if all is right;
If "Right" replies my faithful breast,
I smile, and close my eyes to rest.

Such is the pleasure arising from a consciousness of having employed our time to advantage; but I have inadvertently strolled away where I did not at first intend, and on a Subject which to you my dear Father, it is not likely that I can throw any new light. You will not receive this letter till after my Birthday, therefore I cannot do better than return you all thanks for drinking my health & for your well wishes which I know I shall on that day, and at all other times, while I deserve them, which, my dear Father, I shall always endeavour to do, and will not forget all my dear Friends at Newbury.

I am rather apprehensive from what William said in his letter, that he will be at Reading or elsewhere fr. home when this reaches you, in case of which I hope you will either send it to him, or inform him of its contents, as I will not swell the pocket by repeating in his what I have written to you. I mentioned [to] you in my last very hasty scrawl, a probability of my being under the necessity of drawing a bill on you at New South Wales, as Lt. King informs us that by various accoun[ts] received of & from that place by him, every article is remarkably dear, which [is why] Bedwell & myself lay in a stock of glass at Cork, which is the cheapest place in [the] world for that article; and had we known the above circumstance before quitting Engl[and] other things might have been procured, such as mess utensils, &c., much cheaper and [] than at [] where ironmongery is good for nothing, and twice as dear as in England. [If I po[ssibly] [] [a]void it, depend upon it I will not draw, but in case of being obliged to do so, [] feel [] []se with the hope that it will not reach you at so distressing a time as to put [] so much inconvenience as I am very sorry to think you was at to fit me out for this voyage [which] I am in great hopes will amply recompense in the end f[or] [] [in]conveniences & anxiety, by promi[]].

[5] JSR evidently had a copy of the well-known work by Nathaniel Cotton (1707-1788) to hand, presumably one of the compendium versions which also included Edward Moore's *Fables for the Female Sex*. There were numberless editions in this era.

In all probability, we shall not arrive at our final destination before the latter end of July [or the be]ginning of Augt., by our calculations, and on the 5th. of the latter month you must remember that the 6 months which have expired for which we have received pay in advance; from which time at the end of 3 months, we shall be entitled to draw for pay, and before that time it is not expected we shall have sailed on our expedition, having to rig and fit out our little vessel. Various are the conjectures as to what name she will bear, if a new vessel, not knowing w[hether] the Governor, McQuarrie, might or might not have any particular wish to nam[e] her himself; but if it rests entirely with Mr. K. I am pretty well convinced from what I have both seen and heard, that she will be called the Sydney, after the name of the Town at Port Jackson.^[6] The next letter you receive from me, which most likely will not be before our arrival in New South Wales, will clear up that point, and I will then give you a full direction to me, till when I hope you will not fail to give me a line or two by the mean I have already mentioned.

Monday evening. May 5. To the Southward of the Equinoctial Line
 My dear Father, we have at last crossed the Equator, and I once more find myself in South Latitude. As it is a long time since I laid down my pen, I will now take it up again and acquaint you with what we have been doing since I left off as above, but as the particulars of a shaving match is nothing new to all your ears at home, I will not be so explicit as on a former occasion, yet as the circumstances are at [present] so fresh on my memory, having crossed the Line & shaved this afternoon, [I cannot] forebear giving you a few particulars. To prevent confusion in [our] [] [] and to follow the Ship in her Track, I will recommence where I [] her in [] on our side of the Cape de Verd Islands.

On the morning of the 2[]th, [] [] [] [] []ernmost of the C. Verds, was seen from the masthead at daylight [] [] [] [] [] from the N.E. we so[on] closed in with it and the [] [] [] [] [page 4] at noon, were about 3 leagues distant from the Land, at Sunset, taking our departure from St. Antonio & St. Vincents, distant 7 or 8 Leagues, with a fine wind, no land was in sight next morning, when we stood away to the Southward with the intention of crossing the Equator in Longitude 22 degrees West, being the part most advisable in order to profit by good winds.

On the morning of the 26th. before daylight, the wife of one of the Corporals belonging to the 48th Regt. that had been confined to her bed ever since leaving Ireland with a complication of diseases, departed this life, and at 8 o'clock was committed to the deep, the funeral service for burial at sea, being

[6] Governor Lachlan Macquarie, of course. It is interesting to see the young officers speculating on their plans to name their prospective ship the "Sydney".

read by the senior serjeant of the Regiment. Her name was Armstrong; she was abt. 26 years of age, had been married 6 years, had one child of 3 years of age on board, and 2 left on shore at the depot in Ireland under proper care; was very clean and neat in her appearance and on embarking at Cork was one of the finest women in the ship. She was reduced to such a poor meagre living skeleton near her latter end, that the child was always frightened at sight of its mother, and except by force would never approach her. The measles at that time being among the soldier's children this caught ~~them~~ and had partly weathered them when she was attacked with a violent fever, which in 3 days terminated his miserable existence, and she was launched over the lee gangway from the precise spot which had 5 days before witnessed the like sad ceremony performed to his mother. For some time the grief of the Corporal was so great, that he refused all comfort, and even the necessary nourishment requisite to keep him alive, and he is now evidently in a rapid decline, which makes me sadly afraid that my pen will have the unpleasant task of recording his death.^[7]

No less than 7 children have had the measles since leaving Ireland, from whence it is supposed to have been brought on board the ship, as it was prevalent on shore before we sailed, all of whom have happily recovered, with the exception of one very fine girl, about 4 years of age, who has several times been in a very alarming state, but is now getting better. She is the daughter of the Commanding Officer's trusty servant man (private) who has accompanied him and shared all his dangers & hardships in every campaign, having been with him in 26 battles and wounded twice alongside of his master: she is on that account, and because he has no children himself, the pet of not only himself & wife, but of all the Officers in the Regiment. With the exception of this little girl, and one of the Soldiers very much reduced by the dysentery, all on board are in a comparatively healthy state. Every exertion is used to preserve health & cleanliness by smoking the shop, making the Troops wash their clothes & blankets frequently in salt water as well as themselves in do. notwithstanding which there are some lazy dirty blackguards amongst them, which nothing less than a good towing astern for 24 hours would cleanse. Several are absolutely muffled up in great coats while the Thermometer is as high as 82 or 84 degrees, and other people are on the point of melting.

If the Commanding Officer had not issued an order to prevent this, by the time we arrive off the Cape of Good Hope, these men will literally freeze to the deck, for they are so confoundedly indolent and lazy that I really think

[7] Corporal, later Sergeant, Robert Armstrong (d. 1848) did arrive in New South Wales and remarried, in 1822, Mary Cable at St. Luke's in Parramatta.

they would rather see the ship fall overboard than put their hands to a rope, unless obliged to do so by the presence of an Officer; in short they are a set of new men raised in Dublin, and are the laziest set of Tinkers in the shape of Soldiers that ever were built into the form of a Regiment. They are divided into 3 parties which keep watch day and night by turns to assist in working the ship, and when one watch is upon deck, the other 2 are below. If any of the 2 parties are standing by, and in case of emergency, or even in hoisting up their own provisions and water, he is requested to clap his hand to a rope or in any shape whatever to lend a hand, his reply is in general "It's not my Watch, and I'll be damned if I do," which will pretty well convince you of what a lazy set they are.

We had a fine fair wind with beautiful weather, though rather warm occasionally, and our time was occupied in forming a plan of that portion of the C. Verd Islands which came within our view, from bearings and observations made while roundg. them, and as every chart of them which we have seen on board is very incorrect, it is Mr. K's intention to forward from Rio Janeiro, what alterations and remarks could be made in our limited view, to Captn. Hurd, at the Admiralty. It is his intention, I am happy to say, to make some observations & remarks, if not a general survey should our time permit, of the Harbour & River of Rio Janeiro, which will not only be something towards a beginning, but will exercise and improve all 3 of us, and get our hands in, against commencing our grand survey of New South Wales, which undertaking, although attended with incessant fatigue & labour, I look forward to with the greatest pleasure, both as being a meritorious as well as arduous task, and one towards which my inclination mosts leads me; and if the Almighty spares our Lives, I hope it will not in the end fall short of our expectations in a reward, for "The more danger, the more Honour" is a maxim with a great many men, and with me amongst them.

At noon on the 27th. a strange brig was seen on the starboard beam, standing on the same course, and apparently bound to the same place as ourselves: at 2 o'clock she was perceived to be standing towards us with a flag hoisted at her main masthead, which appeared to be a signal to us. Our conjectures were various as to what she might be, or want with us, but considering that she might be a vessel in want of immediate assistance from having sprung a leak, or from some [other] cause, the Captain with some reluctance (having a fine wind & all sail set) shortened sail [*page 5*] to the Topsails, and hove to for her to close with us, which she did as fast as the wind would permit, and at 7 o'clock in the evening, passed close under our stern, hailed us, hove too, and sent a boat with the First Mate on board of us: we were very much surprized to see that she was all in very good condition, no pumps at work, or any thing to make us think she was in distress, which immediately induced us to sup-

pose that she had some intelligence to communicate, and consequently every one looked with great anxiety to the Mate as he ascended the *Dick's* side, being eager to know all about it. After an answer had been given to his enquiries as to the Ship's name, &c., judge of our surprize and disappointment, when he said "they had mistaken us for the *Eagle*, a ship that sailed in compy. with them from Liverpool, and from whom they had parted company 2 days previous", and with the greatest unconcern said that "as they had been 49 days out of Liverpool, their liquor was all out, and if Captn. Harrison could well spare any, they would be much obliged to him for a gallon or 2": the Captn. could scarcely contain himself till the end of this speech, and when the Mate had spoke his spoke, he commenced to speak his speak, by saying that if grog was all they wanted of him, he wished they had foundered rather than have fallen in with him, (a very charitable wish, I must allow, but one provoked by the circumstances) but to prevent any further detention, said he would let them have a little rum, that he might again get sail set on the ship, which he said would occupy upwards of 3 hours, and hoped it would not be the means of his deserting ~~a~~ any ship really in distress, that made signals to him, as he should be very unwilling a 2nd. time to be served this trick, and desired the mate on returning to his Brig, to thank the Master of her, very kindly for the 20 miles or upwards which we had lost on his account; and went nearly as far as to say, that he did not think his excuse a plausible one, or he would have stood towards us at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, which was the time they first saw us.

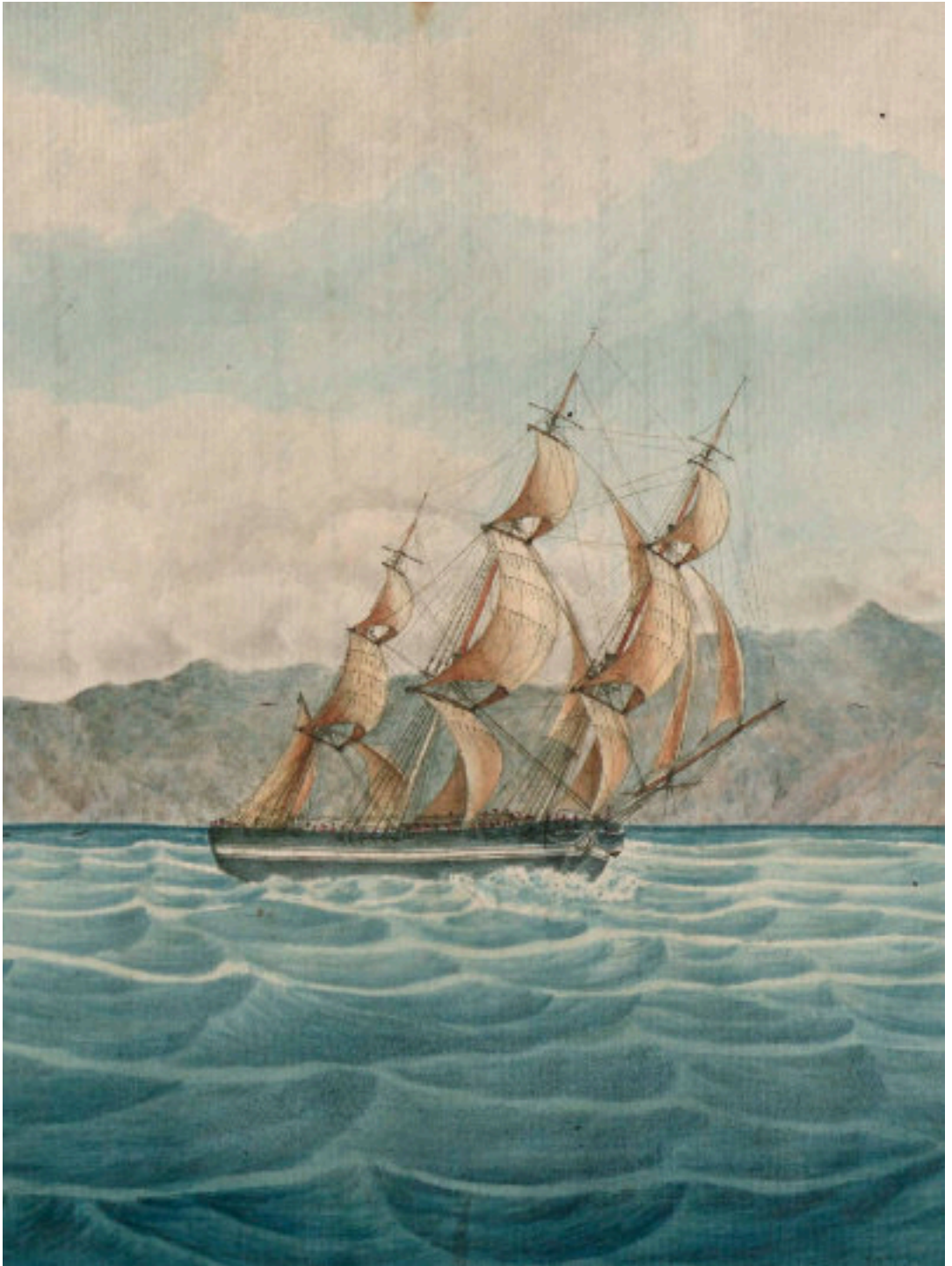
While the rum was getting ready, we learnt that the Brig's name was the *Boulden*, belonging to Newcastle, had sailed as I said before, 49 days ago from Liverpool, and was bound to Bahia, a port in the Brazils, to the northward of Rio Janeiro. What the Captn. of the Brig thought of his message we neither knew, or cared much about, for immediately her boat shoved off fir. alongside, we bore up, wishing the Brig at the deuce, and commenced making all possible sail as before, which occupied us till nearly 10 o'clock, and we had then not only lost upward of 20 miles good run, but something more essential, our fine breeze, which by this time had died away so much that we could not make the ship go faster than at the rate of 4 knots (miles) an hour, whereas she was before going 7, therefore we had double reason to vent out spite on the poor brig, and ~~we~~ had not done pulling long faces upon it till the next evening, the Officer's especially, who could not comprehend their meaning in asking for grog, after such an unnecessary detention and interruption in our voyage, but it was of no use, and next mornng. we had the pleasure of finding [we] had completely outsailed her, for we could just make our from the mast head, her white top gallant sails appearing above the horizon astern of us, being about 18 miles, which we had gained on her during the night. At

12 o'clock on the 28th. she was out of sight from the mast head, so we had one consolation, if it was one, to think that we beat her in sailing.

We had at this time regained our fine N.E. Trade wind again in its former force, & were sailing 8 knots an hour. At 1/2 past 11 in the night of the 29th. we passed a large ship standing to the northward apparently homeward bound, under a crowd of sail, and from the view I had of her with a spy glass, my opinion coincided with several others, that she was a Man of War by appearance, but as the night was too dark to admit of our distinguishing objects plainly, she was in all probability an homeward bound East Indiaman carrying a press of sail thro' thick and thin, being anxious to get home.

I should have mentioned before by the bye, that on the 27th. at noon we passed under the Sun while vertical, or directly in the Zenith over our heads, which by a little reflection you will perceive was occasioned by his meeting us while we were going to the Southern hemisphere into place which he had just returned from summering, (I have looked in dic., but can find no such word, therefore you must class it amongst mine) and where we shall on our arrival find winter; while by his rapid advance to the Northward he makes Summer to you, when his distance from C.G. Hope is so great, as to make it winter at that place. I wished him a hearty good passage towards England, wishing that he would repair all the damages done to your blossoms by the latter frosts of the season, and yeild you all a plentiful harvest.

The weather continued very fine, but oppressively hot till the 1st of May, when it commenced being squally with heavy rain, and heavier gusts of wind than are usually experiences in this part of the world, which obliged us to keep a good look out till the morning of the 5th. which became finer with little rain, and appeared to favour the appearance and customary proceedings of His Oceanic Majy. who had on the preceding evening, hailed the ship and signified his intention of "paying us a visit next morning, for the purpose of enquiring particularly into the health of some of his children whom he had never seen before". Every thing had be[en] [*page 6*] previously prepared for the occasion, and I had the distinguished honor of painting Neptune's Crown. At noon we observed the Sun's altitude for finding the Latitude, by which it was ascertained that we were a mile and a quarter to the Northwd. of the Equator. Nothing could have happened better, for it gave just sufficient time to allow of His Majesty's appearance being made exactly on the line. Accordingly, the soldiers being cleared away, and His Children, confined below in the Steerage, the procession commenced with the drums & fifes playing "Rule Britannia", and proceeded very orderly to the Quarter deck where all the Ladies & Officers were assembled, and having stopped opposite to the Captain, His watery Majesty commenced a speech which he intended should have been both long and to the purpose, but having received a glass or 2 of



JSR, detail of his depiction of the ship Dick off Madeira, from his Log of the voyage. SLWA.

grog before he came on board, his utterance was so completely choaked with repeated hiccups, that his eloquence entirely failed, and to wash off all disgrace, as soon as the Captain had given him the List of his Children, he and his train were deluged with such an immense torrent of water from every direction, that it was some time before we could regain a view of him; and then being thoroughly drenched, he proceeded to perform operations on the lee gangway, where 3 large tubs filled with water were anxiously awaiting his approach, while his 2 Barbers were exerting their utmost skill, and drawing their finest hair strokes over the faces of the unlucky victims, we went through the motions with the Officers, and their Ladies, &c., the latter of whom were shaved first, and of course got very easily off; the Officers not quite so easy, although none of them had sore chins.

The number of seamen shaved was 14 including passengers, and as soon as they had received their allowance, the Captn. shaved all the soldiers wives, and then the soldiers took it into their heads to shave one another, so what with shaving, sluicing each other, and other rare fun, it was 3 o'clock before all was over, and the decks began to be cleared up, by which time every person on board except the Ladies, were completely soaked, and I was very glad to get dry clothes on again. At the commencement of operations, several of the Officers were in a terrible stew, but towards the middle of the fun they all joined in, and were as busy as ourselves. Happily no accidents happened, except from the ravages of the razors, and in the evening the Sailors enjoyed themselves at the Officers' expense, drinking and singing till they gradually dropped down one by one under the Tables, and at 12 o'clock nothing was to be heard but loud snoring, or the noise of some one drinking another drop to cool his coppers: as the way to our cabin obliged us to go through them, it was with some difficulty we could find a passage, but in this respect I happened to be more fortunate~~y~~ than my shipmate, who in the stepping across one of the Men he unluckily gave a grunt and woke exactly at the instant, and giving a roll, capsized B. right into the middle of them all; the consequence of which was a general growl among all hands, which increased to a battle between 2 of them, and eventually ended in a dance, by which time they had pretty well refreshed themselves with sleep, and had commenced another drinking bout, with alternately a fight or dance by way of a change; and this morning Bedwell complained to me in very sorrowful terms of his not having slept a wink during the whole night, whereas I slept every wink, but it was that kind of dead sleep which did not do me any good, and I [sha]ll be very happy if I can get a go[od] night's rest tonight.

My messmate B. is at this moment hard and fast ashore, measuring his length on the Sofa, and as I am nearly asleep myself, I must lay down my pen for the present, having given you all the news I am at this time Master of, hoping

by the time we arrive at Rio Janeiro that I shall be able to make some addition to it. As the day after tomorrow is May 8 I shall not fail drinking all your health's in a bumper, till when and for ever after, may the Almighty bless & protect all my dear Friends.

Off Rio Janeiro, May 26th., Monday evening.

I need not say what great pleasure it affords me to find myself at last off this port, where we are in hopes of coming to an anchor tomorrow morning, wind & weather permitting, having been 8 weeks from Cork, which is a week more than it generally takes to perform the passage. We made Cape Frio, which is abt. 60 miles from Rio Janeiro, and now distant 12 miles from us, yesterday morning shortly after daylight, since when we have made but indifferent progress, owing to contrary & light winds, with a current against us, and we are now on the latter account farther off from the object of our wishes, than we were at daylight this morning; however a fair wind has at length favoured us, and I wish to get this ready to send at a moment's notice. I have been speaking to Mr. K. concerning the best means of your forwarding letters to me, and he has very kindly offered to allow of their being enclosed to his Mother, Mrs. K. at No. 16 Paddington Green, who he says will feel great pleasure in sending them with his own, and she has the advantage of being acquainted ~~of~~ with any ship being on the point of sailing for N.S. Wales.^[8] In his letter to her, he has mentioned his wishes, and has not a doubt of her performing them with the greatest pleasure.

My dear Father, I have no news of any consequence relating to the voyage, to tell [] you, except that my time is now more than ever occupied in assisting Mr. K. in taking obsns. and it gives me no small gratification to say that he is pleased with my endeavours, (my Trumpeter has been gone dead these 20 years, I therefore hope to be excused for standing my own for once) and although he is very clever himself he does not scruple to ask & sometimes to follow my advice and opinion on subjects relating to the service; but if I go on any farther with this subject, you will probably think me vain, and tha[t I] do not deserve the praises and approbation which I give myself, I will therefore drop [] [con]sciousness in my own mind of doing every thing to merit approbation, [] [] [] [page 7] my behaviour not being unsuccessful. It is a pleasing thought to cherish, and an idea that it would prove so to you, was my motive for communicating it.

My inclination will not permit my eyes to have that respite which they require, which is probably the cause of their not being so well as I could wish them to be, though I constantly apply Dr. Mother's Hungary Water 4 or 5 times a day, one of the large bottles of which I discovered to be broken in my chest

[8] PPK's mother, Mrs. King was Anna Josepha, the widow of Governor Philip Gidley King.

the other day, and it has stained 3 sheets completely through.^[9] It is a great loss to me, as I have used one bottle, and have only a small lavender bottle full left, besides one in use; and do not know whether I shall be able to get any at Rio Janeiro or Port Jackson.

On the evening of the 20th. inst. we caught a Shark 7 feet and a half long, which was a great treat to the Ladies, one of whom has by request obtained his jaw bones and another his back bone. My time is occupied nearly as before, except that I invariably bather every morning at 1/2 past 5 o'clock in a large tub, which I find does me a great deal of good, and makes the say appear so long. Too much sleep, as I used to tell Chas. & Willm. is a very bad thing, making one dull & heavy throughout the day, always wanting more; but now that I get no more than 5 hours and at most 5 1/2 hours sleep during the night, I feel 10 times more comfortable and healthy than when I laid my lazy bones down for 8 hours upon a stretch; besides such lazy habits are not at all suitable to the service we are going upon, when we shall think ourselves very fortunate if able to get 2 or 1 hour on a soft plank.

At anchor in Rio Janeiro, May 29. 8 P.M.

You will perceive by the date that we have at last arrived here, having been detained by light and contrary winds from getting in before. It was late last night before we came to an anchor, and as there happened very fortunately to be a Merchant Brig going to sail for London from this place early tomorrow morning, I cannot let slip so good an opportunity of sending this, hoping before we sail, if anor. opportunity offers and any thing particular occurs worth notice, to give you a few lines more, but to not expect them, in case of disappointment.^[10] Our stay here will probably not be lengthened beyond a week, as water is all we want. Thanks God we are all well on board, as is your Son John, and in high spirits.

The Ship called the *Matilda*, that sailed from Cork a few days before is with part of the 48th. Regiment on board bound to N.S. Wales, was standing out of the Harbour as we were entering it yesterday evening, and passing within hail wished us to heave too for them to send a Boat on board of us, but we were then in a very narrow part of the entrance, the Tide against us with little wind, which obliged us to refuse, and they with great reluctance tacked and stood away towards the Cape of Good Hope. They had been in Rio Janeiro 12 days and were all well. The British Consul at this place has in-

[9] Chambers (1728) defined this as “a distill'd Water, denominatd from a Queen of Hungary, for whose Use it was first prepar'd... made of Rosemary Flowers infus'd some Days in rectify'd Spirit of Wine, and thus distill'd” (quoted in OED), but given that the preparation being used by JSR seems to have been made by his “dear mother”, it is likely that he was using this as a fairly generic description.

[10] The Brig sailing for London was the *Comet*, as JSR notes in his letter of 5 June 1817.

formed us of a formidable insurrection having taken place at Pernam[buco] on this ~~place~~ coast very lately, which appears to the Portuguese to be greatly encouraged by the English, as 2 or 3 vessels have been siezed under the British Flag, carrying ~~the~~ Insurgents arms & ammunition: 15,000 Portuguese Troops have already been sent to quell it, and more are on the point of being sent.^[11] The King looks very coolly upon all the [English] on that account, and how it will all end, remains to be proved. Several of the rebels (or what shall I call them?) are now here under sentence of death, which will shortly be carried into execution. It is rumoured that complaints from every quarter are loud & numerous about bad government, &c. &c. &c. but no more of that. I have no news my dear Father, except that Rio stands in the same place as ever, and is as famed as formerly for oranges and – and – what – and black fellows. Pray give kind ~~love~~ remembrance to all friends, affectionate love to dearest Mother, Sophy & Brothers, and my dear Father, receive the same fr. and believe me ever to remain, your affectionate and dutiful Son
John Septimus Roe.

P.S. Pray write to me when an opportunity offers, and let me know all the news, not forgetting the means of sending my letters. You shall hear from me before we arrive at N.S. Wales, if opportunity allows. Once more my dearest Friends, Adieu.

[11] The Pernambucan Revolt took place in 1817, a republic being declared with the support of the Consulate General of the United States.

APRIL / MAY 1817

Ship *Dick*, At Sea

Lat 2° 30" S. Longt. 24° W.

About 250 miles to the Southward of the Equator

“ Those compose the whole of the Officers; but as there is a very accomplished girl of 18 onboard, your enquiries will naturally be made towards her in preference to any of the others.”

JSR to William Roe. Four pages.

[No address]

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 144.

A curious but not terribly informative letter addressed to JSR's brother William; it is a companion to the last to his father, sent in the same packet from Rio de Janeiro, and covers the same time-frame, April and May 1817. The letter displays a distinctly new dimension to JSR's letter writing, as it is full of friendly teasing and high-jinks, quite unlike the more reserved tone he takes with the Reverend: rather more Mr. Wickham than Mr. Darcy, which is perhaps not that surprising, given that brother William was in the Militia. It does not repeat most of the material in the former, as JSR is well aware that the letter to his father will be read by the wider family circle. It is interesting to speculate about whether this letter to William, full of disreputable stories about the soldiers on board and most particularly with some idle gossip about girls at home (and a disconcertingly frank assessment of the young woman he considered the only eligible one on board, the 18 year old step-daughter of Quartermaster Stubbs of the 48th Regiment), would also have been considered appropriate beyond its immediate recipient. Given that he is writing to William, then a Lieutenant in the Army, the letter is full of details of the 48th Regiment, a large contingent of which was taking passage with them, including JSR's scathing assessment of the men as the "greatest trash" and "principally raw recruits", but "fine looking" nonetheless. JSR takes malicious delight in describing how their quarterdeck parades are sometimes rudely interrupted by a heavy sea capsizing them on the leeward side.

Ship *Dick*, At Sea, Lat 2° 30" S. Longt. 24° W. about 250 miles
to the Southwd. of the Equator. May 7. 1817.

My dear Brother William,

Having received so many long letters from you, I should think it quite unpardonable was I to pass them over in silence without giving you a few lines in return, which I think you so deservedly merit, (you see, your Trumpeter is not dead) more especially for your last very long and kind letter of the 23rd. ulto. for which receive my kind thanks, and this small proof of my gratitude in return. My last dated 27th. was written in a very great hurry, and as I mentioned in Father's letter, merely to acknowledge the receipt of yours, which, although not of any particular consequence, might prove satisfactory. When we were about 350 or 60 miles on your side of Madeira, I had written you a long letter in hopes of being able to send it to you from Madeira, but the accompanying letter will sufficiently explain the reason of it's not being sent from thence, as also many other particulars which I will not mention here, because I do not wish to swell the packet to an unnecessary size; but when I come to review what I have already written, it almost frightens me to see 3 sheets; yet as it is the last you will receive from me for some time, I need not make any apology for its size.

It gave me great pleasure in reading your last, to find that you have at length succeeded in what you have so long been wishing for, namely, 2 dogs, and those to your liking; but in return for your very copious description of their dimensions, length, breadth, thickness, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. I ought to tip you a thundering long yarn about the starboard main top gallant bowline, or something else equally intelligible to you; for although I am very partial to dogs in general, I am no great judge of the difference of breed, of their genealogy, ancestry, and such like: but never mind Bill, all helps to fill up, as the Old Woman said when she _____'d in the Sea, and as you will say of my nonsense, yet such as I have got, I offer you, having expended all my ammunition in my letter addressed to Father, which I have no doubt you will see, although I am rather apprehensive from what you have mentioned in one of your letters, that you will be called out with the Militia, and if not at Reading as you seem to expect, you will be in some part of England away from home; in case of which you will lose nothing by Father or Chas. communicating its contents. I give you and Chas. joy upon the happy conclusion of that arduous undertaking, making the casting net, &c., and tell Charles, that in that instance he certainly beats you by chalks, in Laziness, though at that period I will admit of your having both been pretty industrious; but at the same time I could not help laughing at your making mention of "Walks before breakfast": I should like to know Lazybones (for I will give you the credit of being 2 confounded lazy fellows) how many times you have had a walk outside the gate before breakfast, while cool weather lasted; for I rather

think that you both lie calling each other in a morning, till you fall fast asleep again with the words in your mouths; is it not so? Chas., do you hear Wm. say, Get up? I am extremely sorry Wm. on your account to hear of your misfortune in losing the dear dear company of ____ of ____ of ____ hem, dear company of Miss, Miss Whatyoucall'em, Miss Thing-amerry there, that lives in 'tother house; but if I was in your distressing situation, I should most certainly pass my Vote for laying an Embargo upon all the unmarried Ladies in the Town and neighbourhood, especially those whose names begin with a [B.E.]^[1] forbidding them to leave their respective homes without the unanimous consent of the whole tribe of young gentlemen who are concerned, for it is most abominably provoking and confoundedly vexing to be this disappointed in your expectations after all the trouble you have taken, having your ideas conglomerated (What a large Ship! That's a 3 decker) your brains threatened with being blown out, your very self capsized topsy turvey, and all for the sake of a faithly. She, who has ere this deserted you: But never mind, cheer up my Boy and don't despair, you may see her again although she is at present separated from your view, merely to make the next happy meeting more sweet; you are not the first one that has been fuddled on account of his dulcima, witness your messmate when up the Baltic, at Carlsrona! ^[2] Oh, Charles, what a thing it is to be in Love! Now for my part (hem let me clear my throat) I ought to think myself very fortunate in having no one to sigh after or break my heart about, during 3 or 4 long tedious years, or I am inclined to think that the portion of duty allotted to me in the ensuing expedition, would be so poorly executed that a child in love matters would find me out.

So much for that, Willm., but as I expect to catch it pretty smartly for all this I hope neither you or Chas. will spare me, but drive your Quills as hard as you can, all I have to beg is, that one may not have the task of retaliating for both, but that each will take up his pen, Father & Sophy too, when an opportunity offers and contribute every one his mite towards a small packet which I am in hopes of receiving some time hence, which shall always be punctually answered by a returning opportunity, although perhaps not by a separate letter to each, as you must form a pretty [*page 2*] accurate idea of the manner in which our time will be occupied and a letter to each would fall far short of my wishes and your expectations, but a general one shall always be as long and replete with news, as my Time and Pen will admit. As you are Lieut. W.

[1] The initials are rather stylised, but "B.E." is most likely. Needless to say I have no idea who this could be, given the usual discretion of JSR and the lack of William's side of the correspondence.

[2] Evidently JSR's brother Charles, a Lieutenant in the Royal Marines, had had an affair of the heart in Sweden.

Roe, you most likely would wish to know something about the Soldiers, &c. &c. besides it will lend me a hand to fill up my letter: (you see I have an eye to windward). The names of the Officers are Major Cemeteire, a Frenchman and very agreeable gentlemanly man, with his wife,^[3] Captn. Mackay with his wife,^[4] Lieut. Bloomfield (light bob),^[5] Ensign Weston ^[6] and Haggerstone,^[7] Assistant Surgeon Hamilton,^[8] Quartermaster Stubbs, with his round plump wife, a daughter 18 years of age, very accomplished, with whom Hamilton is smitten, was smote, may or can smite, &c. &c. and a youngster about 10 years of age.^[9] Those compose the whole of the Officers; but as there is a very accomplished girl of 18 onboard, your enquiries will naturally be made towards her in preference to any of the others, therefore

[3] Gilbert Cimitiere was a French-born career soldier, a West Indies and Peninsular War veteran, who was posted to Port Dalrymple (Launceston) in 1818, and later to Macquarie's pet project, George Town. Cimitiere had rather a turbulent time of it in Tasmania, and returned to Sydney as commander of the 48th and acting lieutenant-governor throughout 1823, before sailing with the Regiment to India in 1824.

[4] Capt. George Mackay first enlisted in January 1809 and remained with the 48th until his early death, aged 37, on 2 December 1823: his obituary in the *Sydney Gazette* (4 December 1823) noted that he left an (unnamed) widow, that he had endured a "long and lingering illness", and that he was buried in the New Burial Ground.

[5] Lieut. Thomas Valentine Blomfield, a Peninsular War veteran, married Christiana Jane Brooks at St. Phillip's, Sydney, on 3 August 1820 and together they had a large family. He retired from the Regiment to settle "Dagworth" on the Hunter River, and died in 1857.

[6] Ensign Thomas W. Weston was made Lieutenant on 2 March 1820. He was a gentleman-cadet and graduate of the Royal Military College, made Ensign without purchase on 15 July 1813 (*Royal Military Panorama*, October 1813, vol III).

[7] Ensign John Haggerstone was first commissioned on 2 January 1817. He was involved in a much-reported horse race in Sydney in October 1818, and departed on leave for England in February 1821.

[8] Assistant Surgeon Alexander Hamilton. Announced in mock-heroic terms by JSR to be madly in love with the QM's daughter, he also considered that Hamilton – old "Pills" – was likely to be off to India from Port Jackson, so could hardly be expected to be serious. In fact, Hamilton stayed in Australia, and married Caroline Jane Lynch by special license at St. Phillip's on 12 May 1818. Ancestry sources, probably correctly, suggest that Lynch was the step-daughter of Stubbs (*The Colonial Garrison*, p. 32): that is, that Hamilton did in fact marry the girl. Hamilton was posted to Hobart but died after a fall from his horse while riding out with some gentlemen from HMS *Dromedary*, on 16 January 1820.

[9] Quartermaster Joshua Stubbs was quite an important figure, and his official position meant that he was signatory to a lot of records during his time in Australia. He – and presumably his wife as well – left New South Wales for Madras on the *Grenada* in February 1825. His step-daughter, Catherine, married surgeon Hamilton (see note 8) but after his death returned to live with Stubbs in Sydney; she died at his house on 26 June 1822 (*Sydney Gazette*, 28 June 1822). The youngster noticed by JSR is presumably William Travis Stubbs, who was apparently old enough to be petitioning Governor Brisbane for assigned convicts to be sent to him in Newcastle in 1823. William T. Stubbs also went on to serve in the 48th Regiment in India.

for a brief account of this fair nymph, attend to the words of a disinterested observer. In the first place, she is in person about my own size, has a very beautiful run from Stem to Stern, which is unfortunately rather clouded by a yellowish red hair and sun freckled face, the latter of which is far from being ugly, although in my opinion a little more modesty would make it far prettier, yet when she sees her admirer, she can put her mouth in small pleats and give him a bewitching smile as ever caught a fish, which with her overforward behaviour towards him, reminds me of the Words “Thou art woman frail or fair”. I have shewn you the worst side first, but hope it will not so dispose your mind as to cause it to reject all the good qualities, which greatly overbalance the bad (if I may be allowed to use the harsh expression) as great allowance is to be made for her youth. In addition to a very fine figure and agreeable face, she dances, sings, plays music, speaks French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, works well at her needle, and draws not indifferently. There’s a chance for you Willm., leave that faithless one with whom you are entangled, come over immediately to Port Jackson, cut the doctor out, and marry the Quartermaster’s daughter; she will not sustain a very long siege, if any, and although the doctor has been paying her attentions for these last 12 months, no proposal has yet been made to Father, Mother, or daughter upon the main point, and as Pills has signified his intention of leaving New Holland & his Regt. as soon as possible after our arrival at P. Jackson for the purpose of going to India, it is all expected to end with a puff, and then’s your time to board her in the smoke; for the young ladies love revenge sometimes, which may be the occasion of her marrying you out of pure spite to Sangrado.^[10] If you don’t think it a fine chance yourself, you can persuade Chas. it is, and that’s all the same; but if neither of you will buckle to, rather than she shall go out of the family, I will have her myself; on which important subject I await your answer.

Having now given you an account of the Officers & their families, I must proceed to a short account of the Men, who I have before mentioned as being the greatest trash that ever got together in the shape of Soldiers, being principally raw recruits, but fine looking men, from the North of Ireland, and as a great many of them were never on board of a ship before, they do not seem to half like being capsized off their legs whenever we have a fresh breeze, which is consequently attended with a proportional heavy sea, that deprives one half of them of that necessary part of their Sea stock, called Sea Legs: whenever a heavy sea occurs, you may stand by to see 20 or 30 of them roll down in bulk into the lee scuppers, clinging fast hold of each other, being determined not to fall without being accompanied by those within reach, and by the time they have arrived at their journey’s end, have gener-

[10] Spanish for “to haemorrhage”: a pleasantly gruesome joke about the bleeding of patients.

ally gleaned together about 20, who all fall together; and those are generally considered the most fortunate who escape without broken shins or heads. "But avast Jack" I think I hear you say "you forget you are writing to a Soldier." Well so I did, Wm., and before I get my head any farther into the fire, I will haul off; but it is impossible not to be diverted by such a ludicrous scene, especially at Parade on the Quarter deck, where every young Recruit puts on his best Sunday balance, raises himself with great difficulty as straight as a pike staff, turns his toes out, &c. &c. &c. &c., and a heavy Sea comes, capsizes him & his comrades sprawling on all fours to leeward; where if he happens to be more fortunate than the rest he is accommodated with a comparatively easy soft fall upon the top of some of his comrades who have had the good fortune to lead the van, and are either recovering from their sudden shock, or are giving it up as a bad job, and are busily employed discharging their Cargoes [*page 3*] of Burgoo at the Entry port.^[11] In the latter case, if he does not look out very sharp and is quick in his motions, he is most delightfully landed in something still softer; but I suppose you think it is almost time that I should have finished on this subject before it goes farther, and so do I, hardly knowing what induced me to run thus far, except to fill up, as I have not a particle of news for you; but what I have, William, I offer you, hoping you will take every thing for the best.

At Anchor in Rio Janeiro Harbour, May 29. 9 P.M.

We have at last let go our anchor among the Portuguese, and are in the midst of an intolerable smell of Onions and garlic. We made Cape Frio (60 miles from ~~C~~ Rio Janeiro) on the morning of the 25th. and light winds have prevented our arriving sooner than last night. A Brig sails from this place early tomorrow morning for London, and the Master of her had promised to take our letters.^[12] Having just finished Dear Father's letter, you will see that I have no news and sincerely wish that this could be 6 sheets long, but for want of substance to fill it up with I am obliged to knock off, not doubting but you will see the letter which this is enclosed in. As the people will all have turned into their hammocks, Bedwell and myself are going to put these letters on-board the Brig tonight, as she has had the signal up for sailing all day, and we are afraid of trusting her till the morning.

My dear Bror. Willm. with affectionate love & remembrance to all, pray receive the hearty well wishes for your health & happiness of your affectionate Bror.

Mizen staysail Jack.

[11] A rather neat description of vomiting. Burgoo was "a thick oatmeal gruel or porridge used chiefly by seamen; loblolly" (OED).

[12] This was the *Comet*, as JSR notes in his letter of 5 June 1817.

JUNE 1817

No. 2

Ship *Dick*, moored in Rio Janeiro Harbour

“Now the King is here, they think themselves a very smart set of fellows, but in my humble opinion of the matter, an Englishman would knock the wind out of half a dozen of them.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages, crossed in (faded) red ink.
The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.
Postmarks: indistinct “Brazil” stamp.
Location: SLNSW, no. 146.

This letter was started almost straight after the previous, with much on their life ashore in Rio and JSR’s chauvinistic distaste for the religion and pageantry of the Portuguese: his account of the Royal Family is positively scandalised (“this is Royalty with a vengeance...”). The letter has a bitter passage on the horrors of the slave trade being carried on in Brazil, including the horrific tale of an English slaver who had thrown his cargo of men and women overboard when water ran short.

This is the first of JSR’s letters to be numbered at the head – here “No. 2” – so that his family in Berkshire could easily check whether any were missing (JSR himself describes the process in rather too much detail). It is also unusual in that it is partially crossed by JSR in red ink, which is now quite faded and quite difficult to read. Fortunately, his neat hand remains legible for the great bulk of the letter, but a number of passages remain doubtful and/or incomplete.

My dear Father

That most important opportunity to generate passion
 to feeling from their past efforts, by the British, which I thought it would be unfor-
 tunate to miss, and have therefore set down with the intention of circulating
 your paper, to let you know what we are all about, and that you are thank-
 God, in a state of health, and happy - My last letter (in rather faint ink) from this place
 was 20. I am afraid you will not read it, before this, as it was sent in a letter
 called the "Times" that sailed for London on the 20th inst. but was still in sight of
 the shores on the 21st. The British were surrounded by fast, and for the first
 and second time, all upon this island in 18 days. - I had with me, during
 the stay, a Portuguese, &c. &c. whose last continental voyage for me, in a paper
 written 300 & 400 miles from London, in the Portuguese mother, in some instances
 or other, from a hundred miles that the Portuguese were not so distant, and as
 far as I know, that in former occasions, as they are of former days, in which
 a hundred miles for a night is made, which gives you another account
 of a remarkable, remarkable, and sometimes a help, since it is purpose, for
 the time is all. My dear Father, as a very small set of papers, but in my
 humble opinion of the matter, an Englishman would have it, more out of half a
 dozen of them. - The history, however, the history, was, which, regards from
 a distance, for purposes of various descriptions, having had her share, she
 was devoted, and indeed, in a safe, quiet way, which, however, in her last
 effort, she was of Portugal, and being, elements, against the ships, due by the
 fact, to work down, and was not even afterwards, although, very, effort was
 made, to make it, and here, the history, is now, commenced, by a letter
 from, of Portugal, whether, they had, immediately, in the same, before
 she, she, appears, to be an old, proposal, of friends, and, words, have, and
 out, to make, with, from, getting, from, the, things, business, in, terms, of, her, last
 when, she, was, in, what, party, of, it, is, as, about, the, occasion, very, long, together,
 this, has, been, a, young, man, with, the, Portuguese, on, board, from, by, the, French,
 in, some, other, way, or, manner, dedicated, to, the, cause, of, her, in, a, similar
 way, of, which, is, a, young, person, as, to, be, from, Chapel, towards, the
 of, the, King, has, been, allowed, for, it, has, been, family, and, the, interests,
 with, the, interests, of, France, from, the, Committee, were, who, succeeded, in, your
 hands, and, given, to, be, borne, on, the, shoulders, of, both, parties, in, which, some
 power, deny, the, best, approval, to, an, absolute, stability, and, make, the
 freedom, my, own, interests, and, will, to, engage, the, speaking, habits, of, an
 resolution, to, which, will, it, appears, we, thought, a, great, distinction, I, could, say,
 on, her, original, but, as, it, is, only, by, of, her, and, will, that, the, Committee, were, it,
 seems, then, in, the, first, enjoyment, of, making, us, practice, with, a, consciousness
 of, my, intention, which, party, must, discover, the, deficit, the, original, but,
 particular, notice, of, our, English, ladies, who, were, posted, in, a, window, to, be, her,
 eyes, but, her, of, almost, to, do, with, every, one, around, her, before, her, eyes,
 this, scene, had, to, do, not, speak, to, her, only, nature, is, that, she, had, in, the
 as, a, necessary, right, was, and, was, on, the, part, of, my, name, was, then, when, the
 resolutions, were, made, at, Paris, because, which, I, mentioned, in, my, last
 on, which, several, resolutions, was, put, forward, for, a, short, time, before,
 propositions, and, making, for, it, in, the, great, spirit, of, the, French, the
 temporary, stages, towards, one, in, great, foundations, I, was, on, other
 orders, had, to, look, towards, the, town, with, the, French, and, we, made, the
 legal, Chapel, contiguous, to, the, Palace, which, is, most, especially, in, my, mind,
 as, far, as, I, get, beyond, will, go, having, more, the, appearance, of, a, Palace,
 than, a, House, of, Lords, - At, the, upper, end, of, it, is, a, painting, in, a, large,
 hall, but, not, especially, assembled, of, the, whole, both, the, Royal, Family, Secretary,
 to, me, besides, as, the, Court, in, front, of, which, is, an, image, of, representing
 the, Bourbons, with, the, Bourbon, which, in, different, parts, of, his, body, and
 in, which, they, are, of, the, same, and, for, as, as, also, to, several, expressions,
 (names, of, saints, &c.) on, each, side, of, the, altar, - The, service,
 was, celebrated, every, day, throughout, by, about, 20, persons, as, one, out, of
 the, whole, and, an, assembly, of, about, and, then, afterwards, the, English,
 in, my, recollection, as, the, other, end, - One, of, the, Bourbons, not, a, but
 looking, good, was, at, length, but, appeared, to, pay, any, little, attention, to, any
 thing

No. 2.
Ship *Dick*, moored in Rio Janeiro Harbour
June 5. 1817

My dear Father,

One more opportunity of writing to you all previous to sailing from this Port offers itself by the Packet, which I thought it would be unpardonable in me to miss, and have therefore sat down with the intention of scribbling you a few lines to let you know what we are all about, and that your Son, thank GOD, is all alive and kicking. My last dated, (or rather finished) from this place May 29, I am afraid will not reach you before this, as it was sent in a Brig called the *Comet*, that sailed for London on the 30th. ulto. but was still in sight of the Harbour on the 1st. inst.; the Packet sails remarkably fast, and I rather think will arrive first: she leaves this place in abt. 10 days.

What with Processions, Birthdays, Anniversaries, &c. &c. we are kept continually agog, for not a day passes without 3 or 4 salutes from shipping or the Batteries on shore, on some occasion or other. It is a thousand pities that the Portuguese were not as smart at, and as fond of firing shot on proper occasions, as they are of firing away powder in salutes or to enforce signals; for if a signal is made, slap goes a gun, another and another if not answered immediately, and sometimes half a dozen to no purpose. Now the King is here,^[1] they think themselves a very smart set of fellows, but in my humble opinion of the matter, an Englishman would knock the wind out of half a dozen of them. On Sunday morning, the *Hyaena*, store ship, arrived from St. Helena for provisions of various descriptions, having lost her Master, who was knocked overboard by a rope giving way, while hoisting in her Launch off the Island of Ascension, and being stunned against the ship's side by the fall, he went down and was not seen afterwards, although every effort was immediately made to save him. The *Hyaena* is now commanded by a Lieut. from I. Ascension, whither they put in, immediately on the accident taking place.^[2] He happens to be an Old Messmate of Bedwell's, and invited him and me to dine with him yesterday, being the King's Birthday,^[3] on board of

[1] Threatened by Napoleon, the Portuguese Court led by Queen Maria I had removed to Rio in 1807. As a result, Rio was home to the Court from 1808 until 1820. In 1817, when JSR was in the port, King John VI was ruling as King.

[2] The *Hyaena* was a store ship on the Cape Station. In early 1817 the Master was John Foxton, who "was killed by a blow from a block, which fell from aloft on his head"; his initial replacement appears to have been one R.L. Hicks, formerly the master of HMS *Newcastle* (see *Naval Chronicle*, vol. 38, p. 347-348), but by October the ship was commanded by Lt. James Thorne Esq., who had been at Ascension before being appointed to the ship (*Royal Naval Biography*, vol. III, p. 81). Given the June date of JSR's letter it is presumably Hicks that JSR has in mind as the commander and friend of Bedwell, but I have not confirmed this detail.

[3] George III, born 4 June 1738.

his Ship where there was a select party of 8, and we spent the evening very happy together.

This has been a grand day with the Portuguese on shore, being by them (a most impious thing in my opinion) dedicated to 'The Heart of GOD', in representation of which a grand procession is made to and from Chapel, composed of the King, bare headed, attended by all his ~~nobility~~ family, and the nobility, with the Monks & Friars from all the Convents here; who surround a figure painted and gilt all over, borne on the shoulders of 6 old priests; to which every person bends the knee; appearing to me absolute Idolatry, and made the Blood in my veins literally run cold to witness the shocking pitch of superstition to which all classes are brought. A great deal more I could say, on this subject, but as it is only loss of time, I will drop the Curtain over it, leaving them in the full enjoyment of calling us hereticks, with a consciousness of being well aware which party most deserves the epithet.

His Majesty took particular notice of our English Ladies who were posted in a window to see him pass, but having so much to do with every one around him, kissing his hands & his robes, ~~that~~ he did not speak to them, only returned their salute. He is a precious ugly man, and was on the point of being crowned here when the disturbances broke out at Pernambuco, which I mentioned in my last, on which account that ceremony was postponed for a short time.^[4] Great preparations are making for it, in the great square fronting the Palace, where temporary stages & ornaments are in great forwardness.

I was on shore on Sunday last to look round the Town with Bedwell, and we visited the Royal Chapel, contiguous to the Palace, which is most superbly ornamented as far as gilt & paint will go, having more the appearance of a Theatre than a House of Worship.^[5] At the upper end of it is a painting as large as Life, but indifferently executed, of the whole of the Royal Family, kneeling to our saviour, with 16 or 18 arrows stuck in different parts of his body, head, &c. &c. to which they bent the knee and prayed; as also to several representations of Saints (I imagined) on each side of the House. The service was chaunted very well throughout by about 30 priests at one end of the Chapel, and an assemblage of Men and Boys alongside the Organ (a very excellent one) at the other end. One of the Princesses, not a bad looking girl, was at Mass, but appeared to pay very little attention to any *[page 2]* thing else but the new English comers; not meaning to include myself as one, for there were 4 Females & 6 Officers besides Bedwell & the Writer. Just after dark on the same evening, as we were going towards the Landing place to go

[4] The Pernambucan Revolt took place in 1817, a republic being declared with the support of the Consulate General of the United States.

[5] The Old Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was the Royal Chapel in Rio.

on board the *Dick*, we unexpectedly came athwart ~~the~~ a procession called the Host, going round the Town. This is an absurdity something similar to what I have already mentioned, except it's not being accompanied by any more than about 20 priests preceded and surrounded by torches and wax lights; a bugle & drum going before, with 5 or 6 flags here and there interspersed amongst them. The people all go down on their knees while it passes, and it was formerly a custom amongst them to oblige Englishmen & people of all Nations to do the same, but that is now dispersed with by an order from the King, and they are contented with the proper mark of respect being shewn by pulling off hats while it passes.

An Austrian Prince and Princess are expected here shortly, the former for the purpose of being spliced to one of the Portuguese Princesses, & the latter to the King's eldest Son, 16 years of age (she 17),^[6] but I am inclined to think they will both be glad to withdraw the bargain when they arrive, for the King lives more like a pig than a Prince, and I am certain there are many Noblemen's Stables in England superior to his Palace, which is only 2 stories high; and the carriages which he & his family ride out in, ~~and~~ are not to be compared, with respect to elegance & neatness, to a London Hack; are always covered with dirt and the 4 common mules belong to one, are not to appearance cleaned once in a Month: the Postillion (there is no Coachman) is invariably in character, having an Old Coat with long tails, that a Jew would not pick up in the Streets on his back, with about 2 tbs. of grease on the collar and sleeves and 3 or 4 holes which ~~the~~ his immense cocked hat has chased in it just underneath & on the collar with here and there a scrap of tarnished gold lace hanging by a few threads & an Epaulet on each shoulder: 3 or 4 of the Royal family stow in 1 carriage, drive very fast, are preceded by 2 dragoons, & followed by 6 or 8, who all keep in a cluster, and ride helter skelter without the least regard to order.

The King has a Country seat, or palace if it deserves the name, about 4 miles from this, whither he occasionally drives for an airing, and the Englishmen here give us such a dismal account of it, that I should like very much to know whether his palace in Town is at all superior to it: they tell us that there is only one room in it that has any furniture, and that consists of half a dozen chairs, and an old mahogany table, on which is spread a green cloth about 50 years old, more holy than godly, and stained all over with grease & wine! Pity they don't make him go to England to receive a Lesson or 2 on civilization, and to be taught the use of a knife and fork at breakfast, which he is said to eat alone and to have 4 or 5 fowls dressed, which he pulls asunder

[6] The son of King John VI, Pedro I, married the Habsburg archduchess Maria Leopoldina of Austria, initially by proxy on 13 May 1817 in Vienna, before arriving in Rio in November.

with his fingers, and demolishes one particular part in each (perhaps the epicure's nose) without touching it with a knife or fork, at which times, his face always shines like a new penny, or the collar of his Postillion's Coat. This is Royalty with a vengeance, and I think nothing but an act of policy could induce the Emperor of Austria to consent to the intermarriage. It is truly ridiculous to see the Lower classes of Portuguese and the Slaves, some of whom having scarcely a rag to put on, will have a large cocked hat, and strut about with as much consequence as a first rate mandarin in China.

The slaves are as numerous here as ever, being calculated at abt. 20 to 5 Portuguese. The latter treat them very brutally, and procure them 2 or 300 lashes on the slightest pretence, yet they appear very happy & are always singing, without which they cannot work: the burdens they carry are astonishing. I have seen 6 of them carrying a pipe of wine, and other things in proportion. It is a most shameful circumstance, that the slave trade is carried on between Africa, Madagascar, & this place, as brisk as ever; 2 vessels having arrived from the former place since our arrival here, and we found one schooner full of slaves here already. By Treaty, I believe the Portuguese are allowed 3 or 4 Slave ships annually and no more, therefore a breach of that Treaty ought not to pass unpunished. I do not know whether I ever mentioned to you, that while coming in here in the *Horatio*, a Slave ship was coming in at the same time, which had we known her to be such, would have been our lawful prize; but the rascals secured all the slaves below till they got inside Fort Santa Cruz, & then being inside their own Harbour, we could not touch them. It grieves me that [page 3] my Pen can with Truth record an instance of shocking inhumanity in one of our own countrymen, the Master of a Slave vessel, who sailed with a deficiency of water (perhaps his own fault) from some port on the African coast, and finding the water beginning to run short of his expectations; the poor miserable wretches whom his inhumanity had torn from their peaceful families, were by this unnatural monster precipitated to a watery grave, where all their miseries are at an end, and it is to be hoped are enjoying that happiness which this worse than brute never can! He is now safely lodged in Prison, detested even by the Portuguese and will doubtless meet with that punishment which his heinous crime deserves. His name and that of his Ship I am not acquainted with.

We have had several hard squalls on board between the Capt'n. & one of the Officers, who during the absence of his Superior on shore, was left commanding, and on the former returning from dining on shore one evening (rather snuffy, or what we call 'In the wind') an altercation took place about the Soldiers sleeping on the Quarter deck, which soon blew up into high words; a written statement of which from both sides has been presented to the Consul, and an apology from one or both [~~struck~~] is expected. I believe

from the former it is most due, from what I can learn, for although I heard the conclusion of the disputing dialogue between the parties, I was not on deck at its commencement, therefore cannot give any decided opinion on the case, and there is no saying how it will end. This circumstance happened six days ago & nothing farther has transpired, except a bit of a dust between the same Officer and the Chief Mate of the Ship, during the Captn.'s absence, about attempting to send away one of the Ship's boats away, when the Mate could not spare her, but it was only a flying squall, and soon blew over.

Sea stock of poultry, sheep, &c. &c. and every thing of all descriptions except Fruit, is at present remarkably dear here, and I am afraid we shall fare the worse for it, during the remainder of the voyage. This is Sunday, 8th. and we are preparing every thing for sea and bad weather, as we expect to sail tomorrow afternoon, or Tuesday morning. We expect nothing but blowing weather, from the Time of leaving Rio Janeiro till our arrival at Port Jackson, as it will be Winter all the way, and the depth of it off the C. of Good Hope, where we may expect heavy gales if we do not give it a wide birth, or rather if we do not pass at some distance from it. It is Winter here now, the Portuguese huddling themselves up in coats, [when] for my part, I am ready to melt. The Musketoes are a great cu[rse] and the [] have brought Bugs along with them in great plenty, which I [] as yet []y steered clear of. The Musketoes & a few Cockroaches are the on[ly] insects w[e] [hav]e got on board from Rio, and those we can very readily dispense [with].

To establish rates of going to our Chronrs. we are obliged to go onshore at a small island called Rat I. for 4 hours every day, and I am literally almost eaten up by Ants, which are in such quantities there, that one is almost in danger of being shouldered and carried off by the, or the Rats, from the latter of which, the Isld. Derives its name.^[7] We chuse it in preference to any other place for taking our observations upon, being uninhabited, and free from molestation from 2 legged animals. We are all 3 continually hard at work, for when the observations are taken it occupied the remainder of the day & evening in working them. My eyes do not get well so fast as I could wish on that account, for I cannot bear to be looking on, while others are at work, besides I do not think looking on eases the eyes more than when at work, except when drawing or making charts, which requires more particular attention & minuteness, than merely working a parcel of figures on a slate, consequently strains the eyes more; however, when practicable, I spare them as much as possible and do not think them any worse than when I had the happiness of having dear Mother for a Nurse.

[7] Now called Ilha Fiscal in Guanabara Bay, but formerly "Ilha dos Ratos".

As I take it for granted that this will reach you before ~~before~~ my last of 29th. date, I have numbered it, 2, and to prevent all mistakes I intend in future to proceed and regularly number all my letters, recommending the same plan to you, that we may both know if any letters have miscarried, or are due. You had better, I think, number my last, 1, when you receive it, my next will be, 3, &c. &c. &c.

I trust before this reaches you, all disturbances will be happily over, in England, and every class of individuals enjoying themselves in profound peace and Tranquility in the midst of their Families.^[8] Civil strife is a lamentable thing in any station, especially our own; and as we have avoided it a long time, I hope the Time is not yet arrived when Bror. will again lift his hand against Bror., and Son against Father, from which I trust the Almighty will preserve you all. Bror. Willm. has, I conclude, long ere this, been called upon: my prayers & blessings attend him wherever he moves, and sincerely do I hope he will meet the reward due to his conduct in whatever occupation he is employed. I suppose you have not parted with Chas., whom you must find very useful at home, in easing your shoulders of a great deal of fag, and in performing various little things which you could not well do without. And how does my Sophy light? I long very much to have a letter from my dear Sophy, and hope my humble request will not be made in vain; in answer to which I promise as long a letter as I can write [*page 1 crossed*] without a repetition of circumstances, but as I have before requested that favour from all but my dear Mother, I am in hopes it will not be denied, as a line or 2 from each will be truly acceptable.

I must soon begin my letters for India, which shall be as long as I can make them though I shall have nothing else scarcely to let them know but what you have already acquainted them with, however I will do my best as I have done here, for when I sat down I did not think I could fill 1/2 a page, and I find I have filled 3. In case my last does not reach you, I think it advisable to say that I have mentioned in it Mr. King's kind offer to allow of your letters to me being forwarded under cover to his Mother Mrs. K. at 16 Paddington Green, who will forward them with her Son's in one Pacquet, as she has the advantage by means of people in Office, of knowing when any ship is going to New South Wales, which you could not possibly know without the same intelligence.^[9] He has mentioned it in his last letters home, on my acceptance of his offer, and I will submit it to your consideration to determine if it is not the best and safest means of my letters being forwarded; and on their arrival at Port Jackson they will be in the care of Mrs. K. just till we arrive.^[10]

[8] The Habeas Corpus Suspension Act of 1817 (57 Geo. III, c. 3) had been enacted in response to the Luddite protests and what the government called "a traitorous conspiracy". The Reverend James had written to JSR about the upheavals in his letter of 1 March 1817.

[9] Anna Josepha King, the widow of Governor King.

[10] That is, King's mother will send the letters care of his wife, Harriet.

Monday June 9.

I am obliged to close this letter to send with the rest in [] the Packet, as we are to be off early tomorrow morning, wind & weather permitting, and no unlucky current [] happening to prevent us. Twelve Bullocks are coming on board this forenoon, for the Troops, but I think [][] to the fresh beef if it is not better than that we got here in the *Horatio*. By the Time you will receive this [][] off the Cape of Good Hope, which is about 2500 miles distant. I am heartily glad for more reasons than one that I did [][][][] as she will be obliged to remain for several weeks in that Rascally place in the depth [][] where she may think herself very fortunate if she escapes getting ashore.

My other reasons for wishing myself [][][][] pretty well guess at. I understand a [certain] Scotchman was married a day or 2 before we sailed from England, and if he did not marry for the sake of the [trads] (which it is very likely he did) I should have imagined that the tender sentiments which his dear charmer had inspired him with, would have suffered that truly beneficent spirit of his; but he is too far North, sails very close to the wind, and I am afraid is the worst bargain his wife ever made; but enough of him, for I do not consider him worth the precious time I am expending on his account.^[11]

Another Portuguese Slave Brig is just arrived and appears to have about 200 miserable wretches on board, apparently from the coast of Africa. The Troops are all healthy and so is your Son, thanks GOD, but the water which we have got on board from this place is very bad, and before we have been at Sea a month will scarcely be drinkable. It was possibly from bad water I apprehend, that we experienced most of our losses in the *Horatio*, although from none [][] Rio Janeiro, which was far better than this we have [] got. That which we got in the Thames is as fresh as when first filled and is the best that was [][] to be had for Shipping as it is [admitted] that it will smell intolerably and purify itself again [] before it is absolutely so bad as to be undrinkable, and as good [][][] as long as 3 years. When we have been at Sea a month there will be no [][] coming [][] of this stuff, for it already begins to smell, and there is no deprivation [*page 2 crossed*] deprivation felt more at Sea than that of water. I dare say we can [prevail] upon the Captain to make use of the Thames water first, which he will [assuredly] do for his own comfort. Although [][][][][] by way of a change, I am quite [important] to be gone from this place that we [][][] at Port Jackson and commence our Voyage of Discovery, for we [][][] 11 days, and [] and nothing in the world [done] but completed with water, and set up the Rigging, which might all have been done in

[11] As frequently, when JSR is discussing more private matters, the details here remain unknown.

2 days, and the remainder I could [] entirely waster of time, for there is no object in staying to refresh the Troops, the meat being very bad, and a sufficient quantity of fruit & vegetables might have been procured from a Sea Stock, and got on board within 3 days at the utmost; but the Captn. is such a man for the shore, there is no such thing as getting him out of Harbour when he once gets in one, so we know from experience at Cork, but we are at last in a fair way of starting, and must forget all the past inconveniences, by substituting hopeful prospects in their room.

If Chas. & Willm. are at home pray My dear Father don't forget to tell Chas. to tell the Maid to tell the Boy to call Chas. to tell Willm. to tell Chas. to get up some morning to write me a letter, as I hope to receive a long one from [the] Lazybones, promising to send him as long a one in return, trusting he will not scruple about the style in which it is written, but if that is all his objection, tell him that it is to a [] [] [] [] forms, but would receive an Original, corrected or not corrected and all over blots, with equally as much pleasure as a fair written one, provided it expressed the sentiments of the Heart which I am not a stranger to) and [] [] [] [] write as good a letter as my one, yet requires too much persuasion and enticing to write, under the mistaken [] [] [] [] properly in which I make so free as to tell him, although my Senior Officer, that he is wrong, and should embrace eve[ry] [opportunity of] writing that lies in his power, or his diffidence will got the better of his pen, and his writing will consequently go to [leeward]. I hope you will tell him what I say, or as I make no doubt he will read this, I tell you [what] it is Master Charley, you will are much worse for for [] the length of my letters to you, for as I write just what I would as to you whilst talking. I expect you will do the same [by your] Poor Jack, or stand clear, for I will not spare you, besides you are []. I am no critic, therefore, why stand for niceties between Bror. & Bror. As I have said enough on the subject I hope you will take all for the best & that Dr. Father, &c. &c. will all join on my side in encouraging you to write, and that I shall be convinced by the length of your next that you have not altogether rejected the advice of your younger Bror. Jack. Chas. do you hear?

Monday evening. 10 o'clock.

This is the last time I shall have the happiness of addressing my dearest friends before my arrival at Port Jackson, as the Stock is all on board, together with 12 Bullocks for the use of the Troops and I am obliged to conclude this in readiness to send to the Post Office early tomorrow morning, along with the rest. My last consist of 3 sheets, including one for William, and am afraid will frighten you, but it contains ~~you~~ all the news, and I must beg your indulgence for all the nonsense both in that and this.

My affectionate love to the best of Parents, to My dearest Sophy & Brors. accompanies this, trusting the Almighty will bless and preserve you all in health and every enjoyment, not forgetting all kind [enquiring] friends, and that this may find you all well, pray, my dear Father, your affectionate and dutiful Son,
John Septimus Roe

[page 3 crossed] P.S. I wonder whether Graham has been in a gale of wind yet! I dare say, if the Truth was known, he has a hundred times wished himself back again, measuring out fathoms of cloth behind his Father's counter, for I do not think he is built for the Sea, but after all that he will better be able to judge for himself. I shall feel very happy to hear of the safe arrival of the Fishing Tackle, for being a green hand, he may fall into some error about its conveyance, and it may eventually be lost. I will not fail mentioning [] particulars to both Tom. & Geo. that they may make proper enquiries upon the arrival of the Ship near [].^[12] I have not had time as yet to try the strength and efficacy of Willm.'s supply to me of his rare first cho[ice][] fortified, treble distilled fish hooks, but have not the least shadow of doubt, but they possess such superior & enticing charms as will attract all the fish round them when they are just overboard, and even catch them before they bite! A very super-superior machines upon a bowline, tell William, and in my opinion, justly deserving a []; in obtaining which, he will be at full liberty to set up as a first rate wonder of rusty hooks; but I am scribbling [] yarn of nothing but nonsense without at first intending to say more after signing my name, so will once more wish you an unwilling adieu, yet as I am determined to have the last word, I will not seal it till obliged to send it.

Tuesday forenoon. 10 o'clock.

I have just time to say that [] have been disappointed in sailing today, owing to some [] being neglected as to our pass, and we cannot sail till [] [] as the Boat is now going away I cannot with safety delay any longer. We have had a Boat race this [] [] [] [] our Whale Boat, and a Boat belonging to a gentleman on shore which has beat ever boat she [] [] [] [] beat her hollow after a [pull] of 8 miles at 7 o'clock this morning, [arriving] in about 3/4 of a [hour]. [] [] very pretty sight, and a great many wagers depended upon it. Have not time to say more. My earnest prayers [and] wishes attend you all. God bless my dearest. Adieu.

[12] Evidently "Graham" was an acquaintance of the family, presumably the son of a shopkeeper in Newbury (based on JSR's rather snide comments). On the fishing tackle see JSR, 16 February 1819 where JSR mentions Graham's interview with Captain Harwood of the *Friendship* in India. His first name would seem to have been John (in 1819 JSR refers to him as "Jo. G."). He may be referring to one John George Graham made Lieutenant on 20 September 1815. If so, JSR's scathing assessment was way off: that officer served on the East India, Cape of Good Hope and Jamaica stations, was commander of the *Icarus* by mid-1823, took a pirate and its prize off Havana in 1824, and was promoted Captain on 3 October 1825.

JUNE 1817
/ DECEMBER 1817

No. 3

Ship *Dick*, off the South West Cape
of New Holland in the Indian Ocean

“The Mermaid ... is a fine little vessel, & will mount 4 or 5 guns for her own defence against any attacks from the Natives, &c.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Eight pages, crossed in (faded) red ink, with loss.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: indistinct Plymouth stamp.

Location: SLWA, “John Septimus Roe, Papers”, ACC 563AD/2A.

This letter begins, by JSR’s estimation, a few weeks out of Port Jackson while still en route. It was added to over the end of the voyage and during their first months in Port Jackson, and thus takes in most of June through December 1817. It is in this letter, that is, that JSR sends home his first impressions of New South Wales, aspects of which have shocked him deeply, not least the fact that one can be talking with a man who seems a thoroughgoing gentleman, and only later find out he is an ex-convict. In this light, his account of officers at the dock in Port Jackson being gulled by a rather sharp set who push a child into the water to distract attention, is a lovely set-piece. The letter includes some often priggish comments on the Sydney Aboriginals, but with interesting notes on their habits, weapons, and position in the community. The letter also includes the earliest mention of the *Mermaid*, newly arrived from Calcutta (it is with evident pride he signs one section from “His Majesty’s Cutter Mermaid”).

In his next letter (6 June 1818) JSR comments that this letter was sent home by the hand of Dr. Alexander Dewar RN, on board the *Harriet*, which sailed 21 December 1817: Dewar had come to NSW as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Chapman* in 1817. JSR does not mention that Dewar was at the time under open arrest for charges of ill-treatment of the convicts in his charge.

This and the following letter, numbers 3 and 4 in JSR’s sequence, are actually part of the collection of the State Library of Western Australia. As with the previous letter, no. 2, JSR has crossed some pages in red ink which is now only partially legible. It is some consolation that this crossed section is largely devoted to more technical notes, such as a long passage on how JSR has had to draw a bill for £20 on his father, and the complications of having to send home paperwork in triplicate.

Ship *Dick*, off the South West Cape of New Holland
in the Indian Ocean, Augt. 14. 1817.

My dear Father,

Here we are, nearly arrived at the wished for Port at last, and as we are in hopes of anchoring in Port Jackson in about 10 or 12 days from this period, I do not think it acting amiss, if I commence a letter to all my dear Friends at home; though I have little news to communicate. We have run over nearly the same Track since leaving Rio Janeiro, as I did when in the *Horatio*; with the exception of the last 3 or 4 days and therefore nothing new has presented itself. We sailed from Rio on 11th June, & had a very pleasant passage to the Tristan de Acunha Islands, which were seen on night of the 25th and we passed through the channel formed between the 2 Southernmost, which is 18 or 20 miles wide. Being night we could not discern what sort of islands they were, but by the imperfect glimpse we had of them, they appeared very steep, and did not prepossess us in their favour. At noon next day, the largest island, called Tristan de Acunha was just visible through the haze, at the distance of 50 miles. Nothing material occurred till the 28th & 29th, when we passed the meridian of all our friends in England, and I once more got into East Longitude. The health of all absent friends was severally drunk, as we passed the meridians of our respective Towns, and on July 8, the Cape of Good Hope was doubled, at about 100 leagues distance.

It being then the depths of winter off the Cape, strong gales were to be expected, and were accordingly looked for by us, as since leaving the last seen land, we had experienced nothing else but strong winds & bad weather, which had completely tired the Officers of the voyage, and they sincerely wished it was over, being in no small stew, at being then off that dreadful Cape, of which they had had received such disheartening accounts, before they embarked. We had not such bad wear as was expected, though it blew hard, & on Augt. 2 were close to the Island St. Paul in the Indian Ocean, having been 52 days running 6500 miles, which was done by the *Horatio* in 35! The weather was very thick & hazy with rain on 2nd. of Augt., and although we passed within 6 miles of St. Pauls, it was not seen, and it was not thought fit to lose a fine breeze by laying too till the weather cleared up, so we stood on without seeing the island, intending to make King's Island (named after Lt. King's Father, the then Governor of New South Wales, but now dead),^[1] in Bass's Straits, to pass through those Straits formed between Van Dieman's land & New Holland, from thence to Port Jackson. Our distance today from King's Id. is about 1200 miles, and from St Pauls to King's Id. 3100, therefore we have been 12 days running 1900 miles – pretty fair for a merchantman, but it would not do for a Man of War.

[1] Philip Gidley King (1758-1808).

Since passing St Pauls we have had 2 gales, that have greatly helped to drive the Old Ship along, in one of which we were so unfortunate as to spring our fore topmast and main topsail yard, besides blowing away 2 or 3 sails, and on the night of the 5th an accident happened, which might have been attended with more serious consequences, though fortunately no material damage was sustained. The gale was at its height, blowing very hard from the SW, and in a heavy squall, the Tiller which the vessel is steered by, broke short off like a stick, close to the Rudder head. I happened to be on deck at the time, looking out for the issue of the squall, & was standing close to the helmsman when the accident happened.

The sea was running very high, and the Ship was left entirely to its mercy for a few minutes, till a spar could be brought to supply the deficiency of a tiller, while the old one was fitting again. Very fortunately the sea did not strike us in this interval (which was an anxious one, & appeared very long) or it might have swept the decks. In an hour the Tiller was again fitted, but the Ship had hardly time to feel the benefit of it, when a heavy Sea came roaring and Rolling along towards us. We saw it would fall onboard, & all hands but 2 poor Soldiers, laid fast hold of the first rope they could snatch at, just before it struck the Ship on the Starbd. quarter. It gave us a tremendous blow which made all sneer again,^[2] upwards of 6 Tuns of water washed on board, completely drenched us all, & unfortunately for the 2 Soldiers, & myself, it washed them off their legs, and carried them with great force about 2 yards, slap against me, which obliged me to let go my hold, and we all 3 fell into the water on the lee side of the deck. The 2 Soldiers thought they were over-board, & began singing out very lustily for help, as soon as they could fetch breath, which brought some of the sailors to their assistance, who naturally supposed they were severely hurt – for my part, although I was hurt at the time, I could not help laughing, when one of them laid hold of me by the arm, just like a drowning man catching at anything that came within his reach, and was trying to sing out, but excess of fear completely choaked him. All happened in the course of 10 seconds, and having got a complete soaking, I picked myself up, and felt very happy that the same sea had not struck us 2 minutes before, as it would then in all probability have been followed by 2 or 3 more, which on account of the ungovernable state of the Ship, would have swept every thing off the decks, carried away the Masts, & endangered the vessel's safety.

As it turned out, it was a very providential circumstance, & we were all thankful that it was no worse, only a few things having been washed over-board. To say nothing about the Officers & Soldiers, the Ladies in the great cabin, were in a sad plight. The tiller broke directly over their heads – I

[2] To regain full speed, but in a risky situation with a danger to the masts or rigging (OED).

heard 2 loud shrieks, & 2 of them were off in hysterics in an instant. The others [with great part] of the Officers were completely panic struck, and it was not [till] [] [] []ards, that [] could be persuaded there was no danger. [page 2] The fall I received, was not the slightest I ever got, and I hurt my left arm, or rather the Soldier-built tinker Damaged it for me, but it was nothing of consequence, and has now nearly gone off.

I have been writing part of a long letter to Tom, in readiness to send by the first conveyance to India, which may probably be by this Ship, as she conveys the 46th Regt. to Madras,^[3] after her arrival at Port Jackson, & from thence is at liberty to look out for a cargo to return to England with. I think it not unlikely that Tom & Geo.^[4] may be pretty near each other, therefore have made one letter answer the purpose of 2, by requesting Tom to enclose it, or acquaint Geo. of its most particular contents, for I don't know how long it would take me to copy it, or write a similar one, as it is already arrived at the size of 2 sheets written quite close & full, and it shall be 2ce. as large if I can find matter to fill it up with.

Augt. 31 1817. 7 PM.

It gives me great pleasure in once more taking up my pen to add a few lines, having been prevented from doing it lately by a slight attack of illness, which confined me below for several days, but through the kindness of my mess-mates I am now happily recovered, though not so strong & hearty as I was a month ago. My first complaint was a cold in all my limbs, which brought on a fever next day, and the Surgeon took nearly a pound and a half of blood from my arm, which did me a great deal of good, gave a decided check to the fever, from that moment I felt recovering, though I was so weak as to be scarcely able to walk without assistance.^[5] I weigh about 10 lbs. less for this affair, but am in hopes of fully recovering it & and my strength before we sail from Port Jackson. I've not the least doubt, but it will give you great pleasure to hear that we expect to be in that Harbour tomorrow, being now no farther off than 70 miles with a fair wind, & in case of over-running our mark, the Captain will run that distance, & then lie to, till daylight. I will defer writing more on that subject till we have arrived, when I hope to give you a good account of our Proceedings. Upon the whole, our voyage has been very good for a Merchant Ship, & instead of 6 months & a half, it appears most like 1 &

[3] The 46th Regiment, commanded by Lt.-Col. George Molle, was stationed in New South Wales and Tasmania from 1814 through 1818. They were in the process of being sent to Madras, having been relieved by the 48th. Molle and Governor Macquarie were embroiled in a vicious contretemps at the time.

[4] JSR's brothers Thomas and George.

[5] Presumably JSR was physicked by Assistant Surgeon Alexander Hamilton of the 48th Regiment, who was sailing with the detachment on the *Dick*.

1/2 that I have been onboard the *Dick* the time has glided away so quickly. They are I believe happier days than I shall spend for a long time to come, for I have had no Watch to keep, and no compulsive duty to perform, notwithstanding which, my time has not been misspent, for I have completed the sketches in both my Log Books, & nearly finished my Journal of the last voyage, besides having kept a Log replete with sketches &c. &c. of the Land, during the *Dick's* voyage. I have improved considerably in my drawing, since leaving England, & hope to make a great deal more, by the constant practice I shall have hereafter.

The Officers and their Ladies are in high glee with the thought of going on-shore tomorrow, for their sea stock of every article (patience amongst them, long ago) was expended, and for the last 3 weeks they have been living on Salt Junk,^[6] without any vegetables, and they do not half relish the line bread. I am more sorry for the females than the others, yet they have had about 2 fowls a week lately, kept & cooked on purpose for them, which ought to keep the scurvy from making its appearance amongst them for a short time, though they have been expended upwards of a week. We have been more fortunate in our mess, having had fresh meat ever since leaving Port, with very good wine, porter or spirits, of which we take as much as we like, and I think are welcome – for although the Captain has now fed us more than 6 months & a half, by which he must evidently be a loser, considering the Table he has kept, I do not entertain such a bad opinion of him as to think he grudges us our victuals, but far from it. Had some one else been in his situation, I cannot say how matters would have stood – but far otherwise, I am convinced, than they do at present. The Lord deliver me from Scotchmen, if such is the specimen, though I am happy to say I do not form a general opinion from such a mean, paltry scoundrel!^[7]

Since leaving Rio Janeiro we have found 3 new shipmates in 2 girls and 1 boy born into the world, some time since, the 2 former presented to their husbands in the 48th Regt. by their wives, & the latter by a Female servant belonging to the Quartermaster's wife. She is not above 18 years of age, & had allowed her fellow servant, a Portuguese lad, to take more liberties with her than was consistent with decency, till at last he effected her ruin, & has now some idea of marrying the poor girl as soon after our arrival as possible.^[8]

[6] "salt junk" is defined as "the salt meat used as food on long voyages, compared to pieces of rope" (OED).

[7] JSR is remembering the Scots Captain of the *Lloyds*, who had tried to charge him 75 guineas for his passage (he paid £40 on the *Dick*).

[8] I am not yet aware of the names of the two girls born to soldiers of the 48th, but I wonder if the Portuguese lad discussed by JSR in such heightened terms was one "Manuel Prado", who arrived in the colony as a servant to QM Stubbs of the 48th, and was let go for an undis-

Besides our former loss of a Mother & Child, before our arrival at Rio Janeiro, we have since experienced a melancholy loss of one poor Soldier, killed by Lightning on this side of the Cape of Good Hope.^[9] The unfortunate circumstance happened on the night of July 17, in a hard gale, with tremendous thunder & lightning. The wind happened to change suddenly, and the Soldiers who had to keep the watch on deck, were called to render assistance in bracing round the yards. They came on deck accordingly, but were so completely terrified, that they could not do anything but hold on, and were just being ordered below, when 3 very vivid flashes of Lightning followed each other in quick succession, and were followed by a total darkness, in which nothing could be distinguished at the least distance from the eye, for several minutes. In this interval of darkness the unfortunate Soldier rolled, as the Ship moved, from one side of the Deck to the other, and was at last caught hold of by one of the Sailors, & carried below. Blood was immediately taken from him, but to no effect, for he never opened his eyes, or shewed the least indication of Life, but was quite black on his head & right side. He was a very good man in the Regt., we understood from the Officers, & was unmarried. No other accident worth notice has occurred since, & our sick, to the number of abt. 20, mostly with fevers similar to my own, are happily doing well.

Friday evening, Sept. 19th 1817.

My Dear Father, I could not make any addition to my letter, till I could inform you something about this place to which [I] [] [transp]orted, & as [page 3] we have now been here nearly 3 weeks, I am afraid of having too much to write at once if I let it run on too long, therefore have once more with the greatest pleasure taken up my pen. We are surrounded on all sides by convicts, with grey jackets & yellow trousers, & I do not know which way to turn without staring one or more of them full in the face. There are certainly the most complete set of scoundrels & villains in Sydney, that ever breathed, & not a day passes but I hear of some of their handy works. It was not long since, that a Ship lying here was landing some Officers' baggage at a wharf, & a set of these gentry that are ever on the look out, were prowling about the spot watching their prey, & took an opportunity when a large case of clothes was being landed, to pretend to fight amongst themselves, with a view of drawing off the Centinel's attention, but he was too deep for them, &

closed reason. He stayed in NSW and was appointed a Constable, his name recorded variously as Manuel, Imanuel, Maurice and Edmund. His wife's name was Casey, her first name given as Ellen, Elenor or Elisabeth at different times.

[9] This soldier who had died during the voyage must have been one Peter Devoy, "who died unfortunately from a fall" (*Sydney Gazette*, 6 September 1817).

[10] Again, JSR's bête noire, the Captain of the *Lloyds* (see note 7).

finding that manoeuvre did not succeed, they pushed a child off the Wharf into the water, which immediately attracted the attention of every one – away went the Case, & when the child was picked up, no intelligence or traces of the property could be discovered, & the villains have not since been discovered. To enumerate every circumstance of the kind that takes place here, would be an endless task, therefore I will not attempt it, but will leave you to judge of them from the character of those who are sent here.

You will perhaps be surprized to hear that the *Lloyds* arrived here before us, having anchored a week before our arrival. Her stay at the Cape of Good Hope did not exceed a few days, instead of a few weeks, & accounts for her short passage. Since her arrival, it has grieved me not a little, in being obliged to dine at the same table as my old friend, 2c.^[10] He recognized me in an inst. & I him, but I turned & would not speak to him, as he seemed half ashamed to fire first broadside. I twigged him several time during dinner eyeing me with great attention, & seemed to have a malicious grin on his countenance, which in my idea at the time appeared to say “Ah, you dog, you slipped thro’ my fingers at last did you, aye?” I enjoyed the Scotchman’s spleen, though I was at the same time rather uncomfortably situated, in being placed at table near a man I could not think of speaking to, for had he opened the conversation, it is very likely we should have parted not better friends than we met, & had he asked me to take wine with him, I should assuredly have refused, so I think matters turned out for the best, and we now meet & pass each other as if entire strangers, not having exchanged one word.

I first met him at a large Dinner given a little way out of the Town, by the Naval Officer of the Port, Captain Piper, who is in reality no sailor, but a Captain in the Army.^[11] He is a man very much respected by all who have the pleasure of his acquaintance, & has given us a general invitation to go & see him whenever our avocations will permit, but I have only breakfasted once with him. Our dinner party consisted of upwards of 160, Ladies & Gentlemen, who dined under tents rigged up on a green spot, & after dinner dancing commenced for about an hour & a half, when the evening began to close in, & all hands repaired onboard a very fine brig, voluntarily used upon the occasion by her Captain, and had a beautiful sail back to Sydney – the distance about 5 miles.^[12]

[11] Captain John Piper (1773-1851) was one of the grandees of Sydney, having arrived as a member of the NSW Corps in 1791 (ADB). JSR would become close to him, and a number of his letters are retained in the Piper correspondence (SLNSW).

[12] No doubt the “elegant fête champêtre” hosted by Piper at Eliza Point, many of the guests recorded as having been “wafted to the festive spot by the Brig *Alert*” (*Sydney Gazette*, 20 September 1817).

You are perhaps very anxious to know if we have got a vessel yet, therefore to clear up all doubts & anxieties, I am sorry to say we have not, as there is no vessel at present belonging to the Colony, that will answer our purpose, except a small Brig called the *Lady Nelson*, which is now out of repair, and wants a great deal doing to her. Although small, she is a vessel very well calculated for the service, having been used by Captain Flinders, as an assistant, in his Survey of part of Terra Australis in 1802, & is now hauled up into a dock ready for being surveyed by proper persons on Wednesday next, and if the report of her condition is so far favourable as to admit of her being repaired, the Governor has promised Mr. King, that he will set a great many hands to work about her, & that he may make whatever alterations and additions he thinks proper in her refitment & accommodations.

At present we are living in lodgings onshore till a house is repaired in another part of the Town, which the Governor has appointed for us, & which Government will defray the expenses of. Everything is most confoundedly dear here, especially at the present juncture, when great apprehensions are entertained for want of corn. The overflowing of the Rivers having destroyed the most part of it, & the prospect of next harvest is very discouraging.^[13] Arrivals of corn from the English Colony at the River Derwent, in Van Dieman's Land, are shortly expected, but cannot be trusted to, as the time of the arrivals, if at all, is very uncertain, & allowance is to be made for the probable loss of vessels. The people employed & victualled here by Government are on short allowance of wheat, the proportion for 1 man pr. week being 5 pounds, whereas not many weeks ago it was 11 pounds. We all fare alike, which makes it very expensive to us in keeping our Mess, as bread is consequently very dear, & every other article in proportion. Pork is sold at 13d. pr. pound, Mutton 11d., Beef 10d., 2 middling sized fowls [6]s. [&] do. ducks 7s., a goose 7s., a dozen eggs 4s., a lb. of Butter 3s.6d., of cheese 5s., candles 2s.6d., Tea [15d.], very bad sugar 1s. No such thing as lump sugar sold here, or Mustard, indeed every article of provisions, utensils, furniture, &c. &c. is at such a confounded price, it is [] [*page 4*] enough to drive any one mad, that goes out to purchase any thing – yet there is no alternative. Buy, beg, borrow, or steal, we must do, one or the other, & I always think it better to do the first.

The house given to us for our residence is large, has 6 rooms, besides a detached kitchen,^[14] & we go into it on Monday morning, therefore as it is

[13] 1817 was one of the years in which the Hawkesbury saw destructive flooding (Hawkesbury Heritage, online).

[14] As JSR notes their lodgings were at 1 Cambridge Street, the Rocks, close to Dawes Point. This had been the dwelling of the brewer and publisher Absalom West, who offered his famous *Views* from that address (*Sydney Gazette*, 9 January 1813).



CAMBRIDGE ST LOOKING SOUTH FROM CUMBERLAND PLACE

The old Cambridge Street, much as JSR would have known it. This photograph from an album of 'The Old Rocks' by the NSW Public Works Department (1901), SLNSW.

merely the bare walls, we have been looking out for the cheapest & best bargains we could make for 2 tables & 1/2 a dozen chairs, besides cooking utensils, crockery ware, knives & forks, spoons, &c. &c. which so completely drenched me of money, that I was compelled to have recourse to what I always avoid till the last extremity, and have drawn a Bill on you for £20 at 30 days after sight, dated Sept. 4 1817, Sydney Cove. It was with the greatest reluctance I did it, and had not Mr. K. been put to very great expense in his own equipment, &c., I would have had recourse to him, as I doubt not he would have accommodated me with the greatest pleasure, had it been in his power. I'm sure it's almost time that we got to Sea, for I am sadly afraid before our vessel is repaired, we shall have made rather an expensive trip of it, especially if it will take 3 or 4 months to complete her, as is supposed.

The House we are now in, is taken entirely at our own expense, while the other is fitting, & during the 2 weeks we shall have been in it on Monday, each of us will have 2 guineas to pay, independent of our board, which with spinning out, & using the greatest oeconomy, stands us each a guinea & a half a week.^[15] After the first furnishing of our other house is over, we shall not find expenses fall so heavy on us, as our cooking utensils will answer the same purposes on board as on shore, & the other furniture will sell again. It would not answer to hire furniture, for on that tack, we should be considerable losers. Mr. Bedwell & I lived on board the *Dick* upwards of a week before we came onshore, which saved us something, and decency would not admit of a longer stay, or we might probably be there now, though not perhaps with the Captain's good will. We dine out as often as possible, & seldom refuse any invitations. I have dined once at the Regimental Mess of the 48th Regt., at the invitation of one of the Officers, late passenger in the *Dick*, & have another in store for some day next week, but which day is uncertain, as I am going to spend a day or 2 at Paramatta with Mr. King's Sister, & Bror. in law, Mr. Hanibal McArthur,^[16] on Sunday or Monday, so for the present I am pretty well off.

Bedwell has just returned from paying them a visit of 2 days, & gives a delightful account of the Motherly behaviour of Mrs. McA. & the hospitable attentive conduct of her husband, as well as the beauties of the country, of which more bye & bye, after I have seen it. We have been introduced by Mr. K., to General Macquarie, the Governor, who has likewise desired we will go & see his seat at Paramatta the first opportunity, & dine with him. It is our in-

[15] The location of their temporary accommodation on shore before they moved to Cambridge Street is not known to me.

[16] Anna Maria King, the eldest daughter of Governor King, married Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur in 1812, and they established themselves at Vineyard Cottage the following year (ADB). JSR became very close to the family.

tention to embrace his kind offer as early as possible, though at present one of us must remain behind to look after the Chronometers, &c. &c. &c. which we dare not trust out of sight amongst such a rascally set of fellows. Mr. K. is now in contract for a house near his brother in law, to settle Mrs. K. comfortably in, before he sails,^[17] & when ready, he intends transporting the Chronometers to it, which will admit of B. & myself spending several days together at P. at the earnest request of those good people.

I have made no use of the half & half sort of recommendations I received to People in this part of the World, nor is it my intention to do so, as I think it better left alone. A Person here is obliged to look 2 or 3 times before he forms any acquaintance with another, for a Man may be talking to anor., very respectably dressed, & of genteel appearance, & on making enquiries about who & what he is afterwards, finds to his surprize & mortification that his new acquaintance is a convict. What an acquisition! I know most of the Officers of the 48th. now, having bee introduced by those who came out in the *Dick*, and we are on very good terms. They appear to be a very gentlemanly set of men, and are a more sober, quiet set, than any Officers I was before acquainted with.

Sept. 25th. No. 1 Cambridge Street, Sydney.

You see we are at last in our Government House, where we let go our anchors on the 22nd., and are now getting a little to rights, after the hurry & bustle consequently occasioned by getting into a new house. Its situation is a very pleasant one, on a rising ground, but it has the disadvantage of being the very outside house in the Town, & of course very much exposed to the attempts of all the House breakers. However, we have only to prepare for them & keep a good look out, with which I've no doubt we shall be enabled to handle them pretty roughly. Besides us 3, there are 3 servants living in the House, who are Men going with us in our little vessel,^[18] and a Man in the Kitchen, whose wife we have engaged to cook for us, for the accommodation of being allowed to reside & wash clothes there. The House of itself is not a very excellent one, being neither wind or watertight, for when it rains smartly, the roof leaks in 5 or 6 places. A garden is attached to it, in which grow little else but strawberries, with a few figs, grapes, &c. and our time of residence here will be so short, that we do not think there is any fun in cultivating & gettg. it in order, for others to derive the Benefit.

[17] At this time King lived at Rosehill Cottage, on the corner of Phillip and Church Streets in Parramatta.

[18] I do not yet know which of the crew to which JSR refers, but it would be interesting to discover. Perhaps they are implied to be convicts.



JSR, Vineyard cottage, residence of H. H. Macarthur Esq. 1812 to 1820; SLNSW.

Octr. 6.

We are at present very bare of news of any description, but our fate appears to be drawing pretty near to a crisis, & we shall I hope very soon know in what vessel we are to sail. The *Elizabeth Henrietta*, a Brig of about 120 Tons burthen [arrived] [here] a day or so ago, & the Governor had an idea of putting us onboard of her, [page 5] thinking her the best & fitted vessel for our purpose, but a small sloop has since arrived from India, & being exactly the size we want, besides being very strong, & a good sailer, Mr. King is endeavouring to persuade the Governor to purchase her. She is built of Teak wood, only 9 Months old, & was launched at Calcutta. Her dimensions &c. &c. &c. all operate strongly in her favour, & I shall be very happy if can obtain her, though apprehensions are entertained that the Governor will not pay the Sum demanded for her, which is £2,200 with all her rigging, stores, &c. as she arrived, & at present stands.^[19]

[19] The *Elizabeth Henrietta* was a colonial brig built in the Government Dockyard in 1816, wrecking on the Hunter River in 1825. The Indian-built Cutter is, of course, the *Mermaid*.

Involved in doubt and uncertainty about it, as we now are, I will say no more, but I can add something more satisfactory. I returned the day before yesterday, from a visit to Mr. Hanibal McArthur & his wife at their delightful seat call Vineyard Cottage, about 14 miles from Sydney. I went with Captn. Harrison of the *Dick*, in his Boat, & remained 4 days, or rather remained 2, & was pressed for 2 more . The treatment I received there was truly hospitable, & could be only excelled by that which I always meet at HOME. Their endeavour to render us comfortable, and to make our time pass pleasantly, were very successful, & I had a fine view of this country for about 10 miles round.

The face of it wears a far different aspect to that round Sydney, being here fine low land with a rich luxuriant soil, & about Sydney a mere heap of stones & rocks thinly covered with earth & verdure, & the trees growing out from the very rocks themselves apparently, & having very little root. The most barren soil is here the rendezvous of the largest trees. They are often seen growing on the edge of a steep rock, where a person would scarcely imagine there was sufficient soil for the nourishment & growth of a furze bush. The trees all over the country are mostly stripped of their bark, which the natives take away for building their nightly huts, & having no fixed habitation, they assemble in families round a tree that appears pretty dry, which they set fire to at the root, it is not long in catching fire, & burns with rapidity, frequently consuming the shrubbery, & partially burning the surrounding trees, at the distance of several hundred yards around. I have seen the sides & summits of many hills that have witnessed this treatment, and present rather a desolate appearance to the neighbouring ones, which are naturally very highly coloured, & covered with Foliage to the water's edge. The Climate appears to be excellent, though a fair judgment cannot properly be formed of it by me as yet, as the Spring is now just going out, & the season succeeded by Summer (far different with you) which renders cloudy unsettled weather, very frequent & quick changes of great heat to rather a damp coldness, & chilliness in the air, very common. However the weather will soon come to some settled point and by that means be rendered more pleasant.

There are some few peculiar constitutions that the Climate of this country does not agree with, but I feel great pleasure in being able to say that mine is exempt from that particularity, & that since I have been onshore, my health & strength have been considerable improved. I am very sorry than I cannot give so good an account of my eyes, which neither improve, or get worse, although I constantly apply the eye water. Dear Mother's Stock of Hungary Water ^[20] being all expended, I have been making use of a mixture which

[20] Chambers (1728) defined this as "a distill'd Water, denominated from a Queen of Hungary, for whose Use it was first prepar'd... made of Rosemary Flowers infus'd some Days in rectify'd Spirit of Wine, and thus distill'd" (OED).

Mrs. King has been kind enough to supply me with, and which was made by her Mother for her Daughter's use. It has she says been approved of by several physicians previous to being made use of, & is prepared in the following manner, according to Recipe. "Take a 1/4 lb. of Allum, 1/4 lb. Saltpetre, & 1/4 lb. White Copperas, & pound them together. Put these ingredients into a new glazed pipkin, and place it on a slow fire, stirring it constantly with a clean stick. When it has boiled a short time, take it off the fire, & stir into it 1/2 a dram of camphire. Cover it close with leather or paper that the camphire may not evaporate. Put it in the Chimney corner that it may dry. When dry break the pipkin, & place the contents in small pieces in a dry bottle, close corked, & covered with a piece of bladder. For use. Dissolve a piece the size of a nutmeg in about a pint of spring water, & if too strong add more water. It will strengthen the sight, cure any sore eyes & inflammation in the eyelids, & may be used 5 or 6 times a day, if the eyes should require it." Mother might shew this Recipe to any Physician or Surgeon she might think fit, & take his opinion on it, for although I am far from entertaining a doubt of what Mrs. K. says, it would be more satisfactory to both of us to be certain of my proceeding on a good foundation, as well as adviseable to be set in the right, or a better way, should the above mixture not meet with approbation. Therefore as Sight is the most precious gift of our Creator, so it is likewise the most serviceable, & should stand in [need] of no practicable method to be preserved. If my Dear Mother can give me a better recipe than the above, I need not be at the trouble of requesting you to communicate it in your next.

The Natives of this Country have the most quick & penetrating eyes of I think any nation in the World, for the unexampled rapidity & precision with which they will discern any distant object with the naked eye, is truly astonishing, & I have heard it remarked by those who ought to know something about it, that it is not equalled any where. They are in their persons & manners the most miserable, wretched set of human beings, that ever existed – at least to our judgment, but perhaps in their own ideas quite the contrary. They are a very ugly race of beings, & built quite out of all proportion, the arms & legs bearing a greater resemblance to the Ourang Outang's [*page 6*] than to those of ordinary men, on account of being so uncommonly slender. Great numbers of them frequent the Town daily, & bring fish &c. to exchange for bread, rice, Tobacco, & Spirits, the latter of which they are uncommonly partial to, & are soon quite intoxicated with a very small quantity. I have been greatly diverted several times by seeing frequent battles between them, when in this state, especially their women who are only covered with a piece of a blanket, or old cloth, linen, &c. tied round their middles, in which state they contest long battles with the fist, in imitation of an English boxing

match, but without seeing each other the whole time, being afraid of receiving white eyes. Most of the females have conceived a high notion of delicacy from being in the habit of witnessing the inhabitants of the Town always clothed, & generally follow their example, being plentifully supplied with the means of doing so, by presents of blankets, old clothes, &c., but some who have not been much in the habit of visiting the Town, but live principally in the bushes, walk about with the greatest unconcern & simplicity, with no clothes on whatever, and without even so much as to cover the spot where Eve placed the fig leaf. Loud jeers & laughing are of course their attendants in all their motions round the Town, till some one presents them with apparel, which they will put on at the moment with the greatest apparent satisfaction, but on entering their old haunts again in the bushes, they will cast it aside or sell it, & appear again in the Town as formerly, till completely hooted & shamed out of it. The Men appear to have no such an ingredient in their composition as shame, nor do they know, I imagine, what it means, for although most of them are clothed, some will walk about the Town, begging, with nothing on but a Short Jacket, others with 1/2 a shirt, some with a hat, others with a pair of Trowsers buttoned behind, & when they are presented with old blankets, which is their chief & favourite dress, they will make it fast round the neck, & allow it to fly away behind. In short so many ludicrous & uncommon scenes presented themselves on my first walking about the Town, that Bedwell & myself nearly burst ourselves with laughter, on reciting them at home.

Although measures are taken to prevent this indecent way of making their appearance in the Town, it cannot be finally accomplished with having recourse to harsh measures, which will not accord with their hasty passionate tempers, & they might in the end entirely abandon the Town, whereas the Governor is holding out every encouragement & inducement in his power to favour their visiting it. I have several of their spears and fizgigs by me, which I will send you by the first opportunity. Some of the former are 12 feet in length, made of the wood of the Country, & pointed very sharp with a hard heavy wood, similar to ebony. They throw them with great precision, in which they are assisted by another piece of wood called the throwing stick, which is about 2 feet long, & barbed at one end. Against this barb, the end of the spear is pressed by the left hand, the right holding the other end of the throwing stick, & embracing the spear with the thumb & fore finger at the same time. In this position, the throwing stick & spear being held over the right shoulder, or nearly so, the latter is thrown in the same manner as a girl would throw a stone. The fizgig is an instrument with which they spear fishes, & is in reality a spear with a great many barbs at unequal distances from each other. The workmanship is very rude & rough. There are a great many

more weapons &c. made use of by the Natives, which might be interesting in a voyage, but in a letter & penned by so poor a hand, can afford little or no amusement, and will occupy more time & space than I can well spare from what I have hereafter to yarn about.

Talking about time, you will probably enquire of some one, how it can be employed when I am onshore here with nothing to do, and nothing to draw my attention but projects for my own ease and comfort! But I'll tell you, for a person that is otherwise inclined need never be idle, for every moment, every hour that passes will never more return, & if spent improperly may at a future period, be reflected upon with sorrow. My usual hour of rising is about 1/2 past 6, sometimes 7, but I generally am down below before 7, & as the heavy dews which fall during the night render walking very unwholesome & damp at that hour, I either bathe in the Cove,^[21] or, if unfavourable weather prevents that, finish what I had left incomplete on the proceeding night, as I fancy during the morning before breakfast, my head is clearer than at any other time of the day.

At eight o'clock one breakfasts, after which 3 out of 8 of the Time Keepers belonging to different people here, which they have placed under our care, are wound up and manoeuvred a little, & by nine o'clock we commence taking observations on the Sun, in order to find the ratio of the watches, &c. &c. This generally lasts for 1/2 an hour, & from that time to near noon, I either calculate & work the observations taken, or amuse myself with drawing. At this time more observations are made, for noon, when the other 5 Chronometers are wound up, compared with each other, &c. &c. &c. and about 2 hours are occupied as before, when it is time to look out for the afternoon obsns. on the Sun, to correspond with those taken in the forenoon. That is, when he has the same altitudes in descending, as we observed in the morning while he was ascending. This being settled, Bedwell & I take a walk till 4 o'clock, at which hour we dine, & again resume our walk till seven, when Tea, or Scandal broth,^[22] is drank, & the remainder of the evening occupied in working the observations taken during the day. If those are adjusted early, I write [*page 7*] or read till 12, which is my earliest hour of retiring generally, & I then do ample justice to my pillow, by not awaking once till it is time to rouse out.

It frequently happens that rainy weather spoils our sport, and prevents us taking any observations. In that case I amuse myself with Writing, Drawing,

[21] Presumably JSR means Sydney Cove itself, given the location of their house, but he might just as well be wandering down to Cockle Bay or surrounds.

[22] "scandal broth": tea, but with the obvious overtones of gossip. The OED dates the phrase to *Potter's New Dictionary of all the cant and flash languages*, second edition (1795).

or Reading, with now and then a touch at Maritime Surveying, on which Mr. King has plenty of Books, for being something almost new to me, it is very requisite to be studied, with the prospect of this voyage before me. I have just finished for Mrs. McArthur, a sketch of Vineyard Cottage, which at her request I took while there, but not without many long preambles & prefatory remarks upon being no landscape painter, &c. &c. However, the attempt has happily succeeded & given satisfaction beyond my expectation, which is the greatest happiness I can feel, for their kind behaviour to me has been so very kind, that I could refuse them nothing that it was in my power to grant. I must take anor. the next time I go there, to make a pair, & hope to be as successful as with the last.^[23] Mrs. King, who lives with them till her husband can procure a house near their's, persuaded Mrs. McA. that I drew, which was their sole motive for making the request, & gave them hopes which were not realized of seeing something very grand &c. &c. but I am happy in having met with their approbation, & Mrs. M. has since requested sight of my Logbooks. Mrs. K. will very soon fall to pieces now, & I sincerely hope will be successful in making young sailors, for they all treat us like brothers – even Mr. King's Mother in England, who never saw us, desired in her last letter to be remembered, as “we feel great interest in the welfare of every one you are concerned with” were her words to her Son, when she desired remembrance. Mrs. M. has 3 very fine children, & is herself about 26 years of age. Her husband abt. 31 or 32, & they have got completely in a little paradise with a well cultivated farm, & lands all round. The River runs close to their House & has a very pleasing effect.

Having no more at present to write, I must conclude till my poor pen can give you some decisive intelligence concerning our vessel, or till the Ship *Hariet*, by which I propose sending this, is ready to sail. She is expected to leave Sydney for England at the latter end of this month. I dispatched a very long letter to Tom by the Ship *Matilda*, which sailed for Madras with Troops on the 23rd. of last month. I did not forget the birthdays in Sept., or the one preceding it on the 27th and suppose mine will be not far off when this reaches you. In May next I enter my 21st year – getting an old man, Chas. aye? It is now striking [] o'clock, & I must reluctantly bid you good night on account of my not wishing [to str]ain my eyes, or more properly good afternoon as it is scarcely 3 o'clock [with] you, therefore you must not tell me I keep late hours for you w[ill b]e going to bed, after I have done breakfast. Goodnight Chas. Do you hear the [] speaking to you? Chas.? It's very odd. Do you hear?

[23] One of JSR's sketches of Vineyard Cottage was recently acquired by the SLNSW (SV/309); see above.

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*. Sydney Octr. 25th.

I will not attempt to describe, my Dear Father, the pleasure which I feel in having it in my power at length to direct my letter as above. The *Mermaid*, mentioned before in the beginning of this sheet, was purchased by the Governor's directions, with her rigging, sails, all her stores, &c. &c. &c. for £2000 on the 16th inst. and we are now fitting her out with all possible dispatch on our part, though the people at the Dock Yard work so confoundedly slow, being convicts, that we shall not get to Sea in a Month, although very little is to be done. She is only 45 feet in length, & 85 Tons burthen. The *Horatio* was 1098 Tons, by which you will perceive there is a little difference in the size of the 2 vessels, but although small, the Cutter is a fine little vessel, & will mount 4 or 5 guns for her own defence against any attacks from the Natives, &c.

The Cabins, &c. &c. &c. have been all pulled down, and are now rebuilding with alterations & additions according to our own plan. We shall all sleep in standing bed places, built for the purpose, with wooden bottoms, so with the motion of the vessel & our hard beds into the bargain, our bones will be very sore for the first few months & it will take some few weeks before we shall be so far accustomed to it, as to get any sleep. I expect to be very sick indeed on board of her for a short time, but I must grin & bear it, for one consolation will in a great measure soften that inconvenience, that is, a frequent run ashore, and the constant change of scenery, which will take place during our excursions alongshore. In so small a vessel the accommodations and conveniences are necessarily so contracted, as to prevent the possibility of our being able to sleep in cots or hammocks, as in a larger vessel, & by the time we return from our first cruize, I shall be able to give you an idea of how we fare, &c. & how I like it.

Mr. Cunningham, His Majesty's Botanist here, is going with us,^[24] together with a gentleman by the name of Arnold, who is both a Botanist & Surgeon in the Navy, & is coming out in a Convict Ship daily expected (called the *Friendship*) for the express purpose,^[25] which together with Mr. K., B., myself, eighteen seamen & (it is supposed) a Native, will compose the whole of the Officers, Crew, &c. on board. Mr. K., the 2 Botanists & ourselves will mess together in the Cabin, where there will be as large a table as the size of the place will allow, with a skylight directly over it.

[24] The first mention of Allan Cunningham, the botanist who would sail with them.

[25] In the event only Cunningham joined them, no man called Arnold ever sailing with King. From the description, it seems likely that the man JSR had in mind was Joseph Arnold (1782-1818), "naturalist and naval surgeon" (ADB). Arnold had twice visited Sydney, on HMS *Hindostan* in 1810 and as the surgeon on the convict ship *Northampton* in 1815, and he was certainly known to Sir Joseph Banks, on whose advice he travelled to Sumatra in 1817.

(Go on with the red ink 1st. page [] [*page 1 crossed*] continued from page 7).
 My [] [] [] [] [Ship very] [] [] [] On the 15th [inst.] [here]
 [] [] [] [] [] [] [] place [] amount, or rather as soon the
 [16th] [] [] [] [] all be [] [] a Bill on [Govr.] [] for a quantity
 of a [] [] [] [] [] [] towards [] the very heavy expenses of our
 [living]. In case I [want] more money [apply to] Mr. King [it will not take]
 [] [so long] [] [] [] the Bill I drew on yr. [] on the 4th. of
 Sepr. date will go by the same conveyance as this letter & Mr. King [having]
 [] [] so [] [] [] [] 30 days to [] [] the money before []
 [] payment will be necessary, after the Bill has [] [] [] to you for
 [payment] therefore I sincerely hope you will not be distressed and that []
 [] [] [] [] [accounting to the] [] [] [] 3 Bills [] []
 [greatly the] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] that one is [] there
 [would] (“this very first drawn Bill [] [] [] [] [] [] [] being
 [] [] [] [] . The 2nd. [] [] this [] and if I ever [] [] [] []
 [] [] a form always [] for [] [] one bill at [] [] [] [] []
 of the first [] [] [] last on it passage home [] [] is the case, [] []
 is presented to [] [] for payment, [] [] [] 3rd. but when one is
 paid, you always have it [in] if our possession to show against [] [] []
 [] apply to you with [] [] of the other [], and is as good as a receipt
 from the [] [] . I do not know whether you understood it before but
 thought it proper to explain [it in] [] [] [] [] [] any mistake
 might occur by your [thinking] I had drawn 3 Bills on you instead of one
 [] [] I recollect.

You might have [] [] before, as I drew a Bill on you at the Cape of Good
 [Hope] [] [] & conceive [] bound in the *Horatio* in the beginning of
 Octr. 10/6. Therefore this [] [] [] [] be [] [] . I hope you have
 long [ere] this will reach you, or before this [] [] [well] [] [] Letters
 from [] Rio de Janeiro. [] finished May 29 1817 & sent by a [] []
 Brig called the *Comet* [] [] [] . [] [] 9 & sent [] [] [] []
 [] [] [] [] called [], reached [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 [] [] [] [] [frigate] reached [] [] [] [] [] the [] of
 [little value]. Several [] [] [] frozen England [] [] have been
 here, by which I have been [] King out. [] [] [] but have been disap-
 pointed & indeed could not reasonably expect [] as you could not []
 [] [] [] address. Several opportunities have offered of [] sending you
 this letter by the [] [] [] [] but I did [] [] any of them, so good as
 by the *Comet*, that sails thirty-first [] [] [] the Ships [] to []
 [] [] [] there for a cargo, [before] she sails, which [] [] [] []
 [] [] [] [] for 2 or 3 months. I am happy to [] that the arrival of
 ships from [*page 2 crossed*] [] [] very frequent [] [] Bror. [] [] of

sending to [] I am in great [hopes] of returning [][][][] [][][][][][] for we should [][][][][] return to [][] before [then] or 12 months [after] expired from the time of our [][][][][][][][][][] but the French Ships is [] the coast before [] as the last accounts [] [received], stated her to be on the [point] of sailing from France, and we have been now very nearly 2 [months] [here] doing nothing, while [others] were gathering the credit we ought to have been seeking.^[26]

The [][] lies somewhere, but where I will not take upon myself to say, though I [dare say] [][][][][] first to [acct]. It is well known that we could do nothing without a vessel, [] or [][] given [][]. No blame can, in [a case] [] be attached to Mr. K. [] did all in his power, by [application], but I'll say no more about it, you may form [] [][][][] as to who the fault is attached to, & who is the person to [][] these things.

December 10th. 1817.

As we are at last on the point of sailing on our intended expedition, I must bring this to a conclusion, as we shall very likely be at Sea, before another week has passed, & I am in hopes that this letter will be therefore likewise. A Surgeon in the Navy, going home in a ship called the *Harriet* which is to sail on the day after tomorrow,^[27] has promised to take this for me, together with one I must write to Mr. Nichols, acquainting him of the reason I do not return his loan of £20.^[28] Our living is not now so expensive as it was on our first arrival, surplus of grain, &c. having been brought here [][] several ships, but it is still bad enough, & with the fitting out of our new mess with utensils, [], stocks &c. &c., would have left me quite dry had not Lieut. King very kindly lent me £10 without any hesitation. As we shall be very probably be 8 or 9 months at Sea, where we cannot spend money, I am in hopes that our next arrival in this Port will set us all to rights again.

[26] This passage is so damaged as to be one of the more indecipherable sections of the letter, but JSR is clearly and openly concerned about the work being done by the rival French expedition of Louis de Freycinet.

[27] Alexander Dewar RN, who had come out as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Chapman*, and was then being investigated for the treatment of the convicts on board. He went home under open arrest.

[28] JSR was very close to the Nichols family, and he named "Nichol's Bay" on the Australian coast after them. Based on notes in JSR's letters they lived at 2 Chatham Place, Hackney (in 1817) and Seething Lane, off Fenchurch Street (in 1828). They must have been old friends of the family because he was visiting them while still at school, however JSR seemed inclined to find the patriarch of the family rather officious in later years. The Seething Lane address must imply that this was actually John Nichols, of Green, Nichols & Co., ship brokers.

Our accommodation onboard the *Mermaid*, I am happy to say, bid fair to be very comfortable, and have just been painted. We have some notion of going onboard altogether tomorrow, with our baggage &c. &c. &c. but as several small articles are yet wanting to complete our equipment, it will be full a week before we start from this place. To give you some idea of what we shall be doing, if you will refer to a map, you may trace [out] through [*page 3 crossed*] Bass's Strait (formed between New Holland & Van Dieman's Land) from thence along the West coast of this country till we arrive at the North West Cape, where our examination will commence & be carried Northwd. to the Land about Endeavour & Torres Straits, which we shall come through on our return to Port Jackson.^[29] It is out of my power to say what length of time we shall be absent. but we have provisions &c. &c. onboard for nine months, & with fishing, killing Kangaroo, birds & turtle we might make it spin [out] much farther if occasion required it, but if circumstances require our remaining out, & will not admit of our returning to Port Jackson, Lieut. King intends to call in at Coupang, in the Island of Timor, or some other settlement thereabouts, for provisions, which will enable us to remain out a considerable time longer.

I dispatched another letter to India a day or 2 ago, by a ship called the *Lord Eldon*, that sailed from England since the *Dick*, with convicts. It was directed to George, & entrusted to the care of the late commander of His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*, who is going to Calcutta, from whence he has engaged to forward it. I dined with the Governor a day or 2 ago. He is married & has an only child, a boy about 3 years old, called Lachlan, after his Father, and is completely spoiled.^[30] He has been very ill lately, & was nearly killed by the kindness of the Doctors, who all appeared to think that they could not display their affection for the patient in a more forcible manner, than by drenching him with physic, [therefore] plied him so closely with the contents of their shops, that they have made a regular leaky medicine chest of him, & the poor fellow looks now as if he could not help it.

In comparing the first date of this letter with the last, it appears quite an old one, yet I trust it is nonetheless not the less acceptable, and that it will reach you safely. By the time you receive it we [should] be hard at work on the North West Coast of Terra Australis. The *Friendship* [has] not yet arrived but is daily expected here with our Surgeon, Dr. Arnold, but if she does not arrive by the time we are ready, we shall not wait for her. Mr. Cunningham, a Botanist for the Prince Regent, is ready [& he] will make 4 of us in the

[29] This proved to be their itinerary – in broad essentials – except they returned via the South Coast of Australia, not through Torres Strait.

[30] Lachlan Macquarie Jnr. was born to Lachlan and Elizabeth in 1814, and was notoriously pampered. He died, dissolute and in straitened circumstances, in 1845.

Cabin. The Governor wanted to appoint another Midshipman, a [] of his, who would not be of any use whatever to the expedition, but merely [] to [page 4 crossed] to sail in the Cutter for the convenience of serving the [remainder] of his time as Midshipman, having [for] been about 5 years in the Navy, but the imposition was strongly remonstrated against & we hope [entirely] given up, as it will be putting us all to a great inconvenience if he is forced upon us, & his company is not to be kept by any respectable persons, his Father being little better than a convict, independent of which he is a very quarrelsome young man, & would not at all agree with us.^[31]

On my return I shall hope to find letters from HOME, till when I trust the Almighty will [keep] & preserve you all in health, [heart] & happiness. Give my most [affectionate] love to dear Mother, Sophia & Brothers, hoping they will write to me, & my dear Father accept the kind [] from your ever dutiful & affectionate son,

John Septimus Roe

I had almost forgotten to tell you that one of the triplicate Bills which I drew on you since my arrival has been sent home by the ship *Lord Eldon*, [since] [] [] [ready], & the 2nd. will go with the same ship as this letter, which I think there is no doubt [] [get] home first as the former vessel has to wait in India some time for a [cargo] [to be] home, and the *Harriet* goes direct to England. Mrs. King has been safely [delivered of] a fine boy which is christened Philip Gidley, after Lt. K.'s late Father, the former Governor of this Island about 10 or 12 years ago.^[32] I have several times been [] [] asked to visit her at M. & H. McArthur (Lt. K.'s sister) I never [] from any other [strangers]. So much hospitality & kindness

Stephenson on Morbid Irritability of the Eye.^[33]

[31] It is not clear who this young man was.

[32] Elizabeth and Phillip's eldest child Philip Gidley King (1817-1904), who would later sail with his father on the *Beagle* to South America, before returning to Australia and becoming a pastoralist.

[33] This note appears to be written in a second hand, possibly that of the Rev. James Roe, no doubt thinking about JSR's long discussion of his continuing problems with eyesight. The reference is to John Stephenson's monograph *On the Morbid Sensibility of the Eye, commonly called weakness of sight* (Hartford: 1815).

DECEMBER 1817
/ JUNE 1818

No. 4

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
moored off Coepang In the Island of
Timor, Indian Ocean.

“In order to terrify & punish them for the affair of last night, a round shot was fired among the trees over their heads, which dispersed them instantly, & not one was to be seen till a party went onshore to fill water casks, under the directions of Mr. Bedwell.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Ten pages, partially crossed in red ink, damaged.
The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berkshire | England
Postmarks: “Liverpool Ship Letter” and round oval post office stamp (possibly for 23 Jan?).
Location: SLWA, “John Septimus Roe, Papers”, ACC 563AD/2B.

An important letter: this is the first letter home with an account of actually sailing on the *Mermaid* and all of their close surveying work. It was sent home from Kupang, in Timor, by a Chinese Brig bound for Batavia (as JSR noted in his following letter). Dated in June 1818, it describes the six months after they sailed from Port Jackson on 22 December 1817, sailing through Bass Strait to the Recherche Archipelago, via King George III Sound (Albany), Exmouth, and as far as the waters around Goulburn Island, before heading for Timor. The letter is the first to be explicit about a little tension between JSR and Bedwell, the two Master’s Mates (Bedwell had seniority, as JSR was only too aware). JSR is consequently delighted to announce that PPK has, unbidden, named Mount Roe in his honour: he is delighted with the honour *per se*, and not displeased that it just happens to be slightly taller than the neighbouring Mount Bedwell.

Most significantly, it includes a great deal of exceptionally detailed notes on a series of fraught and openly violent meetings with different Aboriginal tribes on the north coast, and much too on their cautious interactions with the Malay fleets then fishing in the region.

This letter has some problems with legibility and not only because the third page has a long passage of six-and-a-half lines which has been completely deleted by JSR: this is one of the letters which includes a large and partly indecipherable section of crossing in red ink.

N^o 4.

The Managers of the Bank of England
to the Hon^{ble} Secy of the Admiralty
Jan 2^d 1798

My Dear Sir,

Nothing gives me greater pleasure than your success
in convincing my Genl to visit to my friend, Captain & Surgeon
who have I hope long and that success has what I have already sent
The last was N^o 3. 2813 from the Duke of Devonshire's Regt. of 1797 to appear
but it is sent by the hand of a surgeon on the ship St. James, your honor
as a passport in a ship called the Associated, if the particulars in which
(troubly you have crossed it) I shall be able to communicate the order
from the Post Jackson at the same time as the appointment, on 22^d of December
has last night passed off the same evening.

You will perhaps be a little surprised at the above state of my letter, but
to explain it we have just arrived here for water, and fresh provisions
promised to return to the Post Jackson for provisions, &c. &c. a report
for the post to sail from here on or about the 15th or 16th inst. — a
letter on the point of writing for Belton with covering this to the Admiralty
then from Belton at water meet with a more direct passage to
England than if despatched from the Post Jackson by the way of Lisbon. I
have still however numerous doubts to settle over such a plan, for I know
by experience that commanders of merchant vessels are not generally
that desirous of Liberty, and may probably be equally so scrupulous
in the present instance — we must however hold for the best.

The little business has now been about 5 months from the Post Jackson, which
is a long time to be being almost entirely when all provisions & general
naturally include that first must, vegetables & fruit are very dear, &
we have, nevertheless, had but very little of either, although the vessel
has been long back, & whole days. Application was in the first instance
made to the Governor, who advised us to his Agent on the spot, giving
him directions to procure every thing we stood in need of, but that Agent
is not ~~now~~ favorable from the circumstances, who collect what is
needed, would in a very short time have settled here with a great quantity
but he has been so very dilatory in his proceedings, although ready
to pocket my money, that no consent has been referred to the Governor
but have nothing more to do with him — believe us what is required
is about the town if it can be got, what is but seldom, I am frequently
after the departure of some necessary articles, which have brought the
Voyage to charge & time has passed. — Captain, as a poor
man, has been obliged to the Debt, though bills by only 40 pounds
above, & above of what could withstand he was for a pair of bellows, or
a pair of instruments — but by I write such Expenses, or unpaid
minutiae, I do not think I the Post Jackson to Birmingham have done
otherwise than with him — In our act of the House, in answer to a

No. 4.
His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*, moored off Coepang
In the Island of Timor, Indian Ocean.
June 8th. 1818.

My Dear Father,

Nothing gives me greater pleasure than once more resuming my pen to write to my Dearest Relations & Friends in England, who have, I hope, long ere this, received those which I have already sent. The last was no. 3 dated from SW Cape of New Holland Augt. 14 to Sydney Decr. 10, & sent by the hand of a Surgeon in the Navy, Dr. Dewar, going home as a passenger in a ship called the *Harriet*,^[1] of the particulars of which, (trusting you have received it) I shall make no more mention. She sailed from Port Jackson at the same time as the *Mermaid*, on 21st. of December & we lost sight of each other the same evening.

You will perhaps be a little surprised at the above date of my letter, but to explain it: we have just arrived here for water & refreshments, previous to returning to Port Jackson for provisions, stores, a refit &c. &c. & expect to sail from hence, on or about the 12th. or 14th instt. A Brig, on the point of sailing for Batavia, will convey this to the settlement there, from whence it will meet with a more speedy passage to England, than if dispatched from Port Jackson by the way of India.^[2] I have still however, anxious doubts of its ever reaching you, for I know by experience that commanders of Merchant vessels are not over particular in their delivery of letters, and may probably be equally as remiss in the present instance. We must however hope for the best. The little *Mermaid* has now been absent 6 months from Port Jackson which is a long time to be living almost entirely upon salt provisions, & you must naturally conclude that fresh meat, vegetables, & fruit are very desirable. We have, nevertheless, had but very little of either although the vessel has been lying here 3 whole days. Application was in the first instance made to the Governor,^[3] who referred us to his Agent, (an Englishman),^[4] giving him di-

[1] Alexander Dewar RN, who had come out as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Chapman* and was being investigated for the treatment of the convicts on board. He went home under open arrest.

[2] JSR does not name this brig sailing for Batavia at any point.

[3] The Governor was Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart, a former merchant and lieutenant on a VOC ship, who held the position from sometime around 1809/10 until at least 1833, with several breaks during the Napoleonic and immediately post-Napoleonic era (see Steven Farram, 'Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart and the British interregnum in Netherlands Timor, 1812-1816', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, online).

[4] The Governor's Agent was possibly J.M. Tielman, who is given due notice in the journal of Rose de Freycinet (*A Woman of Courage*, pp. 54 ff.). The Freycinet voyage artist Jacques Arago executed a wonderful watercolour of a visit to his house.

rections to procure every thing we stood in need of, but stock, fruit &c. are purchased from the mountaineers, who collect what is bespoke, & would in a very short time have supplied him with a great quantity, but he has been so very dilatory in his proceedings, though very ready to pocket any money, that his conduct has been represented to the Governor & we have nothing more to do with him. Whatever we want is now purchased about the town, if it can be got, which is but seldom, & we frequently suffer the deprivation of some necessary articles, rather than trouble this blackguard to charge us 6 times their prices. Coepang is a poor miserable town, belonging to the Dutch, though held by only 40 Javanese soldiers, not one of which could withstand the wind from a pair of bellows or a good wind instrument. Lieutt. King & I waited on the Governor, on our first arrival, & Mr. Bedwell & the Botanist Mr. Cunningham have since been introduced, & dined with him. He is a native of this place, is married to a [page 2] lady of the same colour as himself,^[5] & is very much of the gentleman. This settlement has 2cc. been taken from him, by a very small English force,^[6] & according to his own accounts, I entertain no very high notions of his courage, but that commodity I have at this time nothing to do with, on his part, for while he will supply us with water & refreshments, our expectations are fulfilled, & we have all that is desired.

To give you a detailed account of all our proceedings since leaving Port Jackson would fill about 2 quires of paper, & perhaps prove not very interesting. I must therefore confine myself to particular subjects, omitting all past dangers &c. &c. &c. as matters of rejoicing & congratulation, at having been weathered. I was as you may well suppose, excessively sea sick, upon embarking in so small a vessel, & have not yet got over it, for we have been so continually inshore & in comparatively smooth water, that I am frequently sick, when we lose sight of the land, if there is any thing like a fresh breeze or heavy sea. After leaving Port Jackson we had some very heavy weather, blowing exceedingly hard for several days together, & not knowing the vessel's real qualities, whether good or bad, we looked anxiously sometimes to see how she would behave, & were much gratified with a result equal to our wishes. The gales above alluded to, did us no further injury than retard our progress considerably, for the time & oblige us to run for shelter under the lee of Furneaux's Islds. after which, finer weather succeeded, & we arrived at King George's Sound on the South Coast of New Holland, on 20th. January 1818.^[7] There is no settlement here, but our principal object was to complete with wood & water & take some necessary observations for the Chronometers, which be-

[5] The "Governor's Lady" may have been one Adriana Wilhelmina Hazaart.

[6] On the complicated history of the region, see Farram, 'Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart.'

[7] Modern Albany, an important harbour in the Colonial era.

ing completed in 10 days, we set sail again for the Northwest coast of New Holland, where we arrived on 10th. of February, & immediately commenced to explore a deep opening to the Eastwd. of it, & which Lieutt. King has named Exmouth's Gulf, after Lord Exmouth, under whose command he has served in the late war.^[8] The hottest weather, which we felt on any part of the Coast, was experienced there, the whole of the surrounding country as far as the eye could possibly reach, being one dry arid desert of sand & rocks, which retained the immense heat of the sun in so great a degree, as render the air extremely hot & oppressive.

The first time we anchored in this Gulf, cost us one of our best anchors, which we parted from in the morning, & the very next time the anchor was let go, one of its flukes was broken off by the rocks, & we narrowly escaped being driven onshore upon this desert place, so that the object of the expedition was nearly frustrated at its commencement, & we had only one more anchor fit for holding the vessel, in a breeze, with which it was thought extremely hazardous to venture upon a barren unknown coast, so pregnant with danger. Nevertheless, being unwilling to give it up at so early a commencing it was resolved to hang on as long as the remaining anchor would do its duty, and although we have rode our several pretty strong' breezes, & bent the anchor in 2 places, it appear to be as good as ever, & will probably carry us to Port Jackson.

It was in Exmouth's Gulf that we began to know each other more exactly, with regard to the Service upon which we had embarked, & for reasons which it [*page 3*] does not appear absolutely necessary to mention (as you might possibly think it a vain boast on my part) I was enabled to render more assistance to Lieutt. K. than my Companion Mr. B., & in fact the whole of the duty which should have been equally divided between 2, fell upon the shoulders of one only, & was sometimes more than he could well sustain. However, by perseverance & a wish to contribute as much as possible towards forwarding the service, it did not lose much, & I was the constant attendant of Lieut. King onshore to take obsns. which enable me to see more of the nature of the country & its productions than could possibly have come within my observation had I remained onboard the Cutter. So far, & with the approbation of my superior officer, I should have been perfectly contented, but a sort of jealousy was awakened in the breast of a 2nd. person, who unjustly supposed me, instead of himself, to be the cause of his not receiving so much attention, as an equality of services would have entitled him to, & which he thinks is due to his acquaintance with a certain noble personage in England.^[9] It is therefore, sometimes, squally, with thunder & lightning: the

[8] Admiral Edward Pellew, First Viscount Exmouth (1757-1833).

[9] Bedwell's patron, George Annesley, Earl Montnorris and Lord Valentia.

clouds being attracted by the high land, yet they produce serene weather afterwards, & every thing goes on with its accustomed smoothness, till the clouds again begin to gather.

After getting out of Exmouth Gulf, from the midst of sand & rocks, a very low shore succeeded, covered with that intolerable pest the mangrove bushes which makes landing almost impossible except in particular spots rarely to be found, & the interior covered with a long prickly grass, called Spinifex, which is extremely annoying to the feet & legs, & makes them very sore. Immense heaps of sharp, rusty coloured stones of ponderous weight, are there seen in every direction, & appear to be placed by the hand of Man, but whole ranges of hills being formed in the same manner were probably immense masses of rock in the first instance, struck & broken into so many smaller pieces by the Lightning, which has left indubitable marks of its being very vivid & destructive in its effects. Upon referring to a map of the World, or of this Country, you will see, Rosemary Island situated near the North West Cape. There are a great many Islands thereabouts which we were occupied some time in Surveying, & among the many Bays in the Main Coast at the back of them Lieutt. King kindly offered me the privilege of naming one, which I accordingly did, by calling it after Mr. Nichols, & it is now named on the Chart, Nichol's Bay.^[10] Had it been large enough & of sufficient importance to have borne the name of my patron, Sr. Richd. Keats,^[11] I should most assuredly have given that in preference, but being no more than 6 or 7 miles wide & deep, it would be offering no compliment to his rank in the Navy.

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I do not give up the idea of being able [*page 4*] to name some Cape or Headland worthy of it after both Sr. Rd. Keats & Sr. C. Cole,^[12] which cannot fail to be gratifying to the feelings of either. You are perhaps impatient to know whether I have got any thing named after myself, but I must exhort your patience a little longer, knowing you will not approve of a digression from the regular thread of my story.

[10] Now more usually Nickols Bay) near Karratha. JSR was very close to the Nichols family.

[11] Sir Richard Keats, JSR's most enduring and influential patron.

[12] Sir Christopher Cole, JSR's other patron, and former commanding officer on the *Rippon*.

After examining that part of the coast & the Islands above mentioned, the wind came strong against our future progress along that continuation of it, & the season of the change of the Monsoon, from NW to SE being at hand, and is generally reckoned the most sickly season of the year, our plan was laid accordingly, (which it would be uninteresting to detail) & we stood off from the coast, as well to avoid the heavy rains which are to be expected in-shore, as to proceed to the North Coast of the Island & prosecute its examination from East to West, with the commencement of the SE monsoon. Some very dangerous reefs (near which we passed in the *Horatio* on our outward bound passage to China) & whose situations, extent, appearance, &c. &c. would be of infinite service to the Navigation of these seas, were situated several hundred miles from any land, in almost an unknown part, & they became the next objects of our research.

After looking about for them in the most probable situations that they might lie in, from the various accounts given in books, they were at last fallen in with, the day after Charles's birth day.^[13] There were 3 in number, situated 10 or 12 miles from each other, & I could not but look with a mixture of thankfulness & horror at the tremendous line of breakers which formed their outline, when I reflect upon the number of vessels that had been wrecked there, & upon the small distance we must have passed from them in the *Horatio*, sailing at the rate of 10 or 11 miles an hours, in the dark. The depth of water appeared to be unfathomable at the small distance of a mile from them, for with 220 fathoms of line we could find no bottom, & it was thought useless to veer more (a fathom is 6 feet).

Fortunately for us we had fine weather while among them, & having ascertained their exact situation, by numerous & good observations, they were lost sight of on the following day, as we proceeded to the Northwd. & the 24th. of the same month brought us in sight of the North Coast of New Holland, upon the examination of which we immediately commenced, & have been continually at it till the 1st. day of this month, when our stock of water, which we were once fortunate enough to replenish, began to get very short, & we were upon a reduced allowance when a great deficiency was found to exist in the quantity supposed to be in our only remaining 4 casks, one having leaked entirely out, & all the others being several gallons short of the proper quantity.

Any farther delay upon a coast where it was impracticable to obtain that precious article, was therefore imprudent, & we have out in here for a fresh [*page* 5] supply, to carry us to Port Jackson. It will probably be upwards of 2

[13] JSR's brother Charles Roe was born on 14 March 1792.

months before we reach that place, and it will be as much as we can do to make the provisions hold out, for bad weather had made such havock among our dry provisions, particularly the biscuit, that we have for some time been upon two thirds allowance of that article, & as we cannot procure any more here, thoughts are entertained of making the allowance still more limited, but I dare say we shall do very well, & be all ready for the salutary nourishment & repose, which for a couple of months, will probably be found at Sydney.

But to return to the North Coast of New Holland, of which I have as yet told you nothing. Its examination afforded us a little more pleasure than that which had previously left, although in many places it was very low, & covered with mangroves near the sea. Traces of Malays, who come here to fish for Trepang (a kind of blubbery soft fish, which sells well to the Chinese)^[14] were every where seen, & put us on our guard against that treacherous perfidious race of Beings, whose natural piratical dispositions might, by the small size of our vessel, [provoke] them to some act of violence. None of them were seen till several days had elapsed, when we were standing in for an anchorage we had occupied but 2 or 3 days before, & 10 or 12 sail of Malay proas were observed in the same place, some at anchor, & others under weigh.^[15] Having our long boat towing astern, with which we had been wooding at another island 2 or 3 miles distant, she was immediately hoisted in, our decks cleared of all lumber, & the 3 Guns being cleared away (a terrible force for a Man of War) they were double shotted, & in case they might think we were afraid of them, & were running away, we bore down for the body of their fleet at anchor under a small island, & upon hoisting our colours & pendant, they all shewed Dutch flags, & not less than 100 of them were collected upon the summit of the island, to look at us, exactly in the same spot that our observations had been taken on, for 2 or 3 days before. We took no notice of their waving to us, but with a fine commanding breeze, we passed the whole of them at anchor to the number of 13, within 1/2 a mile, & having run along the coast & carried the examination 12 or 14 miles farther than was originally intended that evening, we stood off to sea at dusk in the evening, in order to disappoint them if they followed us, & made the land again at daylight next morning. The wind was then blowing strong in our favour, & we were on the point of entering a fine bay that was seen abreast of us, & which promised good shelter & anchorage, when these Mahometans were observed coming down towards us before the wind under all sail.

[14] "A marine animal, an echinoderm (*Holothuria edulis*), called also sea-cucumber, sea-slug, sea-swallow, or *bêche-de-mer*, eaten as a luxury by the Chinese" (OED).

[15] Now usually rendered "prahu": "In Malaysia and Indonesia: a type of undecked sailing boat, usually with a large triangular sail and a canoe-like outrigger" (OED).



PPK, Interview with the Malay Fleet, Copeland Island. SLNSW.

We had kept in readiness to receive them, during the whole of the preceding night, & now hove to off the Entrance of the port in sight, to see what they were after, & whether we were the objects of their attention. They soon came down to the number of 16 sail, having between 20 & 30 Malays in each, and [page 6] passing in shore of us, stood directly into the Bay, which we were congratulating ourselves upon having discovered, thereby disappointing our views & leaving us still in the dark with respect to the tendency of their manoeuvres. When they had all passed us, we followed the sternmost, but by superiority of sailing got ahead of the whole, & crossed the mouth of the Bay, towards another beyond it, in which the anchor was let go at 4 or 5 miles distant from them, a low neck of land being the only separations between us. All remained quiet during the night, & before the day had dawned they were all perceived under weigh, in the offing, & divided into 2 squadrons, one of

which consisting of 8 sail, accompanied by as many canoes with 8 or 9 men in each, stood towards us, & the other squadron proceeded to another part of the Bay. Thinking these movements very singular, & not knowing what might be their intention in appearing to follow us up so closely, the anchor was weighed, and with the usual precautionary measures we stood towards the headmost of them, which was the largest, & full of men. With red hot irons in readiness for the touch holes of our guns, & every man with his musket, pistol & cutlass, lying on the deck beside him, we passed within 1/2 pistol shot of her on opposite tacks, while they hailed, & as well as they could, informed us they were from Macassar, fishing for Trepanng. They made many signs & motions to us, pointing towards that part of the Bay which they were going to, as if for an invitation to us, to go there, but being well aware of the consummate treachery which will for ever mark the character of these ruffians, we paid no more attention, than making signs of noncompliance, in return.

In this manner we passed the whole 8, not one of whom (had it been their intention) had the courage to commence an attack upon our little vessel. because they saw we were prepared for them, & for us to have commenced an attack upon them, would have been both imprudent & unprovoked. After we had passed the whole, they all altered their course, collected in a body, & stood alongshore to the westward, leaving us entirely at liberty to prosecute the examination of both Bays, without any interruption, except from another fleet, for we were to windward of our late visitants, & there was not the smallest chance of their being able to beat up to windwd.

The survey of the 2 Bays above alluded to, was completed in the course of a few days & we then fell in with 23 of their canoes fishing alongshore, with 8 or 10 men in each. The vessels to which they belonged soon afterwards appeared, & it was resolved if possible, to communicate with them, as Lieutt. King was in possession of a letter from Coll. Raffles, formerly Governor of Java,^[16] written in the Malay language to explain to any we might fall in with, what was our occupation, & desiring them not to molest us. This letter we imagined would have cleared away any idea of jealousy which might have been entertained on their part, if they supposed we were upon the same expedition as themselves, & which idea, it became necessary to remove as soon as possible, for a misunderstanding between us might frustrate every purpose of our voyage, & from their greatly superior force place us within their power. With this intention, sail was made after the sternmost of them, who was at a little distance from the rest and [*page 7*] notwithstanding our signs, holding out the letter & every thing we could do to induce him to heave to, she would not comply, but spread every stitch of his canvas to come up with

[16] Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826), the British statesman, founder of Singapore, and author of *The History of Java* (1817).

the body of this fleet. Finding it useless at this time to attempt a communication, we stood back again, intending to wait for an opportunity: which shortly afterwards offered, & was effectually made use of, by our standing into a Port where 4 of them laid at anchor, with tents & large fires onshore, curing their Trepang. Not being so shy of this number, we anchored in the same Port, about 2 miles from them, upon our shewing English colours & a white flag at the Mast head, they hoisted Dutch, & a canoe shortly afterwards came onboard of us, with 2 men who appeared to have some authority over the rest.

Our communication was a little embarrassed from ignorance of each other's language, but they immediately understood us when a chart was shewn them, though they were not sufficient scholars to read the letters. Wine, tea, biscuit, & a few other things, including several pounds of Gunpowder were given to them, & in Return they gave us some fresh fish. Every thing which came within reach they did not fail to ask for, even the cups & saucers out of which they drank, but they were not encouraged in this, & on returning into their canoe, invited us onboard their prows. This honor, was however refused, & they returned in the evening, gratified with their reception. As we should perhaps have had too many visitors, if we had remained there another day, the anchor was weighed in the morning, & we proceeded on the further examination of the coast. None of them have been since seen by us, & we now learn that they leave the coast of New Holland in the Month of May, and that the whole body of them consists of about 200 sail, separated into small squadrons of 12 or 14, which keep together for defence from the Natives, who are extremely hostile to them, & invariably collect their strongest force to attack them.

We have, ourselves, experienced the inveteracy which exists between the 2 Nations, by having several times been attacked in our boats, & while on shore taking observations, watering, &c. &c. The first affair we had with them, was at a short time after we arrived on the North Coast, when having discovered fresh water upon an island near the Main, we commenced digging wells to collect it into, & a wooding party was dispatched on shore to fell trees for fire wood. No traces of Natives were observed on the island, & when the party returned on board to their meals, they left their saw, hatchets, & other tools behind, in readiness for the afternoon. I chanced to be upon deck, & casting my eye towards the beach, immediately missed some flags, which had not many hours before been struck upon poles, to assist us in the Survey of the place.

Mention was instantly made of it, but no person had brought them off, & on looking minutely among the bushes with our glasses, 5 Natives were observed crouching behind the trees, & sneaking along towards our wooding place.



PPK, Interview with the Natives at Luxmore Head in Melville Island. SLNSW.

Having arrived there, they immediately seized the tools, & were impatiently looking about for more, when a musket ball was fired into the midst of them. This took them so completely unawares, that some fell flat on the ground, while the others retreated with all possible dispatch through thick & thin, towards the interior of the island, & were not seen again for some time. They were at last discovered among the high grass by the reflection of the Sun on a new crosscut saw which they had taken, shining full in our faces. They imagined themselves concealed, but we distinctly saw all [page 8] our wooding tools in their possession, & by way of retaliation & punishment upon these thieves, Mr. Bedwell was dispatched in an armed boat to endeavour &

find their canoe, while Lieutt. King & myself landed with 2 men (all of us armed) to finish the observations we had begun upon. The latter were just completed, when we were gratified with a sight of our boat coming round a bluff point of land with a canoe towing astern. A short visit was made to ascertain the extent of the mischief done at the wooding place, & we returned onboard without receiving any molestation or seeing any Natives, although some of them were probably watching us all the time.

Mr. B. had found the canoe in the next bay to us near some Natives' bark huts, & there were 10 or 12 Natives armed with long spears, standing over her, as if for her defence, but they all retreated upon the boat pushing in, & suffered 1/2 their number to carry off the canoe. She was immediately recognized to be of Malay construction & was probably stolen or taken by force from some of the prows that had visited this island, for in the night, before the moon was up, our long boat was missed from astern of the vessel, & on looking round, she was perceived inshore apparently being paddled towards it. She looked so large in the dark, that she was at first taken for a Malay boat that might have some designs upon us, & all hands were in an instant upon deck, shot flew about her like pease, till it was found to be our own boat, which was not till Lieutt. King, 6 hands & myself, with fire arms & cutlasses, had put off to see what she was, & we immediately brought her onboard. Upon examining the rope (3 inches thick) with which she had been secured, it was found to be jagged through, as if with a shell, or a very blunt edge tool, & it was immediately concluded that one of the Natives had swum off, under cover of the night, for the purpose of regaining possession of their canoe by stealth, but she had been hoisted up after the evening closed in, & being disappointed in his expectations, the Native thought he would not return empty, therefore took the largest of our boats, and was either towing or paddling her along, for a great splash was heard in the water, upon our first discharge of musketry.

This affair set us upon our guard, & was the first specimen afforded us, of the dispositions of these people. Next morning, we removed the vessel to another part of the island, to water, & upon letting go the anchor about musket shot from the shore, for the protection of our party, between 18 or 20 Natives were seen on the summit of a piece of rising ground, looking at us with great attention, & appearing to be holding a consultation of which we were the subject. In order to terrify & punish them for the affair of last night, a round shot was fired among the trees over their heads, which dispersed them instantly, & not one was to be seen till a party went onshore to fill water casks, under the directions of Mr. Bedwell. The watering place was at the foot of a perpendicular white cliff of about 200 feet elevation, from a hole in which the water exuded pretty freely, & the casks being rolled onshore upon the

beach, were filled by means of buckets. The party had not been 10 minutes onshore, before 6 or 8 Natives made their appearance on the summit of the cliff directly over their heads, & commenced throwing & rolling large pieces of rock upon them. Very fortunately, the height was too great to admit of their taking a good aim, & the preconcerted signal for the people to retreat to the Boats, being made from the Cutter, before one stone was thrown.

Mr. B. happened to be looking at us at the instant, & immediately giving the necessary orders for retreat & self defence, seized a loaded musket that (proceed with the Red Ink, page one) [*page 1 crossed*] Continued from black ink page 8. laid near him, & discharged it full at the foremast [fellow] [] party [] to take effect, & a general discharge [] was repeated 3 times, while the Natives hove 3 vollies [] [] [] they could lift. They then retired, as if [wounded], having stove our long boat with a piece of sharp [rock] & [] [] the crew, though not dangerously. Lieut. K. [] by this time left the vessel in an armed boat to their assistance, & dispatched the other boat onboard for a [fresh] supply of ammunition & arms, while he guarded the casks &c. &c. &c. that had been left onshore. [The] Natives did not however, make their appearance again till next day, when all the crew but 3 hands were [dispatched] on the watering duty, under the direction of Lieut. King, who left me onboard with directions to [] without them, & make the appointed signal as soon as any Natives should appear. Their numerous [] were observed at a little distance from the first range of [], & they were soon observed in motion, to the [number] of 40 or 50. There might probably have been more, behind the [bushes] for they appeared very solicitous to [] [] [], & were very soon perceived to have 4 or 5 spears each, & to be making towards our party on [their] hands & knees. Not an instant was lost in making the signal for the Cutter, which was immediately [attended] to, & having previously loaded our 3 guns, I let fly one of them, right into the centre of the Natives, among the trees, through which they were [sneaking], thinking [them] [] unperceived, and the [] & [] [] [] about their [] so quietly that they seemed not to know which way was best to run. Some fell [], others ran which way appeared clearest, tumbling over each other, & the whole disappeared among the bushes in the most precipitate manner, to avoid a [repetition], which would certainly have followed if they then persisted in their attack.

The watering then went on quietly, 2 Boats lying off [] [] the party, & the 3 guns pointed towards them, in case their assistance was found necessary. I could afterwards perceive several of the Natives with 4 or 5 spears each, walking towards their fires [], apparently much disappointed at the check which they received. They were a tall well made set of men, though rather slender, & perfectly naked, having bushy heads of jet black hair, without any

ornament whatever. Their spears were about 8 or 9 feet long, & appeared to be very sharp at the [] [], though now being [thrown] at any time, we could not ascertain what they were pointed with, &c. &c. [*page 2 crossed*] Having completed our water without any farther interruption from the Natives, we [] [] this inhospitable place, with whole [bones], & the black fellows' canoe, the latter of which would have been returned to them with a few presents, had they expressed an inclination to return the stolen articles. To [recount] the various interviews that we have at various times had with the Natives, would be an endless task, & occupy more of my room & your time than would perhaps be necessary, & too much might prove [] []. Suffice it to say, that all our communications have been by means of spears, stones, & shot, [] [] we found them extremely hostile in every part, [occasioned] by the presence of the Malays on [this coast], whose treacherous & perfidious dealings with them, have rendered the Natives equally as bad.

We have several times had very narrow escapes of being cut off in our boats, one day in particular, when Lieut. King, Mr. Cunningham, myself, & a boat's crew of 5 men, proceeded in one of our boats to examine a part of Van Dieman's Reef, called by us Knocker's Bay. It terminated about 6 miles from the place at which the Cutter was anchored, & there was a small river at its head, whose banks were very thickly covered with tufty bushy mangroves. Its breadth did not exceed in the widest part 16 or 18 yards, which narrowed so much as we proceeded up that the branches nearly touched the boat on both sides. Having with the tide in our favour, proceeded about 2 miles up this narrow inlet, we were convinced from its appearance that it was nothing of importance & were returning the way we came, as well as we could, by pulling the boat ahead by the overhanging boughs. Nearly 2 thirds of the rivulet was cleared when the rudder caught by a branch that laid across the stream, & hung her for a few minutes till it could be cut away, in the act of doing which, we heard the voices of Natives a few yards distant from us, & 6 or 7 were observed swimming across from the side on which we were entangled, to that opposite, all being below us, at a narrow part we had to pass.

Well knowing, from experience, the savage ferocity of the Natives, we [] [] laid hold of our firearms, while they set up the most hideous & loud shouts of [] exultation at having cut us off. Our situation called for the utmost resolution & [] on [our] [] [] [] the rudder of the branch which had entangled it, nothing remained [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [*page 3 crossed*] as we passed. Lieut. King discharged a small [] [] [] shot [] [], enough [that] upon their first shout, which seemed to have touched some of the [] [] [] by a discharge of ours which by the cries of some of them, must have done some execution. They retreated [into] the trees, but it was [only][to] return our salute, with stones & spears, for before a second

discharge of musketry could be poured upon our assailants, we were greeted with several of both. Fortunately for us the whole of the country was under water & afforded them but a scanty supply of stones, & the bushes were so thickly entwined together as to prevent their spears being thrown with precision. The latter were nevertheless handled & thrown with great dexterity, & would have done considerable injury had they not been knocked down with the muskets. Owing to the disadvantages under which they were thrown, some fell short of us, others were clear over, while many struck the boat or were warded off by the muskets. So long as any spears or stones were thrown, & voices were heard, one continued discharge was to this spot

The [eyes of] Bongaree, the Native Chief of a Port Jackson Tribe ^[17] were like those of an eagle, & he [perceived] them running among the Mangrove bushes towards a projecting point that formed a very sharp narrow turning which we had to pass, & from whence (if they possessed sufficient courage & inclination) they might have boarded us. Our situation was at this moment critical, for there was not room enough to row with the oars both sides & they would bare reach the [] at their full length, but being well aware that our deliverance & lives depended entirely upon the Almighty's will, carried into effect by our own exertions, & that we should receive no mercy if we fell into the hands of these savages, every possible endeavour was used to get [free] to the [turning] while the 3 muskets were ready to discharge as we passed. This was happily accomplished, although the tide was against us, & we passed the point into a greater breadth, without receiving more than 3 spears, one of which grazed our Steward's head,^[18] & the others struck the oars.

Although we could not see our opponents, after the commencement of the affray, our fire was constantly directed [*page 4 crossed*] towards the spot from whence voices of spears were observed to issue. After passing the narrow turning before alluded to, the use of our oars enabled us to keep ahead of the Natives, & we soon afterwards got out of the River, into the open Bay, where we could not but congratulate ourselves on our fortunate escape. Our last farewell of them, as they were seen skulking among the trees, was by means of our firearms [& if] none of them were wounded then or previously, they were as fortunate as ourselves, for not one of our party received any material hurt. Their number amounted to about 10 or 12 [] which by the

[17] The first specific mention by JSR of Bungaree (d. 1830), the Broken Bay man who had earlier sailed with Matthew Flinders and became one of the grand figures of Sydney, drawn by artists from Augustus Earle to Charles Rodius.

[18] The Steward was one Ralph Clarke (d. 1841), who had sailed to NSW on the *Dick* with JSR, and later settled in the Hunter region.

noise that was made on both sides would have been speedily augmented, if any accident had prevented our getting clear of the River.

While rowing along the opposite shore [to] complete the examination of the Bay, a canoe was observed [tied] to some bushes onshore, & we instantly pulled in [&] cut the rope with which she was secured & towed her out [as punishment] for the wanton attack which had been made on us for we had not the smallest doubt of this being the property of our assailants, who could not arrive in time to afford her protection. We had scarcely got as far as a musket shot from them with our prize in tow, when they were heard calling to each other in the woods, & no doubt were excessively mortified & ashamed of themselves, when they observed the manner in which they were punished, for the canoe had upwards of a bushel of famous large cockles in her, which appeared to have been just collected, & destined for the supper of the whole party. She was composed of the bark of a large tree, sewn together with [strips] of bamboo, & strengthened by a long pole on each gunwale, & [] across by rope made of reeds common in this country. There were also in [here] 6 [] heavy [slabs] (called [] construction, & cut with sharps edged tools, obtained [][] the [][][][] carrying 8 or 10 men, & was neatly made, [][][][][][] floating near this vessel and was brought onboard by one of our [boats] [][][][] from anor. part of the coast, it was not our wish to detain [them] I took her on shore accompanied by a hatchet [] [*page 5 crossed*] old chisels, files &c. and 3 or 4 strings of beads. [][][][] carried away by the high tides I hauled her on shore upon a rising piece of ground [][][] about her, accompanied by the Vessel's name, in large letters written on a piece of paper which they might shew to any other Ship that would arrive afterwards.

One of their spears was found near the anchorage, leaning against a tree. Mr. B. was the finder & brought it onboard. It was 15 feet in length, pointed at the end with a sharp piece of granite stone 4 inches long & [1 1/2] inches broad, which by the quick circular motion which they have in the air, would inflict an awkward wound. Nothing has transpired at any time, to give us reason to imagine that they are cannibals, for around the numerous fireplaces, which are occasionally seen, great numbers of shells, turtle & fish bones, together with those of Kangaroos, Emu, birds, &c. are seen, but none which we could compare with those of the human frame.

We have now finished the examination of those parts which are frequented by the Malays during the fishing season, & our next commencement will be upon a very different part, near which we have found the Natives harmless & friendly, & complete children of nature, for they threw away the presents of hatchets, red [caps], bread, &c. &c. which were given them, & seemed to enjoy nothing better than their wandering idle life.

Now I have given you an account of a few of our various & (to us) interesting proceedings, you will doubtless be happy to hear that we have as yet escaped the sickness which usually attends long voyages at sea, although 6 months is a long time to be deprived of fresh provision, & other nourishing diet, the greatest attentions has been paid to cleanliness & good order onboard the vessel, which, together with not a too limited allowance of fresh water, has succeeded in expelling [that] [] [] has given a considerable check to the appearance of scurvy, only 2 or 3 being slightly attacked with it.

But after all this yarn, I had nearly forgotten to mention a thing which I am certain will give you great pleasure, & of which you were all very solicitous to [page 6 crossed] [reassure] me, at our last happy meeting. I allude to your wish that I should not fail to request Lieut. King would name something after me. This he has kindly done, without being asked, & at our next interview I hope to show you a drawing of Mount Roe, accompanied by Mount Bedwell close to it. They are 2 very remarkable hills, situated in Van Dieman's Bay, on the North Coast, and well covered with trees of various kinds. Lieut. K. has honoured me with a distinction which, although it cannot fail to be highly gratifying, I could readily have dispensed with, by affixing my name to the largest & most remarkable of the 2, a preference which equal service would have entitled Mr. B. to, on account of his seniority in the Navy. The pleasure which the [] felt, upon this occasion, could not but be [] by the circumstance, and add additional fuel to the fire already made. The land which surrounds them is low but covered with wood, and being about 2 miles from the sea, may be seen from a Ship deck at the distance of 30 miles, & more in clear weather. I hope this has met your utmost wishes, for I can assure you it is an honor which I did not aspire to, & cannot without great injustice be changed by any future Navigator.

We have discovered many very fine Harbours & Ports on the North Coast of this country, which will undoubtedly add to the usefulness & credit of our labours, & will not be in the smallest degree undervalued by the great care & pains which have been taken in their examination & survey, to carry on which, I feel excessively happy in having embarked with a gentleman by no means wanting in abilities of inclination. I am very sorry to say, he has been attacked since our arrival at this place with a fever & severe cold, which are the fore runner of the sickness encountered at this place, but by bare & proper attention, is getting better, & will I sincerely hope, soon recover. My health is at this time very good, & we have been extremely fortunate in not having lost any men, tho' a very narrow chance occurred a day or 2 ago, by a man falling overboard.^[19]

[19] Presumably JSR is referring to the time when the convict cook William Cobbey fell overboard in Lethbridge Bay, on 15 May. Cobbey was pulled out of the water unconscious but survived to become one of the great stalwarts of PPK's crew.

It will probably be 2 months from this time before we arrive at Port Jackson again, & remaining there about 2 months, it is proposed to start again, to prosecute our examination, which cannot be finally completed in one voyage, & will render another necessary, therefore the termination of our labours is yet at some distance [*page 7 crossed*] & the time of their final completion extremely uncertain. Each voyage occupies 9 months or thereabouts, from the time of sailing till our return again at Port Jackson, & would be of longer durations if we could stock more provisions, but as we shall not sail again without a medical man, & Lieut. K. intends to make an addition of 4 more hands to our present crew, we shall not be able, without great inconvenience to stow more than 7 months provisions, I look forward with great pleasure to our arrival at Port Jackson, which will doubtless give me some news from Newbury, & perhaps from India. As there are frequent communications with this place & Batavia, in the Island of Java, I must not fail to write to Thos. & Geo. by this opportunity, being the quickest channel to India that could possible offer. This letter will go from Batavia to India, & from thence to England in some homeward bound ship, therefore before the contents can be made known to you, it will have gone nearly round the world. I am entirely at a loss to imagine what is going on at home, but trust that you have escaped all the civil broils which were under weigh when I left the country, & that al is now peace & quietness. Chas. & Willm. remain, I suppose as before, & together with my Dear Sister & Mother should have heard separately from me, but time & a multiplicity of work will not permit me to do as I wish, & one letter I consider as tantamount to 12 a dozen addressed to the same roof. Therefore I hope to be excused for not writing to each.

When you see me again, I shall be a complete Blackfellow for being under the necessity of exposing ourselves to the sun at all hours of the day, we are sometimes fairly roasted, & I shall never again be able to stand the cold climate of England so well as I formerly have done. My eyes still continue bad, & are rendered worse than before by continual looking out, & so frequent use of a spy glass, as our profession requires. I nevertheless take as much care as I can of them, & on all occasions spare them when not wanted. I must endeavour to get a pocket eye glass to assist my sight the first opportunity. It will give me great pleasure to be assured that the Bill for £20 which I was under the necessity of drawing upon you while at Sydney did not arrive at an unreasonable time, but notwithstanding the enormous price of every article at that place, my pay will perhaps be more than sufficient to supply me with every thing.

[*page 8 crossed*] We find the greatest difficulty in purchasing best blue cloth at Port Jackson, for what little there is at that place is [] also extravagantly dear, that an uniform coat would not cost less than £11 or 12, without the

expense of Buttons, which are not to be had for ten times their weight in gold. I must nevertheless procure a best suit of [my] [], for I have nothing fit to wear in public. My finances will then allow of such an extravagant expenditure, independent of which, I am in hopes of being able to repay you some of my very heavy debts. I promised to send Mrs. Nichols a bird from this country, while I was in Town, which I must endeavour to fulfil, accompanied by one for my dear Mother, as I know she is fond of them, and there are some very handsome ones at P.J. though very few can be found that will speak. The voyage homewards is also so long, & trouble so great, independent of the various climate passed through on the way, & the willingness of any one to take such a charge, that it is 10 to 1 if 1 out of 10 arrive safe or alive. The trial shall nevertheless be made, & may by chance succeed.

Our time was variously occupied while surveying the Coast of New Holland, and we anchored every evening (if anchorage could be found) to prevent any accidents which might happen, from being upon a coast utterly unknown to any European, during the night, but good anchorage could not always be found, for our one anchor, and we then stood out for sea always for [that] night, & [came] in with the land again by daylight next morning. The few times that the vessel has struck or run ashore have fortunately done her no injury except [about] her copper, & in every other respect, we are tolerably sound, though rather wet in our beds occasionally in rainy weather, or in a strong breeze & high sea. Lieut. King & myself are upon deck all day while land is in sight, independent of which I keep 8 hours watch out of 24, besides writing my journal, sketching, writing a fair account of all bearings of land, &c. &c. (the whole of which, for reasons unassigned, pass through my hands) and working, calculating, &c. all astronomical observations taken in course of the day. So you may well imagine that we are not idle, & that it would not answer if all of us obtained our situations by means of interest alone, but that is too frequently the case, & causes the weight of duty that should be equally divided to fall very heavily upon the shoulders of a few, Nevertheless I do not repine as long as the service does not materially suffer [& while I have Power] to do my duty. You see I am hard up & must of necessity refer you to [][][][][] .

[page 9] I hope that the length of my letter will be a sufficient apology for the stuff which it contains, & must at length relieve your patience by assuring you that the conclusion is drawing on apace for want of more matter, or room, to proceed farther. Although yours to me may not be so voluminous, I shall be perfectly contented if it contains the welcome intelligence of your being all well. 3 years is a long time, my Dear Father, to wait, before I shall probably be assured of it in person, but it is comparatively short when I consider the

case of Brors. in India, & must be awaited with patience. Nevertheless one cannot help sighing for *Dulce domum* now & then, however useless we may think it.

Charles, do you hear? here's a letter from John. Come rouse out & hear the end of it. Willm. has been up these 5 minutes & got all the news. This I suppose is the broadside received by Chas. with his mouth wide open, catching flies with it, in his ship, if he is at home, but if not, he will doubtless read it with equal pleasure, & just come in for the assurance of my unbounded regard, for his and all your welfare & happiness, & with kindest love to dear Mother, Sophy & the 2 Soldiers, accept my dear Father the sincere love & duty of your ever affectionate Son

John Septimus Roe

JUNE 1818

/ AUGUST 1818

No. 5

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*,
Port Jackson

“We nevertheless were under the painful necessity of committing to the deep one of our best Seamen, whose valuable life might probably have been saved by the presence of a medical man. Lieut. King was himself dangerously ill, on & previous to quitting Timor, owing as well to the above cause, as to excessive fatigue and anxiety. I was not without my share in the general distress, though I made it out better than many others, & now that we have once more gone to grass, am thank GOD doing remarkably well.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black “Ship Letter” and red “G” post office stamp for 1 July.

Location: SLNSW, no. 147.

The voyage back from Timor to Sydney: this briefer letter was sent home from Port Jackson about a month after the *Mermaid* arrived, said by JSR to have been put on board the ship *Claudine*. The previous letter had described the first voyage as far as their arrival in Kupang, and this continues the narrative up until late August, with an account of their run home from Timor along the south coast and through Bass Strait home, as well as much on life back in Sydney, once again enjoying the friendship of the extended families of King and Hannibal Macarthur. It is also clear that the run down to Tasmania which eventually took place at the end of 1818 was already being contemplated.

The recipient, presumably James Roe himself, has noted on the final page that the letter was received on 2 July 1819, almost eleven months after it was first begun.

My Dear Father,

I do with the greatest pleasure that I can bestow on the
 friends you did call the Clinique of Calcutta, which sailed for home in 1845
 to augment all our best talents & some of our best talents, who arrived
 at this Port on the 20th of June, after an absence of 32 weeks, all but 3 days.
 Both Holland and his wife have come to my house and are much to be
 commended. Most sincerely do I hope this will find you all in as
 good a state of health as the last account affords me. I am extremely sorry
 that I have not the opportunity of sending you news from home, having been
 disappointed at not finding success to my last letter, dated Nov. 23, 1845,
 & Corp. 1, dated 9, 1846, to that since which there have been many arrivals, &
 out from Bombay, I do not however despair of hearing soon from that quarter,
 as fresh arrivals are daily expected from Bombay, which I trust will fully
 meet all your wishes. — Your acknowledgments of my 2 last letters
 come out of course have been noticed in latter letters, the one of which was
 written in the month of June — one was from August to December 1845, sent
 by the hand of Mr. Jones, but a paper in the ship, & the other
 dated March 1846, from Calcutta, in the place of which was sent by a Chinese
 ship, bound to Batavia; but for which I am not without apprehensions, on account
 of the numerous parties which infect that neighbourhood. — Our paper from
 Calcutta was one of 3000 miles of ground, was a very unpleasant one, the
 weather had, consequently had, equalled with almost a continuation of rain,
 which prevented us doing our duties, & for the 2 weeks previous to our arrival, not
 one person out of 10 had a day out to put on. You may easily imagine our
 joy when we arrived at this Port, & got a fine day, which enabled us to treat ourselves
 with big jackets, & to dry our beds, which the badness of the papers when we
 had completely soaked. — I do not after my departure from Calcutta, most of us
 again to fill the vacancies of the changes of diet, which had lately been exhausted
 in a short a time, namely the whole of us were taken ill with diarrhoea &
 dysentery, accompanied or preceded by ~~other~~ colic. — For the first few days
 the weather was fortunately very fine indeed, & the sick got on very well,
 but the rising, stormy weather which afterwards ensued, was so pernicious in
 its effects, & so violent, & requires the greatest care and attention on the part
 of the medical staff, to avoid the dreadful state that all hands might have
 been reduced to, for want of medical advice & assistance. — Medicines
 from the Chest which was promised for us before we sailed from Port Jackson
 are administered to the best of his judgment, & supply with better good
 success, we actually were under the painful necessity of committing
 to the deck, one of our best Surgeons, whose valuable life might probably
 have been saved by the presence of a medical man. — That King was
 himself dangerously ill, on 1 previous to getting home, owing as well to the
 stage course, as to excessive fatigue & anxiety. — I was not without my
 share in the general distress, though I made it out better than
 many others, & am glad we have not more to go to go off, my thanks
 God, are, remarkably well. — The season of the Year will not amount
 to four sailing for that part of the South Coast of New Holland, last winter
 before the commencement of the Year 1846; but there is something
 to occupy our attention in Sir James's and is likely to be the result
 of

No. 5
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid, Port Jackson
Augt. 5, 1818.

My Dear Father,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I embrace an opportunity of writing (by a Ship called the *Claudine* of Calcutta, (which sails for India in 3 days time)^[1] to acquaint all my Dear Friends at Home of my welfare & safe arrival at this Port on the 30th. of June, after an absence of 32 weeks, all but 3 days.

Brother William's kind & long letter came to my hands next day, and merits my warmest thanks. Most sincerely do I hope this will find you all in as good & better health than the last accounts afford me: I am extremely sorry that I have not the opportunity of sending you news from India, having been sadly disappointed at not finding answers to my last letters dated Nov.23.1817 to George & Sept.9.1817 to Thos. since which there have been many arrivals [tho] not from Bombay. I do not however despair of hearing soon from that quarter as fresh arrivals are daily expected from Madras, which I trust will fully quiet all apprehensions. Your acknowledgment of my 2 last letters could not of course have been noticed in [Willm.'s] letter, the date of which was anterior to either of them. One was from August to December 1817 & sent by the hand of Doctor Dewar R.N. a passenger in the ship *Harriet* ^[2] & the last dated June 8.1818 from Coepang in the Island of Timor, was sent by a Chinese Brig bound to Batavia;^[3] but for which I am not without apprehensions, on account of the numerous pirates which infested that neighbourhood.

Our passage from Timor over upwards of 5000 miles of ground, was a very unpleasant one, the weather being excessively bad, & squally, with almost a continuation of rain which prevented us drying our cloathes; & for the 3 weeks previous to our arrival not one person on board had a dry suit to put on. You may easily imagine our joy when we arrived off this port, & got a fine day, which enabled us to treat ourselves with dry jackets, & to dry our beds, which the leakiness of the vessel's upper works had completely soaked. A day or 2 after our departure from Coepang, most of us began to feel the bad effects of the changes of diet, which had lately been experienced in so short a time, & nearly the whole of us were taken ill with diarrhoea & dysentery, accompanied or preceded by ~~xxxx~~ cold. For the first few days the weather was fortunately very fine indeed, & the sick got on very well, but the rainy, blowing weather which afterwards ensued, was as pernicious in the op-

[1] The *Claudine* (Liverpool, Captain Welsh) sailed from England on the 15 March 1818 and arrived in Sydney on 23 July, before sailing for Bencoolen on 18 August (*Sydney Gazette*).

[2] JSR's letter no. 3, dated 14 August 1817, sent home with Dewar (see above).

[3] JSR's letter no. 4, dated 8 June 1818 (see above).

posite extreme, & required the greatest care and observation on the part of Lieut. King to avoid the dreadful state that all hands might have been reduced to, for want of medical advice & assistance. Medicines, from the chest which was provided for us before we sailed from Port Jackson, were administered to the best of his judgment, & happily with pretty good success.^[4] We nevertheless were under the painful necessity of committing to the deep one of our best Seamen, whose valuable life might probably have been saved by the presence of a medical man.^[5] Lieut. King was himself dangerously ill, on & previous to quitting Timor; owing as well to the above cause, as to excessive fatigue and anxiety. I was not without my share in the general distress, though I made it out better than many others, & now that we have once more gone to grass, am thank GOD doing remarkably well.

The season of the year will not admit of our sailing for that part of the North Coast of New Holland, last visited before the commencement of the year 1819, but there is something to occupy our attention in Van Dieman's Land, a little to the Southwd. of [*page 2*] of this place, in the mean time, but we shall not sail from this, before the expiration of 2 or 3 months at least, by which time I hope to be in readiness for encountering a 2nd trip. Nothing occurred during the homeward bound voyage that would be interesting to relate, except what I have already noticed, & that one of our boats was washed away off Cape Leeuwin (the South West Cape of New Holland) by a heavy sea. We found the weather very cold after leaving the North Coast & crossing the Tropic of Capricorn, for although the thermometer was not much below 40° (32° being freezing point) we had it very rarely below 80°, & sometimes 97° & 98° in the coolest part of the vessel, while surveying the coast. The latter is the temperature for Blood heat, & when you reflect what the heat must have been in the Sun, it will not be wondered that we were more like black fellows than Europeans & seldom wore more cloathes than a shirt & very light pr. of trowsers, with shoes, & a light straw hat, which were as necessary for defence against the heat, as to conform to the rule of decency & decorum. The weather is now getting warmer every day, for the season being directly in opposition with you, and us Australians, your Summer is our Winter, & the contrary.

I hope my next voyage will be more productive in curiosities for the proposed Museum of Willm., which shall receive every assistance in my power, though

[4] In one of his later logs JSR mentions that King had been issued with a chest of medicine from the Rum Hospital.

[5] The man who died was George Speed, an AB who was buried at sea in Bass Strait on their return voyage. In the official account of the voyage PPK wrote that Speed "breathed his last; his death was occasioned by an excessive indulgence in the vegetables and fruits obtained at Timor, and he had been sick ever since we left that place; first with dysentery, and then with an intestinal inflammation" (King, *Narrative*, vol. I, p. 143).

my wishes will not be gratified to their full extent in collecting articles myself, my time being so fully occupied while on shore with Lieut. King that very few opportunities offer of making any considerable collections. My hope of being able to form an elegant assortment of shells have fallen far short of my expectations, the country producing very few that are worthy of notice, although the adjacent islands abound in the greatest variety of the most handsome & superb ones that I ever saw.^[6]

On re-perusing Wm's letter, I cannot but notice with infinite surprize & astonishment the statement of Mr. Nichols with respect to the £20 which he was kind enough to lend me, at my own request, & in opposition to his saying that it was borrowed "by desire of my Father."^[7] I hope my dear Father that you will be perfectly satisfied to the contrary, when I say, upon my word & honor, (which it is hoped you never yet had occasion to distrust) that such words, or others of the same meaning did not on that occasion escape my lips. I cannot but feel excessively hurt at such a misrepresentation, after having received particular instructions from you upon the subject, & which my own conscience acquits me of having fulfilled in an upright manner.

It is true that I stated to Mr. N. your having been much distressed in the then great pressure of the time, to supply my wants for so long a voyage & absence from England, but at the same time to prevent any misconstruction of my words, I was cautious in requesting the loan as if totally unknown to you, & accompanied by a promise of repaying it myself as soon as my circumstances in this country would permit. That opportunity has now happily arrived, & by the same conveyance which takes this to my Native Country. I enclose to Mr. N. one of my Quarterly Bills for £21, being the pay due to me as Assistant Surveyor for one quarter of a year, & to prevent adding more fuel to the fire which had already been so unfortunately kindled, I will take no notice of the circumstance having been mentioned to me from home, but express a hope in my letter to him that you know nothing of the matter. I trust that this explanation will be perfectly satisfactory.

[*page 3*] The black edge to the first page of William's letter, alarmed me not a little before I read his caution at the top, but I was partly prepared to anticipate its import from having just received the sad intelligence of which it was the mourner. The news affected us greatly I do assure you, my dear Far., both as an irreparable public loss, & for the departure of that virtue & amiable worth so universally acknowledged by the whole nation.^[8]

[6] The museum of JSR and William Roe, housed in the rectory at Newbury, would become very grand indeed, before being dispersed at auction in 1842.

[7] JSR was very close to the Nichols family: see JSR letter to Rev. James Roe, 8 June 1818.

[8] From the tenor of JSR's comment, it would seem that his brother William had written him a letter mentioning the death of Princess Charlotte of Wales (1796-1817), the only child of Prince George and Caroline of Brunswick.

Wm.'s adventures & amusements in town & country were both extensive & interesting, but they have brought to my knowledge 2 or 3 dozen cousins, &c. &c. &c. &c. which I was not before aware of, except the Bentleys whose place of residence I was not acquainted with, but was totally in the dark with respect to the others.

I forgot to mention in my last 2 letters that a Bror. Of Sr. C. Cole's, whom you may probably have heard of, as being very wild, & discarded from his family, is now at this place, having been transported for some crime or other, a few years ago.^[9] I have not spoken to him, but he has been pointed out to me & if I thought it would be agreeable to [Sr. C.] I would willingly offer my services in doing anything for him, but it would most likely be thought an un-welcome intrusion into the family affairs of other people, & I think it as well to give up the idea.

I have been making enquiries about new rigging for myself, & find that I cannot procure a suit of uniforms for a less sum than £14 or 15 independent of the buttons, which are not to be had here for their weight in gold. These expenses fall very heavy indeed upon me but will not oblige me to draw on you for any money, as my pay will be adequate to meet the [] & I am very sorry that the exorbitant prices [] article [] place prevents my remitting anything that my [] of serv[] to you.

I have no farther news to communicate at present, and am almost ashamed to send you so short a letter, but if I had matter to fill a dozen sheets you should not fall short of an atom. Therefore hope you will consider the recent date of my last which I trust you have long ago received, before this reaches you. With most affectionate love to my dearly beloved Mother, Sophy, & Bros. & kind remembrances to all friends. I reluctantly conclude, with most fervent wishes for your health & happiness, & remain, Dr. Father,

Your affectionate & Dutiful Son,

John Septimus Roe.

P.S. I hear from Lieut. King that the warning which his mother at Paddington has of ships being about to sail for this Port is frequently too sudden & short to admit of her apprising you or any of her friends of it, in time for them to write letters, & he recommends letters being sent to his Mother's at any convenient time, as an opportunity of forwarding them generally occurs

[9] Sir Christopher Cole was JSR's captain on board the *Rippon*. Cole (1770-1836) was from a large family, being the youngest of six sons, but as yet I do not know which of his brothers was the convict: not, I assume, Samuel Cole, Chaplain of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich; nor John Cole, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and Chaplain to the Duke of Clarence; nor Capt. Francis Cole RN. That leaves two other brothers that I have not traced: one who served in the RN and another in the Army, both in the West Indies.

Best uniform Coat Buttons.
4 Dozen -

Sacket Buttons.
3 Dozen -

Waistcoat, & Light Jacket Buttons.
5 Dozen -



They must be well packed in Cotton, to prevent being discoloured by the pernicious
effluvia from Bilge water.

At the same time I shall feel much obliged, for a few bunches of white twisted cord
for the same purpose, as that which I took with me, from Newburgh, but which
was not the right sort, I did not answer the purpose for which it was intended.

[Faint, mostly illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the paper.]

[Large handwritten signature and address:]
The Rev. to Mr. B. C.
116
Bucks

[Vertical handwritten note:]
Paid, July 2, 1844
at New York

[Vertical handwritten initials:]
L.L.R.

[Circular postmark:]
1844
JUL 2
NEW YORK

about once every Month or 6 weeks, & he has also kindly offered the same mode of conveyance for any parcel or package which you may wish to send out. This opportunity has induced me to request your indulgence & that you will send me some uniform buttons of the size & quantities mentioned overleaf, which will be readily forwarded by Mrs. King the first opportunity that offers.

[page 4]

Best Uniform Coat Buttons. 4 Dozen.

Jacket Buttons. 3 Dozen.

Waistcoat, & Light Jacket Buttons. 6 Dozen.

They must be well packed in Cotton to prevent being discoloured by the pernicious effluvia from Bilge water.

At the same time I shall feel much obliged for a few bunches of white twisted cord, for the same purpose as that which I took with me from Newbury, but which was not the right sort, & did not answer the purpose for which it was intended.

Augt. 17th. My Dear Father

By some unforeseen delays, the *Claudine* has not yet sailed, and although I had sealed up my letters, among which was one to Mr. Nichols, I have been obliged to open this to let you know that it is out of my power to forward the latter at present, as my pocket has been completely drained by the unavoidable & heavy expenses incurred to procure myself clothing of every description except shirts & stockings, & at this place people imagine they cannot set too high a price on their articles. Sincerely as I regret this disappointment after having made up & sealed Mr. N's letter, I am not without hopes of being able to accomplish my wish after the brunt of my expenditure is over, & of which I will not fail to let you know by the same conveyance. This letter will accompany one to Bror. Thos. as far as Calcutta. Adieu my Dear Father. May God bless & protect you all.

I had almost forgot to mention that during our absence in the *Mermaid*, Mr. Hicks' son arrived here as mate of a ship called the *Friendship* & brought me a letter from the Boatswain of the *Horatio*, alongside of which ship they were lying to refit, & prepare to take convicts on board for this country.^[10] I very much regret not being in the way, as I have not the pleasure of personally knowing Mr. H., & might have embraced that opportunity of writing to you direct. As you will in all probability see him, pray return my thanks for his

[10] I do not know his connection to the Roe family, but Lieut. William Hicks RN definitely arrived in the *Friendship* (Capt. Armet) which arrived on 13 January 1818 carrying female convicts. The Boatswain of the *Horatio* was a good friend of JSR's, one Mr. Hughes.

letter, which came to my hands at the same time as Wm.'s on my return from our 1st voyage. He disagreed with the Master of his ship, whom he has left, & I understand has gone as mate of a ship called the *Laurel* expected here again in a few months from Batavia.^[11]

[11] JSR's gossip was accurate: Lieut. Hicks did initially announce that he would sail for India on the *Friendship*, but later advertised that he would be on the *Laurel* instead (*Sydney Gazette*, 21 February & 14 March 1818).

AUGUST 1818
/ DECEMBER 1818

No. 6
His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*,
Port Jackson New South Wales.

“My sight has been so much impaired by constantly looking out, since my being employed in this Service, that I now find it difficult to distinguish objects plainly without the aid of a glass and am now on the look out for one to suit my eyes. The eye water supplied me by Mrs. King was nearly all lost at sea but I have now obtained a fresh supply & intend to persevere in the use of it as long as any chance remains of its proving beneficial.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 148.

An interesting letter, written as JSR kills time before they get to work on their survey of the west coast of Tasmania. He is bothered by the lack of mail he is receiving from his family and implores them to put pen to paper (he has started to count the ships that sail into Port Jackson without any news from home). He had hoped they would have sailed by now, but they have been delayed by the shoddy work of the Dockyard – the first of many complaints JSR will make about professional conditions in Sydney. He makes a sweeping comment regarding the new crew, “mostly very fine men”, and notes that Barron and Jane Field will travel with them to Hobart. Without doubt the most remarkable part of the letter is JSR’s account of a small hunting party that he had joined which had made their way “up the Port” in a small boat, only to be overturned in rough water, all five on board only narrowly escaping from drowning. It is with due chagrin that he reports that he was responsible for the loss of a real treasure, a hunting rifle he had borrowed from Captain King: it had originally belonged to King’s father Governor King, a gift from Commander Baudin when he was in Sydney in 1802. The rifle, JSR notes, has joined a small catalogue of personal items that went straight to the bottom.

N^o 5.

Mr. Myself, Sister, Wm. & Mrs. Pakenham
Middell Hill, Brompton, 18th Dec.

My Dear Sister

I have not time to write you more than a few lines at present. I hope you will be able to write me soon.

I cannot but feel extremely sorry to
 understand, every opportunity afforded to my dear Mother & Sister
 in England, and as may very naturally be supposed, receive equally as
 much pleasure in hearing from them. Indeed, of Mrs. Pakenham's last
 letter (of course of 11th Dec. since) is your so soon, that notwithstanding
 all my endeavours to banish unpleasant thoughts, the state of my mind
 is very uneasy. I am totally at a loss to conjecture the reason of the
 protracted silence. Sister's transport cannot doubt have arrived here,
 since we sailed on our 14th voyage from that port, and that it were
 as duly expected from England, necessary to inform them, because here,
 Kingston is still so small occasions any that unless, I cannot but
 still indulge myself in that pleasing conceit. I must necessarily
 think that I shall not be disappointed. I am very glad to hear
 that your dear Mother's letter from her Mother by nearly every
 opportunity, I so soon may be expected through the same Channel,
 my disappointment falls doubly or trebly heavy, although I do not
 of course expect such frequent communications. How my doubts
 to wish, if your time is too closely occupied, expect one of
 Brothers, or Dear Sister, if only 2 or 3 lines to let me know
 how all hands are getting on. I am equally anxious
 accept the letter with Tom George, not having as yet received a single
 answer or return to 4 letters sent this piece has arrived in this
 Country, which induces me to suppose that they are in the field with
 the force employed in the present Contest, and that they cannot have
 received my letters, or are unable to answer them. God grant
 that they are safe, and ultimately reap the fruits of their operations.
 You may depend upon receiving from me the earliest subscription
 what I can afford of them, without any delay.

The period of your stay at this place had been longer than we
 at first expected, measured as usual by the very detestable severity
 of all classes of workmen; for a great measure, to the neglect of
 those, whose business it should have been to prevent it. But of this,
 you will perceive that there is not occasion to say more. We
 are now about to set, in the course of a week, to make some
 excavations for the South West Coast of our former Land, where
 a Harbour has lately been found, and are not perfectly satisfied.
 This duty will probably occupy about 8 weeks, when we shall
 return here again, & at the latter end of February, or beginning

No. 6
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid, Port Jackson
New South Wales. December 7th 1818.

My Dear Father,

I cannot but feel extremely happy in embracing every opportunity of writing to my Dearest Relatives & Friends in England, and, as may very naturally be supposed, derive equally as much pleasure in hearing from them. The date of Bror. William's last letter (upwards of 12 months since) is now so remote, that notwithstanding all my endeavours to banish unpleasant thoughts, the state of my mind is very uneasy, & I am totally at a loss to conjecture the reason of so protracted a silence. Thirteen transport convict ships have arrived here since we sailed on our 1st voyage from Port Jackson, and 11 or 12 more are daily expected from England, according to information received here. Therefore as Hope is on all occasions my sheet anchor, I cannot but still indulge myself in that pleasing resource, & most sincerely trust that I shall not be disappointed.

Lieut. King & his relations here, invariably receive letters from his Mother by nearly every opportunity; & as mine may be expected through the same Channel, my disappointment falls doubly or trebly heavy, although I do not of course expect such frequent correspondence. Pray, my dear Father, do write, or if your Time is too closely occupied, request one of Brothers, or dear Sophy – if only 2 or 3 lines, to let me know how all hands are getting on. I am equally unsuccessful across the [], with Tom & George, not having as yet received a single answer in return to 5 letters sent there since my arrival in this Country, which induces me to suppose that they are in the Field with the force employed in the present Contest, and either that they cannot have received my letters, or are unable to answer them.^[1] GOD grant that they are safe, & will ultimately reap the fruits of their exertions. You may depend upon receiving from the earliest intimation which I can obtain of their welfare & manoeuvres.

The period of our stay at this place has been longer than we at first expected, occasioned as usual by the very dilatory proceeding of all classes of workmen; & in a great measure, to the neglect of those whose business it should have been to prevent it – but of this, you will perceive that there is not occasion to say more. We are now about to sail, in the course of a week, to make some examinations of the South West coast of Van Diemen's Land; where 2 Harbours have lately been found, and are not perfectly explored. This duty

[1] JSR's brother Thomas (1789-1876) and George (abt. 1790-1819) were both in the Army of the East India Company, so presumably JSR is alluding to the Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817-1818), when an EIC force campaigned in central India.

will probably occupy about 6 weeks, when we shall return here again, & at the latter end of February, or beginning [page 2] of March. It is the intention of Lieutenant King to sail on another long voyage of 8 or 9 months, proceeding to the northward through Torres' Straits, & commencing the fresh survey & discoveries where we left off, near Cape Van Diemen, which is the Westernmost extremity of the North coast of this country.

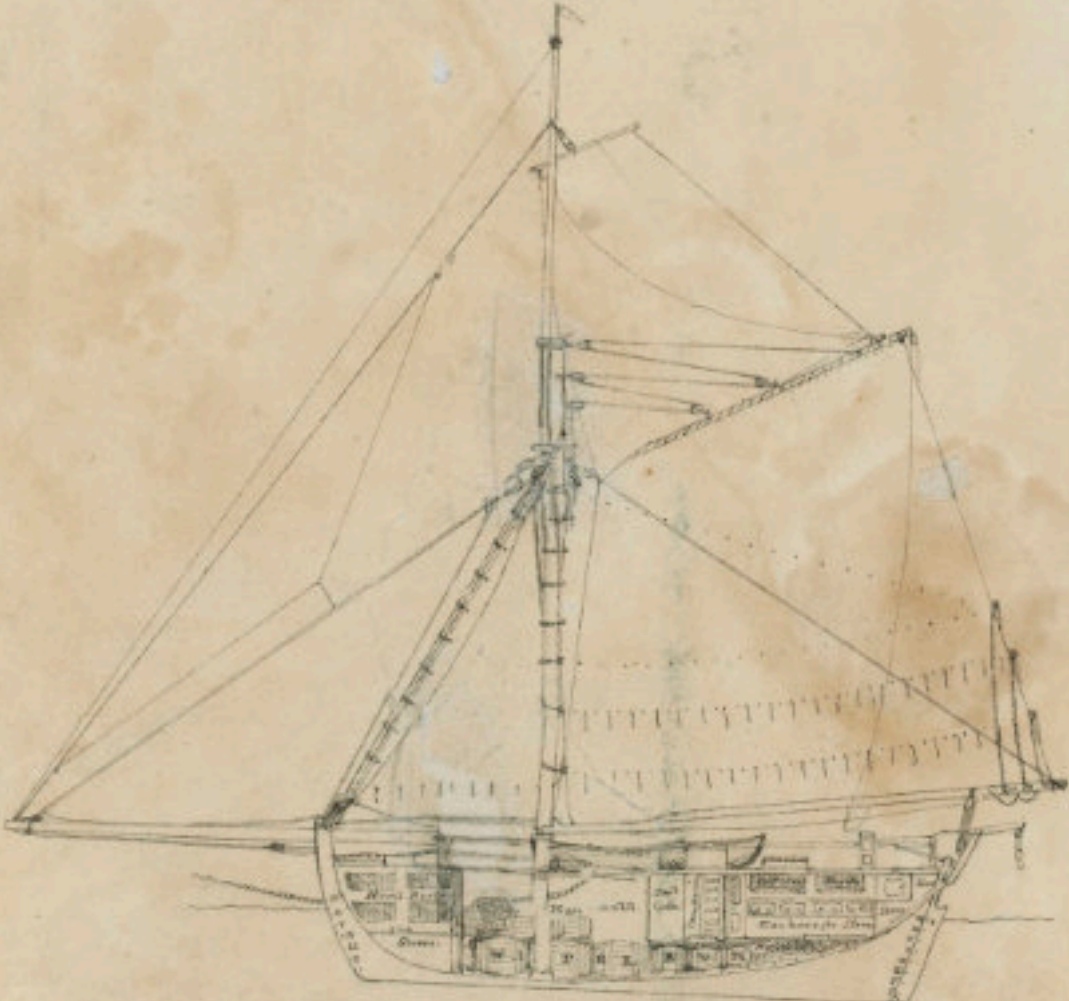
Most of the old crew have been discharged at their own requests, & new hands shipped instead, so we have nearly a fresh crew altogether, of mostly very fine men. The Judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature, Barron Field, with his Lady, take a passage with us to the Derwent River in Van Diemen's Land, where we shall leave them during our Survey & call there again for them on our return. He is a Son to the Physician at Christ's Hospital, & received his education under Dr. Trollop the Head Grammar Master there.^[2]

I have just returned from Mr. King's residence at Parramatta (16 miles from this Town) where we have been busily employed getting Charts of our late Surveys & Discoveries ready for sending home to the Admiralty, & I have the satisfaction of informing you that all of them are of my poor execution, having originally been drawn out on a large scale by Lieut. K. & reduced to a smaller one by me. It is not probable that any of them will be published till the whole are complete & we have finished our Survey. My time was spent very agreeably at Parramatta, although I was of course rather confined, for the very amiable & exemplary conduct of Mrs. K. added to her kindness & generous hospitality could not fail to produce that effect upon all those who are susceptible of their influence. They have one son, now 13 months old, who promises to be a very fine fellow, & the keel of another is already laid.^[3] They are, in fact, the most perfect representations or models of real matrimonial happiness that ever I witnessed.

[2] Barron Field and his wife Jane née Cairncross. Field was a jurist, legal author, and from February 1817, served on the Supreme Court of NSW (see a long entry in the ADB). He was the author of the first book of poetry published in Sydney, his *First Fruits of Australian Poetry* (1819): this exceptionally rare work includes his rather marvellous lines on the kangaroo, "To describe thee, it is hard: / Converse of the camelopard...". The Fields were well known to some of the English poets, and were particular friends of Charles Lamb, who mentions them several times in his letters, and wrote a poem to Jane. JSR notes that Field was the son of the Physician at his old school, Christ's Hospital: his father was Henry Field, surgeon and apothecary, appointed to Christ's Hospital in 1807. Arthur William Trollope was appointed headmaster of Christ's Hospital in 1799, and married Sarah, the daughter of Cook second voyage veteran William Wales.

[3] The King's eldest boy was Philip Gidley (who later sailed on the *Beagle*). Their second son John was born in January 1820 which must mean – given the innuendo of his comment and the date of the present letter – that either JSR was mistaken, or Harriet miscarried.

Scale 20 feet to an inch.



His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid - S.P.P. King 1857.

PPK, His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid. SLNSW.

We rode out on horseback altogether on a visit to Lieut. K.'s Farm (about 2000 acres) situated on an arm of Port Jackson called the South Creek, & 15 miles from Parramatta towards the Blue Mountains.^[4] It is very pleasantly situated on the banks of the Creek which is here fresh & in some part nearly dry across, & the scene was rendered still more enlivening by the harvest getting in. About 40 acres are in cultivation, & the remainder is appropriated for the use of the Cattle, consisting of about 800 head, with as many sheep, & a good quantity of horses, pigs, &c. &c. all in excellent condition. We returned next day.

We continue to receive very hospitable attention from Mr. King's Sister & Bror. in Law (Mrs. & Mr. Hanibal McArthur) residing near Parramatta & sometimes visit them at Vineyard Cottage. Mr. M. has also a flourishing farm near Parramatta with an annual income of about £1000 and a family of 4 small children. I have also dined 3 times at the Governor's table since our arrival here & find him a very gentlemanly man. His Lady & myself are likewise on very good terms & I have unconsciously crept into her good Books.

My time has been, and now is, as you may imagine, fully occupied with writing Log. Journal. &c. and Drawing. I have, in fact, not a moment to look round me, [placed] (as I before hinted) in a situation to do the greater part of another's duty in addition to my own, but without complaining.^[5]

I am determined to do every thing in my power for the good of the service, & for the satisfaction of Lieut. K. though latterly my poor eyes have been great sufferers by it. My sight has been so much impaired by constantly looking out, since my being employed in this Service, that I now find it difficult to distinguish objects plainly [*page 3*] without the aid of a glass and am now on the look out for one to suit my eyes. The eye water supplied me by Mrs. King was nearly all lost at sea but I have now obtained a fresh supply & intend to persevere in the use of it as long as any chance remains of its proving beneficial. It is the same which I sent a recipe for in one of my last letters, & has happily succeeded at this place beyond expectation.

I have had a very narrow escape from drowning since I wrote you last, having about a month ago gone up the Port on a shooting excursion in company with a Lieut. & Ensign of the 48th Regiment, with the servant of the former, & a young Gentleman the son of Mr. Brooks, Merchant of this place, about

[4] This was the large parcel of land near St. Mary's to the west of Sydney, based around an initial grant given to him in 1806, when he was still a child, by his father Governor Philip Gidley King. The land, added to by grant and purchase, became the centrepiece of his later life in Australia.

[5] A less than subtle dig at his fellow Master's Mate, Bedwell.

my own age.^[6] We were returning towards the close of the afternoon when the Boat unfortunately capsized about 3/4 of a mile from the shore, no houses or any other boats being in sight. The Lieut. & his servant immediately struck off for the nearest shore, which they fortunately reached after much fatigue, & the remaining 3 including myself clung to the bottom of the Boat as well as we could for more than 3/4 of an hour, the Tide all the time drifting us rapidly out of the Harbour. It was not till some time after the sun had set that a Boat arrived to our assistance & secured us from our perilous situation, very providentially for us. The Boat turned completely over in the 1st instance & emptied all her Ballast out, or she would otherwise have gone to the Bottom in 10 or 11 fathoms water, & none of us were sufficiently expert in swimming to have reached the shore. I was in this affair happily the means of saving the Life of the Ensign, Mr. Haggerstone, who being a very bad swimmer had 2cc. gone under, & was once underneath the boat after she had capsized. For in defiance of our utmost endeavours to keep her steady, she would turn over every 2 or 3 minutes & call for our greater exertions to avoid being caught underneath her. Amongst many things lost upon this occasion, consisting of the Boat's oars, boat hook &c. &c. plates, bottles, knives & forks, glasses, &c. &c. &c. 2 Fowling pieces, powder & shot, was a small rifle belonging to Lieut. King which was made a present to his Father by the Commodore of a French Expedition of Discovery in these Seas, while he was Governor of New South Wales.^[7] I used every exertion to recover it, but without effect & shall be obliged in honour to make good the loss.

A very fine diamond snake 8 feet long which we had shot, I was also bringing on board to stuff for William's Museum, but was likewise lost, and occasioned

[6] A remarkable story, which took place "about a month ago" (presumably, that is, in early November 1818). It is difficult to say precisely where they had been hunting ("up the Port"), but JSR's comment that the overturned boat was drifting "rapidly out of the Harbour" would imply that they were along towards the Heads. It is a great shame that JSR is not more explicit, especially as regards his exact location and the names of his fellows. To date I have not established who is the Lieut. of the 48th nor the man's servant. JSR had met Ensign John Haggerstone on the *Dick* en route for New South Wales; Haggerstone was first commissioned on 2 January 1817 and was involved in a much-reported horse race in Sydney in October 1818, and departed on leave for England in February 1821. The Sydney merchant JSR refers to must be Richard Brooks (see ADB) but the son is not explicitly named beyond JSR's vague comment that he was "about my own age" (that is, about 21). It would seem almost certain that it was Henry Brooks (abt. 1798-1841) to whom JSR refers. Henry had arrived in Sydney with his father in 1814 and remained in the Colony, taking up a land grant and marrying one Margaret McKenzie in 1825.

[7] The French expedition to which JSR refers is that of Baudin, which visited Sydney in 1802 when King's father Philip Gidley was the Governor. The small rifle must have been treasured by the King family, and its loss is a terrible shame. Governor King had genuinely exerted himself to help succour the crews of the two French vessels, no doubt resulting in Baudin's gift.

me some sorrow as it was a beautiful but dreadful reptile & would have been a valuable addition to my small collection of curiosities. I should wish to know if Dear Mother would like to have some of this Country seeds to rear in a hot-house, as I have now by me about 4 dozen species that I have collected here & on the opposite coasts of Australia, which will be totally spoiled if kept much longer.^[8] In your next letter after the receipt of this you can let me know. Or if M. does not want them they would prove (so I am informed by our Botanist)^[9] a very valuable & acceptable present to any Botanist you may be acquainted with in England. Of these particulars you had better let me know as soon as possible for the reason before named, & I will take measures for forwarding them.

Thank GOD my Dear Father that it is in my power after all the buffeting & knocks of Fortune to say that I enjoy perfect health & am now perfectly ready again for any enterprise or undertaking that may yield credit [*page 4*] credit or Emolument, trusting (as I trust I ever shall) for protection for that Divine Providence which has so conspicuously watched over my Destiny. May that same Providence ever protect you all at Home & elsewhere, my dearest Friends, & return you once more to my affectionate embrace. I trust that my Dear mother, Sophy & Bros. enjoy good health. Pray give my love to all. Sophy I must write a few lines to, in order to open a correspondence which she appears rather diffident in commencing, although I do not imagine that she in the smallest degree deficient in that return of sincere affections ~~which~~ for her Brother which he feels happy in entertaining for her: & if it was not for incurring an useless & unnecessary expence for Postage I should feel great pleasure in writing to all hands, though a letter to the Fountain Head is as good as a dozen scattered round about its base.

This letter I shall leave behind to be forwarded by a ship called the *Shipley*, bound to England direct; but as she is to wait for the several detachments of Troops which come out as guards in the Convict Ships daily expected, the period of her departure is very uncertain, & she may possibly not have sailed from hence, when we arrive from Van Diemen's Land.^[10] I have just written to Bror. Thos. & must write to Geo., in the event of the other failing. My last letter to you was dated Augt. 6 1818. & sent on 20th of same Month by a Ship called the *Claudine* of Calcutta – but as she was bound to Batavia 1st, &

[8] Another reference to the natural history and curio collecting of JSR in Australia, particularly for brother William's Museum. JSR's mother was apparently something of a gardener, and in a later letter JSR notes that she was personally acquainted with the great botanist Sir James Edward Smith.

[9] Allan Cunningham, of course.

[10] The *Shipley* (Capt. Moncrieff) arrived in Sydney on 18 November 1818 carrying male convicts, and was detained in Sydney until 1 April 1819.

was to procure a cargo there, or in India, it is not at all unlikely that this may arrive at the Rectory before it.^[11] In either case, I again earnestly entreat that some one will write to me, & you may rely upon every opportunity of writing being embraced on my part. I have no news to communicate & trust you will on that account excuse the brevity of this scribbling [match]; therefore, with a reassurance of my kindest love & remembrance to the inmates of my Happy Home, I again commit you all to the ever watchful care of Divine Providence, & trusting to its merciful goodness in the dispensations of its blessings, I have the happiness to remain, my Dr. Fa. your ever affectionate Son.

John Septimus Roe.

[*margin of page 1*] Mrs. King of Paddington Green is always good enough to enquire after Mr. Bedwell & Myself, in her letters to her Son, for which I hope you will not fail to return my thanks in your next enclosure to her.^[12] I should have done so myself had I the pleasure of her correspondence.

[11] The *Claudine* (Liverpool, Captain Welsh) sailed from England on the 15 March 1818 and arrived in Sydney on 23 July, before sailing for Bencoolen on 18 August (*Sydney Gazette*).

[12] Anna Josepha King, the widow of Philip Gidley King.

DECEMBER 1818
/ FEBRUARY 1819

No. 6 [2]

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
Port Jackson, New South Wales

“During our stay at the Derwent of 8 days, Mr. Bedwell, the Botanist & myself made several small excursions with the officers of the 48th Regiment. stationed there, to see the country: in one of which we ascended a steep Mountain that overlooks the Town & is about 4500 feet above the level of the Sea.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: red “Portsmouth Ship Letter” and red post office stamp “F” 9 Dec. 1819.

Location: SLNSW, no. 149.

Also numbered no. 6: as the opening lines make clear, JSR had found no opportunity to send the previous letter before he sailed for Tasmania, and so has combined the two and sent them home together (which will also be why the former has no postmarks. The letter includes a description of the whole voyage to Hobart and Macquarie Harbour, basically covering the three months from December 1818 through February 1819. He quickly describes their passage to Hobart, includes a wonderful account of his summiting, with a small party, Mount Wellington, and gives an insightful look at their work at Macquarie Harbour (“Hell’s Gates”) although they did not have time to look at their other proposed destination, Port Davey. Their passage home was done in poor weather, and they arrived to find Sydney enduring weeks of rain and what JSR calls an outbreak of dysentery. Most importantly, however, JSR has finally heard from his brother William, his first news from home in more than a year, noting in passing that his father does not feel well enough to write himself.

(Note: ^{to} the Job was lost)

(5)

His Majesty's Letter Marquis Port Jervis
New South Wales February 15th 1819

My Dear Father

Since writing the enclosed the Ship Reginald
 has not yet sailed for England, & I feel badly
 in being able to add a few lines more after our return from the British
 Land. By reading the enclosed letter you will find that we are then
 on the eve of starting on a short expedition to explore a newly discovered
 harbour on the South West Coast of the British Land. That object has been
 accomplished as far as our short abode would allow. I at least only
 achieved the night before last. At the English settlement of
 Robert Town on the Western Coast, I had the infinite
 pleasure of receiving Bro. Williams very kind long letter bearing date
 the 29th of April 1818 ^{sample of the original} for which I must take this opportunity
 of expressing him the most sincere & grateful thanks. That an absent &
 far distant Brother can bestow so liberally very few can. My dear
 Father that you are not able to write as you used to do; and trust
 that you are fully aware how truly acceptable your letters always prove
 to a silly but deficient. William is very kind. In his letter he
 complains of ^{never} receiving no letters from me since my arrival. This truly
 that way is very true, for the Ship Reginald by which my first was sent,
 (which from misapprehension is misapprehension) did not sail from the
 Port till Decr 22nd some years. I arrived in England in the latter end of January 1818.
 He has now received here, about a week since, & answers to the letter
 sent by her having been received here. I sincerely trust that any want
 has reached your hands. Since then I sent another ^(No. 2) from the Island of
 Tenor. It is dated 8th 1818 & No. 5 from this place Aug. 5. 1818. The
 enclosed, I think rather No. 5, but an under apprehension
 for my Tenor letter on account of the numerous pirates that
 infested the Indian seas at the time of its sailing. The whole of
 the above, together with this, I trust you have duly received safe.
 I do not for a moment suppose that any other kind of writing, or any
 part will be neglected. Within the next 2 months, the Ships Martha,
 Malabar, and St Vincent, Glote, Lyon, General Stewart, & Harriet, have
 returned with convicts from England, by which you will perceive that
 I have had numerous opportunities of forwarding any letters that I
 may be so fortunate as to prevail upon my dear Father to write.
 This kind of paper will have gone round the world when it reaches you,
 having been originally brought from England, & will arrive there again
 by the passage round Cape Horn.

I was very happy to hear of Brothers' employment of their Tenor to
 such advantage, as for the extension of their knowledge. I hope they
 enjoyed their cruise into Scotland. It was right when he
 anticipated

The enclosed letter was lost in the post on the 15th of February 1819.

(Note. This Letter to be read last.)

No. 6

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*, Port Jackson
New South Wales. February 16th. 1819.

My Dear Father,

Since writing the enclosed the Ship by which I proposed sending it has not yet sailed for England, & I feel happy in being able to add a few lines more, after our return from Van Diemen's Land.^[1] By reading the enclosed letter you will find that we were then on the eve of sailing on a short expedition to explore 2 newly discovered Harbours on the South West Coast of Van Diemen's Land. That object has been accomplished as far as our short absence would allow, & we have only returned the night before last. At the English Settlement of

Hobart Town, on the Derwent River, V.D.'s Land. I had the infinite pleasure of receiving Bror. William's very kind & long letter bearing date the 29th. of April & 8th. May 1818 brought by the ship *Lord Melville* – for which I must take this opportunity of returning him the most sincere & grateful thanks that an absent & far distant Brother can bestow.^[2]

Extremely sorry I am to hear My Dear Father, that you are not able to write as you used to do: and trust that you are fully aware how truly acceptable your letters always proved. To supply their deficiency, William is very kind. In his letter he complains of having received no letters from me since my arrival in this Country. That may be very true, for the Ship *Harriet* by which my first was sent (bearg. date from middle of Augt. to middle of Decr. 1817) did not sail from this Port till Decr. 22nd. same year, & arrived in England in the latter end of June follg. She has now arrived here again about a week since, & answers to the letters sent by her having been received here, I sincerely trust that my scrawl has reached your hands.

Since then, I sent a letter (No. 4) from the Island of Timor, dated June 8. 1818, & No. 5 from this place Augt. 6. 1818. The enclosed, & this envelop I have called No. 6 but am under apprehensions for my Timor letter on account of the numerous pirates that infested the Indian Seas at the time of its sailing. The whole of the above, together with this, I trust you have & will receive safe, & will not for a moment suppose that any opportunity of writing on my part will be neglected. Within the last 2 months the Ships *Martha*, *Lord Melville*, *Hadlow*, *Earl St. Vincent*, *Globe*, *Tyne*, *General Stewart*, & *Harriet*, have arrived with convicts from England, by which you will perceive that Mrs. King

[1] JSR was still waiting on the *Shipley* to sail (see previous letter).

[2] The *Lord Melville* (Capt. Wetherell) arrived in Hobart in December 1818.

has numerous opportunities of forwarding any letters that I may be so fortunate as to prevail upon my dear Friends to write. This sheet of paper will have gone round the world when it reaches you, having been originally brought from England round Cape Good Hope & will arrive there again by the passage round Cape Horn.

I was very happy to hear of Brothers' employment of their Time to such advantage as for the extension of their knowledge. I hope they enjoyed their cruise into Scotland. Wm. was right when he [*page 2*] anticipated the pleasure I should have felt in being of the party; as I am well aware of my deficiency in the knowledge of my own country, but my time is happily not thrown away, & adventurous as the undertaking may be. I would not relinquish the participation in these discoveries for any other voyage than that recently undertaken to the North Pole.^[3] There I should above every thing like to have gone if they would have accepted my poor services, though it is now of no use to talk about it.

I am glad to hear of the safe ~~delivery~~ delivery of the fishing tackle by young Graham & trust that it is has ere this been received.^[4] I did not fail mentioning it all in my letters to India though as yet no answers to them have been received, & I could have wished that Wm. had mentioned to me in his last, the name of the place at which Graham had an interview with Captain Harwood of the *Friendship*, as I have now some letters in readiness to send to that quarter, & should have been glad had it been in my power to state that particular in them, but I hope there is no necessity for it.^[5] The intelligence of your having heard from Tom. is highly gratifying to me, & I am not without hopes that some one or other of my letters have at last reached them.^[6] He is particularly unfortunate with respect to his loss of baggage &c. but we must hope for better amounts by the next receipts. Jo. G. does not appear to be tired of the Sea yet, though by Wm.'s account, I am inclined to think he would rather be measuring fathoms of cloth behind his father's counter, than encounter a repetition of the gales (or breezes) experienced off the Cape & in the China Sea.^[7] William gives me so gay a description of the newly painted

[3] Given the date of this letter it must be the Arctic expedition of John Ross, the first Admiralty attempt to explore the Northwest Passage, to which JSR refers. JSR later attempted to join the second Parry voyage, and believed that he was only kept from it by the dark influence of patronage.

[4] John Graham – and the fishing tackle – is first mentioned by JSR in his letter to his father (5 June 1817), in which he was distinctly snooty about the chances of the young man in the Navy. He may be the John George Graham made Lieutenant on 20 September 1815.

[5] I have not yet unravelled to what JSR is referring in this question about Captain Harwood of the *Friendship*.

[6] That is, his brother Thomas, serving in India.

[7] "Jo. G.", given the tenor of JSR's comments, must be John Graham (see note 4).

& decorated house, that I am afraid I shall not know it again, (unless by its Bearing & Distance from the Bridge) but although distant that time I cannot help looking forward to it with eagerness.^[8]

You will probably wish to know what we have been doing in Van Diemen's Land all this time, and as I have no other news to communicate at present I will endeavour to state the leading particulars in as brief & concise a manner as possible. Mr. Justice Field, with his Lady, Clerk & a male & female servant, took a passage with us to the Derwent,^[9] as I have before stated in the enclosed & on the morning of Christmas Day we cleared the ~~Harbour~~ Heads of Port Jackson, steering to the Southward. The wind continued fair & to blow fresh for the remainder of the day & in the evening had changed against us and blew a strong gale for 2 days. Our passengers as you may easily imagine were very sick; and in fact they were scarcely out of their cot 8 hours during the whole 8 days that it took us in Reaching the place of our destination.

Hobart Town is far inferior to Sydney in point of size & number of public buildings although the adjoining country & the land on which the Town is built is a very deep rich soil, & produced all kinds of English fruits in great abundance. A Captain & 80 Men of the 48th. Regimt. are stationed there ^[10] & it is the residence of the Governor of the [] (Coll. Sorell) who is under the orders of the Govr. of New South Wales,^[11] but the [*page 3*] settlement is at present but in an infantile state and is advancing in a rapid degree. During our stay at the Derwent of 8 days, Mr. Bedwell, the Botanist & myself made several small excursions with the officers of the 48th. Regt. stationed there, to see the country: in one of which we ascended a steep Mountain that overlooks the Town & is about 4500 feet above the level of the Sea.^[12] The travelling (on foot) through almost impenetrable woods & thickets was truly laborious & fatiguing; & after cruising about for the whole day without a guide &

[8] As may be clear from the context, JSR is referring to the family house, the Rectory at Newbury. The "Old Rectory", now Grade II listed, is on the Kennet and Avon Canal in the centre of Newbury, just to the north-east of Bridge St, and diagonally across from St. Nicolas.

[9] Judge of the Supreme Court Barron Field, his wife Jane (née Cairncross) and his small entourage sailed with them in the tiny *Mermaid* to Hobart.

[10] JSR's letter is not particularly clear, but the commanding officer of the Hobart detachment of the 48th Regiment at the beginning of 1819 was Maj. Thomas Bell (see ADB).

[11] William Sorell (1775-1848) had been appointed Lt.-Gov. of Van Diemen's Land, arriving in April 1817 (see ADB).

[12] Mount Wellington, of course. JSR seems to imply that his was the first party of Europeans to summit the mountain, which may be correct. The party consisted of JSR, Bedwell, Cunningham, three men from the crew of the *Mermaid* (unnamed), and an unnamed officer from the 48th Regiment. It was – presumably – not the C.O. Maj. Bell who joined them, but which of the handful of officers of the 48th then in Hobart it was is not yet known.

on a side of the Mountain which the inhabitants told us was impenetrable; we brought up for the night near the summit & before sunset had built a tolerable good hut of branches & long grass.

The night was very cold & wet & notwithstanding our excessive fatigue defied our efforts to sleep; & to add to the disaster a fire that had been made inside the hut in addition to ~~the~~ a roaring one outside, set fire to the premises at about 3 o'clock in the morning & compelled us to entertain ourselves as well as we could over their smoking remains. There were 7 of us altogether including 3 seamen to carry the provisions & the Botanist's collection of plants; & we started at break of day from our encampment to prosecute the remainder of the journey to the top. Very little water indeed had been found on the side of the mountain but [near] the summit the snow had formed many small pools of the coldest water I ever tasted in my life, frozen o[] we were obliged to drink it as we should have sipped wine & [] as if we could have almost cut it with a knife.

[] [] o'clock in the morning found us at the Top of the highest rock on its summit & we immediately kindled as large a fire as the materials would allow us & piped to Breakfast. A most extensive view of the Sea & surrounding country for the distance of 80 or 90 miles then rewarded our trouble & was in fact the sole object for which I & others came. The early hour of the morning cheated us of a good deal as the sun had not sufficient power to dispel the vapours & thick mist that appeared to adhere to every object; & the mountain below us was partly enveloped in clouds. The limited quantity of provisions that we had taken did not admit of a further stay & shortly after 6 o'clock we set off on our return determined to penetrate (like true Discoverers) where no one had ever been before.

The descent proved exceedingly more difficult than the ascent & I have frequently reflected with surprize at the manner in which we effected it without a compass & unable to see even the sky over our heads for about an hour at a time. Several ridges of smaller hills lie between the above mount & the Town, & we got completely entangled in the main deep valley where the immense trunks of fallen trees (many from 20 to 30 feet in circumference) crossed each other in all directions & being covered with soft slippery moss, occasioned by the constant humidity that prevails there, rendered our progress exceedingly slow. These huge masses of wood that were probably the remains of ancient forests many hundred years old were so fairly decomposed & rotten with age that it was dangerous treading on them for fear [*page 4*] of falling through. Hunger & Thirst were great spurs to our exertions (having eaten nearly every thing at breakfast) and by keeping as much as possible on the tops of the ridges.



PPK, Entrance of Macquarie Harbour, Van Diemen's Land. SLNSW.

Mr. Bedwell, myself & the 3 seamen reached the vessel at about 4 P.M.; which the Botanist & an officer of the 48th. Regt. who had imprudently quitted our company preferring their own navigation, lost their reckoning & did not arrive in town till 7 o'clock next morning.^[13] They had nothing to eat & very little to drink for upwards of 24 hours & were treated into the bargain with a 2nd. Bivouac in the woods. We were all, as you may suppose, heartily fatigued at the conclusion of our joining but were recompensed for all by its happy termination; & at having penetrated to the top & from the top, by routes that were before considered impracticable & on which several had been previously repulsed. We were to have been provided with a guide but by some misunderstanding or other could not procure one. The Botanist found many new plants there.

You see my Dear Fr. how I am pinched for room. Sailing from the Derwent River we arried. on the bleak west coast of the island at the desired Port

[13] JSR's recounting of their difficult trek has something of a subtext, as it is not at all clear why the party had split in two (this would not be the last time that JSR would be coy about tensions within the group in letters home).

(Macquarie Harbour) on the 3rd. day & began to commence preparation for crossing a bar of sand that fronts its entrance & has only 10 feet water in the deepest part at High water. Our boats were hoisted out [started] &c. and we got over when a favourable opportunity offered without touching. The Harbour was soon afterwards entered & a tedious & laborious survey that would afford no amusement in the recitat. commenced in the Cutter & in her Boats as the depth of water would permit. The Harbour is a noble sheet of water, 50 or 60 miles in length by 10 or 12 in breadth, but is so completely choaked with shoals & shoal water that it is rendered almost totally useless, unless for vessels of very light draught of water. We ran on the shoals no less than 7 times while examining it, though without receiving any material damage. The surrounding country is not fit for cultivation, but affords some excellent kinds of wood, for cabinet work, besides the common wood of the country. We were not sorry to leave such a place; & Lieutt. King did not think he should have time to examine the other Port (Port Davey) so we returned to the Derwent by the 1st. Feby. to convey back to this place the Judge &c.

Owing to various delays &c. &c. we did not sail till a week afterwds. & after a very rainy, uncomfortable passage, arrived here the night before last, blowing a gale of wind from the Southwd. with constant rain. This kind of weather had been experienced here for the last fortnight and all the low country is overflown, wheat &c. &c. &c. washed away & the devil to play. To add still more to the general confusion, the dysentery is very prevalent here, occasioned by the continual wet weather & has no prospect of abating. Thank God I enjoy very good health, & sincerely trust that this will find you all as well as I wish you to be. I will not yet close this, in case of any arrivals before the *Shipley* sails at the latter end of this month & am happy that I took the precaution of leaving my letters ~~with~~ unsealed with Mrs. King,^[14] who promised to seal & send them by any opportunity that offered before we arrived from the Derwent.

We shall sail in about a month on a 2nd. voyage of 8 months to the North Coast of this country, which will probably be the last but one, that we shall make before our labours are completed. In that case it will be at least 2 years more before we leave this country but that is only speculation. With every most fervent prayer & good wish that I can possibly express in one line. I am obliged to give it up for want of room, & remain, my Dear Father, your very affectionate Son.

John S. Roe.

[14] From the context, Harriet King is clearly meant.

Pray give my duty & affectionate love to Dr. Mr. Soph. & Brors. Although I have not the pleasure of Mr. Greenhead's acquaintance,^[15] I cannot but feel extremely obliged for his kind remembrance to me, & beg to return him my [] sincere thanks for the same; with hearty good wishes for his welfare. I hear that my last Captain (Dillon) has mustered interest enough to get appointed to a fine frigate called the *Phaeton* & that the *Horatio* is undergoing considerable alterations & repairs at Deptford.^[16]

If you see any thing concerning our voyage in the Papers, Reviews, Magazines &c. &c. &c. I hope you will not fail to communicate its substance as I am anxious to know what people in England think of it. The Charts & Lieut. King's Journal going home by the *Shipley* will arrive at the Admiralty as soon as this reaches you, & the Public Prints will of course take some notice of it.

[15] Evidently Mr. Greenhead was an acquaintance of the family in Berkshire. There was a Charles Greenhead in Reading (*Pigot & Co. Trade Directory*, 1830), who may prove to be the connection.

[16] JSR's former commander on the *Horatio*, and one of his strongest supporters, Capt. William Dillon.

MARCH 1819

No. 7

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
Port Jackson, New South Wales

“During our short walks for recreation on shore when we feel happy in being able to emerge beyond the narrow limits of our little quarter deck, our Time is not thrown away, for both Mr. Bedwell & Myself (the Botanist likewise, of course) are making a collection of insects; & mine amounts to about 300 different species carefully preserved in boxes scented with Camphire to guard against invasion from ants or other destructive vermin.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: Black “Hastings Ship Letter” and circular red “E” for 19 Oct. 1819.

Location: SLNSW, no. 150.

A brief letter, written chiefly in case any of his previous have not come to hand in Berkshire. JSR gives a short notice of the proposed itinerary for their second major expedition to the northern coast, and again laments the lack of any letters from family, especially the poor correspondents in India (his brothers Thomas and George). The letter includes JSR’s rather awe-struck account of the recent flooding of the Hawkesbury, but is perhaps most significant for his comments on his attempts in collecting natural history (he has already over 300 insects), and for his outraged comments on prices in Sydney (which he hopes to outsmart by having buttons and other uniform necessities sent to him direct from home).

No. 7
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid.
Port Jackson, New South Wales.
March 22nd. 1819.

My Dear Father.

By a gentleman going to England via Cape of Good Hope I embrace a happy opportunity of writing you a short letter, trusting you received my last by the Ship *Shipley*, Moncrieff Master.^[1] She has not yet sailed from this port, & I have just finished a long double letter for you to go by her; together with one for Dear Sophy both of which will probably arrive before this. Yours included the dates of December 7. 1818. & March 22. 1819 (this day) & Sophy's was dated Decr. 8. 1818. I can now of course add no new intelligence, & only write in case of the above Letters miscarrying.

We are nearly ready for Sea & expect to sail in the little *Mermaid* on a Voyage of 8 or 9 Months duration in less than a fortnight from this date. Our destination will be to the North Coast of this Island, where we ~~commence~~ prosecute the further discovery of the unknown parts, commencing at Cape Arnhem (the Western Cape forming the Gulf of Carpentaria) & proceeding to the Westward till we fall in with that part of the Coast examined during the latter part of our last voyage. We then strike off & commence the examination of the North West coast to the Southwd. of Cape Van Diemen. I hope to be able during this Voyage to name something after Sr. Richd. Keats which cannot but be extremely gratifying to him; & will at the same time shew that I am not unmindful of his good offices.^[2] Wm. will say that I have an eye to windward at the same time & he is probably not far out of his reckoning.

I have not yet been so fortunate as to hear from India since my arrival in this country & am at a loss to account for the reason unless it is the failure & miscarriage of my letters which is not at all improbably considering the very great interruption that must necessarily exist in the interior, towards any communication across the country. Most of my letters to that quarter have of necessity been [*page 2*] sent by the way of Calcutta or Madras but I was fortunate the other day in being able to write to Geo. (Decr. 13) by an officer of the 67th Regt. going to Bombay to join his Regiment & have every reason to believe that my letter will be delivered. I likewise wrote to George by a Ship called the *Globe* bound to Calcutta that sailed a week ago.^[3]

The weather here has been exceedingly bad (with very slight exception of fine weather of short duration) since our arrival from Van Diemen's Land; &

[1] JSR was still waiting on the *Shipley* to sail (see previous letters).

[2] Sir Richard Keats (1757-1834) was JSR's great patron.

[3] The *Globe* (Capt. Blyth), had arrived with 139 male convicts in January 1819.

all the Low Country is flooded in a greater degree than it has ever before been known. Very severe losses have in consequence been sustained by the settlers particularly those on the River Hawkesbury whose very low banks are composed of the finest soil in the country & consequently covered with all the very small & poorest settler that cannot afford to clear away & cultivate a spot of ground less fertile and desirable. Many of these have lost every atom belonging to them, houses & all; & some have even lost their lives. The extent of the damage in many parts of the country may be more easily conceived when it is confidently asserted that in some places the water rose ~~rose~~ between 50 & 60 feet above the common level of the Rivers, carrying away in its rapid subsidence, bridges, houses, cattle, corn &c. &c. in short every thing it could get near enough to undermine. The prices of provisions have consequently been raised & the crops of Indian Corn which were about 1/2 grown being carried away has caused that article to be very scarce indeed. The vegetation during these heavy rains has been astonishingly quick & fields that were ploughed to receive turnips, previous to their commencement are now upwards of a foot high in rank weeds & grass. They must consequently be ploughed over again, though it is said to be very late, even now, for the usual crop of turnips that is expected at this time of the Year. Formerly one of these floods was expected every 3 years but they are now much more frequent; & such is the richness of the soil in those parts that are most subject to the inundations that the settler could afford to lose one crop out of 3, & at the same time be no sufferer by it, provided his house & wheat stacks are not washed away with it & his farm is supplied with a fine rich coat of manure, that could not otherwise be procured.

I have just returned from a visit to Lieutt. King's Country residence at Parramatta; & from his Brother in Law Mr. Hanibal McArthur who continues to shew us those kind attentions which we could never have expected from a total stranger: I remained 2 days with each & spent my time very agreeably.^[4] A longer stay could not have been made for my Time is so fully occupied when not engaged in [*page 3*] carrying on the duty of the vessel in the progress of her refitment, in bringing up my Log, sketches, Journal &c. that I have very little Leisure time to devote to other purposes. During our short walks for recreation on shore when we feel happy in being able to emerge beyond the narrow limits of our little quarter deck, our Time is not thrown away, for both Mr. Bedwell & Myself (the Botanist likewise, of course) are making a collection of insects; & mine amounts to about 300 different species carefully preserved in boxes scented with Camphire to guard against invasion from ants or other destructive vermin. I hope that the few which I took home from my China voyage are not destroyed & that Wm. will take

[4] JSR had been staying, that is, at King's house in the colony, Rosehill Cottage, in Parramatta, and at the more substantial Vineyard Cottage of the Macarthurs.

care of every thing he can collect to put in our MUSEUM. Those which I have been able to collect I am afraid to trust by any conveyance & prefer waiting till I can accompany them myself. There is such a total want of brown paper in this colony that I have been prevented from making a very large collection of the plants of this Country, which are said to amount to about 40,000 different species; & having a Botanist onboard the method of preserving them & insects is constantly before our eyes.

It is not too late to write to you for any, as Lieutt. King is not without hopes of finishing the discovery & examination of this country without making another voyage, though for m[yself] I am not so sanguine & do not expect it. His instruc[tions] from the Admiralty direct him to return ~~then~~ [to] England so soon as the object of our expedition is completed; & we shall therefore take our passage by the earliest conveyance as was done onboard the *Dick*.^[5] The expence will I am afraid be equally as great & much more so if the Ship by which we go home proceed by the way of India for a cargo; but I hope for every reason that we shall be fortunate enough to go by a ship bound direct to England. I hope you received my letter in which was the request to be supplied with uniform buttons of the underneath sizes.

4. Doz. 6 Doz. 4 Doz.

A few uniform buttons have arrived lately by one of the Ships from Home, & the Proprietor of them has really the assurance to ask 12 shillings a doz. for them, which is 3 times the price of them in England; but badly as they are wanted by us we are determined to ~~put~~ undergo great inconvenience rather than suffer such ~~inconvenience~~ an imposition; & if the man does not sell them to us he will not part with them at all as no one else in the colony wears them. A few [hanks] of white silk chord would also prove very acceptable if you are able to send the buttons, as there is none to be procured here & every thing is so exceptionally dear. I must now conclude My Dear Father, with most cordial good wishes for the happiness & prosperity of you all, hoping you will request some one to write, & believe me My Dear Fr. to remain your ever affectionate Son

John Septimus Roe.

A letter has just arrived in this country from the Cenotaph Committee for raising a public Monument to the Princess Charlotte, & subscriptions are now open for that purpose. The Officers & Men of the 48th. Regt. stationed here have subscribed about £100.^[6]

[5] The ship on which King, Bedwell and JSR had sailed to Sydney.

[6] Princess Charlotte of Wales (1796-1817), the only child of Prince George and Caroline of Brunswick, had died following childbirth, leading to almost universal grief throughout the UK. The Committee to which JSR refers is said to have raised £15,000 and a cenotaph was built by Matthew Wyatt, ultimately being installed in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, the private chapel of the King (*The Literary Chronicle for the Year 1824*, p. 141).

APRIL 1819

No. 8

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
Sydney Cove, Port Jackson

“We have received several indirect & perhaps erroneous reports of plots being in agitation to carry off our little vessel; but we are perfectly ready for the rascals & if it was not for the waste of human life that would ensue I could heartily wish some of them would make the attempt; for unless our own men are in the plot they could have very little chance of success. We keep too smart a lookout for them.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: red stamp for “Chatham” and red circular stamp “D” for 9 Dec. 1819.

Location: SLNSW, no. 151

Another brief letter, written because they have been delayed in Sydney longer than JSR expected. He comments that the most recently dated letter he has had from anyone in his family was from Newbury in April/May 1818, so he has gone a year without news. The letter is an unusual one from JSR in that it discusses the men that will sail with him in some detail, particularly as it relates to the medically trained convict George Cooke. JSR also comment that Bungaree, who is sometimes assumed to have been on board, did not sail on this occasion, King preferring to take another Seaman with him instead. The letter also includes JSR’s light-hearted assessment of the sometimes uneasy truce that has been established between himself and his (slightly) senior officer Frederick Bedwell.

No 8

His Majesty's Letter to the Hon. the Secretary
of the Treasury, dated the 22nd of March 1789.

My Dear Sir

I give you great pleasure in having such
an opportunity of writing to you all, and more, previous to our sailing
at daybreak tomorrow morning on a voyage of about 6 months to the
North coast of this country. — My last letter to you was dated
March 22 1789, & from Dept. of the 22nd of March 1789. — The former I
sent by a ship called the Shipley, belonging to Mr. Jones, bound to the
by the way of Copenhagen, & the latter I distributed by the hand of
a Lakeship going home by the route of Cape of Good Hope. — In
case the gentleman obtains a passage from thence, some time he
arrives, it is more than probable that the last letter will reach
you first. — I have no news of my dear Father to communicate
but wish to write you one more line, before we sail, which
be obliged to leave this with a friend here, to forward by the first
conveyance. — The Memorial is now the only remaining paper
in Treasury, & this time to have being sent home a few
days ago, — a very necessary matter, which detains me from writing
you by that opportunity, although I write to George by one of
them. He got a month before by a similar conveyance. There
had yet occurred it necessary answers to my vigorous letter
to that quarter — I am at a loss to amount for the cause. — The
last letter received from my dear Father at Dept. was dated in
April & May last — & it is to be sincerely wished that my letters
to him be not sent with such ill fortune. — I do really assure
you my dear Father that a letter from England, although it has
to travel over a space of 10000 miles, is a perfect matter.
I am not without reasonable hopes that this will contain a
happy correspondence, which I ^{have begun} feel very happy &
heartfelt to the poor's goodness in forwarding. — I hope that
in return, my dear Father when at 10 years a distance from all that
may be the most dear, meet with a similar happiness, and enjoy
the correspondence of the long absent & distant friends. — I
am afraid my dear Father from the account to give me, that
I am sure there to enjoy the great pleasure, that the receipt
of your letters will give me, although the deficiency is in a
great measure supplied by William's kind words and attentions. — it seems
to me
K. L.

No. 8
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid. Sydney Cove
Port Jackson, New South Wales. April 19th. 1819.

My Dear Father

It gives me great pleasure in having another opportunity of writing to you all once more previous to our sailing at daybreak tomorrow morning on a voyage of about 8 months to the North Coast of this Country. My last letters to you were dated March 22. 1819. & from Decr. 7 1818 to March 22. 1819. The former I sent by a ship called the *Shipley*, Moncreiff Master bound Home by the way of Cape Horn;^[1] & the latter I dispatched by the hand of a Supercargo going home by the route of Cape of Good Hope.^[2] In case this gentleman obtains a passage from the Cape soon after his arrival, it is more than probably that the last letter will reach you first.

I have no news My Dear Father to communicate but wished to write you one more line before we sailed, & shall be obliged to leave this with a friend here to forward by the first conveyance. The *Mermaid* is now the only remaining vessel in Sydney Cove, 2 ships bound to India, having sailed hence a few days ago by a very circuitous route which deterred me from writing you by that opportunity, although I wrote to George by one of them, & to Thos. a month before by a similar conveyance.^[3] I have not yet succeeded in receiving any answers to my numerous letters to that quarter, & am at a loss to account for the cause. The last letter received from my Dear Friends at Home was dated in April & May last; & it is to be sincerely wished that my letters to them do not meet with such ill fortune. I do really assure you my Dear Father that a letter from England although it has to travel over upwards of 18,000 miles is a perfect treat; and I am not without sanguine hopes that Sophy will continue a happy correspondence between us which I have begun and feel very happy & thankful to Wm. for his goodness in forwarding. I hope that in return they will when at so great a distance from all that they hold most dear, meet with a similar happiness and enjoy the correspondence of their long absent & far distant friends.

I am afraid my Dear Father from the account Wm. gives me, that I am never more to enjoy the great pleasure that the receipt of your letters once gave me, although the deficiency is in a great measure supplied by William's kindness and attention; it [*page 2*] nevertheless makes me very happy to hear of

[1] The *Shipley* (Capt. Moncreiff) took the letter dated 22 March 1819 (no. 7).

[2] Who this Supercargo was who took this letter (December 1818 and February 1819, no. 6) does not appear to be recorded.

[3] JSR's brother Thomas (1789-1876) and George (abt. 1790-1819) were both in the Army of the East India Company.

your enjoying good health & that the very full occupation of your time is the principal reason of your not being able to make so frequent use of the pen as formerly.

Thank GOD I enjoy tolerable good health; & being quite tired of a place torn to pieces by dissention, I am happy with the thought of speedily getting out of the reach of it all for at least a few months to come, & am equally as much rejoiced in the reflection that we have invariably supported our characters as becomes officers in our situation and have in return enjoyed the support and friendship of all the most respectable people at Port Jackson.

We dine frequently at the Regimental Mess of the 48th. Regt. stationed here and are well treated by them.^[4] We also frequently enjoy the honor of dining at the Table of Governor Macquarie who paid us a visit a few days ago on-board the Cutter & was saluted by us on quitting the vessel with 17 guns. On this occasion he was accompanied by his Lady a very motherly good woman & and only Son 5 years of age who, as may well be supposed, is a spoilt child.^[5] They expressed themselves highly gratified with the order & regularity of our little vessel & staid onboard nearly an hour. Mrs. Macquarie is getting a still made for us to use on our ensuing voyage for the purpose of converting salt water into fresh; to which benevolent act she was prompted by hearing of the great distress we were frequently in for the want of that desirable article; & from the almost total deficiency of it on the [] barren coasts we are exploring.^[6] This kindness was entirely unasked for on our part & calls for our sincerest acknowledgment.

They are on the point of leaving this country the Governor having sent home his resignation upwards of a year ago & is in daily expectation of being relieved by an arrival from England. I have received from Mrs. M. a very kind & pressing invitation in case I ever go to Scotland to visit them at the Isle of Mull, which is their estate, & whither they intend to retire.

[] Lieutt. King appears now to be well aware that our labours will not terminate with the expiration of this voyage; & it will in all probability be full 2 years from this time before I again see my Native Country: my 6 years service in the Navy to enable me to pass the examination at Home for a Lieutt. will have expired before the middle of the ensuing June, but I feel very happy

[4] The Regimental Mess of the 48th would have been in the Sydney Barracks.

[5] Exactly when this brief visit took place is not clear: it is not mentioned in Lachlan Macquarie's diary.

[6] There is no reason to believe that Mrs. Macquarie did not make them a gift of a water still, but I do not completely understand how payment had been arranged, assuming (perhaps erroneously) it is the same one as listed as having been made by John Cadwallader, who submitted an invoice for £7 9s for "Making a Still for Distilling fresh from Salt Water for Mermaid Cutter with fire pot & stand complt" (Col. Sec. papers). Cadwallader was paid out of the Police Fund.



Detail of the title-page to JSR's log of the Mermaid voyage. SLWA.

in considering that the overplus is not thrown away & that I could not be occupied in a more interesting voyage or one more suited to my inclination.

On our first voyage we carried [*page 3*] no more than 19 hands including every one onboard, but we now sail with 22; having found that in case of sickness the former number was not sufficient.^[7] Bongaree the Native Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe does not now go with us, having been found of comparatively little use & not so advantageous to the expedition as an able seaman that might be carried in his room.^[8] Most of our Crew are new hands though good Seamen, & we shall have the benefit of medical advice from a young man that was lately an assistant to the Hospital at Parramatta & who had been entered as part of our crew. He is a prisoner in the country having been transported a few years ago for taking money out of a Letter that passed through his hands. His Father is a most respectable Surgeon in London named Cook, & has given his Son a liberal education. Of course he does not mess with us, but lives with the Seamen & is on the same footing with them with the exception of receiving more indulgence from Lieutt. K., which has unfortunately given rise to a little dissatisfaction among the rest.^[9]

Robberies & Murders are getting very frequent indeed here & scarcely a Market Day passes on which 3 or 4 are not executed for these crimes. Those [] & desperate banditti called here 'Bushrangers' are dai[ly] augm[enting] their numbers & lately seized 13 horses in the vicinity of Parramatta besides muskets from the Barracks &c. &c. &c.^[10] A small vessel employed as a packet between this and Van Diemen's Land was lately ran away with by 14 or 16 Convicts in the night & are now in pursuit of by several parties though without much probability of success.^[11] We have received several indirect & perhaps erroneous reports of plots being in agitation to carry off our little

[7] Before they sailed, as this note confirms, the entire crew was meant to be 22, but in his follow-up letter, and in a handlist he later wrote, JSR said there were 21 on board.

[8] It has frequently been assumed and stated that Bungaree sailed on the second and third voyages of the *Mermaid*, but here JSR states quite clearly that he did not go on the second, and must be taken to imply that he did not sail with them again.

[9] George Cooke was a more than normally genteel convict and had extensive medical training. His training and education evidently blurred a few social boundaries on board the *Mermaid*: JSR, on his list noted him down as "Geo. Cook, Doctor's Substitute"; Cunningham simply called him "the Doctor". King later commented in a Memorial on his "zeal beyond my expectations", adding that it was a shame that the man had once struck one of his officers.

[10] JSR was not exaggerating about the executions: three executions took place in Sydney on 10 April, three on 16 April, and three more on 23 April 1819.

[11] I suspect this is a reference to the boat taken in late March 1819 by a gang of convicts, several of whom were associated with the Dockyard, including Richard Scadden and John Burton. Scadden, Burton, James Fitzsimmons and William Tremaine were brought before the Magistrates in Sydney and convicted to 100 lashes and double irons for a year. They has been taken, a report in the *Sydney Gazette* noted, by "a military party off Newcastle" (17 April 1819).

vessel; but we are perfectly ready for the rascals & if it was not for the waste of human life that would ensue I could heartily wish some of them would make the attempt; for unless our own men are in the plot they could have very little chance of success. We keep too smart a lookout for them; & either Mr. Bedwell or myself are always onboard after dark.

The 2 latter gentleman agree tolerably well, considering the vanity & wish of one to top the Officer, & the determined resolution of the other not to submit to imposition!! All things considered we are comfortable. Lieutt. King resides at Parramatta with his wife & does not often trouble us with his presence. This being the last opportunity I shall have of writing for 6 or 8 months to come. I have to bid you a long adieu & recommend you all to the unceasing care & protection of that Supreme Being who is ever mindful of our destinies & who has hitherto so graciously looked our for the life of Poor Jack. I sincerely hope Dr. Mother. Sophia & Brors. are in the full enjoyment of good health & that they & yourself may long continue to do so is the fervent prayer of Dr. Fr. yr. affect. Son.

John Septs. Roe.

The arrival of a Ship from England would be very grateful but I hope on our return to find plenty of Letters from all Quarters; Mrs. King having kindly promised to take care of any that may arrive for us. I am sorry to inform Dr. Mother that my eyes do not improve.

MAY 1819

/ NOVEMBER 1819

No. 9.

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
Coepang Bay, Island of Timor

“The new boat being painted & launched, preparations were made for sailing, & next day we left Endeavour River. As soon as we were clear of the Harbour (upon the shoal bar of which we twice grounded) the Natives, who appeared to have watched us, set fire to the woods on every side, and the whole was speedily enveloped in one general conflagration.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Eight pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of Newbury | Berks. | England

Postmarks: red “Portsmouth Ship Letter” and red circular “F” 29 Sep. 1820.

Location: SLNSW, numbered 152.

An extraordinary letter, one of the best of the series. JSR recounts some 25 weeks at sea, leaving Port Jackson on his birthday, completing the survey of Port Macquarie, sailing through the northern Great Barrier Reef, being forced ashore at Endeavour River and having a fraught time, surveying along the north coast before ultimately having to run to Kupang for water. The account of Port Macquarie is of obvious significance, capped only by his extraordinary description events at the Endeavour River where, to JSR’s delight, they camped at the precise spot previously occupied by Cook’s *Endeavour* in 1770. JSR’s account of an attack made on them is riveting reading, and quite revealing in terms of seeing JSR with his blood up (“To be forcibly compelled to do any thing by a naked savage was what our men could very ill brook...”). JSR’s description of sailing from Endeavour River in heavy weather and difficult currents, with the hills behind them deliberately set on fire by the local men, is dramatically told. JSR is given a few naming rights, naming an island after Sir Christopher Cole and a large port after Sir Richard Keats. It was on this voyage that both King and Bedwell were quite unwell, meaning that a large share of the duties fell to JSR. Short on water they stand for the island of Savu, but finding the region suffering itself from lack of water, they sailed on to Timor. The letter is being sent home from Timor (taking more than ten months to arrive), and JSR concludes with some sobering comments on his indifferent health and poor eyesight.

W. G.

As Myself's letter to you. (Sitting by
Board of Trade. November 1. 1797.)

My dear Father

It is with the greatest pleasure that I show the
testimony of our more worthy to my dear Friends in England. I to inform
how that through the Providence of the Almighty our little vessel has
arrived safely at his Port after an absence from Port Jackson of 22
weeks. I think I inform you of the long absence you might expect after
my last letter to you from Port Jackson, which was dated May 7. 1797.
I should be provided by some of our former (Captain Ross of the 26th Regt.)
who was going to England in the ship Shipley, then about to sail. It
may therefore be later that you have long and this arrives it - we
waited on our former voyage the next day (very late) which I think
my 22nd year) we have been ever since here at work exploring what has
hitherto escaped the observation of former Navigators. I am however long
to see that our labours are not yet brought to a conclusion, and we are
now completing our water at this place preparing to return to Port
Jackson for a fresh supply of Provisions, and will be obliged to make
another voyage to the West Coast of New Holland before our thoughts can
be sufficiently freed upon revisiting our native Country - that I think
do I hope that the Almighty has been pleased to extend his generous
protection over you all. That this will find you all in the full
enjoyment of health & every other blessing you can desire. For my
own part I am ever more fully convinced of his wonderful goodness
towards us unworthy creatures, as myself, and in every season
of our own natural depravity & ingratitude that does not allow
me to be more thankful.

The greatest good fortune has attended us throughout all our difficulties &
travels, which was not a few, but a running shirt of our provisions may
not have stopped us, insupportable. I will by your petition for a few more
that I may give as brief an outline as possible. - We returned to Port
Jackson every last birth day, carrying with us the two or three of the
Colonial boys called the Lady Nelson, to a newly discovered
harbour a few miles to the North, which has been named Port Phillip
after the discovery of the South water. That we remained a week to
survey the Port, and I was one of a party, consisting of several King's (the only
the two of us) who were about 2 days from the Royal, carrying the load of the
King's Passage which was into it - we possessed in our largest whale boat.

No. 9.
His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*, Coepang Bay
Island of Timor. November 5. 1819.

My Dear Father,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I have the happiness of once more writing to my dear Friends in England, & to inform them that through the Providence of the Almighty our little vessel has arrived safely at this Port, after an absence from Port Jackson of 25 weeks. I think I informed you of the long silence you might expect after my last letter to you from Port Jackson, which was dated May 7, 1819, I left to be forwarded by a namesake of mine (Captain Rowe of the 84th. Regt).^[1] who was going to England in the Ship *Shipley*, then about to sail: it may therefore be hoped that you have long 'ere this received it.

We sailed on our present voyage the next day (being that on which I entered my 22d. year) and have been ever since hard at work exploring what had hitherto escaped the observation of former navigators. I am however sorry to add that our labours are not yet brought to a termination, and we are now completing our water at this place preparatory to returning to Port Jackson for a fresh supply of Provisions, and will be obliged to make another voyage to the NW Coast of New Holland before our thoughts can be stedfastly fixed upon revisiting our Native Country. Most sincerely do I hope that the Almighty has been pleased to extend his gracious protection over you all, & that this will find you all in the full enjoyment of health & every other blessing you can desire.

For my own part I am more & more fully convinced of his wonderful goodness & mercy towards so unworthy a creature as myself, and am very sensible of my own natural depravity and ingratitude that does not allow me to be more thankful. The greatest good fortune has attended us throughout all our difficulties & dangers, which were not a few; & as a running sketch of our proceedings may not prove altogether unacceptable, I will beg you patience for a few minutes that I may give as brief an outline as possible. We sailed from Port Jackson on my last birth-day carrying with us the Surveyor General of the Colony & one of the Colonial Brigs called the *Lady Nelson*, to a newly discovered Harbour a few miles to the Northwd., which had been named Port Macquarie after the Governor of New South Wales. Here we remained a week to Survey the Port, and I was one of a party, consisting besides of Lieut. King & Mr. Oxley (the Surv. Genl.) who were absent 3 days

[1] Captain Stephen Shute Rowe (c. 1776-1825) was a Captain in the 84th Regiment. In 1821 Rowe published a now very rare pamphlet seeking to exonerate himself from the charges of "Insubordination preferred against him by Lachlan Macquarie."

from the vessel examining the head of the River Hastings which runs into it.^[2] We proceeded in our largest whale boat, [*page 2*] 25 feet long, upwards of 18 miles up one of the most beautiful picturesque fresh water Rivers I have ever seen, & were only stopped in our progress by the shallow depth which gradually diminished at every rapid we passed.

Very fine rosewood, cedar, &c. &c. were found growing upon the banks and in the adjoining country, but our stay was too short to admit of more than a very small piece of each as a Specimen to be obtained; the Natives we found very friendly, though timid; & when our whole party, which with the boats crew amounted to no more than 8 persons, landed among nearly 30 of them, it was not without their betraying evident signs of fear & uneasiness. Some of this number we had before seen near the vessels on our first arrival in the Port, & many had even ventured on board to be shaved, have their hair cut, &c. &c. with all which they were greatly diverted & amused. But a party of 16 or 18 with whom we communicated near the end of our examination appeared not so trustworthy, for although double our number, they set a look out party on an elevated commanding spot to observe our motions; and notwithstanding their friendly signs & joy at receiving fishing lines, hooks, iron chizels, &c., it was not without feeling much pleasure that they saw us depart.

A very favourable report was given by Lieut. King & Mr. Oxley (who is also an old Lieut. in the Navy) of the Port, River & adjoining Country, and I think it very likely to be the spot upon which a new settlement will be established, to employ some of the many thousand convicts that are continually being sent from Europe, & for 1/12 part of whom there is no employment either by Government of private individuals. From this port I sent the Governor's Lady a box of Insects collected there chiefly by myself, as a trifling acknowledgment for the many favours we have received at her hands, & for the very handsome manner in which she behaved to myself in particular.^[3] I received from her a very kind invitation (& she is a woman that says what she means) to visit them at their estate, the Isle of Mull, on the borders of Scotland, should any circumstance ever take me to that part of the Country; and in return I could not but offer as sure and hearty a welcome at the Rectory of Newbury under the same circumstances; where I felt assured that my dear Parents would be ever willing to entertain with hospitality any person who had been kind to their Son in so distant a Country. We parted, I can assure you, almost like Mother & Son.

[2] John Oxley, Surveyor General of New South Wales, who is described in more detail later in the letter and stayed in touch with JSR. See ADB.

[3] A casual aside, but a very interesting one. Here JSR confirms that he was one of the many who collected natural history specimens for Elizabeth Macquarie, some of which may well have ended up in the famous collector's chest, now in the State Library of New South Wales (see Elizabeth Ellis, *Rare & Curious* (Melbourne: 2011)).



PPK, View of Point Elizabeth on the Hastings River, Port Macquarie. SLNSW.

After the *Lady Nelson* had completed us with provisions for 9 months we parted Company; Mr. Oxley proceeded in her to Port J. while we bent our course to the Northward for the more perilous & intricate navigation along the N. Eastern shores of Australia through Torres Strait, formed between that country and New Guinea. We soon entered among the numerous reefs & shoals with which that part of the Sea is checquered, & to steer clear of which sometimes puzzled our Navigation. The Coast of Australia [*page 3*] in the vicinity of these reefs not having been explored by any Navigators since their superficial examination by the original discoverer Captn. Cook, Lieut. King determind to keep as close in shore as possible, in order to make a proper survey of the coast, and to examine any openings which that celebrated navigator might have been passed over unnoticed. The corrections and additions which we were in consequence enabled to make of the former Charts were so numerous as to induce Lieut. K. to form new ones of his Own; and with the addition of other observns. that will be made on the future voyage which we shall be obliged to perform by the same route, they will I trust prove of considerable importance to Navigation.



PPK, Entrance of Endeavour River, from the Hill at the North end of Long Sandy Beach. SLNSW.

The route we had to pursue being almost continually between reefs & shoals that seldom appeared above water, and were only discernible by the dreadful line of breakers that rolled with tremendous fury upon them during a fresh breeze, you may conclude that our examination of this dangerous & almost deserted track was not unattended by considerable labour, fatigue, & anxiety; and particularly towards the latter part of it, when a boat was washed away from our stern, and we were obliged to run into Endeavour River to build another; not daring to trust ourselves in such a labyrinth without the means of safety in case of any serious accident befalling our vessel. It was here that Captain Cook repaired his Ship the *Endeavour*, after laying for 23 hours upon one of the reefs outside, and it is certainly a most providential circumstance

that this River existed, for no other place that would answer his purpose is to be found within 200 miles on either side.^[4]

We occupied the precise spot on which Captn. Cook had pitched his tents, and immediately commenced setting up a boat which we had fortunately brought with us in pieces; but from the length of time it had been on board, many of the planks, timbers, &c. were broken, and it was a fortnight before the Carpenter had completed her fit for launching.^[5] He carried on his work within 20 yards of the cutter, which was secured close to the shore for protection against the Natives, whom Captain Cook (their last & only visitor) found very troublesome. We had not been here more than 2 days before they found us out, and after their first timid visit or two to reconnoitre us, we were visited by upwards of 20 of them, and obliged to keep a bright look out upon our boat building. Presents of biscuit, beads, iron tools, fish hooks, &c. kept us on an amicable footing with them, and in return Mr. Bedwell obtained from one of them a curious shield made of a light wood that grows very abundant in the woods. This shield having 2 spear holes in it shewed that they were sometimes at war. No other curiosities were obtained from them, and they appeared cautious in endeavouring to conceal their spears, which we nevertheless could perceive among the bushes, though were unwilling, by approaching them, to give ~~them~~ any cause of distrust. Their curiosity however appeared gratified at the end of 3 or 4 days, & they suffered a whole day to elapse [*page 4*] without making their appearance.

Our conjectures were various as to the cause, some thinking we must have unintentionally affronted them, while others imagined that they were absent in the woods hunting kangaroo (which are here numerous) for their daily subsistence. They however, came down to the vessel next day in greater numbers than before, and mustered 25 men besides boys. A sullen sulkiness seemed to possess several of them, & particularly one who appeared to be the father of a youth abt. 11 years of age, that had been much frightened by one of our boys offering to comb his hair; most of the others appeared as friendly as before, & Mr. Bedwell & myself had been busily engaged endeavouring to obtain a small vocabulary of their language, for which we rewarded those who gave us the most information. More than 3/4 [of] our Men were at this time on shore, either assisting the Carpenter, cutting firewood, or washing their clothes at a hole of fresh water about 200 yards from

[4] Cook was at Endeavour River from 17 June – 4 August 1770 making his repairs, and the scene is depicted in a large folding plate in the official account of the voyage edited by John Hawkesworth (1773), showing the *Endeavour* careened on the small stretch of a sandy cove.

[5] The Carpenter on board was William Forster, who my initial research suggests was a child convict who worked in the Sydney Dockyard when he was very young, and had a long career as a mariner based out of Sydney.

the Tent, and the Natives (who had on every former occasion refused to go on board the Cutter when invited) were now anxious for the boat to be pushed on shore for them, that they might see the interior of the vessel. We were now however as anxious to divert their attention to other objects as they were importunate to have their wishes complied with, and they did not seem offended at finding that we diverted their attention.

Particular attention was paid by some of them to the Carpenter's manoeuvres, and as to his tools, nails, &c. each party kept, I believe, as vigilant an eye as the other. Towards the middle of the day the whole party retired by the way they had advanced; and being more than usually anxious to give us to understand that they were going to eat, we could not but suspect that all was not as it should be; and Lieut. King was just expressing his distrust of them when I passed him with my Port Folio & pencil to take a view of the Harbr., from a rising ground immediately over the Tent. I had not reached my station before I heard a loud shout from the Natives, which was instantly followed by the reports of 2 muskets from a party of 5 or our Seamen who were washing their clothes. My imagination instantly suggested an attack, & hastening as fast as possible to the tent, I seized a musket & quantity of ammunition that was lying near the bench, and made a double quick move towards the spot accompanied by a Seaman with an adze.

My blood ran cold when I missed 2 of the 5 men that I knew were washing, & saw the other 3 gathering the linen as fast as possible up in their arms. Sufficient time had not elapsed to ask a question before I perceived the other 2 men at a distance with muskets over their shoulders, just returning from pursuing their assailants. They assured me (after much swearing as to the truth of their assertions) that they had offered not the smallest provocation to the Natives for attacking them, but upon their refusing to leave their clothes at the washing place while they went on board to dinner, the natives endeavoured to use force, & at the same time brought a quantity of spears from among some [*page 5*] trees 15 or 20 yards distant.

To be forcibly compelled to do any thing by ~~force~~ a naked savage was what our men could very ill brook, and were taking up their clothes to go on board when 2 spears were thrown with great force among them, but fortunately without taking effect. Two muskets loaded with ball, that had lain concealed in the high grass, were immediately resorted to by our party, but were not fired until a second discharge of spears stuck harmless into the ground several inches deep. The Natives instantly took to their heels, & were followed by the 2 musketeers, who had not even another charge for their pieces, & luckily did not come up with the chace. Assistance from the vessel having arrived by this time, Mr. Bedwell & myself set off with 7 men (all of us armed with muskets) in

pursuit of these treacherous Savages, who had retired in a direction whither our botanist had been absent several hours examining the vegetable productions of the country. We had too much reason to imagine that these misguided wretches would if possible wreak their vengeance upon him before he was aware of their intentions, and it was therefore with much pleasure we at length found him, after enquiring for nearly 4 hours among the woods about 2 miles & a half from the Cutter. Fortunately for the Savages we did not see any of them during this excursion or they might have paid dearly for their treachery; nor did they again make their appearance, except at a distance, during the remainder of our stay here. Their spears are formidable weapons, thrown with great dexterity, and barbed with a close grained wood hardened over the fire.

While the Carpenter was busy about the Boat, I assisted Lieut. King in making a survey of the Port & Harbour, and while he was occupied in committing our obsns. to paper, I was offered our large whale boat with an armed crew, &c. to explore the head of the River which runs into it; with a promise to insert the plan in his chart as my own. This was a chance not to be neglected, and accordingly having closed with the offer, I started accompanied by the Botanist and returned at the expiration of 2 days without having seen any of the Natives, whose numerous traces were observed wherever we landed. The new boat being painted & launched, preparations were made for sailing, & next day we left Endeavour River.

As soon as we were clear of the Harbour (upon the shoal bar of which we twice grounded) the Natives, who appeared to have watched us, set fire to the woods on every side, and the whole was speedily enveloped in one general conflagration. The wind increased considerably as soon as we got clear of the harbour and blew from that quarter which prevented our returning. To add to our misfortune, we were likewise in as intricate a part of the Navigation as we had to encounter, and which required the finest weather to be examined, or even passed. The channels between the reefs sometimes scarcely exceeded a mile in breadth, and were even then probably connected by sunken rocks, under water, which rendered this kind of work extremely hazardous. There was however no choice left, & we were obliged to stand on, trusting to an ever gracious Providence for assistance.

The wind increased to nearly a gale towards the close of the day, and we were looking out with considerable anxiety for a secure anchorage for the night, when an opening having the appearance of a River was seen abreast of us, and we stood in for it, with a pleasure which only ourselves could feel. Running between 5 and 6 [*page 6*] miles an hour & the sea running very high, the soundings suddenly decreased from 20 to 11 fathoms; the next cast of the lead instantaneously gave 6 faths. and before the vessel's head could be

placed off the shore she struck upon a sunken shoal in 8 & 9 feet water, and commenced beating with great violence against the bottom. Our situation was indeed critical, but it was no time to be looking at one another, for some hideous looking rocks were just raising their rugged heads above the water as the swell receded, and would inevitably have proved our instantaneous & total destruction had not kind Providence ordered otherwise, and assisted us by a judicious management of the sails in getting off into deeper water.

Upon sounding the well, the vessel did not appear to have been materially injured although her copper must have been cut to pieces in several places; and we stood off, thankful for our hairbreadth escape, intending to anchor under the lee of a small island seen in the Offing. By this time the evening had closed in upon us, the sea ran very high, raised by more 1/2 a gale of wind, and the darkness seemed with almost every other circumstance to impress upon our minds that were desolate outcasts deserted by all but that omnipotent Ruler of Events, whose mercy is over all his works. Without despair, yet not daring to communicate our thoughts to each other, we hoped to find anchorage, and at length arrived under the lee of the island, where our best anchor was let go in a very exposed situation, though the best that was there to be found. The violent working of the vessel broke the ring of our anchor in the middle of the night, and we lost it, but anor. anchor being cut away held us on till daylight discovered our situation nearly hemmed in by reefs, which we had been more than fortunate in escaping.

Being anxious to get out of such a place, we pursued our route with break of day, among numerous small islands & shoals; and at noon were abreast of a cluster consisting of 4, low & woody, which Lieut. King offered me the privilege of naming after some of my friends. I called them Cole's Ilds. In honor of Sir C.C.,^[6] trusting that something of greater consequence would present itself for Sir Richd. Keats.^[7] The same afternoon before sunset we secured our anchorage for the night among a cluster of low islands that afforded us but very indifferent shelter, and the ground being bad for the anchor we once more experienced a very narrow escape from Shipwreck, and were on the point of cutting away the anchor to avert the blow.

Being now nearly at the termination of a place that teemed with danger in every shape, our spirits happily remained buoyant as ever, and the same afternoon with a great deal of pleasure we entered the Strait of Torres, which separates the Continent of Australia from New Guinea and at the opposite end of which we should not only navigate a clearer sea, but commence the examination of that part of the Coast which was included in Lieut. King's

[6] JSR's dashing Captain on the *Rippon*, and a supporter of JSR's career.

[7] Sir Richard Goodwin Keats, JSR's most important patron.

instructions. Fresh trials however awaited us here, as if the heaviest of our misfortunes were to come upon us together; for after having miraculously seen 2 sunken rocks upon which we were running at the rate of 4 3/4 miles an hour, & which would have split us in a moment, we hauled in for anchorage under an island for the night and had the misfortune to lose another anchor from the badness of the ground & of the anchor also. Having now only one anchor remaining, which for the next 4 months would perhaps be dropped every night, we began to look seriously upon our condition, & to reflect that the [*page 7*] object of our expedition was nearly frustrated, ere it had commenced. But the same good fortune attended us throughout this voyage as during the last, under similar circumstances, & although the anchor has been let go upwards of 100 times since that period, we still retain it as perfect as when new.

As a repetition of such scenes can afford but little interest, I will not trouble you with any more, but suffice to say that our examination of an unknown coast is attended by its pleasures as well as hours of trial. We all enjoyed tolerable good health till latterly, when fatigue and over-anxiety worked too powerfully upon the constitution of Lieutt. King & made him frequently unwell. During one of these attacks, we were very busily employed examining a part of the Coast much indented with Bays, &c., & from my having been of more service than usual on account of Lieut. K's inability to move about, he gave me leave to name a fine newly discovered Port, and I then did myself the pleasure of honoring it with the name of Port Keats after Sir Richd.; a conspicuous mountain of considerable elevation near the termination of the Port I also obtained permission for being called Mount Goodwin, in order that no mistake might hereafter arise as to the personage whose name is attached to the Port. I hope this will meet with the approbation of Sr. Rd., who will see more than my poor pen can describe when the charts are published.

I was dispatched in one of our whale boats to make a plan of the head of Port Keats, & was absent 2 days, after which we sailed on the further prosecution of our labours & discovered some very fine Ports & Bays that amply repaid our trouble. Mr. Bedwell was soon afterwards unfortunately taken ill with dysentery & obliged to keep his bed for 7 weeks. An increased proportion of his duty consequently fell to my lot, and I can only attribute my escape from the almost general sickness to a kind of Providence and the having much more to do that I was able to []m. Four of our crew, which consists of 21 (including all of us) were ill with these [] when []ulted the Coast of New Holland for this port, and not being able [] of the currents to fetch Timor, we stood away for the I. Savu 90 miles dist. to the W. but on arriving there we found the Malay inhabitants so much distressed themselves for water

owing to the dryness of the Season that they could not spare us any, and we have been a week beating back to this Port where we arrived 3 days ago on the very reduced allowance of 2 pints of water each person per Day. We are now completing that necessary article as quick as possible, & the fresh provisions that are obtainable have already worked a wonderful difference in the health & appearance of us all, whatever may be the subsequent effects of it.

The Dutch Resident here expecting shortly to be relieved from Batavia has kindly promised to convey all our letters to that quarter & so forward them from thence by the earliest & safest conveyance.^[8] I therefore trust that you will receive it safe, & that my last from this Id. has long since reached your hands. Pray, my Dear Friends, do write as often as you can find opportunity & do not wait for the intelligence of a vessel being about to sail, but send the letters to Mrs. King at 16 Paddington Green who will forward them the 1st opportunity.^[9] I look forward with great pleasure to the receipt of a letter at Port Jackson on my arrival there which will be perhaps in 7 or 8 weeks if all goes well, & you may depend upon my writing by every opportunity that offers.

God grant that you may all be in the full enjoyment of health & every blessing. This is the longest absence from you that I have ever had, but I congratulate myself upon the time being so well spent & being likely to yield a happy termination. You will (at least I do) recollect that I have now served 5 months over the time (6 years) that enables me to pass any examinations in England for a Lieut.; and it is likely to be at least 18 months more before we leave P. Jackson for England; therefore my Promotion being the primary object in view, you will agree with me in thinking that the sooner our labours are brought to a conclusion the better. May that time speedily arrive, my Dearest Friends, that will again unite us all under one roof, and that the Almighty will in the interim extend his watchful care & protection over you all, is & and had been my constant prayer. Pray give my kindest love & duty to Dr. Mother, affectionate love to Dear Sophy & Brothers, & with kind remembrance to all friends, believe me my Dear Father to remain your dutiful affect. Son.

John Septimus Roe.

I am sorry it is not in my power to give so good an account of my eyes as could be wished. They must, you well know, have had considerable exercise,

[8] The Dutch Resident at Kupang in Timor was Jacobus Arnoldus Hazaart, a merchant and former Lieutenant on a VOC vessel.

[9] PPK's mother, Anna Josepha, the widow of Governor King.

which in so hot a climate has not bettered their condition. I obtained at Port Jackson a glass suitable to my sight and am now completely at a loss without it. When I get Home I hope to give them a holiday & to obtain some advice as to the proper treatment &c. for them.

NOVEMBER 1819
/ FEBRUARY 1820

No. 10
H.M. Cutter *Mermaid*,
Sydney Cove, Port Jackson

“We have received the gratifying intelligence of the Lords of the Admiralty having expressed their approbation of our endeavours in a dispatch to Lieutt. King & signifying that they were well pleased to think that he had done so much with such small means. I had the pleasure of reading in a number of Blackstone’s Edinburgh Magazine a copy of Lieutt. King’s letter to the Admiralty addressed from Timor at the conclusion of our 1st. Survey, and the accompanying expressions of the Editor at the pleasure he felt in being able to contradict the report which had been in circulation at home, with respect to our little vessel having been totally wrecked.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Eight pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black “Deal Ship Letter” and red “F” stamp for 24 June 1820.

Location: SLNSW, no. 153.

A buoyant and very gossipy letter from JSR, written at Sydney and Parramatta, describing the end of the second major northern expedition. It is a particularly long and interesting letter, not least because it reveals the closer ties being established in England between the King and Roe families: Anna Josepha King and two of her daughters, for example, had visited the Rectory in Newbury. Given that King and his officers are between voyages there is not much on the actual expedition, but it is in this letter that JSR describes his sorrow at having narrowly missed meeting Freycinet and the officers of the *Uranie*: with frankly quite amazing discretion, JSR does not even mention that Rose had been on board as well. The letter includes a lot on his family because JSR is in possession of a handful of letters from home, his first mail in some eighteen months or more. There is also another reference to brother William calling on Thomas Hurd at the Admiralty and asking for the latest news, which seems admirably low-key. JSR’s eyes are giving him a great deal of trouble, and none can doubt him when he laments that being forced to seldom write by candlelight is “a great privation”. In the same letter he also mentions that he has been a pall-bearer at the funeral of George Johnston Jr., and that he still considers Harriet King as “quite a model for a wife.”

N. H.

1011 Letter to Mrs. W. W. W. by George W. Peck
January 21, 1870.

My dear Sister

With the most heartfelt and grateful pleasure I have just
 received your kind, welcome letter, dated Dec. 2, 1869. With the journal of
 the 10th, 11th & 12th of Dec. in your hand, I feel too happy to write to you
 especially to receive my acknowledgments in a proper manner. In due time perhaps
 I shall see you again in person for some months this year absent of communication and
 find you will not fail to unite my own with your thanks when you next have occasion to
 write to me. Your letter, dated 21 May 1869, (Millions of G. Jan 1869) was to have reached
 from the same quarter, I could have found it, but I have been so busy with other
 affairs, I could not find it. I have not yet had time to write you, but I have not
 been able to do so. I had the wonderful prospect before me, that all my letters to you had
 miscarried. Thank God it is not the case. I had I could have had the pleasure of knowing
 that all my dear children & friends are happy, well & prosperous. I have no great regret
 to find that my letter from June 1869, reached your kind hands, as I did not see it without
 misgivings, especially as to its fate. I have frequently had occasion with a more confident letter to
 my last to you from that date, being dated Nov. 1869. It is of course it must reach you
 after some months after the date of the letter, but I do not see its remaining any addition of its
 contents in its original form. I believe you are in good health, the intelligence
 you will have received of my having been gratified with the love of my dear friends, I believe
 of that letter, to your precious letter of the 21st of Dec. 1869. I cannot but have extremely
 agreeable to the feelings that have so long abided in me, and I am sure will find your wishes of
 health and well-being. I shall not forget the names of all the friends.
 You may easily imagine how much I was gratified at the news of the health of my dear
 children & friends, as well as the intelligence of your health, but not
 without his being under the impression that he had not yet reached my hands, and so I am
 assured that it will be a remarkable relief to me. It is however a great consolation and
 encouragement for me to know that my letters have found their way to him, & I shall not
 fail to write to both whenever the occasion offers. I cannot think of any more about the light from
 the fact that I shall not be able to tell what will be the result of the project of
 to be true, time is so precious as the distant prospect of the globe. The communication
 returns between this but is very open & frequent, & in respect from that quarter especially
 more so than ever. I have never seen a man for particulars of the same. The
 result is very generally superior to expectations which arose in the immobility of
 England, and now there is about 200 from the London Bazaar. Before I say any thing
 concerning myself, I cannot forbear relating the gratification which I feel at the thought
 being in power to preserve you all in the enjoyment of that inestimable blessing. I shall
 undoubtedly be able to do so, and which most of you have been thinking of. I shall
 have much to do to make you all more comfortable & cheerful in that respect, for the purpose
 of writing more news concerning you. I hope my dear sister has not suffered materially from
 her sickness in Town. I shall do all that I can for the sake of those who love her
 than her self for the purpose as much as I can. I believe that she has long since
 missed my letter to her, of Dec. 2, 1869. It is the earnest intention of your distant brother
 will not prove unavailing in obtaining a free passage in answer. I have not (April 1869) by the same
 conveyance as one for yourself of the same subsequent date, but the carriage of it was somewhat
 delayed by the ship being getting in a reef in the part of the boat. Having a paper to put into
 the kit of Town for several G. The same ship brought home the Charles from St. Augustin, to
 the

No. 10.
H.M. Cutter Mermaid, Sydney Cove. Port Jackson
January 21 1820.

My Dear Father,

With the most heartfelt and grateful pleasure I have just received your & Brother William's long letters dated March 4. 1819. together with the parcel of blue cloth &c. &c. accompanying them, for all of which I feel too happy to be able to write sufficiently legible to express my acknowledgements in a proper manner. To Mrs. King's goodness I shall ever feel greatly indebted for having afforded this free channel of communication and I trust you will not fail to unite my own with your thanks when you next have occasion to write to her.^[1] Your letter bearg. date 19 May. 1819 & William's of 2d. Jany. 1819. came to hand yesterday from the same quarter (Lieutt. King) & were truly acceptable.

From the long and painful silence of you all, I could not help beginning to fear the worst, not having received a letter of later date than May 1818 and I had the mournful prospect before me that all my letters to you had miscarried. Thank God that is not the case & that I once more have the pleasure of hearing that all my dear Relations & Friends are doing well & prosperously. It gives me great satisfactn. to find that my letter from Timor (no. 4) reached your hands safely, as I did not send it without considerable anxiety as to its fate, & consequently look forward with a more confident hope to my last to you from that place (being dated November 5. 1819. No. 9). Of course it cannot reach you till some months after the date of this but as I do not fear its miscarrying, any repetition of its contents would be loss both of time & paper-room.

By what you say on your last, the intelligence you will have received of my having been gratified with the honor of naming a cluster of Islands after Sr. Christ. Cole ^[2] & a fine spacious Port after Sr. Richd. Keats ^[3] cannot but prove extremely agreeable to the feelings of all those (at home especially) who favor me with their good wishes: & should any similar opportunities be offered I shall not forget the names of Hall & Brooks.^[4] You may easily imagine how much I was gratified at the news of Bror. Thos.' Successful

[1] JSR seems to have received three letters from Newbury, from William dated 2 January 1819, from William and the Reverend James dated 4 March 1819, and from the Reverend James dated 19 May 1819, taking advantage of Anna Josepha King's repeated offers to forward letters on their behalf.

[2] Sir Christopher Cole was JSR's dashing Captain on the *Rippon*.

[3] Sir Richard Goodwin Keats, JSR's most important patron.

[4] Although there is evidently a family connection, I do not know who the Hall family were in this regard; Brooks was the maiden name of JSR's mother Sophia.

undertaking & promotion as well as at the intelligence of George being in good health: but notwithstanding his having written to me his letter has not yet reached my hands nor do I now suppose that it will after so considerable a lapse of time, it is however a great consolation and encouragement for me to know that my letters have found their way to India & I shall not fail ~~to~~ writing to both whenever opportunities offer.^[5] Several ships being now about to sail from Port Jackson for Calcutta I shall send a letter to both which will make my 4th. to George & 6th. to Tom. since my arrival in this distant & remote corner of the Globe. The communication between Calcutta & this Port is very open & frequent, & newspapers from that quarter consequently arrive very often, but I have searched them in vain for particulars of Bombay news, their contents being generally confined to transactions which occur in the immediate vicinity of Bengal, with now & then an extract or 2 from the Bombay Papers.

Before I say any thing concerning myself, I cannot forbear repeating the gratification which I feel at the Almighty having been pleased to preserve you all in the enjoyment of that inestimable blessing, Health, notwithstanding the colds, sort throats &c. &c. with which most of you have been troubled & which have merely served to make you all more watchful & careful in that respect for the purpose of averting more serious inconvenience: I hope my Dear Sophy did not suffer materially from her [] in Town & that she will take great care of herself for the sake of those who love her & have her welfare & happiness as much as at heart as their own. It is to be hoped that she has long since received my letter to her (of Decr. 8. 1818. No. 1) & that the earnest entreaties of a far distant brother will not prove unsuccessful in obtaining a few lines in answer. It was sent (April 1. 1819) by the same conveyance as one for yourself of the same & subsequent dates, but the carriage of it was considerably delayed by the ship *Shipley* getting on a reef in this part of the World & being obliged to put into the Isle of France for repairs &c. The same ship conveyed home the Charts of our 1st. Voyage to [*page 2*] explore the coasts of this Country together with Lieutt. King's Journal of that voyage and a plan laid down for his future operations. They have all I trust arrived safe & that the Admiralty will have found an opportunity of expressing their sentiments upon the occasion before we again sail on our 3rd. & (I hope) last voyage to the Northward. We have received the gratifying intelligence of the Lords of the Admiralty having expressed their approbation of our endeavours in a dispatch to Lieutt. King & signifying that they were well pleased to think that he had done so much with such small means. I had the

[5] Brothers Thomas and George in India. Thomas was in the Army of the East India Company, and seems to have had some sort of brevet promotion around this time (he is listed as made Captain on 22 May 1821).

pleasure of reading in a number of *Blackstone's Edinburgh Magazine* a copy of Lieutt. King's letter to the Admiralty addressed from Timor at the conclusion of our 1st. Survey, and the accompanying expressions of the Editor at the pleasure he felt in being able to contradict the report which had been in circulation at home, with respect to our little vessel having been totally wrecked.^[6] Lieutt. King says that the letter is only a very small part of that sent by him, & having been communicated to the Public by Persons in Office, it appears to be merely intended as an authentic official document respecting our safety & success & is no more than they think proper at present to communicate.

In order to account for this mode of proceeding, you must consider that the French had a similar ~~voyage~~ expedition under weigh at the same epoch & experience has taught us, under exactly the same circumstances, how much is to be lost by being too communicative before the whole proceedings of our voyage are published by authority.^[7] This mark of approbation was accompanied by a fresh supply of Instruments which fortunately arrived in a good state of preservation and has completely recruited us. The remainder of a list of stores written for by Lieutt. K. we are daily expecting by the *Dromedary* Storeship & consist of anchors, a chain cable, blocks, rope, &c. &c. that which is procured here not being trustworthy.

With respect to that desirable thing Promotion, Mr. Nichols & others who gave Wm. his information must have been altogether unacquainted with the rules of the Naval Service to suppose that a Mid. could receive his Commission as Lieutt. before he had passed the requisite examinations in Seamanship & Navigation, the former of which cannot take place until he has served 6 years at Sea.^[8] You of course remember that on quitting England I had not completed that time of service & an opportunity never offered to allow of my passing in Navigation at the Naval Academy Portsmo. I have now served 6 months above the stated time and if I behave myself may perhaps serve 18

[6] See 'Letter from Lieutenant King, now employed in completing a Survey of New Holland', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, XXI:4 (December 1818), p. 286. The short piece was an excerpt of a letter King had sent from Timor on 11 June 1818, addressed only to "Dear Sir" (the editor in a brief preamble notes that he was "extremely obliged to a Friend, who has communicated to us a private letter from Lieutenant King"). The editor is also pleased to be able to contradict the reports that the *Mermaid* had been lost in February 1818, and that the French expedition (that is, Freycinet) "will find themselves anticipated by Lieutenant King's visit." Near contemporary issues of the magazine had devoted quite a lot of space to a discussion of the northwest passage expeditions of Ross and Parry, so the inclusion of King's letter is not at all surprising.

[7] JSR here describes the belief that the French in general, and indeed Louis de Freycinet in particular, were a little too keen to take credit for discoveries.

[8] Mr. Nichols/Nickols was a friend of the family who had known JSR since boyhood.

months longer before an opportunity will offer to allow of my passing in England.

My messmate Mr. Bedwell had passed his examination both at the Naval College & for Seamanship upwards of 12 months before we left Europe & still retains no higher rank in the Service than myself. Poor fellow, he has suffered dreadfully in a long attack of that formidable disease the Dysentery which laid him on his beam ends for upwards of 2 months and for some time left us in doubt whether he would ever rise from his bed again. It was the same attack I alluded to in my last to you & unfortunately happened while we were exploring the Coast which made the duty fall trebly heavy upon my shoulders but he is now perfectly recovered. We agree together as well as can be expected considering his presumption & my pride.^[9]

We arrived here 8 or 9 days ago after a 9 weeks passage from Timor (5000 miles) and an absence of 36 weeks from Port Jackson, having sailed from this on my birthday.^[10] Our voyage from Timor was 3 weeks longer than the 1st. one from the same place owing to strong breezes against us & we lost another boat off Cape Leeuwin, washed away in a Gale of wind near the spot where a similar accident happened ~~last year~~ to us in 1818. In the present instance we were not at all sorry for the circumstance the boat being almost entirely useless & was built by the apprentice boys in the Marine Yard here to prevent the expense of about 5 & 20 shillings to be paid to a regular boatbuilder for putting up one to which we could trust our lives with any degree of safety. We were anxiously expecting & wishing for the accident & it being my watch upon deck when the Sea struck us, it was with great pleasure that I assisted in cutting away the remainder of the trash.^[11] You may well imagine that our little vessel is very wet in rough weather & that the weather which would admit of a large vessel having dry decks makes us wet both on deck & below; & latterly when the numerous leaks in our decks & upper works had been considerably enlarged by the constant action of a powerful Sun, neither our beds, provisions, or Stores were in [*page 3*] the least degree spared.

Fortunately for us the weather was considerably finer than on our last homeward bound voyage from Timor & we were thereby saved the pain of witnessing any aggravation to the sufferings of our sick who are now happily doing very well. We were exceedingly lucky in losing no more than one man during the whole 9 months & he died of Hydrothorax or Dropsy in the

[9] JSR is very even-handed about Bedwell here, and particularly as regards what had evidently been a more serious illness than one would guess from the published accounts.

[10] JSR was born on 8 May 1797.

[11] JSR is here unusually frank about the difficulties they had with the Dockyard in Sydney, but is basically repeating the sort of critical comment he made in many of his letters.

Chest which would have put a period to his existence under any other circumstance.^[12] The Almighty has been pleased to preserve me on good health although I feel that being obliged to be so much exposed to a burning Sun with the Thermometer at upwards of 90° in the coolest part of our vessel, has made some impression upon my constitution & made all of us totally unfit for encountering the severities of an English winter; though I am in hopes that a short cruize in a cold climate, if not encountered too suddenly, will completely brace up our nerves. My sincere thanks are due for your kindness in sending the preparation for the eyes which I shall immediately commence using, though without the hope of obtaining a permanent or substantial relief from any remedy till our present service is completed, being fully convinced that that alone has done my eyes the principal mischief from being obliged to strain them in looking out for land from the Mast head, in an atmosphere completely parched with heat. I will not say that is the sole enemy to my eyes, being aware that close application to the Charts I copied for Captn. Dillon & Mr. Taylor, the Master of the *Horatio* (the latter of whom, Charles knows, repaid my labours so gratefully by his shameful behaviour)^[13] added to overworking by Candle Light, were the grand attacks which have brought my eyes to their present state. I am now giving them a respite as much as possible, though it is out of my power to spare them as much as I could wish. Stephenson's *Treatise* I shall peruse attentively, & hope with Mr. Hemsted's letter & other Medical advice to derive some benefit from its contents.^[14] My eyes do not get worse.

It gives me great pleasure to say that we are on the most friendly footing at Government House, having dined there once since our arrival & being now under an engagement to dine there in a few days. We (Mr. B. & myself) have also dined at the Judge Advocate's (Mr. Wylde), at the Supreme Judge's (Mr. B. Field) several times at the mess of the 48th. Regt., & are now under 2 engagements to dine there again together with one for tomorrow at the Lieutt.

[12] William Nichols/Nicholls (abt. 1793 – 27 September 1819) was the Seaman who died in the Cambridge Gulf, only the second man to die sailing on King's survey voyages. He had been born on Norfolk Island and returned to New South Wales in 1815 on board HMB *Emu* (Capt. G.B. Forster). On his death see King, *Narrative*, vol. I, pp. 305-309; see also JSR's crew list for the second voyage of the *Memaid*.

[13] As JSR makes clear, both Captain William Dillon and Mr. Taylor were on his old ship the *Horatio*, but what was the latter's "shameful behaviour"?

[14] The reference is to John Stevenson's recent monograph *On the Morbid Sensibility of the Eye, commonly called weakness of sight* (Hartford: 1815). The Rev. James had scrawled a note relating to the work on the address leaf of JSR's letter of 14 August 1817, part of the family's continuing endeavours to improve JSR's eyesight. The medically trained "Mr. Hemsted" JSR refers to is very likely to have been Henry Hemsted Esq. (abt. 1773-1839), Coroner for the County of Newbury.

Governor's (Colonel J. Erskine, K.B. commanding the 48th Regt.).^[15] So you see that we have the benefit of the best society in the place & most friendly & pressing invitations to visit the Country are often sent from Parramatta (16 miles) by Mr. & Mrs. H. McArthur, Bror. in Law & Sister to Lieutt. King.^[16] The latter was much surprized (at least he appeared so) on his arrival, to find that Mrs. K. had just been confined with her 2d. Son; & as I cannot but admire every amiable woman it gives me pleasure to add that Mrs. K. is doing very well.^[17] Since I read your letter Mrs. Macquarie the Governor's Lady who was so kind to us before we sailed on our last voyage, heard from Lieutt. King that I had received letters from Home, & yesterday evening when we drank tea there, she enquired very kindly after my Father & Mother, how many Brothers & Sisters I had, where they were, in what situations, &c. &c. &c. and repeated her invitation for me to visit them at the Isle of Mull in Scotland. You will of course perceive that we are on very good terms there. I am extremely sorry that you should have been so much alarmed with the shameful false report of the *Mermaid's* loss on the Cumberland Rocks (God knows where they are for I never heard that any such existed) and I have not yet had an opportunity of conversing with the person who we supposed was the dispenser & framer of such a fabrication, & who has since arrived here in a ship from India, but when that opportunity offers I shall not fail to obtain all the information in my power from him on the subject & then expose him to the contempt he merits. He is a Master of a Merchantmen that resided here for some time till his behaviour obliged the Governor to order him to quit the Colony, & he then embarked as passenger on board a Ship called the *Friendship*, the same in which Lieutt. Hicks R.N. (Son of Mr. H. near Newbury) was chief mate.^[18] At the time of that Ship's sailing from Port Jackson no opportunity had offered of our sending away any letters since the Cutter

[15] JSR and Bedwell have, that is, dined with Governor Macquarie; Sir John Wylde, the deputy judge advocate; Barron Field, the judge of the Supreme Court; and with Colonel James Erskine, the CO of the 48th.

[16] That is, Hannibal and Anna Maria Macarthur.

[17] Elizabeth King's second son John (1820-1895).

[18] The fallacious report of the loss on "Cumberland Rocks" was much discussed by those with an interest in the voyage, which makes it a shame that JSR does not commit himself to actually naming the man he clearly thinks was the source of the story, nor why he would have done such a thing. JSR only comment is that he thought the man responsible was a "master of a merchantman" who had left Sydney as a passenger on board the *Friendship*, which had come to Sydney as a convict transport for women prisoners. So who was he? When the *Friendship* (Capt. Andrew Armett) left Sydney in February 1818 the only passengers recorded as being on board were: Robert Stewart Walker (called a "Chief Officer"), Peter Cosgreave Esq. (a Surgeon in the RN), Willm. Barnes and Adam Aitchison (free sailors), four Tahitians and two ticket-of-leave men (Departing Crews & Passenger Lists, February 1818). By this reckoning, the only man who would fit the bill must be Walker (keeping in mind this is only JSR's opinion). Walker had been master of the colonial vessels *Mary Ann*, *Governor Macquarie*, *King George*

left the Port, therefore the report must have been a total invention of the propagator.

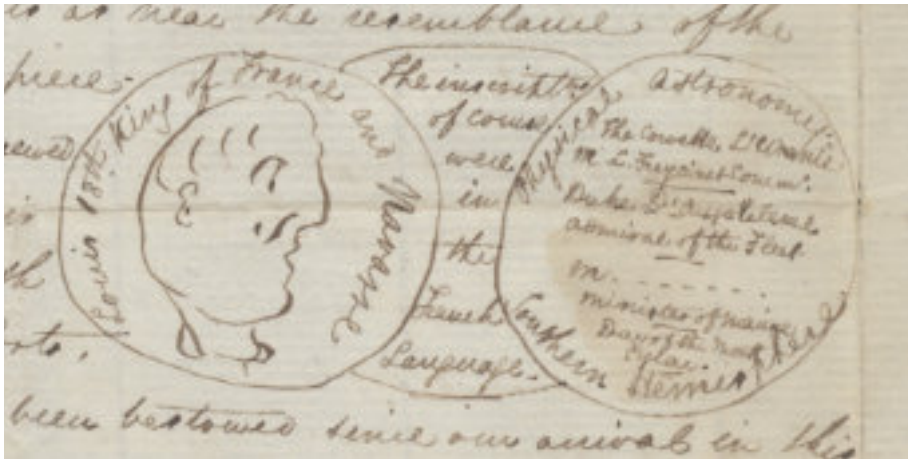
We were all very sorry indeed to find that the French expedition on discovery in these regions commanded by Captn. Freycinet had sailed for Cape Horn only a few days before our arrival here, after a stay of 5 weeks to refit & take the necessary observations to ascertain, for some astronomical purposes, the number of vibrations of a pendulum in 24 hours, together with several other remarks of a similar nature for the same purposes.^[19] It is gratifying to say that they received every possible [*page 4*] attention that could be paid to them by every description of persons except the Convicts, some of whom continued to help themselves to the Captain's Plate which he had conveyed to his lodgings and on shore, it was however nearly all recovered, and one of the principal aggressors punished. General (Governor) Macquarie offered to make good the loss at the expense of Government but the Captn. declined it.^[20]

As I mentioned in my letter from Timor, the French Government caused some very handsome medals to be struck in commemoration of the voyage, previous to the Expedition sailing from France. Captn. F has distributed a great many in the course of his voyage, & Lieutt. King was gratified with one of the only 2 silver Medals left at Port Jackson, the judge of the Supreme

and *Dragon*. What reason could he have had for spreading such an unkindly piece of gossip? There is also JSR's interesting reference to "Lieutt. Hicks R.N. (Son of Mr. H. near Newbury)" being chief mate of the *Friendship*. Lt. William Hicks arrived in Sydney on the *Friendship* in February 1818 and in a Memorial he sent to Governor Macquarie at that time he said that he had served as a Lieutenant in the RN for the previous five years, including service as commander of HMC *Finch* "in the Lakes in Canada". That Memorial is a politely worded complaint against Captain Armett, and Armett also wrote to Macquarie announcing that he would be pleased to be rid of several of his officers and men: in the event only Hicks was allowed to leave the ship (Armett had done such a good job of slandering the men on his ship that Macquarie was in no mood to add them to the population of Sydney). Hicks left Sydney soon after as a passenger on the *Laurel* for India in April 1818 together with "Fras. Jones", his 11 year old servant (Thomas Skottowe was on board the same ship). Hicks is almost certainly the RN officer of that name who returned to Sydney on the *Admiral Cockburn* in 1822 and asked permission to remain in the colony, moving to Newcastle and marrying Sophia Hickey in 1823. His connection to Newbury might well repay a little more investigation.

[19] The *Uranie* sailed into Port Jackson on 19 November 1819 and left on Christmas Day. The "pendulum" noted by JSR was seriously investigated during the voyage, and the results published in the official account as a separate volume (*Observations du Pendule*, Paris, 1826).

[20] A collection of family plate and other household goods were stolen from Freycinet from his house ashore on Bunker's Hill, to the horror of Governor Macquarie, who wrote to him in the hope that he would allow the Government to recompense him (Col. Sec. papers, 20 December 1819). One Thomas Jennings, transported for life, was tried for stealing "sundry articles of plate, &c." from the house and convicted to see out his sentence – life – in Newcastle (*Sydney Gazette*, 25 December 1819). This would make him the man who came out on the *Almorah* (1817) and who was killed in a tree fall while working as a cedar cutter in Newcastle on 22 December 1820.



JSR's rough sketch of the two sides of the Freycinet voyage medal struck in 1817.

Court having been presented with the other.^[21] You are not perhaps aware that Capt. F. was the 1st. Lieutt. to the Commodore (Baudin) of 2 ships, the *Géographe* & *Naturaliste*, employed by the French Government in 1801.2.3. upon the same service as the little *Mermaid*, in this Country. Lieutt. King's Father being at that time Governor of these Territories, paid them every possible attention, & the good Mrs. K. opened her hospitable door to them all in the most friendly way. That kindness, besides having been publicly mentioned in the history of the voyage, has now been most~~ly~~ gratefully acknowledged by the present Commander in a very handsome letter left here for Lieutt. K. & accompanied by the Medal above mentioned.^[22] The following is as near the resemblance of the Medal as I can recollect & its size about that of a large penny piece. They are all uncommonly well executed.

Although the officers were so reserved as not to communicate any particulars relative to their voyage, it is gratifying to us to know that we have no rival to dispute with as to the claim of priority in discovering the newly explored

[21] JSR's rough pen sketch of the medal that had been issued by Andrieu & Puymaurin in honour of the Freycinet voyage in 1817 is illustrated above. The medals were chiefly struck in silver or bronze, the silver ones tending to be for more significant gifts. Before PPK left Sydney on the second voyage of the *Mermaid* he left a letter to Freycinet introducing Barron Field "who will be proud to receive you as a brother" (King letterbook, SLNSW, 26 April 1819). Freycinet became great friends with Field.

[22] PPK had left a note for Freycinet in Sydney when he sailed on the second *Mermaid* voyage (see previous note), and Freycinet in turn left a long letter in Sydney when he left, expressing his regret at having twice narrowly missed meeting him: the French had anchored soon after PPK in Timor, and were now leaving Sydney just before his return. He had, Freycinet continued, a perfect recollection of the hospitality of Governor King and his family, feelings which he had a chance to express to PPK's sister-in-law Anna Maria Macarthur in person. Freycinet

Ports, Harbours, Islands, &c. &c. &c. upon which our labours have been bestowed since our arrival in this Country; for Captn. Freycinet has openly avowed that this Country was a secondary consideration only in his instructions & that the only part of it visited by *l'Uranie* was the neighbourhood of Shark's Bay on the West Coast which they looked into in hopes of finding wood & water.^[23] They all expressed great concern at not being able to see us & the vessel in which we were employed but wished us every success & sailed for Cape Horn after a stay here of 5 weeks: we were, as you may naturally suppose, equally disappointed & sorry at not having arrived in time for the interview.

We found also that ___ Bigge Esqr., a Commissioner of Inquiry lately arrived from England, had sailed only a few hours before we made our appearance off the Harbour, for the purpose of inspecting the settlement of Newcastle about 70 miles to the Northward, & to examine into the eligibility of Port Macquarie (lately surveyed by us) for the establishment of a new settlement.^[24] He returned on the 31st. Jany. 1820 without having seen the latter place & is preparing to sail for Van Diemen's Land in the 1st. week of February. His mission is to examine into every thing civil, military, judicial, ecclesiastical, &c. &c. &c. &c. and to report accordingly at home. I have not yet seen him but understand he is a very pleasant gentlemanly character and expect that he will be prying into our affairs as well as those of every other department. This afternoon (Feb'y. 1. 1820) I dined at Government House in company with his Secretary & find him a perfect gentleman & pleasant man.^[25]

Although I have dated this onboard the *Mermaid*, we are all onboard a Brig called the *Queen Charlotte*,^[26] with our stores and every moveable article, having been under the necessity of sinking our own vessel to destroy the innumerable rats, cockroaches, centipedes, earwigs, ants, scorpions, tarantulas, mice, & other vermin (no bugs, thanks God) which infected her & destroyed our provisions, stores, books, papers, linen, & any thing they could get at.

also thanked PPK for providing an update on his work on the north and northwest coasts, admitting himself completely aware of the imperfect state of the maps that had been done on the Baudin voyage and the difficulty of sailing in those waters. In the letter he particularly thanked PPK for the introduction to Field and the opportunity to spend time in his charming and agreeable society.

[23] The *Uranie* anchored in Shark Bay on 12 September 1818.

[24] John Thomas Bigge had reached Sydney in September 1819 to begin his appointment as commissioner of inquiry into the colony of New South Wales.

[25] Bigge's secretary was Thomas Hobbes Scott (see ADB). JSR is either tactful or oblivious about his recent dinner at Government House: in his diary Governor Macquarie commented on what had been a testy interview between himself and Bigge ("after a great deal of warm discussion... we parted not friends" Macquarie wrote). See transcript of his journal for February 1820, *The Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie Archive* (online), accessed 18 March 2017.

[26] The *Queen Charlotte* (Capt. Sindrey) was a merchant ship built in Sydney.

The cockroaches are so famed for the ravages they commit, that a vessel having money onboard to convey across the Indian Ocean, did not fail once to attribute the deficiency of a few boxes of dollars to the prowess of those formidable insects: & it is even added that the E.I. Company were obliged to put up with the excuse!! I should like to know whether those insects had 6 legs or 2!

(Feby. 1). I have to return many thanks to my Dear Sophy for her kind letter received yesterday with the buttons, which are fortunately of the proper kind & truly acceptable. Mrs. H. McArthur writes me word that her sisters (the Miss Kings) speak very highly of Sophy in their letters to her, & if they are at all like their Sister in this Country you cannot but be all highly pleased with them & their good mother. Most heartily do I wish that the late trips to London may not have occasioned more than a temporary inconvenience to the giddy cakes.

February 2. 1820.

I have just enjoyed the gratification of receiving your kind & welcome letter of 23rd. Augt. 1819 by the *Dromedary* Storeship that arrived here a day or 2 ago & am extremely happy to find that you have had an opportunity of entertaining Mrs. King & 2 Daughters at the Rectory.^[27] It is also gratifying to hear of the welfare of Dr. Hall, Mr. Lowthian, & Mr. J.H. Roe the Recorder of Macclesfield.^[28] I do not remember, nor have I any knowledge of the Craven family, farther than their being residents in your neighbourhood but am concerned to hear of the slippery behaviour of its branches. With respect to Mr. Nichols I am far from wishing to add fuel to the fire already so unhappily kindled, but cannot forbear expressing myself highly indignant at the aspersions he has been pleased to bestow upon your character; & as to his having taken me into his house because I had no where else to go, he must have been well aware that he could not be writing the truth when he said so, for I [*page 5*] slept every night at the King's Ward Christ's Hospital before I called at all upon him & he expressed his displeasure at my not having made his house my home on my 1st. arrival in Town.^[29] In consequence of which & being unwilling to disoblige a person who had ever manifested the most friendly disposition towards me.^[30] I consented to sleep under his roof; but never had the least cause to suppose that I was taken in as an houseless va-

[27] Evidently Anna Josepha King and two of her daughters, presumably Elizabeth and Mary, had visited the Roe family in Newbury.

[28] I have not yet worked out the connection with Hall and Rowthian, but "J.H. Roe" of Macclesfield was John Heriot Roe, Esq., a barrister elected Recorder of Macclesfield in 1804, in which position he served until his death, aged 67, on 19 October 1833.

[29] Christ's Hospital in London was, of course, JSR's school.

[30] Mr. Nichols/Nickols and his trouble-making ways are a fairly regular refrain in the JSR correspondence home.

grant; for by his expressions that appears to have been the light in which he held me. I hope however that we shall both in future be spared the pain of similar reflections.

To write in a different strain. I must say that it caused a lively sensation when I read that my Father, Mother, Brother Chas. & Sophy has been hung (what a deplorable picture) but it was a feeling of pleasure, however unnatural the reflection might be: Chas.'s injunction to have my likeness taken at Canton shall certainly be attended to if opportunity offers, which God forbid, for I have no particular wish for a voyage in that direction at present and would rather wish that a ship was getting ready to sail for England by the way of Cape Horn when we arrive from our 3d. voyage, which will give me an opportunity of completing the circumnavigation of the Globe.^[31] Independent of this consideration I am afraid you will be suspending me also with others.

I am sorry I can give you no intelligence from India, not having received a single line either from Tom or Geo. for the last 3 years, when you may remember putting a letter from Tom into my hands dated Jan. 1815. I have had occasion to mention this subject in the former part of my letter & mentioned my last to that quarter (directed to Tom) having been dated in April 1819 & followed a fortnight after one to George sent by a different conveyance. The answer of the latter to mine sent on my 1st. arrival in this country having been now dated nearly 2 years back must have miscarried by some means or other as I have not been able to bring any such letter to light. I will thank you in your next letters to both if you will give them my full address, onboard His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*, Port Jackson, New South Wales; though when I consider of it you will perceive with me that by the time they can have received such a communication all necessity for it will have been removed by our return to Europe. It may nevertheless be gratifying to them to receive my proper address that they may be enabled to form some idea whether their letters may have miscarried for want of it.

I shall continue to write & intend sending a letter immediately to G. by a ship called the ~~Recovery~~ *Castle Forbes* that sails for ~~Batavia & Calcutta~~ Bombay on Sunday next.^[32] I hope Willm. has succeeded in obtaining his wishes in the India House & wish I had time & material to return his very long & kind letters that give me so much pleasure in the perusal: he merits my warmest thanks for his successful endeavours (as he calls them) to write a few lines, but

[31] I do not know the location of any of these family portraits. JSR's comment that he should attempt to have his likeness taken "at Canton" must imply that no portrait of him had yet been taken. The famous miniature of JSR (used as the cover image on J.L. Burton Jackson's *Not an Idle Man* and as the frontispiece to this volume) is thought to date from 1824.

[32] "G" is brother George. The *Castle Forbes* (Capt. Reid) had recently arrived in Sydney on 27 January 1820.

as for Chas. I have a great mind to fire a heavy broadside of double shotted guns, round & grape, at him for his inexcusable laziness in not writing to his brother, for he can have nothing else whatever to do, and must be well aware of the extreme gratification which is derived from receiving Letters from Home when at so great distance as New South Wales. I sincerely hope that Chas. has no scruples as to style & manner, punctilious nonsense that should have nothing to do with communication between 2 Brothers & which he may rest assured is paid as little attention to by me in the letters I receive as in those I send to Newbury; nor am I one of those that are so particular in their correspondence as perhaps they ought to be. Pray, my Dear Father, persuade Chas. to believe this & if possible ~~getting~~ him to write, or I shall otherwise attribute his silence to a want of proper confidence in a Brother who has the greatest regard for him. He will see by what I have said that I am getting angry with him & that I shall overhaul him pretty handsomely if he does not take up a pen in his own defence! The hog!!

I have often enjoyed the thought of Chas. & Willm. learning to ride of the rough rider of the Blues ^[33] & hope you or they will give me a faithful account of the number of times they have been capsized, & whether they were always on the ground in time every morning. I am in hopes they will be able to track me if ever I get home again for I am a desperate bad hand at it & do not remember whether I told you of a famous somerset I took over my horse's bow one day while riding out with Mrs. King near Parramatta, in a careless inattentive manner (sailor-like you will say).^[34] I landed on my back upon a grassy spot & after recovering all the wind that had been knocked out of my body by the violence of the concussion. I was able to resume my seat without having received any considerable damage & for the remainder of the ride took care to steer my horse clear of all holes & stumps.

Bedwell has been absent the last 2 days on an excursion up the Country with a Surgeon in the Navy, an old messmate of his, and another gentleman who wished to see the Country in the vicinity of the Blue Mountains which I must also endeavour to visit myself before we sail for England.^[35] I expect his return in a couple of days & that shortly afterwards I shall be called to Parramatta by Lieutt. King to assist him in preparing the Charts for the Admiralty. That will be another benefit for my daylights which I shall nevertheless spare as much as I can and at present am happy to say that they do not get worse. I am using a solution of some of the preparation you was so kind as to send me out, but have not had time yet to perceive any sensible benefit I may have derived from it.

[33] A joking reference to the Royal Horse Guards and 1st Dragoons, "the Blues and Royals".

[34] With Harriet King, that is.

[35] There are no obvious clues as to who these two gentlemen were.

The Admiralty have been pleased to send out by the *Dromedary*, Storeship, 5 or 6 Tons of stores for the use of our little Man of War, including 3 new patent chain cables which will prove of the greatest use to us & 2 new English anchors which will spare us all a repetition of the many anxious nights we have passed, while trusting the safety of our vessel to the trash they supply as with at Port Jackson. Among other [page 6] things in this timely supply are upwards of 2000 Yards of Canvass, an article that cannot at this period be purchased in the Colony for 2ce. its weight in gold, & which it is indispensably necessary for us to have to make a new suit of sails for our ensuing voyage. Many other articles equally as valuable in such a place as this are included in the Inventory & we feel very thankful for the whole. By every arrival we are anxiously looking for an answer from the Admiralty to Lieutt. King's Dispatch, Journal & Charts of our 1st. voyage, sent home by the ship *Shipley* that sailed from this Port on 1st. of April 1819. The Charts having been copied by my humble self from the original plans by Lieutt. K. I of course feel particularly interested in their fate, & do not consider that time as thrown away which had been spent in their completion.

I am sorry that Willm. could not see Captn. Hurd when he called at the Hydrographical Office, as that Officer is the most likely person from his connexion with our Expedition, to know something about our affairs and of any intention they (the Admty.) might have in view respecting us.^[36] I am however glad to hear of the welfare of my old schoolfellow [Bushman] & that he is in a fair way for Promotion.^[37] Next to the voyage upon which I am at present engaged there is none I should prefer to the Expedition towds. the North Pole, though well aware upon cool reflection of the danger accompanying the enterprise. It would be altogether madness for me to think of such a trip before I have been 2 winters out of this scorching climate, & there is no such thing as diving into Futurity to ascertain what events will happen before that period is elapsed. It is also to be hoped that for the benefit of Geography, Navigation & other of the Arts & Sciences that the second sailing of the expedition, under Captn. Ross's 1st. Lieutt. (Parry, I believe) may have proved successful in dissolving the knotty points at issue.^[38]

The eyes of the whole civilized world having been directed towards Captn. Ross, his failure (& particularly under the existing circumstances) was truly

[36] JSR's brother William had evidently called on Thomas Hurd at the Hydrographic Office: JSR often encouraged William to do so.

[37] Lt. John Bushman RN (abt. 1796-1824) took part, as JSR clearly knows, in the north-west expeditions under Ross and Parry, sailing three times. His obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported that at the time of his death at Clifton, near Bath, on 28 August 1824 he was "attached to the overland Expedition destined for Behring Straits, under Captain Franklin."

[38] JSR here shows he is by no means an impartial (nor indifferent) observer of the reports relating to John Ross and William Edward Parry.

unfortunate & disgraceful; but it caused Lieutt. King's Letter from Timor to be received at the Admiralty with greater satisfaction, at a time when every other expedition had failed of success. He has received intimation (I think through St. Geo. Cockburn,^[39] one of the Lords of the Admiralty, though not by any letter or written communication, but from a person who heard that officer say so at a dinner party) that the Admiralty would promote Lieutt. K. to the rank of ~~Master~~ & Commander, immediately on his arrival in England. This sounds favourably of the disposition they may be in & makes us look forward with greater hope to the prospect of their extending the same consideration towards his officers.

For my part barring all claim to supposed merit, or alledged services &c. &c. I am decidedly of opinion that they deserve it if only for the tenfold risk & numerous privations which they endure, & in return for the gratification (no small one I can assure you, either) of being absolutely fried alive in a place as warm & comfortable as the entrance to the Infernal Regions we often wished it was possible to exchange a few bottles of our famous hot winds with the Northern voyagers, for one of the Polar Ice Islands. The change would have been perfectly agreeable to both parties I have not the least doubt.

William entirely forgot to mention any thing farther of the intended trip to Scotland, projected by Chas. Greenhead & himself, & anticipated with so much pleasure in his last letters.^[40] I am afraid by his silence that the excursion terminated in smoke or something else as light; but if otherwise I must beg him to recollect he has never given me the promised particulars. His account of having the cramp in his little finger while writing his last letter to me made me laugh more than a dozen times. Indeed, one could perceive in that particular part of his interesting sheets that it was either written with a game hand or with his foot, and he said very right when he wrote that it was a most miserable scrawl, but I don't mind that. My eyes forbid me the gratification of writing any more this evening, and in fact I happen to have nothing more to say, being very bare of news. Therefore I will wish you all pleasant dreams. Good night Chas. 7 Bells. 1st. Watch, Feby. 4. 1820.

Parramatta. February 24. 1820.

The Ship *Admiral Cockburn* positively sails for Dear Old England the day after tomorrow & obliges me to take a farewell scribble at this letter, though without being enabled to add so much to it as the lapse of time since I wrote the preceding part would lead me to wish.^[41] Indeed this place is extremely bar-

[39] Sir George Cockburn (1772-1853) was appointed a Junior Naval Lord in April 1818.

[40] William's friend Charles Greenhead is certainly the man listed as a Surgeon attached at the Warwick Militia in 1809 and with the Berkshire Militia in 1813. JSR's brother William Roe was himself a Lieutenant in the Berkshire Militia as of 2 February 1815.

[41] The *Admiral Cockburn* (Capt. Briggs) had been delayed in harbour for some months.

ren of any news that I can commit to paper. By the above date you will perceive that I am about the Charts at Lieutt. King's residence Parramatta, where I have been for the last 8 or 9 days & expect to be 4 or 5 more before my work is completed. The Charts we are at present employed upon are duplicates of those of our 1st. voyage that were sent home to the Admiralty by the *Shipley*, of which I apprized you by a former opportunity; & the present set are for the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Earl Bathurst) who is partly concerned in our voyage & has expressed himself to that effect. Of course this circumstance will give me double trouble (if there is such a word as Trouble in my Dictionary) by being obliged to make 2 copies of the charts instead of one. Those of our recent voyage, I am happy to say will not be sent home until our 3d. & last has enabled us to correct them with sufficient accuracy for publication, but although this will relieve my eyes for the present, a double portion of work hereafter will make up for it & leave no just cause for exultation. It is needless to add that last 8 or 10 days labour has done my eyes no good, nor can I say they are [*page 7*] materially worse. I spare them as much as possible after dark & seldom write by candlelight. To me the latter is a great privation but I pass away my time profitably in reading as long as is proper.

We have all been exceedingly dull here lately occasioned by some melancholy accidents that have deprived us of 2 most worthy young men in the very flower of the days. The 1st. was an Assistant Surgeon (Hamilton) who came out to this country in the *Dick* with us & married the Quartermaster's daughter of his Regt. (who likewise came in the *Dick*) shortly afterwards, at the close of a 2 years courtship. He was 24, his wife 18, & he was appointed to the settlement of Hobart Town in Van Diemen's Land where (on our visit in the *Mermaid*) we saw them living together in the most perfect harmony that can be imagined & universally beloved by all around. A ship that arrived from thence a few days ago brought up Mrs. Hamilton in a state of total insensibility & very near her end, her husband having been killed by a fall from his horse. So universally esteemed were they that every respectable person here went into a short mourning & expect that the wife will very soon follow her husband. She is not yet 20 years of age, has once miscarried with twins, and is now abt. 4 months advanced in the family way, which it is feared will terminate her existence & sufferings.^[42]

[42] Assistant Surgeon Alexander Hamilton had married Caroline Jane Lynch in Sydney in 1818. She was the step-daughter of QM Stubbs, also of the 48th. JSR, Hamilton and Stubbs had all sailed together to NSW on the *Dick* in 1817, and JSR had made great sport about Hamilton's courtship, writing home sportively that it was unlikely to come to much (see his letter of 7 May 1817). JSR's fears for Hamilton's wife seem to have been justified: one source records her as having died in Sydney in 1822.

The other case is a more recent one and occurred here a week ago in the person of a worthy young man (fortunately single) 30 years of age with whom we were on terms of the greatest intimacy and friendship. He was the eldest Son of Coll. Johnston, formerly of the 102d. Regt., & met with an untimely death in a similar manner by his horse falling upon him. He was reckoned the best horseman in this country. His funeral was conducted in the most impressive manner 2 days ago, attended by the Governor, Lieutt. Govr., all the civil & military officers & nearly every respectable person in the Colony who had hearts capable of feeling the loss of real & genuine worth. I was one of the pall bearers. He has left a father, mother, 4 sisters & 2 brothers, at present inconsolable for his loss, & many true friends that would have done anything in their power to have saved him.^[43] There are awful warnings which I need not tell my dear Father cannot but remind us that “in the midst of life we are in Death” & it is to be wished that some of us, including my stubborn self, could view them to advantage, & profit by the salutary lessons which they afford – but our nature is so frail, that in general all is lost upon us, until we are ourselves called upon to act a part in the Tragedy.

It is to be hoped that I shall improve a little when I again have the happiness of residing under your paternal roof; for whether it is, as I before said, that I have grown too much of a sailor to think seriously of the[se] affairs, or because we have of late been so frequently accustomed to see [] on the re[] of Eternity, that it is comparatively disregarded, I cannot pretend to [] but trust if [the] Almighty is pleased to spare my Life for 12 or 16 months more, that [I] shall again revolve into my former train of thinking. You will think, my dear Father, from what I have said, that I have grown a very hardened wretch, but to do myself a little justice. I do not exactly coincide in that opinion; for whatever my reflections may be upon dangers past & present warnings, there are moment in which serious thought will not be banished & in which all the harsher features & outlines in our nature dwindle away, as it were, into the softer & more affectionate remembrance of absent relatives & friends.

I am however leading into a melancholy train of reflections, which can will not only prove uninteresting to you, but will perhaps lead me into some

[43] The eldest son of George Johnston, George Johnston Jnr., was 31 when he died of a fall from his horse on 19 February 1820 while riding out at Camden. His funeral was “numerously attended by almost every person of rank or consideration in the Colony, amongst whom were His Excellency the Governor and his Staff; the Lieutenant Governor, and several of the other Officers of the 48th Regiment; together with the Civil and Naval Officers and Gentlemen of the Colony...” (*Sydney Gazette*, 26 February 1820). That JSR was one of the pall-bearers is a revelation of the esteem in which King’s officers were held in Sydney.

scrapes from which my poor pen will not be able to extricate me; my paper therefore desires I will desist for the present, & my heart prompts me once more to express an earnest wish that this may find you all perfectly well & happy. The kindness of our friends Mr. & Mrs. Hanibal McArthur, & Mr. & Mrs. King continues unabated, & I am afraid it will never be in my power to repay, otherwise than by a continuance of my earnest wishes for their welfare. I have not time to look back to see whether I told you of the latter having been confined with her 2d. Child (a boy) 2 or 3 days before our arrival here. He is a very fine little fellow, is to be a namesake of mine (John) and Mrs. K. has asked me to stand Sponsor for one of his Godfathers in England (Father of Mrs. K.) to which I have agreed most cheerfully. She is a most amiable woman & quite a model for a wife.

I have just filled up a corner which she offered me in one of her letters to Mrs. King, to return my acknowledgments to that Lady for the kindness in forwarding my letters &c. You are perhaps aware that she has removed to No. 7 Lyon Terrace in the Edgeware Road. Having now nothing farther to communicate, I must beg most affectionate over to me ever dear Mother, Sophy & Brothers, & praying the Almighty to preserve you all in health & peace, believe me, my Dear Father, to remain your affectionate Son
John Septimus Roe.

[page 8] I have written to George by the ship *Castle Forbes* that sailed a day or 2 ago for Bombay, intending to touch at Van Diemen's Land. I mentioned your anxiety to hear from them both, as also the heads of news in your kind letters to me, but I trust you have ere this received long & satisfactory letters. By the time this reaches you we shall have sailed on our last voyage to explore the miserable coasts of this country; after which we shall think of returning home by the 1st. ship that sails. You had therefore better not risk the sending of any thing more to me than letters & I must again repeat my sincere acknowledgments for your last truly welcome parcel. I will write again before we sail.

MAY 1819

/ FEBRUARY 1820

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, New South Wales

“This letter from Timor arrived at a very seasonable Time, when Intelligence had been received for contradicting a malicious & ill-founded but generally believed Report that our little Vessel had been totally lost on the Cumberland Rocks 3 Months previous to the Date of this Letter in Question. Fortunately my own Friends did not hear of the mischievous Rumour until the contradiction of it was also known. But Lieut. K.’s Relatives had actually been in mourning several days, when the welcome Dispatches from Timor arrived at the Admiralty.”

JSR to the Taylor Family of Greenwich. Six pages.

Mrs. Taylor, Greenwich, from J.S. Roe | A copy.

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 154.

An intriguing survival: a contemporary transcript of one of JSR’s letters, based on the original sent home to the Taylors of Greenwich. The Taylor family crop up once or twice in the correspondence, and quite a lot about the connection between JSR and them can be gleaned from the present letter, notably in the reference to staying with them at the Plymouth Dockyard, and that he had most recently seen them some six years previously (about 1814, that is). The letter tracks back as far as May 1819 and while giving a good overview of his life on the voyage and at Sydney, does not add much to the overall story that is not referenced more fully in his letters home, although his set-piece on events at the Endeavour River does have a slightly different tone for being so truncated here: it is in this letter that he makes the explicit comment that “on our sailing from the Port, the natives set fire to the Hills for several miles around – to shew perhaps that they were not ignorant of our motions.” The letter also shows a more demonstrative and religious JSR: in his letters home he normally skips ahead a bit, assuming no doubt that his father the Reverend was familiar with most of such pieties. Given that it was kept with the other letters sent home by JSR to Newbury, and given the letter itself, it is fair to say that one of the Taylor family took a transcript and forwarded it on from London. The person who has transcribed the letter has made numberless abbreviations which can make the flow of the letter a little difficult to understand.

A Copy
To Mrs. Taylor, Greenwich &c.^[1]
from J.S. Roe
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid, Sydney Cove Port Jackson
New South Wales Febr'y. 10. 1820

My Dear Friend,

With the greatest Pleasure I embrace anor. oppority. by the Ship *Admiral Cockburn*,^[2] of assuring my much respected Frds. at Greenwich yt. I am still alive, & thank Heaven in as good condition as can be expected after a long salt-beef Cruize, & the Terminn. of a 9 month fatiguing Voyage from which we have arrived abt. 3 weeks. I have been lookg. Anxiously for a Line from either yrs. or good Husbd. & can assure you have been considerably disappointed at not having heard from Either for the last 3 years. Our principal Cause of yr. silence I can readily allow may be attributed to the want of Opports. of forwardg. Letters to a Place situated as it were at the very uttermost Extremity of our Globe, & to which you cannot know yt. a Vessel is abt. to sail but by mere chance. I am unwilling to say it is Forgetfulness of your young Friend, who tho' so many Hundred Leagues from scenes that will ever live fresh in his Memory, cannot possibly forget the very kind attentions which as a total stranger he recd. under yr. truly hospitable roof at Plymo. Dock Yard happy Fireside of a Far. & Mor. cd. not afford a more hearty welcome – nor cd. yr. own Sons have recd. more friendly admonition & advice yt. was given to yr. friend. He trusts his gratitude will never suffer him to forget such treatmt.

My last to you was sent abt. a month before we sailed, in the Beginning of May 1819, on our recent Voyage to explore the unknown Coast of this immense Isld., & I hope has long since been recd. On sailing from this Port our

[1] It is possible to glean a little about the Taylor family from the correspondence and particularly this letter. He mentions that he had last seen them about six years previously (about 1814, that is), and that they had apparently moved from a place in Plymouth to their house in Greenwich. I cannot completely untangle the connection but the families do seem to have been quite well known to each other. The family is definitely otherwise mentioned in JSR's letters of 14 October 1813 (JSR had visited them on shore from the *Rippon*); 10 March 1817 (gossiping about William and John Taylor); 29 November 1827 (death of Mrs. Taylor at Greenwich); and 12 May 1828 (dined with Mr. Taylor at Greenwich). JSR also mentions a Mr. Taylor who served as Master the *Horatio*, which may be another connection. In this letter he mentions three of their children: William, who was at some point before 1817 withdrawn from Christ's Hospital to study to become a surgeon (JSR letter of 10 March 1817); John, who had been at Christ's Hospital and had hopes of going to sea with Capt. Caulfield of the *Malta* when he left Christ's Hospital sometime around mid-1819 (ditto); and Frances, a young girl and the subject of a rather clumsy run of gallantry from JSR in the present epistle.

[2] The *Admiral Cockburn* (Capt. Briggs) had been delayed in Sydney for some months.

course was directed to the Northwd. We ~~discov.~~ examined a newly discovd. Port (Macquarie) where a fresh settlemt. is abt. to be formed, something more yn. 120 miles to the Northwd. of Port Jackson; and, pursuing the truly intricate & dangerous navign. in shore of the Great Barrier Reefs, that front the N.E. Shore of Australia, we encountered various & numerous Difficulties while exploring a good Channel & having a Boat washed away off Cape Tribulation (of Capt. Cook) were obliged to put into Endeavor River to build anor. bef. we cd. trust ourselves in such a Labyrinth of shoals & reefs you may probably remember; that this is the Port into which Capt. Cook was obliged to run for repairing his Ship the Endeavor yt. laid 23 Hours on a Reef outside, & was nearly wrecked.

We pitched a Tent, & built a 20 Feet Whale Boat upon precisely the same spot yt. the Tents of that celebrated Navigator had occupd. 49 years bef., & from the appeare. of the Place there was Every Reason for supposing, that no vessel besides ourselves had ever visited this Port since that Period. During 10 or 12 Days stay here, we had frequent communicn. with many Natives until their Treachery made them keep aloof for Fear of the Punishmts. wch. they were well aware they deserved for their Conduct. We had been at great Pains to conciliate their Friendship & Goodwill by makg. them various Presents of Iron Tools, Necklaces, Biscuit &c. &c. [page 2] & in return we endeavd. to obtain a small Vocabulary of their Language, wch. however proved very small on acct. of their not being very communicative. Half an hour after 1 of these Interviews where 24 or 26 of them had been apparently on the most fdly. Footing with us, & recd. sevl. Presents at our Hands, they retired in a most vile treacherous manner makg. signs yt. they were going to eat, & endeavd. to oblige 4 of our Seamen, who were washg. some Linen at 2 or 300 yards Distce. to go on Board the Cutter, & leave the Clothes to dry. The men were not so ignorant of the Charr. of the Australians as to trust them in this Instce., & were preparg. to collect their Linen for the Purpose of prudently retiring wn. some of the Savages retired to some Bushes also abt. a Doz. yds. off for some spears, & witht. farther ceremony discharged them with great Violence. ams. our Party.

Very fortunately none of them took Effect, & 2 Muskets yt. were lying concealed in the high Grass being fired over the Heads of the Assailants, the noise of the Balls so effectually terrified them, yt. the whole took to their Heels, & disappeared into the Woods, in a Direction yt. The Botanist of the Expedition had taken a few Hours bef.^[3] The savages had previously told us by signs, yt. they had seen him by himself in such a Direction; therefore being very anxious for his safety, & apprehensive yt. these misguided People wd.

[3] Allan Cunningham.



PPK, Mermaid at anchor, Endeavour River East. SLNSW.

wreak signal Vengce. on him if any of their Party had been wounded, Mr. Bedwell, the other Master's Mate, accompd. me with 7 men, all armed with Muskets, in search of him. After abt. 3 Hours search he was discovd. abt. 4 miles from the Vessel, descendg. a steep hill & happily had not met with any hum. Being.

The Natives thot. proper to keep out of our Reach; for we found 2 of their Encampmts. deserted, & did not see any thing of them for sevl. Days afterwards. altho' they had previously been our constant Visitors. Wn. a fridly. Footg. was agn. established with them, they once more tried wt. we made of by endeavouring to entice one of our Boats into shoal water at a Distce. from the Vessel, during the Ebb Tide; but having once been taken in by their Professions of Frdship., we were not to be duped a 2d. time. By keepg. a good Lookout upon them, & securing the Cutter along side the shore, within 30 or 4 Yds. of the new Boat, the Carpenter happily succeeded in finishing her witht. farther molestation. And on our sailing from the Port, the natives set fire to the Hills for sevl. miles round – to shew perhaps yt. They were not ignorant. of our motions.

The next day commenced a series of Troubles, which required all our skill & perseverance. to surmount. The weather was very bad & navign. so extremely intricate yt. in the space of 30 hours we twice for on shore in the Cutter, lost 2 Bower anchors, & were sev. times most miraculously preserved from Shipwreck by that Div. Providence. wch. Has hitherto guarded & protected us in the most conspicuous manner. Such Hours of trial I never bef. experienced, & to add to the gloomy Ideas wch. they cd. not fail to impress upon our minds at the Time, the Blood ran cold in our Veins, wn. we descried one [P?] of the wreck of a Ship almt. in Pieces upon the most wretched sterile shore I ever beheld. Humanity shuddered at the Idea of hum. Beings castaway in such a Country; & in our own situation, after the 1st. Expressions of Sympathy for the unfortunate sufferers were over, we cd. not but congratulate ourselves, & return thanks secretly to the Alm. disposes of all events for His Goodness in having so often preserved us from a similar Fate, wn. the Partition yt. had divided us from Eternity was found [*page 3*] to have been so very thin. We anchored abt. a mile & half from the Wreck under the Lee of the same Island & upon sendg. a Boat next mornng. to her, found it was a Ship called the *Frederick*, belong. to Port Jackson, the name being plainly visible upon her stern.^[4] Unless you have witnessed a similar scene, you can form no adequate Idea of the Picture of Devastation wch. here presented Itself, & wch. it wd. prove of little Interest to describe.

Our main object was if possible to discover the Crew. But in this we did not succeed after remaing. 2 Days & from the Boats being missing, we entertd. sanguine Hopes of their havg. escaped in them to some civilized place. In this we were partly right, for on our Arrival at Timor sevl. mths. afterwds. we learnt, yt. the Capt. of the Ship & 4 Men had arrived on Board a Ship yt. was 4 or 5 Leas. off wn. the *Frederick* was lost, but yt. The remainder of the Crew consists of 21 Hands had embarked for the same Purpose, & awful to relate have never since been heard of. They have undoubtedly perished by Famine, or the merciless Hands of the Savages, who spare none yt. fall within their reach. Our own suffergs. vanish as it were, wn. the more weighty ones of others present themselves, & cannot fail to give us just Cause to be thankful, that our own Fate has not been similar. These are Incidts. wch. cannot but remind us rebellious mortals of the Existce. of a Div. Providence., which sometimes chastises with [Lenity] in order to make our watching more vigilant. But we are too apt (& I most readily allow it to be the case with myself) to consider lightly of these Affairs wn. they are over, & wn. they are as it were accidentally recalled to the memory, to think of them only as subjects of con-

[4] The *Frederick* (Capt. John Williams) was a Batavia-built merchantmen which wrecked on Cape Flinders, Stanley Island, under Williams' command in August 1818 (Charles Bateson, *Australian Shipwrecks*; report in the *Sydney Gazette*, 15 May 1819, p. 2).

gratuln. at havg. escaped past Danger & as Circumstces. yt. enable us to read with greater Gratificn & Please. yt. the “Honr acquired in encountering Danger increases in Proportion to the Extent of the Danger.”

I will not trouble you, my Dr. Mrs. T. with any more of wt. can afford you very little Interest & havg. already taken up the greater Portion of my Paper with wt. chiefly concerns myself, I must conclude the remainder as briefly as possible. By Dint of Perseverce. & after a few [rubs] fm. wch. we got clear wtht. sustaing. any materl. Injy., we cleared Torres Strait & [entered?] the most intricate & Difficult navign. perhaps in the known world, amg. Reefs & Shoals where the navigable Channel in many Places did not exceed a mile in Breadth. Our Examinn. of the unexplored Parts of the North Coast of New Holland afforded nothg. worthy of extarordy. Remark yt. wd. be of Intt. to a Person on Shore; & we were not able to hold much communicn. with the Natives – who, fm. their constance adherece. to the Spear & Stone-throwg. system, invariably shewed ’emselves decidedly hostile to their New Visitors.

Having been 7 Mths. upon the Coast, & many of our men bad with ye. Scurvy & the Breakg up of ye. S.E. Monsoon obliged us to push off for Timor to water & procure Refreshmt. preparaty. to our Retn. to Port Jackson. The strong S.W. Current yt. we experienced on the E. Coast of ye. [hld.] of Timor did not admit of our fetchg. Coepang Bay & obliged us wtht. more loss of Time to bear up for I. Savu, situated 90 miles to lewd. of It. On arrivg. there we had nearly got into a serious Dilemma, for the Malays were themselves nearly supplied with water fm. a few Holes dug in the Ground, & told us to our great mortificn. yt. there had been a genl. Drought all over the Isld. for sevl. Weeks past, & yt. they cd. not spare us ye. Small Quantity of water even yt. we required. Providentially we had then 7 or 8 Days water remaing. & as not a minute was to be lost, we immedly. turned to, filled all ye. empty water casks in ye. Hold with Salt water, got spare anchors, chain cable & every thing weighty below to make ye. Vessel hold a [*page 4*] good wind. 10 Days placed us fm. 1/2 to whole allowce. of Water, wch. in so warm a Climate is truly desirable & next Day presented us ye. Luxury (if we chose to accept it) of beg. able to drown ourselves in ye. Fresh water rivulet yt. supplies ye. Town of Coepang. After obtaing. fresh Provisions &c. at Coepang & recruited ye. Strength & Spts. of ye. scorbutic Patients on Board, we left yt. Port & arrived here abt. 3 weeks ago, having had rather a tedious Passage, & lost one Boat in a Gale of Wind off Cape Leeuwin.

And now, my dr. Frds., let me hope yt. you have had more smooth Times of it, & yt. you have all been in ye. full Enjoymt. of yt. inestimable Blessing – Health – wch. Is above all Price & above Every other Considn. Your younger Son (Jno. I believe) ye. Blue Coat Boy, I suppose has long since left Xt’s Hospl. & it is to be hoped is servg. in some Ship at Sea. The *Dromedary* Store-

Ship has arrived here & possesses 3 Midshn. who know Mr. Taylor very well, their Frds. residg. at Plymo. Dock almost within hail of Each Other. Their names are Baskerville, McLean, & [Hebe?].^[5] The D. goes to New Zealand for spars, with wch. she returns laden to Engld. We are now refitting ye. little *Mermaid* for her 3d. & last Voyage, after wch. we return Home by the 1st. Ship yt. sails, & hope to receive yt. Promoti. wch. has been promised, & wch. I think we deserve (that it thinkg. no little, you will say, & yt. we have a great opinion of ourselves). Towds. it, it is gratifying to say, yt. in Ansr. to a Letter fm. Timor (by Lieut. King commd. of our Expedn.) to ye. Admiry., [ye.] Latter have expressed themselves highly pleased & gratifd. to find yt. we have accomplished so much with such small means, & yt. they were perfectly satisfd. with our Exertions. This letter fm. Timor arrived at a very seasonable Time, wn. Intelligce. had been recd. for contradictg. a malicious & ill-founded but generally believed Report yt. our little Vessel had been totally lost on ye. Cumberland Rocks 3 Mths. previous to ye. Date of this Letter in Question. Fortunately my own Fds. did not hear of ye. mischievous Rumour until ye. contradiction of it was also known. But Lieut. K.'s Relatives had actually been in mourng. several days, wn. ye. welcome Dispatches fm. Timor arrived at ye. Admy.

They have sent us out a complete Refit in Instrumts. & Naval Stores, includg. 3 chain cables & anchors yt. will prove of ye. great serve. to us, & spare us a Repetition of ye. many anxious stormy nights we have been obliged to spend at anchor, while trustg. to ye. Trash yt. is made at Port Jackson. As a Specimen of their Workmanship, it is only necessary. to say, yt. we broke an Arm off an anchor yt. has been repaired for us here, ye. very 1st. Time it was let go; & at other Times were under ye. necessity of riding with a small Scope of Chain, for an unwillingness. to trust to a shackle yt. had been made for us at this Dock Yd. The Workmen being all Prisoners do not give themselves any uneasiness abt. ye. manr. in wch. 'eir work is done 'eir only care being to get it out of 'eir Hands, at wt. ever risk, or at ye. Expce. of how many Lives, let Chance determine. The Overseers being of ye. same Description are not a whit better.

I suppose Mrs T. yt. your good & once little Family are now a good & large Famy; ye. Girls will not receive me as freely as 'ey once did, I am afraid, & am under ye. same apprehensions, yt. my pretty little Frances will not be so lavish of her Kisses as formerly. They are all, I doubt not, growg. very fine

[5] HMS *Dromedary* (Capt. Skinner RN) arrived in Sydney in January 1820 bringing out some male convicts, together with a guard of the 84th Regiment and a small detachment of the 67th (the latter en route to India). The ship later sailed for New Zealand, and soon after the ship returned one of the three mentioned here by JSR as being known to the Taylors, Percival Baskerville, joined King's crew as a midshipman and sailed on the *Bathurst*.

Girls; & if you don't look out sharp, Mrs. T., I shall be fallg. most desperately in Love with 2 or 3 of 'em wn. I return. Theref. if you are afraid you had better keep 'em out of ye. Way. Your Son Wm., I understand, has taken up ye. Medical Profession & trust he will succeed, but do not know whether he is practisg. on Shore or afloat. I long to pay my Respects once more to you & your worthy Husband, wn. we shall have a great deal to talk over, since our last Interview. The Recollection of ye. many happy Evgs. I have spent in yr. Famy., the Parental Kindss. I have recd. at yr. House, ye. kind concern wch. You both took in my little Affrs. & ye. Able & [Godly] Advice wch. Mr. T. was ever ready & willg. to afford me, will never be obliterated fm. ye. Heart of a Person who feels proud in entertaing. ye. same affectionate Regs. & Venern. as for his own dear Parents, & wch. neither Time or Distce. can lessen. I trust you have found your Transfer of situation advantageous in Every respect, & yt. you have no Idea of quittg. Greenwich [*page 5*] as it will afford me more frequent Opports. of seeing you all yn. if you resided at as great a Distce. fm. ye. Metropolis as Plymo., wch. has deprived us of an Interview for upwds. of 6 yrs.

But there is a cheerg. Prospect of yt. very long score being soon brot. to a Conclusion & yt. I shall 'ere long have ye. heartfelt Please. of seeing a Famy. amg. whom I have spent so many agreeable Hours. Till yt. Period arrives, pray, my good Lady, accept for yourself, Mr. Taylor, & your young Famy. ye. most affectionate Remembrce. & best Regds. I can offer, with every possible good wish for ye. welfare & Happiness of you all, & believe me to remain, my Dear Madam, your true & sincere Friend

John Septimus Roe

P.S. Pray write to me wn. an oppority. offers, as you must be well aware how truly acceptable are ye. Letters recd. fm. a much esteemed Friend.

FEBRUARY 1820
— MAY 1820

No. 11.

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*.
Port Jackson. N.S. Wales

“In addition to as much live stock as we could carry with us on our former voyages, the Governor has kindly complied with a wish of Lieutt. King’s, and allowed him to receive from the Medical Stores as much of Donkin’s Preserved Meats as the Surgeon can spare. In consequence of this permission, and the Surgeon (Mr. Bowman R.N.) being a good fellow we this day stowed snugly away 300 tin cases of the above desirable article.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Six pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: red “Portsmouth Ship Letter” and indistinct red circular stamp (16 Dec.?).

Location: SLNSW, no. 155.

JSR writes home to describe preparations for what he here calls his “third and last” voyage to explore the coasts: he evidently doesn’t count the quick Tasmanian excursion as a full voyage by this measure, and could not have known that his longest coastal voyage, on the *Bathurst*, was yet to come. This letter includes his concluding note that PPK has told him that he simply does not feel up to a fourth voyage and hopes to be allowed home to England even if their work is not completed. Perhaps the most significant inclusion in the letter is JSR’s notice of the Russian voyages of exploration, amongst which that of Bellingshausen is now the best known (commanding the *Vostok*). JSR dined “frequently” with the officers who were leaving for the Arctic (given his interest in the northern exploration of Ross and Parry) and just as readily met with the officers of the two ships en route to the Antarctic. On a more homely note, it is also in this letter that JSR sends word of his evident delight at what he believes to be a budding romance between his brother William and PPK’s sister Elizabeth: JSR, it must be said, delights in these romantic castles in the sky, almost none of which seem to come to pass. It also includes his mildly concerned reminder that his family should not broadcast what they know about the voyages from his letters, given that they are getting such an inside run of information that they are quite as up-to-date as the Admiralty: quite an admission. It is rather touching that his most obvious concern is for his sometime nemesis Frederick Bedwell, worried that his own not infrequent blowing off steam might be misconstrued.

No. 11.
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid. Port Jackson. N.S. Wales
May 6, 1820

My Dear Father,

Agreeably to the tenor of all my former Letters it gives me the greatest pleasure in having another opportunity of sending you a short one more before we sail on our 3d. and last voyage to explore the Coasts of this country. That period is now drawing so near as a fortnight & I trust the Almighty will not withhold the protecting arm with which He has so powerfully assisted us hitherto in all our times of danger and trial. The provisions & stores (for 8 months & a half) are nearly all onboard & we only wait for the Completion of 2 Boats that are building for us in the stead of those which were washed away during our last voyage. We carry 21 hands in all, including the Commander, and that very desirable thing, a Surgeon, who has volunteered to go with us & is Mr. Hunter of the Navy.^[1] I believe I mentioned in one of my former letters the circumstance of our having very narrowly escaped taking a Mad Doctor with us, a Mr. Morgan of the Navy, who came from England appointed by the Navy Board as Surgeon of our Expedition, but unfortunately was seized with a serious fit of madness that appears to be hereditary in his family & has ever since been in the hands of the Principal Surgeon here; although he is at short intervals perfectly rational, it is running too great a risk to trust ourselves in his hands & he will be sent home again by the first favourable opportunity with a medical gentleman that will be able to manage him.^[2]

In addition to as much live stock as we could carry with us on our former voyages, the Governor has kindly complied with a wish of Lieutt. King's, and allowed him to receive from the Medical Stores as much of Donkin's Preserved Meats as the Surgeon can spare.^[3] In consequence of this permission,

[1] An intriguing figure, in his early career Hunter sailed on HMB *Icarus*, and had seen service at the Isle de France (JSR wrote home that Hunter had met his brother Charles there when the latter was there on the *Alpheus*). Hunter had come out to New South Wales as the Surgeon-Superintendent on both the *Minerva* (arrived 1818) and the *Prince Regent* (1820) and was initially welcomed with open arms by King and his officers, who had long been openly anxious about the lack of medical support on board.

[2] John Morgan had arrived in Sydney on board the *Mary* in 1819, and was found to be suffering from mental derangement in October. The following July he was able to sail for England on the *Tuscan* under the care of Dr. James Marr Brydone.

[3] Bryan Donkin (1768-1855), an engineer by training, became interested in canning foods around 1812, and together with his partners Hall and Gamble began selling the product commercially in 1813. The Admiralty quickly caught on to the product, and issued cartons of tinned meat to the 1818 expedition of Ross to the Arctic: the issuing of the cans to PPK, that is, is a remarkably early adoption of the technology. See: *Copies of Official Reports and Letters relative to Donkin, Hall, & Gamble's Preserved Provisions* (1817).

and the Surgeon (Mr. Bowman R.N.)^[4] being a good fellow we this day stowed snugly away 300 tin cases of the above desirable article, each containing from 4/4 lbs. to 18 1/2 lbs. either of Roast Beef, or Beef & Bouilli, or Roast veal, or Roast Mutton or Boiled Mutton, or Mutton Broth, or Rounds of Corned Beef; besides 60 Bottles of vegetable & gravy soups preserved by the same people. You will readily agree with me that these are most excellent things, and that served out to all hands once a week in the proportion of one pound pr. Man, they will prove a most acceptable relief during a salt beef diet.

We have had & still have some interesting strangers among us, some Russian ships on Discovery having visited Port Jackson to refresh about a month after our arrival here, the *Blagounemei* & *Othritie* (Good Intent, and Discovery, in English) arrived here also, being on their passage from Europe toward the North Pole, via Cape of Good Hope, Can Diemen's Land, & Bhering's Straits.^[5] Some of them spoke tolerable good English, the whole were very well treated & entertained by the Governor & the Gentlemen of the Colony, and appeared extremely grateful for the treatment they received. I had the pleasure of dining frequently in their Company & with my messmate Bedwell dined onboard each of the Ships with the Officers. Their mode of serving up the dinner was entirely new to me, for they never put the dishes on table, but the meat being cut up at a side table is handed round in a plate by a servant, for everyone to help himself, & is followed by other servants with the vegetables. They appeared to expect us to eat of every dish & out of Compliment to them we did so, for fortunately they could not procure any materials for making the high flavoured oily dishes of which they are said to be fondest, and we had the gratification of dining as onboard our own vessel, with very little variation. They do not drink wine like the English, but [*page 2*] take their necessary quantum during dinner by filling their glasses at pleasure, & never sit after dinner longer than is sufficient to empty the bottles.

I was sorry to find them not very communicative upon the subject of their voyage, but suppose its object to have been the discovery of a North Western passage between the 2 grand Oceans, and I imagine they have every probability of meeting with success. Indeed there is no voyage upon which I should sail with greater pleasure, than the one upon which they are engaged, was

[4] James Bowman RN (1784-1846) married Mary, John and Elizabeth Macarthur's daughter, and became a pastoralist at Ravensworth (near Singleton) and became closely entwined in the fate of the Australian Agricultural Company. In 1820 he was the Principal Surgeon at the Rum Hospital in Sydney.

[5] The Russian vessels *Blagonamerennyi* ("Good Intent"; Capt. Gleb Shishmaryov) and *Otkrytie* ("Discovery"; Capt. Mikhail Vasil'yev) arrived in Sydney to refit on 1 March 1820, en route to the Alaskan coast.

our present service completed, & a tender of my poor endeavours accepted at the Admiralty, for I am one of those who have very sanguine hopes of the passage being practicable, particularly by the way of Bhering's Strait, but this is no news or interesting matter at Home.

After a stay of 5 weeks the above 2 ships sailed to prosecute their voyage, and were speedily succeeded by 2 others of the same nation employed on a Voyage of Discovery towards the South Pole, in which direction they had been cruising for several weeks but had not been able to penetrate farther South than 69 1/2 degrees, on the meridian of Greenwich, in which parallel they sailed several hundred miles among immense fields & mountains of ice that effectually repulsed them in any farther attempts they made at approaching the Pole. One mountain of ice was found by admeasurement to be 500 feet above the level of the sea, which is only 2/3 of its whole height, the remainder being immersed in the sea. The 2 voyages are nearly upon the same establishment & consist of a Corvette and Storeship commanded by Officers in the Russian Navy who with the Naturalist & other Scientific Men appear to be Persons of considerable knowledge & information. The last 2 ships that arrived are the *Vorstock* & *Mornoy*, the latter being storeship.^[6] She struck upon one of the numerous ice islands which they saw during the night & suffered considerable injury in her stern which she has repaired here by hauling the ship on shore.

I do not envy them their voyage as it embraces no object of any immediate moment farther than the discovery of any unknown Lands that may exist in the Southern Hemisphere and is attended with infinitely more danger and inconvenience than a voyage Northerly. These visitors are not much more communicative than their countrymen who just left us but have given us to understand that their labours have hitherto been rewarded by the discovery of only one island; & after passing the winter among the Islands to the Eastward of this place, they again strike away to the Southward to make another attempt at capturing the South Pole.

Being naturally a friend to all voyages of Discovery and a sincere well wishes to all exertions for the advancement of Science & Geography, I heartily join in wishing them success. The Commodore & Captns. with some of the other officers of the present expedition have honored us with a visit onboard the *Mermaid* to see our instruments &c. &c. with some of which, being almost entirely upon new principles, they were highly pleased. All the instruments they possessed were made in England, including even the common steering compasses, and every thing about their vessel they acknowledge to have been

[6] The *Vostok* ("East"; Capt. Fabian Bellingshausen) and *Mimya* ("Peaceful"; Capt. Mikhail Lazarev) arrived in Sydney on 11 April 1820, soon after their compatriots had departed.

copied from the British Navy, into which the Emperor a few years ago sent a great many of his Officers for instruction. Some of the officers of the first expedition gave Bedwl. & myself a few Russian silver & copper coins which will all do for the Museum!

I believe when I wrote to you last (Jany. 21 to Feby. 25. 1820) we were on-board a [page 3] Brig called the *Queen Charlotte* while our little vessel was laid under water to kill the great quantity of vermin with which she was infected.^[7] We did not get onboard our own vessel again till the commencement of last month, and are now as snug and comfortable as ever, having destroyed about 3 Bushels of Rats & Mice and many thousands of Cockroaches, Centepedes, &c. &c. &c. When I refer to the dates of my letters received & sent, I find that I have not acknowledged the receipt of Bro. William's letter of Sept. 17. 1819. which did not reach my hands until my last to you was closed. I cannot thank him too much for the interesting matter which it contains, and cannot but admire the warm strain in which he eulogizes the amiable Elizabeth King, whose brilliant accomplishments & enchanting voice seem completely to have captivated him.^[8] By all accounts she really deserves every kind thing my fond Brother has said of her, and I trust he will not be vain when I (at this great distance) give it as my opinion that there has been a reciprocal sneaking regard on both sides, from the few paragraphs her sister Mrs. Hanibal McArthur & Mrs. King read me from her letters, that she really is as he says "a Treasure". I wish I had time to give him a rally upon this point, & hope their next visit will improve the acquaintance. Hem! Mrs. King sent her kind regards & those of her family on the back of Wm.'s letter to me & after mentioning the very pleasant 3 weeks they had just been spending at the Rectory, intimated that Sophy was going to spend some time with them in Town. This visit must have been very agreeable to all parties I am sure & not the least so to Willm. who had to fetch her back & to meet face to face an object so disagreeable to his imagination as Miss K.

I can very easily imagine that you must all have been most highly gratified with your visitors for Mrs. McArthur is truly an amiable creature, and speaks of the others as if they were all the same. Her account of Bedwell & myself having entertained the Governor's Lady onboard the *Mermaid* is altogether a mistake, though we should have considered ourselves highly honored by the opportunity. The fact is, as I before stated, in one of my former letters, the Governor & his Lady with their Son of 5 years old and an Aid de Camp

[7] The *Queen Charlotte* (Capt. Sindrey) was a merchant ship built in Sydney.

[8] Elizabeth King (abt. 1797-1831), the younger sister of Phillip Parker King, is not terribly well known. Marnie Bassett, in *The Governor's Lady*, stated that "Elizabeth, after a broken engagement, was safely married to a widower, Charles Runciman, a London artist of some standing." She died in September 1831.

came onboard one afternoon after they had dined, and [] when they had been shewn the vessel & stopped about 3/4 of an hour in the cabin, our visitors landed under a salute from us of 17 guns.^[9] They appeared highly gratified with the order in which they found our little vessel, contrasted her to the Colonial vessels belonging to the Colony (Hem! how extremely vain!) and expressed themselves highly honored by the salute we gave them.

Talking of the Kings, I am happy to hear of Mr. Darch of the Admiralty having been introduced to you, as he is a man possessing great influence there, and is above all a very good man by all accounts, but I cannot help observing that you ought to be very circumspect in shewing my Letters (full of rubbish as they are) to any one, and express even to him, that I have intimated such a thing to you, & that I thought it might not perhaps be agreeable at the Admiralty that my letters containing any description of the country we are exploring should be circulated beyond your own family before the particulars of our several expeditions are made public through the proper channel.^[10] You will in a moment see my motive for being thus particular about such sheets of trash, and I trust I am rightly understood. You will of course be extremely careful in keeping any thing from the sight of Mr. D. that may in the smallest degree operate to the prejudice of my messmate Bedwell, who, notwithstanding the many squalls that pass over our heads, I shall ever be friendly to on account of the Service we have seen together & that which we have yet to experience. We are still upon the same footing as ever, fresh breezes and squally weather with some thunder, and intervals fine; which unsettled state of the atmosphere must necessarily result from an union of persons who happen to [page 4] think so widely different as your youngest Son and his Messmate.

It is very painful to reflect that in my own Native Land, the Sun should almost every evening set in a cloudy horizon, but I most sincerely trust that the next accounts we receive from thence will be of a more favourable import. William acknowledges the receipt of my letter of Augt. 6. 1818. which did not reach his hand until 11 months after its date. In this respect he is not more fortunate than others who sent letters by the same conveyance (Capt. Walsh of the Ship *Claudine*)^[11] but I trust that this will meet with better treatment; for although it goes by the very same ship, I shall take care it does not go by the same hand, as I intend entrusting it to the care of a Lady, Mrs.

[9] The Governor and Elizabeth, their son Lachlan jnr., and their unnamed aide-de-camp – possibly Lt. Hector Macquarie of the 48th.

[10] Thomas Darch was, in 1820, listed as a Senior Clerk in the Admiralty Office. PPK named Darch Island after him.

[11] The *Claudine* (Capt. Welsh) was in Sydney in July 1818 and again in March 1820.

Rowe, who with her daughter of 16 or 17 is on her passage to join her husband at Batavia & sails tomorrow.^[12]

Since the above letter, I have had the pleasure of sending you 5 others of Decr. 7. 1818. to March 22. 1819 – Mar. 22. 1819 – April 19. 1819 – November 5. 1819 from Coepang & January 21. 1820 to Feby. 25, 1820 together with one to Sophy dated Decr. 8. 1818 which I trust will all have arrived safe to hand before this reaches you. I have just sent off a letter to [Tom] by a ship called the *Mary* bound to Calcutta & have mentioned the anxiety in which you all were to hear from him, agreeable to William's directions, and hope my endeavours will procure you the desired letter. For my part I have now given up the idea of hearing either from T. or G. though it is some consolation to hear from you that my letters find their way there.^[13] Several ships have arrived here lately & among them the *Tuscan*, whaler, ~~and~~ *Seaflower*, private trader & *Janus*, convict ship. I am however anxiously looking out by every southerly wind for the arrival of the Ship *Saracen* that was lately spoken to while going into the River Derwent in Van Diemen's Land, and by which I hope to receive another letter from Home previous to our departure.^[14] It is to be hoped that your next will contain better news of Dr. & Mrs. Hall, &c.^[15] I am sorry it does not lie in my power to give you a better account of my eyes than to say that they do not get worse, though I have not been able to pay that attention to them which they require – for while the cause of their weakness exists, any precautions & remedies that I can use for their recovery, I am convinced will act no more than a check upon the, I fancy I derive more real benefit from bathing them in water as warm as I can bear than from using the eye water you so kindly sent me from England; and by every ship I shall not fail to look out for the ointment Mr. Nicholls said he would send.

I need not add my Dear Father how willingly I would try every remedy at Home; for after so long an absence it will be with real pleasure that I shall hail the time when the Land of Old England is again seen from the Mast

[12] A notice in the *Sydney Gazette* had "Mrs. Rowe and Family proceeding to Batavia" on board the *Claudine* (8 April 1820). In the DC&PL there is listed as sailing "Mrs Row, Miss Eliza Row, Masr. Jos. Row." Without the mother's first name it is difficult to be sure who this woman was: perhaps the wife of Captain Stephen Shute Rowe (c. 1776-1825), a Captain in the 84th Regiment who had earlier left Sydney?

[13] "T. and G." are JSR's brothers, Thomas and George.

[14] The *Tuscan* (Master William Dagg), a whaler bound for London; the *Seaflower* (Master William Spiers), en route to Valparaiso; the *Janus* (Captain Mowall) a convict ship which had arrived in Sydney carrying female convicts and some children; and the *Saracen* (Master William Kerr) which soon left for the South Sea fishery.

[15] I do not know the connection with Dr. and Mrs. Hall, although presumably it is the same family mentioned by JSR in his letter of 21 January 1820.

head and when the tedious course of a few more days shall restore me once more to your happy fireside. Twenty three years have now elapsed within 2 days, since my dear Mother gave me birth, and I may safely say that I never longed so much to weep upon her neck as I do at this moment, but many days & nights of care and anxiety must revolve ere that period can arrive and I find no remedy so effectual in my case as Patience.

In the mean time having no news to tell you, I must again commit you all to the care of the Almighty & praying that he will preserve you all in health & safety, I trust He will speedily restore to your roof your ever affectionate Son
John Septimus Roe.

I will write again before we sail, and leave the letter to be forwarded by the next favorable opportunity. Mrs. Macquarie & the Governor again enquired of me a few days ago if you were all well. The former and I are great Cronies!

[page 5] P.S. I forgot to say that on the receipt of William's last letter I was staying at Lieutt. King's assisting him to complete the charts that accompanied my last letter to you; and Mrs. King upon reading her letters was sensibly affected at the notice you had all taken of her by drinking her health &c. &c. She really longs extremely to see Newbury and I am sure you will all be equally as much delighted with her as she is already pleased with you.

God bless you all. Pray write whenever you can (any of you) find time, as I expect it will be full 12 months from this time before we are able to quit the country. Lieutt. K. is determined not to make a 4th. voyage even if this one does not complete our examination, for in fact he will be almost incapable of undergoing so much fatigue, and now feels very much the effects of the 2 voyages he has already made. I am myself not in such perfect health as when I first arrived in the Colony, but thank God am well able at present to bear a great deal of fatigue.

JUNE 1820
– JULY 1820

His Majesty's Cutter *Mermaid*
Port Jackson, New South Wales

“Since that period we have been most confoundedly knocked about at Sea in a very heavy gale of wind that obliged us to return here again to repair damages, having carried away our bowsprit completely in half, lost the principal part of our iron work, had a boat washed away, sprung a considerable leak under the starboard counter, & experienced other injury which caused us to consider ourselves extremely fortunate in having been able to reach our Port again.”

JSR to William Roe. Six pages.

Willm. Roe Esq. | at the Rectory of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black “Deal Ship Letter” and red circular “E” 29 Mar. 1821.

Location: SLNSW, no. 156.

JSR is in the unusual position of having to apologise for letting his side of the correspondence slip a little, having received several letters from Newbury. Indeed, as he admits, the *Mermaid* had actually left Sydney without him putting pen to paper, but the heavy gale off the coast of NSW had so knocked them about that they had been forced to return to Port Jackson, which did at least allow him the chance to write a few lines. The account of the battering they took in the gale is matter-of-fact (“our situation was by no means enviable”, he notes as the bowsprit snaps off).

JSR also takes the chance to send home some brotherly barbs about what he fondly imagines is a burgeoning relationship between William and Elizabeth King (PPK’s sister), prelude to his announcement that he is also head over heels with a “peerless fair lately arrived from dear old England”: sadly, JSR is so impossibly discreet that it is only possible to speculate about her identity, and to note that the collapse of the relationship broke his heart (see his letter to William, 6 June 1821). His recounting of her virtues starts to sound a little like Darcy describing female accomplishments to Elizabeth Bennet and the Bingleys, but JSR is very clearly feeling his way and talks openly of a hope that he might one day be “spliced” to her. The letter gives some insight into life on board the tiny *Mermaid*, with JSR noting, two-thirds of the way in, that the whole time he has been writing Dr. Hunter and Cunningham have been conducting an argument about the difference between an architect and a builder, and that it was still going on, no closer to any resolution, as he signed off. The letter concludes with a reflective JSR describing the wreck of the *Echo* on Cato’s Bank, and his fear that some of the crew may have “gotten into the hands of the Savages.” He finishes with an introduction to “Admiral Benbow”, his troublesome but much loved Newfoundland Dog.

No. 12.

In Reply to the Doctor's First Journal
 New-hell Lake July 24 1872.

My Dear William

I am quite ashamed of myself for never having given you any return for the numerous long & kind letters with which you have favored me. I wish have afforded me a much gratification in the removal - but has you been about from home, my sincere thanks not have been so long. I went last to Apple, June 21 1872, when we were on the point of starting upon our 3rd voyage. The lake was calm in the hands of a person who has not yet had an opportunity of forming it - I saw that boats we have been most comfortably handled about at sea in a very heavy gale of wind that obliged us to return here upon to repair damages having carried away our bowsprit completely in half, lost the forward part of our main mast, has a boat washed away, having a considerable leak under the foremast counter. I confesses other ~~was~~ saying what caused us to consider ourselves extremely fortunate in having been able to reach our port again. - We sailed from this place on the 27th inst. the gale came on next day, was stronger with it until the 29th, blowing very high south on the shore, when our situation was reversed rather, in stead of being carried away our heavy aft masts. The vessel took a great deal more when without water. The number of men we continually shipped - 32 lost the bowsprit was carried away at anchor in the morning of the 27th in a very deep sleep, but the vessel ~~was~~ with a sea hollow sea, which completely removed the bowsprit beam of the vessel. I desired to cross today but the darkness hindered when the it was lifted into the air by the receding wave. - So we expected that the vessel was then not more than 2000 yds from the land directly under our lee, our situation was by no means favorable. I a brokenly canvas was immersed by them with as much sail as could with safety be raised, in hopes of clearing all dangers & gaining a place of safety or shelter. It was with considerable anxiety that we raised our eyes until daylight in expectation of discovering land, even though the gloomy darkness & complete darkness of our which fell, & in the distance ~~was~~ we were to be looking at each other. The vessel was got on board with some difficulty. Next of it we raised a jagged bowsprit which was raised in the best manner we were able, with lookings to see by which the stern jet was set upon it, to our no small satisfaction. This was increased by the day having broke without discovering land. We ultimately found out that a strong current

No. 12.^[1]
His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid. Port Jackson
New South Wales. July 8th. 1820.

My Dear William,

I am quite ashamed of myself for never having given you any return for the numerous long & kind letters with which you have favored me, & which have afforded me so much gratification in the perusal; but had you been absent from Home my silence should not have been so long. I wrote last to Sophy, June 10. 1820. when we were on the point of sailing upon our 3rd. voyage & the letter now remains in the hands of a person who has not yet had the opportunity of forwarding it. Since that period we have been most confoundedly knocked about at Sea in a very heavy gale of wind that obliged us to return here again to repair damages, having carried away our bowsprit completely in half, lost the principal part of our iron work, had a boat washed away, sprung a considerable leak under the starboard counter, & experienced other injury which caused us to consider ourselves extremely fortunate in having been able to reach our Port again.

We sailed from this place on the 15th. instt., the gale came on next day, & we struggled with it until the 22nd., blowing very hard directly on the shore, when our situation was rendered rather unpleasant by having carried away one thing after another & the vessel leaking a great deal owing to her violent motions & the number of seas we continually shipped. At last the bowsprit was carried away at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 22d. in a very deep plunge that the vessel ~~xxxx~~ made into a ~~xxxx~~ hollow sea, which completely immersed the bowsprit and stem of the vessel & exposed to view nothing but the splintered stump when ~~xxxx~~ it was tossed into the air by the succeeding wave. As we expected that the vessel was then not more than 4 or 5 leagues from the land directly under our lee, our situation was by no means enviable, & a southerly course was immediately steered with as much sail as could with safety be carried, in hopes of clearing all dangers & gaining a place of safety or shelter. It was with considerable anxiety that we strained our eye until daylight in expectation of discerning land, even through the gloomy darkness & complete torrents of rain which fell; & in the interim ~~xxxx~~ as it was no time to be looking at each other, the wreck was got on-board with some difficulty & out of it we rigged a jury bowsprit which was secured in the best manner we were able, with lashings &c. and by 7 o'clock the storm jib was set upon it to our no small satisfaction.

[1] JSR has noted this, evidently in error, as "no.12" (JSR was actually up to that number in his correspondence with his father James, not brother William).

This was increased by the day having broke without discovering land & it ultimately turned out that a strong [*page 2*] current had been running to the Southward at the rate of nearly 3 miles an hour, & although it created a very heavy sea that nearly drowned our little vessel it drifted her father offshore than we had expected. The close reefed mainsail, reefed foresail, & storm jib were all the sails we could possibly carry while the gale lasted, & in the afternoon we had the misfortune to lose the jolly boat that was hoisted close up astern & well secured with additional lashings. A heavy & merciless sea which I expected would have washed our deck well for us struck her with great violence, broke all the lashings &c. but one, & notwithstanding all the efforts we could make to save her, we were obliged to be witnesses to her going astern full of water. She was a fine little boat, built here under the superintendence of our own Carpenter ^[2] & was much regretted not only for the above reasons, but because it was then very uncertain to what extent & for what particular use our boats might speedily be required. Had the gale blown 2 points more from the Southward we should not have been able to clear the land, & must have looked out for the best spot upon which to run the vessel onshore to save ourselves; but the Almighty who has hitherto so often preserved us in times of difficulty & danger was pleased to ordain otherwise by extending his Mercy to us once more; & the wind having abated on the following day, attended by a breaking up of the weather, we reached this Port in safety on the 4th. evening after carrying away the bowsprit, to the surprise & joy of our friends here, who had entertained serious apprehensions for us.

We found that the weather had been very severe in this quarter also & that the great quantity of rain which fell had caused ~~the banks of~~ some of the Rivers to overflow their banks to such an extent as to occasion considerable losses among the Settlers on the low grounds.^[3] We have now got a new bowsprit on board, most of our iron work will be replaced (though it is to be feared, in their usual defective & shameful manner ~~the~~ a new jolly boat is in great forwardness, & we expect to be enabled to make another attempt in about 3 days. The late trial has given us increased confidence in our little vessel, & much as I shall rejoice in common with my messmates at the conclusion of the service we have the honor to be employed upon, it will not be without considerable reluctance that I shall bid a final adieu to a vessel in which we have already experienced so many difficulties, dangers & privations. Our live stock suffered much, for out of 40 ducks 23 died together with 2 turkies & 1 pig, and we killed about 10 or 11 of the former to save their

[2] The Carpenter on this voyage was recorded as being William Forster, who sailed on the second and third voyages of the *Mermaid*.

[3] A reference to the periodic flooding which caused havoc with the early farmers. notably on the Hawkesbury.

lives; but have now nearly replenished again. Ducks cost 5/. pr. couple, fowls 3/6, pigs abt. 10 or 11 d. pr. lb., sheep 25 & 30/, each, geese 4/6 each, turkies 7s/. & 7/6 ea., eggs ~~3/6 pr. lb.~~ 2/6 pr. Doz., butter 3/6 pr. lb., tongues 2/6. ea., English ham 3s/. pr. lb., & other things in proportion. Towards our fit-out Mrs. Macquarie, the Governor's Lady made us a present of 2 ~~pigs~~ sows with young, & a large tin case full of cakes, &c. &c. She is a very good creature, & has behaved very kind indeed to me, as I mentioned I believe in my last letter to Sophia.

And now my dear W. that I have occupied so much of your attention & my paper upon what relates more immediately to myself, let me venture to enquire after "The Treasure", which in your former letters appeared to occupy so considerable a [page 3] share of your attention and (I was going to write of your Heart, but will not be so severe) of your paper.^[4] In my last I could not avoid touching upon so interesting a subject & hope on my return here to receive your reply, written with your accustomed candour & openness, upon the measure of which will depend the extent of the communication which I will make to you respecting my being in the same predicament myself, & my own Fort being nearly taken by surprize by the inexpressible somethings of a peerless fair one lately arrived from dear Old England!!!!!!^[5] I have not much time to think of these things, but perhaps Wm. you will readily agree with me that there is a certain weakness or natural failing or whatever else you are pleased to call it, in our nature, which makes it absolutely impossible, unless one's Heart is composed of stone, or lignum vitae, or some such stern stuff, to look with indifference upon a fine girl when her outward & secondary attractions are combined with & rendered more [~~xxxx~~] brilliant by that train of female accomplishments, which when united to a modest & virtuous conduct, do not fail to impress us with a very high notion of their possessor.

You may laugh; but these rare qualities your Brother has seen & more than admired, & was he in a situation capable of imparting comfort as well as misery to any fellow creature that would be so great a sharer of his own sorrows as a wife, he thinks he has seen the object to whom [~~xxxx~~] above all others he should like to be spliced; [~~xxxx~~] but unfortunately that time is yet far distant and I hope never to make a worthy girl miserable by uniting my destiny to

[4] This raillery gives further evidence to the dimensions of an apparent romance (on paper at least) between William Roe and Elizabeth King (PPK's younger sister), following the latter's visit to Newbury with her mother and sister.

[5] But just who is this "peerless fair lately arrived from dear old England"? By the time JSR left on the *Bathurst* the romance would seem to have run its course without JSR ever committing the solecism of writing her name in a letter home. In 1824, JSR was writing to his "friend Sophia" in Sydney (under cover of letters sent to John Piper): could this be the same woman? There is some circumstantial evidence that hints it may have been Sophia Garling (see introduction).

hers without being able to support her with comfort. I have now my dear William given you all ample materials for sending me a long letter apiece, which I shall be perfectly in readiness for when we arrive here again; for if I am now struck curiously comical (of which there remains very little doubt on my own mind) a long absence of 9 months from all female society, instead of cursing [~~xxxx~~] or dispelling the pleasing illusion (if I may call it such) may probably tend to increase its intensity.

I have now told you the principal part of the plain & honest truth which I feel no reason to disguise, & am not aware that our dear Parents will find any serious cause for alarm at the desperate condition of their Son, who trusts he shall never be induced, under any circumstances, to take ~~any~~ step of that nature, without their consent.

We continue to receive every possible attention from our friends at Port Jackson. I have just dispatched a letter to our Bror. Thos. directing to him as Adj. to the 2d. Battn. of 6th. Regt. & to the care of Messrs. Boyce & Co. of B'bay. who I suppose still continue the Agents both to himself & George. In all my letters to them I have mentioned the anxiety & uneasiness which you all feel at not hearing from them, & your earnest desire that they will do so; as I have cause to suspect that some hidden obstacle lies in the way of my communication with India. I have accepted of the good offices of Capt. Irvine of the Bengal Native Infantry who is here for the benefit of his health & has promised to forward T.'s letter to a friend at Calcutta, who will put it into a proper channel for conveyance.^[6] This officer was never in the Field or on duty with either of our Brors.' Regts., & consequently has no knowledge of them, but gives me the gratifying intelligence that a late addition of 3 Regts. to those on the Bombay Establishment will certainly give them both promotion above the rank of Lieutts. I shall continue writing to both of [*page* 4] them whenever an opportunity offers, though I have long since abandoned the idea of ever receiving an answer to my letters, on account of the unknown impediment before mentioned.

I sincerely trust that this will find you all free from sickness & trouble, and our distressed country in an improving state. I have now spun out my letter to an unconscionable length without giving you any news, & am sorry to say must conclude it under the same disadvantages, this place affording no intelligence sufficiently interesting for communication except what I have written, which by the way would afford a little interest to any person but myself; such as you find it my dear W. it is most cordially at your service; & if the Doctor

[6] Captain Francis Irvine, of the 11th Bengal Native Infantry, arrived in Sydney with his wife Frances Sophia and their children in June 1820. He was a Foundation member of the Philosophical Society of Australasia.

(Hunter) had not been for the last hour & a half engaged in a very tough argument with the Botanist (Cunningham) about the difference between an Architect & a Builder, you would certainly have had a great deal more of it, & with a quarter proportion of reason & common sense perhaps. I propose leaving this to be forwarded by a different opportunity from Sophy's letter, therefore allowing for the probability of this coming to hand first, it may be necessary to say that in it I had the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of Sophy's kind letters of Oct. 23 & Nov. 26. 1819. which with the brown paper & silk cord arrived in the ship *Saracen* May 19. 1820.

I also requested Father would send me more of the latter, 4 dozen smallest size uniform buttons, & enough Irish linen to make 12 shirts, as my stock of the last article are all falling off my shoulders & I have had to supply myself with new light trowsers, waistcoats, stockings, &c. at very extravagant prices & of inferior quality. The brown paper which you sent instead of being of the finest quality should have been the coarsest that could be procured, but by putting 4 or 5 sheets together, I will contrive to make good use of it in preserving as many plants as it will contain. I am sorry to say that my eyes do not get any better, owing the cause that I have heretofore stated, of not being allowed that respite from application which they stand so much in need of & which it is absolutely out of my power to allow them. The preparation that was made up according to the Recipe & sent from Newbury. I have long since discontinued under the impression that no benefit was derived from its use in the present instance.

Mr Dear Willm. we are always enabled to form a more correct opinion of our good or bad fortune, and of the various vicissitudes of life, by complaining our own lot with that of others, either more or less favored than ourselves. A good opportunity has just occurred for doing so by the arrival here of a small boat containing 17 hands that are part of the crew of a whaler called the *Echo*, wrecked a few days ago upon a dangerous reef called the Cato's Bank, situated about 700 miles to the Nd. & Ed. of this Port.^[7] After constructing 2 Boats out of the wreck of the ship, the whole crew embarked with what provisions they were able to save & with a very small supply of fresh water. The sufferers who have arrived parted compy. with the other boat containing 15 hands on the 16th of June last, since which they have not heard or seen any thing of them, & are apprehensive that the same bad

[7] The *Echo* (Capt. Spence) was a whaler which went aground on the Cato Reef on 21 April 1820 (the reef was named after the *Cato* and *Porpoise*, the latter carrying Matthew Flinders, which were wrecked in 1803). The crew of the *Echo* got off into two boats, one of which, commanded by Capt. Spence, was picked up by the *Cumberland* at Moreton Island, and the other, commanded by Chief Officer Lowe, made it to Sydney after assistance from the *Sindbad* (see the *Sydney Gazette*, 8 July & 12 August 1820).

weather we experienced must have driven them onshore & that they have gotten into the hands of the Savages. I hope this will not prove the case & that Lieutt. King will think it worth while to look along the coast for them should they not arrive before we sail again.

I [~~xxxx~~] returned yesterday evening from a visit of 3 days to Lieutt. King & his Sister at Parramatta & left them with regret. The latter has lately received the addition of a little Son to her young family, which now consists of 2 Boys & 3 Girls & are as fine children as any in the Colony.^[8] She often talks of you all in the handsomest manner as does Mrs. King who longs extremely to be enabled to accept the invitation which I have given her of visiting the Rectory on our arrival in England. She has got 2 as fine [*page 5*] Boys as I ever beheld, to the last of which 5 or 6 months ago, I believe I mentioned that I had the pleasure of standing proxy for one of her Brothers in the West of England and exacted a promise that in the event of her presenting Lieutt. King with 7 Sons without a girl intervening (a curious bargain you will admit, & one which cost the lady many blushes before it was finally settled) I should be allowed the honor of standing Godfather to him & that he should receive the name of Septimus.^[9]

I am sure you will be very much pleased with [~~xxxx~~] Admiral Benbow the Newfoundland dog that Mr. King gave me a few months ago.^[10] He is really a very handsome dog, black & white, takes the water admirably & is the admiration of all who see him. The forbidding looks of the Convicts here have made him rather savage at present though a very vigilant watch dog – as one instance of which I will relate his having accompanied our Sailmaker to the sail loft one day & was left in charge when the man went to dinner.^[11] A quarrel having arisen among the others who were left working during his absence, one of them discharged a large lump of bees wax at the head of another, who immediately got up to resent the affront with the leg of a stool when he was seized by ~~the~~ Benbow in the breech, & in a moment found himself deficient of all the after part of his Trowsers to his total discomposure & the general mirth & merriment of the whole room.

Altho' this incident are ludicrous enough & afford amusement, I have been obliged to have him tied up onboard the Cutter, both to save his own life &

[8] Anna Maria Macarthur gave birth to her son Charles Macarthur on 21 May 1820.

[9] Incredibly, Harriet did indeed give birth to seven sons in a row: Arthur Septimus King was born in 1827.

[10] Admiral Benbow, a boisterous dog, gave PPK not a little grief over the years, so it is good to learn that the dog was originally his gift to JSR.

[11] The Sailmaker on the voyage was Thomas Stevenson, one of PPK's most trusted men: although records for King's sailors are pretty sketchy, he would seem to have sailed on all the voyages of both the *Mermaid* and *Bathurst*.

his Master's sorrow at losing him, for a few day's ago he received a severe cut with a stone on the head from a Man who was carrying a bag on his shoulder through the street & Benbow thinking he looked like a thief seized him by the calf of his leg & held him till some one ran up to his assistance. Of course people will consider [themselves] perfectly justified in shooting so presumptuous an animal & I feel that [I cannot] part with him. The shooting season will be at an end before this reaches you & I hope to hear of your having committed greater ravages among the game than during the last. Benbow will of course be out of his Latitude at such times as those & has no more notion of that kind of work than of flying. He sails with us on an approaching voyage, & in addition to his other qualifications will have learnt that rare & desirable one, of being able to live upon nothing before he returns.

I sat down in expectation of writing you only a few lines but have swelled my letter to several pages, which I am at length obliged to bring to a conclusion for want of news & more candle at hand. The Doctor & Botanist are not so particular & seem to think they can see to talk in the dark, although it is now nearly 12 o'clock, & neither of them appear yet to have gained the weather side of the argument. God bless you all. Give my kindest love to our Dear Father & Mor. Sophy & Chas. (wishing the latter good night) & believe me, my Dear Willm. to remain your ever affectionate Brother

John Septimus Roe.

P.S. We expect to touch at Timor in about November next for wood, water, &c. and should there be any opportunity of forwarding letters from thence, I will not fail to advise you of our proceedings. Pray write to me by any opportunity that offers, & let me know if you have been able to gain a sight of the charts we sent home, & any news respecting us that you may pick up at the Admiralty. I had almost forgotten to say that our Surgeon Mr. Hunter was formerly Surgeon of the *Icarus* Brig when she was at the Isle of France with the *Alpheus* & he recollects having seen Chas. there.^[12] Good night Chas.!

[12] Brother Charles, an officer in the Marines, was on board HMS *Alpheus* from 1812-1816, serving on the India Station.

MAY 1820

/ JANUARY 1821

No. 12.

Parramatta, New South Wales.

“Lieutt. King, whose thoughts I could pretty well guess, was so completely overwhelmed with the perilous situation we had just escaped from & of the miraculous interposition of Providence in sparing him to his wife, children, & friends, that his feelings found vent in a flood of tears for an instant, when upon recovering his composure, he acknowledged with myself the gratitude we ought to feel to the Almighty, who had so wonderfully delivered us.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Ten pages.

The Reverend James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 157.

A difficult and wide-ranging letter, including an account of the entire last voyage of the *Mermaid*, but starting of necessity with his notice of the death of his brother George in India. JSR was so fond of his family that it is sad to see him being forced to mourn his brother's loss while taking into account that they were almost strangers (“the course of events has prevented my having more than a distant recollection of the departed ornament of our family”). He also cruelly feels the fact that he has received no new letters from home. The melancholy opening to the letter does not prevent JSR, nonetheless, from giving due account of the eventful voyage of the *Mermaid*, including his description of grounding at Port Bowen, a brief description of their return to Endeavour River, and the events at Careening Bay, where the cutter was found to be leaking dangerously, forcing their expeditious return to Sydney. The letter also includes JSR's gripping account of the near catastrophe they experienced off the heads of Botany Bay in December 1820, when the *Mermaid* was driven onto Cape Banks in heavy seas in the middle of the night, and JSR was so convinced that they were lost that he spoke to the overly garrulous medical man who sailed with them, Dr. Hunter, for the first time in many weeks, even if only to shake hand “like men going to be hanged.” On his return he reflects on the approval that their work seems to be meeting with, and makes an interesting aside on the possible political changes afoot, which might see their political masters Goulburn and Bathurst replaced. He also reports the examination of the *Mermaid* and the consequent outfitting of the newly purchased *Bathurst*. The letter includes much on life in Sydney and the friendly relationship between the Roes and the Kings in both countries, and has an interesting each-way bet on the very gentlemanly “Mr. Bigge” and his secretive report: it is interesting to see JSR wrestle with his obvious friendly attachment with the Macquaries, and his even-handed account of what Bigge was doing.

No. 12.
Parramatta. New South Wales.
January 29. 1821.

My ever dear Father,

With what pleasure & yet what pain do I again write to you all after the severe & melancholy loss we have lately experienced in poor George, the intelligence of whose decease reached my hands in the middle of last December in a letter from Bror. T. who was at the period of its date (April 24. 1820) on the point of sailing for Dear Old England for the re-establishment of his health. Most earnestly do I trust that the Almighty will have been graciously pleased to spare this honorable member of our family & to deliver him safely into the hands of those Parents, Brothers & Sister who have ever regarded him with the greatest affection that such a tediously protracted absence always ~~conduces~~ conduces to keep alive; & it is needless to add how truly happy (as far at least as the melancholy occasion would admit) should I be to ~~add~~ participate in the pleasure you will all feel in once more taking him by the hand.

My dear Father, it would indeed be presumption in a [stripling] & inexperienced Boy like me to make any remarks & observations upon the severe loss we have all felt in poor G., on the great uncertainty of human life & on the awful but wise dispensations of that Divine Providence, to whose will we are ever bound to submit without murmuring, under the impression which I have even been inclined to believe that “whatever is, is right” – Although the course of events has prevented my having more than a distant recollection of the departed ornament of our family, I deeply feel what a Brother ought to feel on such an occasion, & am only restrained from entering more largely on the subject by my unwillingness to revive in the minds of you all those painful reflections & sufferings, the keenest edge of which may happily have worn off by the time this poor sheet may reach you, & which I am very far from wishing to revive.

The shock was certainly very severe to me because totally unexpected; and in opposition to my utmost efforts to banish unfavorable impressions, I have not been able to divest myself of the painful & truly sorrowful notion that Brother T. may ~~have~~ unhappily have never reached his native Land & that the revered object to whom I am now addressing myself may never have recovered from the severe attack of Inflammation of the Lungs with which Dear Sophy informed me in her last kind letter of April 23. 1820. May the Almighty have decreed otherwise & be graciously pleased to spare you & my dear Mother yet many more years to the society of your children who cannot but be truly sensible of your worth.

The unwelcome and painful intelligence communicated to me in the last letters both from Home and India continue to prey so upon my mind, that I cannot say my health is at the present moment in the best state, though I am far from being ill; & being naturally disinclined to contemplate the dark side of Events can easily attribute my uneasiness to excessive depression of spirits which it is to be hoped a few more revolving weeks will succeed in removing. It gives me great pleasure, very great pleasure to hear from Sophy that my Dear Mother still enjoys her health & that she is herself recovering rapidly from the ill effects of her raking in Town which I trust will call forth an additional exertion of her prudence upon a recurrence of the opportunity – indeed, I have had the satisfaction of hearing through the channel of Mr. King’s letters from his Mother dated in the beginning of last August, that all at the Rectory were then well & that Sophy was then in Lincolnshire upon the visit which she has so often mentioned in her letters to me.

This tends materially towards reviving my hopes that all goes on well at Home, though I am at a loss to account for not hearing from any of you. T. not having quitted Bombay in the Orient before the latter end of April cannot reasonably have been expected in England at that period – but God grant that he has arrived safe & (I will add) well, [*page 2*] for there is every probability of the voyage homewards re-establishing his health. How happy should I be to have it in my power to realise his wish & will say that of us all, in being able to complete the family meeting of us all around that dear fire-side where I have beguiled many hours in the society of those far distant relations who are ever present in my memory & who are so good & kind as to remember one of themselves who has now been absent 4 years from his native land which contains all that he holds most dear in this world. So protracted an absence seems only to increase his affection for them, if possible, & to make him look forward with a tiresome & tedious impatience to the 2 years which appear still to separate them. This I am aware will be unexpected intelligence to you all, as you appear to have been in daily expectation of our arrival in England 6 months ago, though upon reference to my late (or last) letters, if you have preserved them, you will perceive that I gave no hopes or grounds for forming such an expectation, though Lieutt. King seems to have been sanguine on the opposite side.

As you have already, perhaps, expressed your surprize at hearing from me again soon after my last of July 8. 1820 (to William) it is necessary that I should now enter upon an explanation & state the cause to be the leaky & decayed state of our little vessel the *Mermaid*. After the short but unpleasant trip in which we had the misfortune to carry away the Cutter’s bowsprit our repairs were completed here in the usual... style & in the middle of July we again sailed with the good wishes of all the friends to ourselves & the expedi-

tion, & with the prospect of an 8 or 9 or 10 months voyage before us. Our number then amounted to 22, including the Commander & a Surgeon, and to add to our prospects of being more comfortable, Governor Macquarie was good enough to allow us to take as much of Donkin's Preserved Meats in tin cases as we could conveniently stow away, for the purpose of issuing to all hands as often as Lieutt. King should think necessary.^[1] Of course we did not scruple to incommode ourselves on so beneficial an occasion & continued to stow away as much as would admit of one fresh meal pr. Week for 9 months. The presence of a Medical Man (Mr. Hunter R.N.)^[2] also inspired us with additional hopes of returning again, and we at length cleared the heads of Port Jackson, to pursue the same intricate route Northwards that was adopted on the preceding voyage to enable us to arrive at that part of the North West coast which we were destined to explore.

Of course we did not run over the same track that had been previously been followed & the navigation among that immense Labyrinth of shoals was in consequence rendered considerably more intricate and dangerous, which exposed us to the usual number of perils & narrow escapes, each of which was almost forgotten by us as soon as another succeeded. At length however one of these unpleasant occurrences nearly proved fatal to us, having grounded in the entrance of a place on the East Coast of this country called Port Bowen, which had some years ago been entered by Captn. Flinders R.N. in H.M. Ship *Investigator*.^[3] at that time no shoals existed where we struck but they have since been washed up by the sea & for nearly 3 hours we were beating very hard upon them with a fresh squally breeze & ground swell, unable to extricate ourselves until the flowing tide happily assisted our endeavours; we then hove the vessel off by main force with 2 anchor's astern, & were in hopes no material damage had been sustained, although some loud crashes were plainly heard occasionally when the Cutter struck heaviest.

At this time we could not but congratulate ourselves on the strength of our little vessel; the confidence we had hitherto placed in her was by this circumstance increased, & we entertained sanguine hopes that with the assistance of that Supreme Being who has shielded us with his protecting arm in a most conspicuous manner, she would carry us safely through all our remaining difficulties & troubles. Our hopes however were not gratified in this respect

[1] JSR had earlier talked enthusiastically about Donkin's Preserved Meats in his letter home of 6 May 1820 (see note 3).

[2] Dr James Hunter RN had come out to New South Wales as the Surgeon-Superintendent on both the *Minerva* (arrived 1818) and the *Prince Regent* (1820), and although he had initially been welcomed with open arms by King and his officers, as the present letter makes clear relations were distinctly frosty by the time they returned to Port Jackson.

[3] Flinders was at Port Bowen in August 1802.

for it was soon found in the first breeze (as we call it) she encountered, that a considerable leak had been sprung in some unknown part. As we were then in a mild & fine climate (though confoundedly hot) & did not expect to encounter much rough weather during our Examination of the coast, we had no thought of returning to Port Jackson; therefore prosecuting the voyage we touched again at Endeavour River where the natives proved so treacherous last year by attacking our Seamen without any provocation. A party of ~~them~~ 8 or 10 now made their appearance in a timid & cautious manner & after some difficulty we communicated with them, but did not recognise one of the former set. Some presents were therefore given them of beads, old chisels, knives, ropes, &c. and they did not repeat their visit, being, from their behaviour, evidently apprised of what took place there last year.

During our passage from Port Jackson to Torres' Strait (on N. coast of Australia) we had the satisfaction of fixing the position of 40 or 50 reefs & shoals that had no previous existence in any former Charts, & which, together with the nautical knowledge obtained of these parts last voyage & that which we shall at a future opportunity procure, will render the navigation of these dangerous & intricate Seas almost as trustworthy as any other. We passed through Torres Strait into a more open sea without meeting with any thing worthy of particular notice & having obtained 2 Turtle & 1000 Turtle eggs from a small rocky island (Booby) in its Western Entrance. We arrived at that part of the Coast where our labours were to commence in the [~~xxxx~~] early part of September having thus lost 7 weeks at sea before we could arrive at our ground, although the greatest dispatch was used.

The [*page 3*] leaky state of the vessel had however by this time so considerably increased as to require her being pumped out every 2 hours & during a fresh breeze she leaked about 7 or 8 inches an hour, rendering nearly an hour's pumping necessary out of every 2. Things could not long go on in this state or we should have gone down in spite of our exertions; therefore notwithstanding our anxiety to prosecute the examination of the coast, self-preservation, the first law of nature, obliged us to come to the determination of laying the vessel onshore at some convenient spot where the Tide would leave her dry & enable us to examine into her state below the water line.

Such a situation at length presented itself & having got all our provisions, water, stores, &c. onshore, we pitched our tents close to them in a very pretty little Bay, & hauled the Cutter up at High water until she touched the ground. The tides being there very great, at the succeeding low water she was left about a quarter of a mile from the water's edge, across an extensive sandy flat that could not have offered more opportunely for our purposes.

Immediate examination was made by removing some of the sheet copper & we found that material injury had been sustained abaft: the main keel was



PPK, *Repairing the Cutter Mermaid, Careening Bay. SLNSW.*

rent completely through in an horizontal direction about 3 feet from the stern post; the latter and the keel were very much loosened at their connexion with each other, and the bolts which secured an iron brace connecting them together were found so eaten away by rust as to be extracted by the Carpenter with little other assistance than his fingers.^[4] This gave us a specimen of what we might expect in other parts, & a further inspection almost alarmed us, for the iron fastenings that held the vessel together were found to be so rusted & corroded by the copper that we no longer hesitated in fixing upon the cause of the leak & were at the same time utterly unable to repair the defect. In a week we had secured the stern post & keel in an efficient manner & replaced with new copper all which had been ripped off for the examination. Some of the butt-ends (if you know what they are) were additionally caulked & secured, & other necessary repairs made as far as our slender means would admit, & we were in hopes of being able to hold out, with-

[4] The Carpenter on board was William Forster, who sailed on both the second and third voyages of the *Mermaid*.

out finding the necessity of returning to Port Jackson sooner than was originally intended.

Here however we were again doomed to disappointment for on re-embarking the Stores and Provisions, & getting the vessel under sail again, she was found to leak as much as ever, even during a moderate breeze and smooth water. The S.E. monsoon being at that period (middle of October) on the point of breaking up, Lieutt. King had formed the plan of going to sea in order to escape the heavy rains & consequent sickly season attending that event, & to make the S.W. Cape of Australia, Cape Leeuwin, for the purpose of running up the West Coast until our examination of it should join that of our first voyage. The continued & increasing leakiness of our little Cutter made it absolutely necessary that we should immediately change our plan & make the best of our way to Port Jackson while the Summer was before us; which was accordingly done & we arrived here the 2d. week in December after an absence of 21 weeks only.

But how very narrowly we escaped being destined never to arrive & what great reason we have to be additionally thankful to the Almighty for his great & undeserved mercies to us, you may easily judge by what I am going to relate to you; but which I candidly tell you should never have been included in any of my letters was I not fully aware that you will hear it from other quarters, & perhaps have chided me for my neglecting to mention it. It was blowing nearly a gale of wind the day before we arrived off Botany Bay, accompanied by very heavy, cloudy & wet weather which of course did not contribute much to our comfort in so small & leaky a vessel, & made us anxious to get secured safely in Harbour. The strength of the wind deterred us from going very close inshore until we arrived off the Port, & during the night of Sunday, December 6th. we steered a course which we expected would bring us in sight of the Light House here before daylight.

I had retired to bed at 12 o'clock after keeping a most uncomfortable wet watch for 4 hours & had scarcely been in bed 2 hours and a half when I was awakened by a great noise on deck caused by the loud expressions of several persons together which I was well aware portended no good. A cry from ~~from~~ an old Sailor in a desponding tone of "it's of no use, there's no room to wear" immediately confirmed my conjectures, and slipping on my Jacket, Trowsers & Cap I was on deck in a moment & soon found ample cause for alarm, by seeing a range of steep perpendicular rocky cliffs not a quarter of a mile distant on the lee beam, & a tremendous surf breaking at their feet in a most frightful manner. The horrible darkness of the night & vivid lightning which but too plainly discovered to us our unenviable situation, increased the sadness of the scene, & after a moment's reflection, our strained eyes having

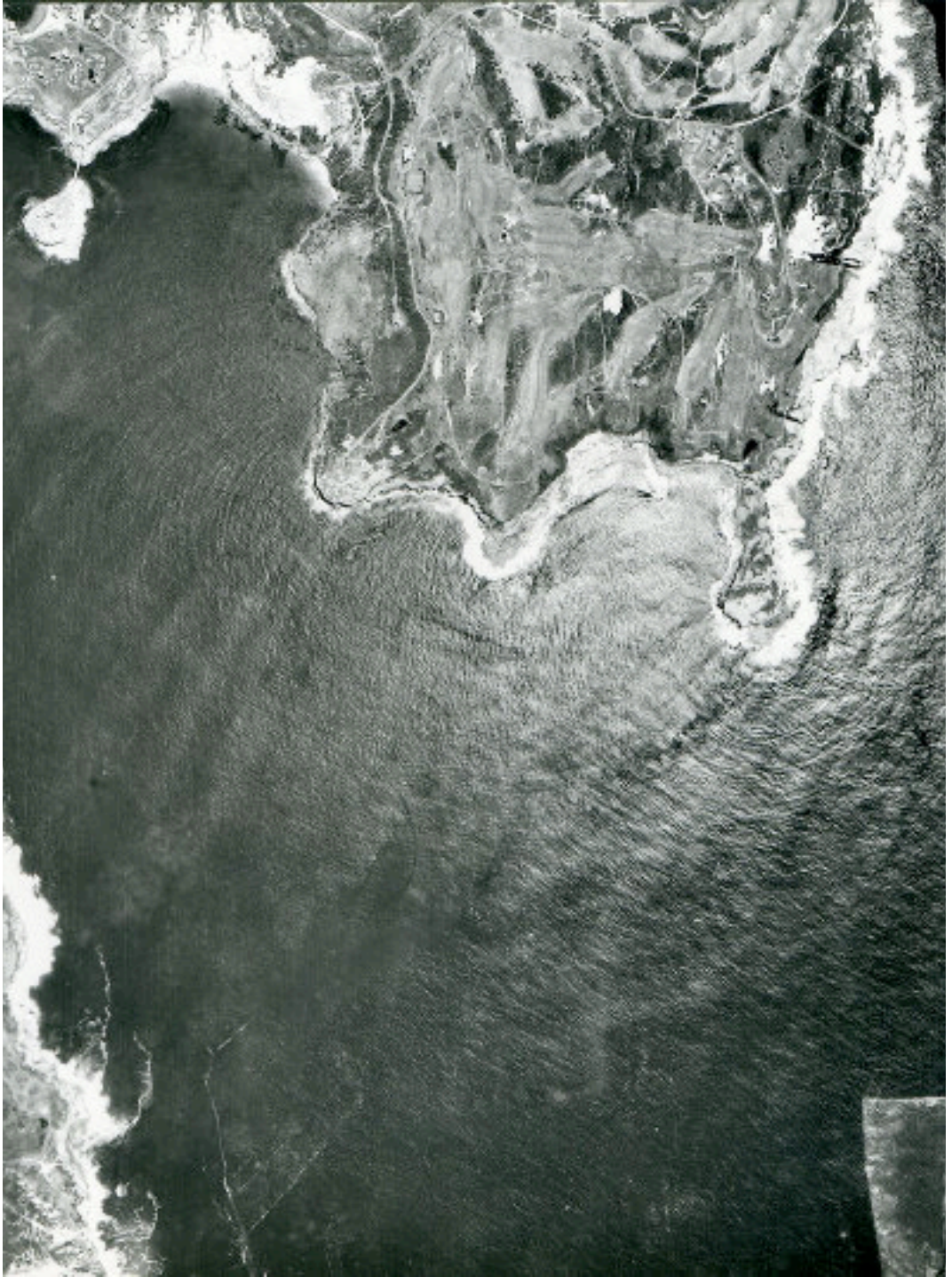
discovered more land extending on the weather bow [*page 4*] close to us made me among the rest almost give ourselves up for lost.

You must be fully aware that in this dreadful emergency not 1/2 a moment was to be spared; Lieutt. King not having retired to his bed throughout the night was ondeck during the whole time, & in consequence of the assertions of some that there was not room to wear the vessel's head round, I advised him to try & tack as our only resource, though at the eminent hazard of such a heavy sea causing the vessel to founder by the stern. The helm was accordingly put alee, though with very little hopes of success & we had the satisfaction of watching the vessel's head gradually veering in the direction we wished (though every moment appeared like a week) until a cruel heavy sea which we expected would have overwhelmed us in one roll, most appallingly threw her head off again, & every possible exertion was then used as the only remaining but hopeless alternative to wear with the vessel's head inshore.

These terms are of course foreign to you, but I cannot express them in other more intelligible words ~~but~~ and refer to Chas. for an explanation.

With despairing hearts, & feelings indescribable, the helm was put a weather for that purpose & the sails trimmed in the most advantageous manner with an alacrity that can only be equalled by persons in a similar situation, every one fully expecting that a few moments only separated him from Eternity. The merciless interposition of the Almighty, whose assistance we invoked to deliver us, was here most certainly granted us in a real time of trouble, for by the time the Cutter's head was got round to the Southward, we were not more than 100 yards distant from the most tremendous breakers I ever beheld, which were lashing in a merciless manner a steep & even overhanging shore, upon which it would have been an actual impossibility for one of us to have gained a footing. Even in this situation, which under any other circumstances would have been viewed with terror, we could not avoid congratulating each other & returning secret thanks to that Omnipotent hand that had so far delivered us – but the worst part was yet to come, & has left on my mind an indelible impression that cannot be effaced; for young as I am, I have seen Death in various shapes, in common with the rest of mankind, but never before encountered him at such close quarters.

I will conclude such disastrous affairs as these in as few words as possible, by saying in continuation that on account of the vessel being under close reefed mainsail, reefed foresail, & storm jib when the land was first seen, our nearness to it did not allow of time to make more sail, & she consequently dragged but very heavily through the water & went considerably to leeward – we had scarcely got on the larboard tack & trimmed sails in the best possible manner with the land in sight as far as 2 points on the lee bow, before our



Aerial Photograph of Cape Banks and the heads of Botany Bay. Randwick City Library.

blood almost stood still in our veins at a flash of lightning exposing to view in that direction very high breakers upon a projecting reef towards which we were gradually drifting. Certain destruction seemed now inevitable – the lightning exposed to our view the despair that was depicted in every one’s countenance, and we could alone trust to that gracious God, whose awful presence & that our of our dearest relatives now occupied our sole thoughts. Nothing could possibly have been done, but stand on as we were going in hopes of weathering the breakers, the outer extent of which we sometimes thought rose ahead – but many moments (although they were very very long ones) could not elapse before our fate was to be decided; & like men ascending a platform for execution we approached them, calling on God to befriend us now as he has so often done before.

The truly horrible sensations that we now felt are not to be described – my blood freezes when I think of them even at this distant period – and you may perhaps imagine how much they were augmented when the vessel struck upon the outer rocks & the breakers were rising outside of her in terrible grandeur. Even at this momentous crisis, I cannot say (& it is no time my dear Father for boasting) that all hope forsook me, for the Almighty had shewn us his gracious protection so often of late years & we now repeated to each other our grateful sense of them & our confidence in their continuance so earnestly, that had the worst taken place, there appeared a serenity & composure on my mind that I cannot explain & which appeared to me as the result (perhaps too confident a one) of that reliance on His goodness which caused me to view with less horror each overwhelming wave as it broke. It is at such dreadful times as these that man’s real character for courage, coolness, & piety is more fully developed than under any other circumstance, and confirmed in the present instance the opinion I have ever formed of our Commander for a firm reliance on Divine Providence; for I was standing with him in conversation the whole time that my duty would permit of inactivity – at the dreadful moment of striking on the rocks, a faint exclamation that all was over with us escaped from several; the rudder was lifted more than a foot out of its place but fortunately resumed its proper situation again, and every one expected the next wave would hang us upon the reef, the rocks of which were sometimes seen not a dozen yards from the vessel’s side, as the breakers & surf receded to give place to each other.

My thoughts are at this moment totally confused with the recollection of the numerous [*page 5*] ideas which then crowded in utter confusion on my mind, & which followed each other in such quick succession as to embrace my dearest relatives, friends & others in the short space of a few moments. Most providentially for us, the Cutter had struck upon the outer rocks of the reef

(which was very narrow) & not having lost her head-way through the water, we still stood on through the foam of the surf which covered the sea like a thick lather for 30 or 40 fathoms round, & our feelings can be better imagined than described when we found we had weathered the extremity of the reef & got into a situation of comparative safety.

So close & miraculous an escape perhaps no mortals ever before experienced, for to have been within the very breakers of a reef & to have even struck upon the ~~rocks~~ rocks which composed it, would afford the most sanguine but a very faint hope of deliverance indeed. Lieutt. King, whose thoughts I could pretty well guess, was so completely overwhelmed with the perilous situation we had just escaped from & of the miraculous interposition of Providence in sparing him to his wife, children, & friends, that his feelings



found vent in a flood of tears for an instant, when upon recovering his composure, he acknowledged with myself the gratitude we ought to feel to the Almighty, who had so wonderfully delivered us. We were however not yet clear of danger, for land was presently again seen ahead & on the lee bow, which could not be weathered, & the vessel was settling fast down towards it. The good fortune that had attended us created a confidence in our breasts which nothing but actual fatality could destroy, & we set to work with the greatest alacrity to make

more sail on the vessel. 2 reefs were let out of the Mainsail, though at the eminent hazard of losing the mast, and a reef let out of the foresail. By the time these preparations were made for beating offshore, we were within a 1/4 mile of the land, the gale had not abated in the least, & the surf beat with amazing fury at the feet of the perpendicular cliffs. A light streak in the heavens, & the only deviation from the general gloominess, was over that small space which was included between the land we had just weathered & that we were now approaching, & plainly discovered, after many anxious doubts that there was an opening in the Land there which our supposed situation on the Chart pointed out as no other than Botany Bay, 10 or 12 miles south of Port Jackson.

The reef upon which we had struck could be no other than that which projects 3 or 400 yards from the North Head of Botany Bay, & ~~in~~ the critical situation which we were again involved in, made us agree by general consent of the Officers to bear up & run in there for shelter till break of day. The ves-

Inset: a later reconstruction of the Mermaid being driven against the rocks of Botany Bay by Conrad Martens (HMS Mermaid off Cape Banks, c. 1840). NLA.

sel was instantly wore round, the anchors prepared for coming to, & we entered between the Heads of the Bay in one of the thickest & most dismal squalls that we had experienced throughout the night. The entrance being not more than 1/2 a mile wide, the tremendous roaring surf that beat with great violence on both shores cause a white foam & froth that nearly met across; & had we not been certain of the place we were running into, if it had not poured so with ~~the~~ rain we might reasonably have concluded that we were entering the Gates of Hell.

Every man was at his station for trimming sails in a moment, should it be found that we had unfortunately mistaken our Port; but every succeeding flash confirmed our hopes of the contrary, & when we had got as far as the middle of the Narrows, the wind died away in the most unaccountable manner to nearly a calm, accompanied by a temporary break of the clouds which enabled us to see a little ahead, & at about 4 o'clock we could scarcely credit our senses when we found ourselves securely riding at anchor in a safe port, free from more than the ordinary perils of our fellow creatures. Precautions were however still necessary to provide against the approach of threatening weather; and our expectations that we were enjoying but a deceitful calm were soon verified by the heavy bursting clouds, thunder & lightning, bringing on a continuance of the same uncomfortable weather we had just experienced at Sea. The preparations we had made for meeting it were however ample, & we had the good fortune to ride safely for 6 days, during which time we sent overland to Port Jackson with the news of our arrival & among the returns I received Sophy's letter of Jany. 26. 1820 and the intelligence of poor George's departure by T.'s letter of April 24. 1820.

As I said in the former part of these dismal pages, I have not yet got over the effects of these various vicissitudes, but hope soon to be able to write you in perfect health. To Lieutt. & Mrs. King I can never make an adequate return for their kindness & attention to me. I am now at Parramatta, as you will perceive by the date of this, assisting Lieutt. King in preparing a chart to send to the Admiralty by His Majy.'s Storeship *Dromedary*, which sails for England in a few days & will take this Letter also;^[5] therefore by the time you have received it their Lordships will be scrutinising, quizzing, laughing (but I hope not grumbling) at the humble endeavours of your obedient & affectionate, far distant [] whose thoughts very very often wander there in almost hopeful expectation... I was going to write despairingly but after what has happened I cannot, therefore beg you to pass on & to rejoice exceedingly when I

[5] HMS *Dromedary* (Capt. Skinner RN) arrived in Sydney in January 1820 bringing out some male convicts, together with a guard of the 84th Regiment and a small detachment of the 67th (the latter en route to India). The ship later made a round trip to New Zealand. One of the Midshipmen on board was Percival Baskerville, who sailed on the *Bathurst*.

tell you that I am here as one of the family and might remain until the expedition is ready to sail again, if I chose to accept the kind invitation that has been given me, but that would not be fair.

The chart contains the whole of our late survey together with part of that of the preceding voyage, which ~~together~~ combined, make a very pretty sheet full, & embrace many fine Harbours [*page 6*] and Ports, which the Lords of the Almighty and all well wisher's to Geography & Navigation cannot but view with pleasure. After all the cloudy & gloomy events I have been recounting it will doubtless give you very great satisfaction to hear that in this Chart of our late discoveries, the short but highly honored name of Roe has acquired additional celebrity by being attached to a very fine River in Latde. 15° 8' S. and Longitude 125° 36' Et. It empties itself into a fine Harbour named Prince Frederic's in honor of his Royal highness the Duke of York; and York Sound is outside of it, formed by numerous islands sheltering an extensive bay, that affords good anchorage for shipping. Upon [~~xxxx~~] discovering the Harbour, it was entered in the Cutter & she was taken 6 or 7 leagues up; when the depth having gradually decreased to 3 or 4 fathoms, the vessel was secured at anchor, & while Lieutt. King proceeded with the Surgeon in one armed boat to examine one opening in the land, I was dispatched in another with the Botanist, to explore the Head of the Harbour or any River that might fall into it. The former little expedition returned on the same evening, having penetrated 10 or 12 miles up the opening which assumed the character of a river, running between high rocky hills that supplied it with fresh water, and Lieutt. King named it Hunter's River in honor of the Doctor.

I was more fortunate in the Distance my excursion led me, having found a fine River falling into the Harbour; and before sunset had proceeded 26 or 28 miles from the Cutter at anchor, where the Tide turned against us, & we pitched our tent upon the banks for the River for the night. Hereabouts the breadth was about 70 [~~xxxx~~] yards, & when the Tide was out, the bed of the River was dry except a very small channel through which a little water drained, & there appeared to be a rise & fall of 24 or 25 feet, which would have made the River navigable for at least twice the distance for my Boat, but having brought only 2 days provisions, & being certain of the anxiety that would be felt onboard if we exceeded that length of absence, I was very reluctantly obliged to return when the Tide answered on the following day, & we arrived onboard at 8 o'clock in the evening, all well. On making my report to Lieutt. King, he kindly offered me the honor of naming it, but I declined doing so under the plea that it deserved a name of greater distinction than could be attached to any friend of mine, & that he had better call it after some title or name in connexion with the Royal Duke whose name the

Harbour & Sound bore. This was not agreed to, & he very handsomely said it should be called Roe's River after my revered Father the Rector of Newbury, in whose name & my own I could not do otherwise than return sincere thanks for so unexpected and great an honor.

The favour appeared greater than it otherwise would from my having praised the River & its probable magnitude before the name was conferred upon it; & having said that it deserved some grand appellation to which it would do infinite honor: but as every particular respecting these things or any thing else affecting the family name cannot by prove extremely interesting, I will state the more minute circumstances attending its examination in a letter which I owe to Willm. & which I will endeavour to write by a Ship (the *Shipley*, by the bye, our old friend)^[6] shortly expected to sail for England, therefore hope to be excused for having been so brief, as I have other particulars to mention respecting our future movements.

On our arrival here from Botany Bay an extract from Lieutt. King's letter to the Governor [~~xxxx~~] acquainting him with our arrival at that place & of our narrow escape (I should have told you though that our being so close in with the Land when it was expected we were abt. 5 leagues off was occasioned by a current having drifted us without our knowledge) ~~was public~~ having been published in the *Sydney Gazette*, we were greeted on our arrival with the warmest cordiality of our friends, all of whom, & particularly Mrs. King, &c. were more than agreeably surprized at the length of the Cutter's absence being shortened.^[7] We found here a letter from Mr. Goulburn, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, acknowledging the receipt of the Charts & Journal of our first voyage and ~~acknow~~ expressing Earl Bathurst's high satisfaction at the Proceedings of Lieutt. King up to the date of his Letter. Although my prospects from that quarter are trifling compared with the expectations we naturally form from the good will of the Admiralty, it was very satisfactory to hear of our exertion meeting the approbation of those so high in office as Earl Bathurst, by whom you are aware we are jointly employed in our present service, and are consequently obliged to send duplicates of every communication made to the Admiralty; indeed, these favorable reports of their Lordships' opinion of our proceedings are the greatest encouragement we can receive in the midst of all our troubles and difficulties, and are in fact the only connecting links between our Hopes and the yet distant Promotion to which we are naturally aspiring.

[6] The *Shipley* (Capt. Moncrieff), was indeed a regular visitor to New South Wales, and the name does crop up several times in JSR's letters.

[7] Presumably this is the notice of the voyage and its travails published in the "Ship News" of the *Sydney Gazette* on 9 December 1820.

The only unpleasant reflection that tends to dishearten & undermine our prospects is the probability of a chance taking place among those in office when “there will arise a King in Egypt that knows not Joseph”,^[8] (excuse me for the allusion) and all our former exertions be under-rated or neglected because not undertaken under the same patronage and auspices – but of this I am unwilling to think & must be content with wishing a continuation of the same liberal & impartial ideas which at present know how to discriminate between real privations [*page 7*] and hard-earned reward, and empty claims to undeserved consideration. As to the Castles you have all been building in the air respecting our promotion being forwarded to us, it may be the case with Lieutt. King & Mr. Bedwell, the latter having passed his examination for Lieutt. previous to quitting England; but with poor me it is impossible unless by an Order in Council, on account of my not having completed 6 years service in the Navy to have enabled me to pass the same ordeal, ~~before the expedition~~ therefore pray set yourselves as much at rest on that point as I have done myself, & your disappointment will not be greater.

I will however proceed to apprise you of the steps we are taking towards arriving at that desirable []. Soon after our arrival, as it was the intention of Lieutt. King to have the Cutter thoroughly examined by hauling her onshore in the Dock Yard, we got every article out of her, including even the lower Mast, hauled her up in some convenient spot in Sydney Cove & had proper persons to hold a Survey on her & report to the Governor. The state of the vessel may easily be imagined when I say that on stripping the copper off her bottom, she leaked so much that when the tide came up to her the water in her hold was on a level with that outside. This was found to be occasioned by the iron nails & bolts with which she was put together being so corroded with rust as to be considerably smaller than their original size, which will of itself point out the consequence that must ensue; & it drew from the Surveyors a report to His Excellency of the necessity that existed for the vessel being fresh fastened throughout before she would be fit for mailing another voyage.

As this undertaking would require considerable time and a Brig called the *Haldane* that would answer our purpose indefinitely better than the *Mermaid*, was then in Sydney Cove, for sale, Lieutt. King entered upon an agreement with the Governor & her owner to purchase her for the use of Govt. for the sum of £3000. The Governor listened with great impartiality and disinterestedness to Lieutt. K.’s statement of the uncomfortable manner in which we had so long been penned up in so confined a manner onboard a vessel so small as the *Mermaid*, to the prejudice of our healths as well as safety, as we had lately found her inadequate to beat off a lee shore in several instances which would have proved our destruction but from the intervention of favor-

[8] Exodus 1:8.

able circumstances. He also stated the small size of the *Mermaid* to be not only unfit for carrying on the examination of the West Coast where we had to experience rough weather and no shelter, but her incapability of carrying boats sufficiently large to be sent away from the vessel for 4 or 5 days together, which frequently obliged us to discontinue the examination of Openings in the Land, just at the time when their appearance and character were becoming momentarily more interesting &c. &c. &c.

The result has been the purchase of the *Haldane* for £3000, the change of her name to His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*, & our removal into her from the *Mermaid*, which is now undergoing the necessary repairs for the service of the Colony while we fit out the *Bathurst* for our next voyage of Discovery. The exchange is in most respects more advantageous than a continuance in the Cutter. She is nearly 200 Tons burden (the Cutter only 85) and will not only afford us twice the accommodation and comfort that we experienced in the *Mermaid*, but we shall be able to carry a large supply of live stock and Mess [~~xxxx~~] comforts – we shall be able to walk about, write, draw, beat off a lee shore in case of necessity, defend ourselves and enforce obedience (with the Malays in particular) and have an Awning over the Quarter Deck to defend us from the burning sun which I feel has made a great change in my Constitution & health since my employment on this Service; in fact, the change is just what we could have wished, in every other respect than the vessel's draught of water being greater by 2 or 3 feet, which will prevent our going so close inshore as we could have done in the *Mermaid*: and besides, it gives us an additional claim on the notice of our Employers from having worn out a vessel in their service.

We shall carry about 30 hands in the *Bathurst*, including Mr. King and a Surgeon in the Navy, Mr. Montgomery, who has lately arrived here, appointed to sail with the expedition instead of Mr. Morgan who was obliged to return Home again on account of Mental derangement.^[9] Mr Montgy. appears a good sort of fellow, abt. 34 years of age, but complains much of warm climates & has a very bad liver; I hope he will hold out though. He will be a much more welcome addition to our mess than Mr. Hunter, of whom it is unnecessary to say any thing in this place, except that he quarrelled with us all, & that I did not speak to him for the latter part of the voyage until we were all on the point of going to the Devil together off Botany Bay – we then shook hands together like men going to be hanged & have since been on speaking terms only. B. & I agree about as well as ever, though we have now seen so many dangers together & have yet a few more to encounter perhaps,

[9] Dr John Morgan RN arrived in the Colony on the *Mary* in 1819, but was suffering from mental derangement. The position went to Dr. Andrew Montgomery RN, an Irishman who had arrived in Sydney as the Superintendent of the convict ship *Elizabeth* in December 1820.

that we cannot avoid feeling some regard for each other, and after 4 years acquaintance we almost know each others character & disposition.

I am happy to say that a considerable weight will be taken off my shoulders in our approaching voyage by Lieutt. King having increased his establishment of officers with a Midshipman from the *Dromedary*, who promises to be very useful in the service we are employed upon. His name is Baskerville, an agreeable young man, about 19, understands something about Charts (but not Drawing) & has been 4 years at sea.^[10] I anticipate much satisfaction from the circumstance, not only [~~xxxx~~] on account of our duty (which before was much too heavy for 2 of us) being lightened, but because I shall be enabled to bring up deficiencies in my Logs, Journals, Sketches, &c. which the press of other business rendered absolutely impracticable. I have [*page 8*] now been here 3 weeks (at Mr. King's) and really was never treated better any where. The amiable Mrs. King & Mr. & Mrs. H. McArthur treat me as a brother, or one of their own family, which will make me truly sorry (although the occasion will be so joyful) when the period of our final departure from this country arrives. The 2 ladies in particular take great interest in every thing relating to you all, frequently making their kind enquiries & desiring a return of remembrances which they express themselves extremely anxious to be able to give in person should the time ever arrive that is to permit them to visit Berkshire.

The Chart for the Admiralty is now (Feby. 4. 1821) finished, & Lieutt. K. has taken it to Sydney to put onboard the *Dromedary*. I sincerely hope & have no doubt some of you will be able to obtain a sight of it by application at the Hydrographical Office of the Admiralty, where I do not think Captn. Hurd^[11] would refuse the request; & the call might easily be excused under the plea of enquiring for me or for his opinion respecting the period at which we might be expected in England – but perhaps you or some of Brothers have already seen the former charts that were sent by the *Shiplay*, by making a similar application, & you will then be able to form some idea of what we have been about. The present Chart is of the same size (23 inches by 34, or rather 34 by 23) but a much fuller & prettier chart, being rendered valuable by containing several fine Harbours, Ports & Rivers (including Roe's River, which alone must render it very interesting to you all) and it is in my humble opinion better executed (“Lord! How vain this fellow is!”, you exclaim at once; but don't believe it) should you be able to obtain a sight of them all I will leave you to

[10] Percival Baskerville (abt. 1802-1858) had a long career in the RN, ultimately serving on the Kessingland Coast Guard (in Suffolk).

[11] Thomas Hurd RN had been appointed Hydrographer to the Admiralty after the death of Alexander Dalrymple in 1808, and was instrumental in getting JSR and the other officers appointed to the Australian survey.

judge for yourselves, but hope you will pass no encomiums even if merited, as so many undeserved ones have been passed here by people who think it a necessary accompaniment to their inspection of another's work, that had I believed even one quarter of them. I should long since have been spoiled both in the opinion of other people & myself, but this being a subject solely about myself, it is almost time to change it for another, & say how anxiously I await the arrival of letters from you that will contain pleasing & welcome news of all hands at Newbury.

I must acknowledge the disappointment I felt a ~~few~~ days weeks ago on the arrival of the Ship ~~Juliana Caledonia~~ to find not a line for me, although Mr. King had letters from his Mother & family bearing date 3 months later than the last I have received. My expectations are now, however, on the tip-toe and by one of the numerous ships that are ~~deli~~ daily expected here from England. I hope they will not be disappointed. On the outside of Sophy's last letter to me (April 23. 1820) Mrs. Govr. King writes that she was expected in town on the day the letter was enclosed in her Son's packet; but no date being attached to that communication I must suppose the letter was not sent till some time after it was written. As Mr. King's letters always come by private hands, free of all expense, & Mrs. K. has so kindly undertaken to forward all letters to me, it is unnecessary for me to point out to My Dear Brother & Sophy, the facility with which their truly welcome letters can be forwarded to me, & hope they will take advantage of it by writing me as often as possible, even if they write the same thing two or three times over, as letters in such a remote part of the Globe, are so very acceptable that to be deprived of them renders the distance between the correspondents appear twice as great to the imagination.

I am now however the only absent member of the family, & hope to profit by the circumstance. There is a very great probability of our proceeding to England in the *Bathurst*, when our labours in this country are brought to a termination, as Lieutt. King, I believe, has represented in his accompanying dispatch to the Admiralty, the great expense of procuring sufficient room in a homeward bound merchant ship for himself & Officers, together with space enough to allow of his working at the completion of the Charts so as to enable him to perfect them for laying before their Lordships on his arrival in England. I am not aware of his having actually requested permission to take the *Bathurst* home, but know that his inclination ~~will~~ lead that way, as well for the above reason, as on account of taking home his wife & family, which in a merchantmen would be attended with considerable expense. His officers would also prefer the *Bathurst* for the same reason, for although unfortunately not possessed of wives & families, the expense of a passage to England would

be very little short of £100 in a merchant ship, whereas in their own they could accomplish that object for 1/4 of the sum.

Mr. & Mrs. Hanibal McArthur send home their eldest son, James, in the *Dromedary*, to go to school in England, & as he will be some time with Mrs. King in London, some of you will perhaps see him.^[12] I have had the pleasure of seeing a pencilled sketch of the Rectory by Miss Mary King, sent in a letter to her Brother, and found no hesitation in recognising the place.^[13] Her sister here is quite delighted with it, & required from me a full explanation of a place where she says her Mother & Sister have been so happy as to quit it with tears when obliged to take leave. A likeness of Elizabeth by Mr. Harper has lately arrived here for her Sister, & I can only say that next to allowing the Artist every possible credit for the execution, I think the original must be a very pretty girl indeed, & well worthy of all the fine things that have been said of her person by so able and discriminating a Judge as _____.^[14] A portrait of Mary is also here nearly the size of life, together with one of their amiable Mother, which greatly resemble each other.

I had almost forgotten to mention for the information of my amiable Mother & you all, the state of my eyes; which after the [~~xxxx~~] minute work of labouring for 3 weeks nearly at a Chart are not so well as they were previous to the commencement of that ruinous work, though I spare them as much as possible by not over-exerting them by candle light & hope to derive great benefit from a green silk shade which Mrs. King has been kind enough to make for me: I am obliged still to use the eye glass to assist my sight; & frequently when looking at distant objects can fancy them double as if one overlapped the other. I hope on my arrival in England to remedy all defects & to regain the full use of my sight which I have now been so long deprived of – as I am certainly disposed to consider the deficiency as merely temporary & by no means lessened by the heat & glare of this climate. I derive the greatest benefit from the use of water as warm as can be borne, & have long since discontinued the use of the wash you was so kind as to send me out, under the impression that it would answer well [*page 9*] for sore and inflamed eyes, but not ~~from~~ for those whose sight has been weakened by too great use and intense application. In this I am supported by several who have spoken with me on the subject; and all agree with me in saying that while the cause of

[12] James Macarthur (1813-1862) was the eldest son of Hannibal and Anna Maria, and in later life became a settler in Goulburn NSW.

[13] Mary King (1805-1872), the youngest daughter of Governor Philip Gidley and Anna Josepha King.

[14] A typically oblique reference by JSR to what he hoped was a burgeoning relationship between his brother William and Elizabeth King. The artist Harper [possibly Harpur?] is not known to me.

their complaint exists all remedies that can be used will only check but cannot entirely remove or stop its progress.

I was very much surprised a few days ago to hear of Sir Richd. Keats being married, but to whom I have not been able to learn.^[15] I wish him joy & plenty of happiness if true.

You will easily perceive my Dear Father by the fragments of various subjects with which I am scattering my paper, that I am drawing my letter near to a conclusion, & indeed I think it almost time; but trusting you will excuse this want of system & order in my writing. I have to mention a circumstance that escaped my memory while on the subject; which is no other than my having been allowed by Lieutt. King the pleasure of naming the highest hill in the vicinity of Entrance of Roe's River; ~~and I called it~~ Mount Brookes after my Dear Mother's maiden name: it is a conspicuous elevation close to the Entrance of the River, about 500 feet high and I obtained a sketch of it, as also 2 views up the River, which I hope will one day or other serve to grace or dis-grace some room or other in that happy dwelling where my dearest thoughts are ever rambling. They will at all events serve to brighten up my remembrance of passing [~~xxxx~~] scenes which will never again return, & to remind me of the honorable manner in which Lieutt. King has distinguished our family name beyond all hopes that I ever presumed to aspire to.

I have also derived much gratification from being allowed the honor of standing sponsor for the youngest son of Mr. & Mrs. H. McArthur, who was the day before yesterday christened Chas.^[16] The other Godfather was a brother of Mr. McA. who is a Lieutt. in the Navy that has lately arrived here as a settler.^[17] Mrs. King was Godmother. It is pleasing to be able to report that we still continue on the same friendly footing as ever with the respectable part of the people here who always make us heartily welcome when we arrive from a voyage and give us their best wishes at our departure & none more particularly so than the Governor & Mrs. Macquarie, the latter of whom is very attentive to myself & I trust that you have, agreeable to my

[15] JSR's great patron, Sir Richard Goodwin Keats. In 1821 he was appointed governor of Greenwich Royal Navy Hospital and married on 27 June 1820, at the age of 63, Mary Hurst (the daughter of Francis Hurst, of Alderwasley in Derbyshire).

[16] Charles Macarthur (1820-1871) was the fifth child of Hannibal and Anna Maria Macarthur. He later settled in Tasmania.

[17] Charles Macarthur RN, promoted Lieutenant on 12 March 1812. He died on 14 April 1827 and was buried at St. John's Parramatta. His memorial stone gave his age as 34. In a letter JSR wrote while the *Tamar* was in Sydney, dated 29 November 1824, he commented that he had given a note to Charles who was about to leave for England to look into his father's affairs (his parents had died earlier in the year), and that he hoped to visit the Roe family in Newbury while he was there.

wish, expressed in a former letter, written her & the Govr. a few lines of acknowledgement.

They have lately been considerably perplexed (and I may add annoyed) by having to [*encounter*] the investigation of the Commissioner of Enquiry (J.T. Bigge) [] [] mission I mentioned in a former letter, & whose affairs you will, I am [] [] to my leaving alone: they will shortly be made public & you will [] see a more correct report in the Debates of Parliament than can come from the pen of the best informed Man in this Colony. He is a remarkably pleasant & gentlemanly person, & I imagine has done a wonderful deal of good. We sometimes dined at his Table which was the best in the Colony, & regulated or conducted (I don't know what to call it) in the most independent manner, without favour or partiality to either party. He returns to England in the *Dromedary*, & at his embarkation on the 7th. instt., there will be a great fuss.

I believe you are now possessed of all the news I can at this time muster, except that we shall sail on our next voyage perhaps in the latter end of April or beginning of May; previous to which some more charts are to be prepared for sending home by any safe conveyance, which will give me the pleasure of again visiting this hospitable roof for some days or weeks. You shall however hear again from me by the next & every opportunity that offers, praying in return that my Dear Sophy & Brothers will exercise their leisure minutes in scribbling a few lines apiece to poor Jack, who on his side will never forget those whom he holds so dear. Should Sophy be at the Rectory and still corresponding with her interesting friend Mary, I must beg her to give my kind remembrance to Mrs. King & family, with many thanks for their notices and communications written on the outsides of my letters which are always truly welcome, & in many instances have given me later intelligence than is contained inside. I also feel under great obligation to that good family for their kindness in forwarding my letters, which I must request my kind Sister to express in one corner of her next.

And now my Dear Father it only remains for me to say in the short space I have left, how very anxious I am to see you all again. I never was so long absent from England before, & was it not for the very full manner in which my time is invariably occupied, I know not in what manner I could satisfactorily exclude unpleasant thoughts, or prevent gloomy ideas from mixing with those happier sensations with which I always associate my reflections of Dulce Domum, & which are always rendered doubly pleasant by receiving letters from thence. Pray therefore my Dr. stir up your Sons & Daughter to write as often as they can, & believe how much pleasure & gratification it gives me to see the hand writing of yourself, but that I am led not to expect & must endeavour if possible to banish the cause from my mind. May this

find you all in as good healthy as I expect to be in a few days. I shall ever, as I never fail doing, pray that the Almighty will bless I preserve you all in the full enjoyment of that and every other Blessing, & that He has been pleased to make a new man of your eldest Son. With this kind love to Dr. Mother, Sophy & all Brothers, I am obliged to conclude at last, & my Dear Father, beg you will receive the same, from your ever affectionate Son

John Septimus Roe.

[*margin of page 1*] P.S. Having just thought of the shirting & uniform buttons which I requested from you in a former letter, I hope they are on the passage out, as my shirts are falling off my back and I have been obliged to get half a dozen made here to go on with. What do you say to Blue Superfine Cloth (fit for a dress coat) being here as high as £3 pr. yard, & very [*margin of page 2*] very scarce. I have been obliged to purchase enough of an inferior sort at 50s/. for making a Jacket, waistcoat & trowsers. I hope you have not sent any, as it will possibly arrive too late for being essentially necessary and I must endeavour to do without any more. [*margin of page 3*] In the *Bathurst* we shall each have a separate cabin for sleeping in, meaning about 8 feet by 6, having every one a scuttle through the vessel's side for admitting [] [] [] [] like this – and the Mess Cabin has also a large skylight over the Table, that we shall hereafter find the full benefit of. I have no more news.

God bless you all.

FEBRUARY 1821
/ MARCH 1821

Sydney, New South Wales

“Bedwell & I are thinking of asking his Excellency for a grant of land each in this Country [...] in the event of our succeeding in this measure & obtaining a few hundred acres apiece, if we really have no intention of returning to the Country we might sell it for between 5 & 10 Shillings pr. acre according to its value to any individual who chose to purchase it. Such a chance of making prize money in time of peace is not to be neglected when so good an opportunity offers & we will endeavour to try it.”

JSR to William Roe. Eight pages.

Willm. Roe Esq. | at the Rectory of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black “Margate Ship Letter” and red circular “D” for 1821 (exact date indistinct).

Location: SLNSW, no. 158.

An important letter to his brother William, which helps put in place a number of facts about JSR and his family, chiefly in light of the recent news of the death of his brother George in India (even though, as JSR is compelled to add, his memory of George is based on so “slight a personal knowledge”). There is a slightly incredulous account of the attentions paid to Commissioner Bigge before he sailed for England, and a very long section describing the Roe River and Mount Brookes, named in honour of his father James and mother Sophia (née Brookes): the description quotes from JSR’s journal, and he explicitly comments that he has written at length because he fears the original may be taken up by the Admiralty and never returned. There is a good deal on the travails of outfitting the *Bathurst* and the lack of enthusiasm being shown by the officials in Port Jackson (in particular the dilatory Army major, George Druitt). The letter also shows JSR and Bedwell considering asking the Governor for a grant, describing it as “a chance of making prize money in time of peace.” He was clearly not averse to a “New South Wales Estate,” not least because it might improve his chances on the marriage market: all the more curious that JSR goes through the entire letter without mentioning his *inamorata*, mentioned in his previous letter to William, and painfully alluded to in a later letter he sent home from Mauritius at the end of the year. Lastly, in this letter JSR gives perhaps his best account of his collection of insects, complete with details about how he was making artistic arrangements of “tills”. He also gives a real sense of his everyday life in Sydney, notably how he bathes regularly in the harbour, sharks notwithstanding, and is unenthusiastic at the number of social callers he is forced to entertain with impromptu exhibitions of his charts and views. The fifth page has JSR’s small ink drawing of a cabinet he wanted to have made in Sydney.

Sydney. New South Wales
February 26. 1821.

My Dear Brother William,

With very great pleasure I avail myself of an opportunity by the well known *Shipley* of fulfilling a promise made in my last letter to our dear Father (dated in the early part of this month) & have resumed my poor goose quill to endeavour and make some slight return for your many long and interesting letters and to make an attempt to induce you to continue a correspondence which gives me so much pleasure & gratification.

Your last letter which was written 18 months ago, has long since been answered by me, & I am in great hopes that the ships at present bound hither will amply repay me for your very long silence – but however that may be, I shall not be discouraged from continuing to spoil paper in this manner, and will always endeavour to write by every opportunity either to one or another of those by whom you have the happiness of being surrounded. May God grant that our dear eldest Brother now forms one of that happy circle, & that he has long since perfectly recovered from the many & sever attacks of illness with which he was afflicted in India. It is needless for me to add how truly happy I should feel could I join the social group, though that enjoyment would be blighted by the painful recollection of one who would still be absent, and whose memory will ever be held dear even to those who had so slight a personal knowledge of him as the younger branches of our family.^[1]

On this melancholy subject I have no inclination to dwell, though I cannot help feeling a melancholy pleasure at the occasional recurrence of such reflections and cannot easily persuade myself to dismiss them until a train of meditations have arisen which could most willingly be dispensed with. To the all-wise dispensations of Providence, my Dear Willm. we must undoubtedly submit without repining, under the impression that every circumstance is ordained for the best & wisest purposes.

The latest intelligence I have received of you all is through the Channel of Miss King's letters to her Brother dated in the beginning of ~~October~~ September, which mentions the arrival (I think at Little Hampton) of yourself & Chas. on your way into Lincolnshire for the purpose of escorting Sophy back to Newbury.^[2] The same communication contains also the gratifying intelligence that you were all very well at the time, & more particularly our dear Sister, who was stated never to have enjoyed better health: most sincerely do I hope that the same favorable account might have been given of you all &

[1] His eldest brother was Thomas, who had returned to England from India for his health.

[2] Evidently Miss King (that is, Elizabeth King) had written to PPK with news of the two families.

that one of you had written to me to that effect. My last letter from Home was from Sophy, April 23. 1820, & I lately dispatched a long letter addressed to our dear Father in the 1st. week of this Month, by His Majesty's storeship *Dromedary*, that sailed direct for England with a cargo of New Zealand Timber & having onboard the Commissioner of Enquiry (John Thos. Bigge Esqr.) who has been for the last 12 months investigating the affairs & Government of the Colony – upon the latter subject I will not venture to touch.^[3] All the Civil, Naval, & Military Officers & many of the respectable ~~xxxxx~~ merchants &c. here, attended His Honor's embarkation in the Governor's [] preceded by the full band of the 48th. Regiment; the flank companies of the same Regt. lining the way from Government House to the Wharf. Upon his leaving the shore, Sydney Cove presented a spectacle which very few of the Colonists or others had ever before witnessed; the whole of the Merchant Ships, amounting to 10 or 12, manning their yards, & mutual salutes being fired from the Batteries & Storeship.

We had on the preceding day partaken of a farewell dinner given by Governor Macquarie to all the Officers under Govt., amounting to about 120, upon which occasion several appropriate & independent speeches were launched both by the Commissioner & other individuals, expressive of the real regret that was felt on both sides at the departure of a gentleman who had rendered himself so much respected both by friends and foes as to call forth a general sentiment of sorrow at the prospect of the blank in society which his departure would occasion.^[4] The result of his Enquiries will perhaps be made public in the Parliamentary Debates at Home, as soon as possible after his arrival.^[5] The *Dromedary* also conveys to the Admiralty a Chart of our late proceedings, which (as I mentioned in my last letter) was copied by myself from the Originals on a larger scale, of Mr. King's – but I will venture to hope that you have upon application to Captain Hurd, been enabled to gain a peep at this and the former ones that were conveyed Home in the *Shipley*.^[6] I had expected that other Charts would have been in hand before this time, to be forwarded by the next favorable opportunity, but I have nor yet been called upon by Lieutt. King for that purpose though in daily expectation of it.

[3] The *Dromedary* (Capt. Skinner RN) was something of a feature in JSR's letters, and PPK often had cause to rely on the ship for supplies and assistance.

[4] Commissioner Bigge sailed on the *Dromedary* on 9 February 1821.

[5] Bigge's findings, critical of Macquarie, were ultimately published in three substantial reports between June 1822 and March 1823.

[6] Thomas Hurd RN had been appointed Hydrographer to the Admiralty after the death of Alexander Dalrymple in 1808, and was instrumental in getting JSR and the other officers appointed to the Australian survey.

I resided at [page 2] his house at Parramatta about a month while completing the last chart, and cannot speak in terms too grateful of the kind treatment I invariably received from all hands while there. They always make very kind enquiries after every one of you, & their letters contain the kind remembrance of the good Mrs. King (Senior) & those of her amiable family to myself, who in consequence cannot but feel much gratified and flattered thereby. I have just returned from a fortnight's excursion to see the country about what is called the "Cow Pastures", which commence about 50 miles to the SWd. of this place & extends to the Westward about the same distance until it joins a track of country equal good & beautiful that has very lately been explored in search of pasturage for Cattle, & found to exceed all expectation that had been formed of it. The gentlemen with whom I travelled on this short excursion are 2 cousins of Mr. Hanibal McArthur of Parramatta, & Sons of the Mr. McA. whose sheep have been brought into such particular notice in England in the Market.^[7] They are about my own age & we had originally planned the tour and examination of the above newly discovered lands which are of great extent – but wet weather setting in for several days at the commencement confined us to the Cottage of their Cow Pasture Farm called Camden,^[8] and obliged us to relinquish the original plan of proceedings: our movements were in consequence confined to the River Nepean that empties itself into the Hawkesbury & Broken Bay, & waters a country most amply provided by Nature with a luxuriance of vegetation that leaves very little else for the Settler to do than guard against the probability of losing his rich crops by the floods that sometimes overwhelm them at this season of the year.

That part of Australia that is situated in the immediate vicinity of Camden is the finest in appearance that I have anywhere seen, but with the exception of Mr. McA.'s farm of 5 or 6,000 acres, & another of similar dimensions, the Govt. refuse to grant away any more of it to Applicants, for unaccountable reasons only known to themselves. As our route laid through a rough wild country & we had frequently to cross Rivers & their branches, rendered rapid by the rains, we were obliged to travel on horseback, and I am happy to say that with the exception of one capsizing on my back, & my horse at another time running into a prickly lemon bush or thicket, I steered him clear of all

[7] JSR has gone out riding with two of the sons of John Macarthur. Given that JSR says they were about his age, it is quite likely the two boys James (1798-1867) and William (1802-1882) were his companions.

[8] "Camden" was Macarthur's great estate: by the late 1820s "Camden Park was 'the first agricultural establishment in the Colony', incorporating over 60,000 acres (24,281 ha) acquired by grant and purchase" (ADB).

dangers, & have happily returned here without a broken neck – for you must understand that I stand greatly in need of a few lessons from the rough rider of the Oxford Blues, who it is to be hoped has made you & Chas. perfect adepts at it.^[9]

I think I recollect having in my last letter made something like a promise to give a more particular description of the River which Lieutt. King has recently honored our dear Father by naming after him. Such accounts, however imperfectly or hastily written, must undoubtedly prove acceptable to you all, and I will therefore give you a literal copy of that part of my Journal which embraces it, making a few omissions of matter that would not interest general observers.

“Sept. 13 & 14. 1820. Soon after daylight on 13th. I left the Cutter in an armed whale boat with 2 days’ provisions, accompanied by Mr. Cunningham the Botanist, to explore an opening in the SE part of Prince Frederick’s Harbour (where we had anchored on the preceding evening), while Lieutt. King in the other whale boat explored another opening to the Northward, communicating with the same Harbour. The Tide being at last quarter ebb, our progress at first was slow, and at 20 mins. after 9 AM, we landed at the foot of a peaked hill on the West bank of the River, about 5 1/2 miles from the Cutter’s anchorage, to obtain a set of Bearings for the Survey of the Port. Scrambling to its summit over a very rocky surface, chrystals and chrystalized quartz were found in abundance scattered loosely among the sand stone of which the rocks were composed; and I had scarcely fixed my instrumt. for taking the bearings when 11 Natives were observed crossing over a muddy flat that separates this peak from the Main Land, & which was at this time dry (or uncovered by the Tide). They were calling out loudly either to us or themselves, and were accompanied by a boy and 2 dogs, but whether they were armed or not, the distance was too great to distinguish, nor could we discern any distinction between males & females: all appeared quite naked. By the time they had arrived 1/2 way across the flat the mud was nearly up to the calves of their legs; & whether from this reason or through fear I cannot say, but they all turned back and retired slowly towards some fires in a NWly. direction. Fresh feet marks being visible in several places across the flat forming a communication between the peak we were upon and the opposite point of the Main 1/3 of a mile distant from it, on which was a fire just kindled, we looked well about us but could see no marks of Natives.

From this station the appearance of the Country is very rocky and barren, though improving; & the banks of the River low & lined with mangroves to

[9] This is a call-back to an earlier letter of JSR’s (21 January 1820), in which he teased William for his horse-riding skills by making a joking reference to the likelihood that he must be fraternising with the Royal Horse Guards and 1st Dragoons, “the Blues and Royals”.

the feet of the hills which in many places are washed by the Salt water that finds ingress through several small inlets from the main stream. One, more considerable than the others and about 80 yards wide appeared to wind to the NEd. among the hills, & has a low mangrove island about 3/4 of a mile in length to the Southwd. of its entrance. Having taken the Bearing of the Cutter's anchorage at N76°W, a high hill that Lieutt. King has named Mount Anderson N20°W, the Summit of the nearest hill on the Main, (which Lieutt. King was afterwards so kind as to allow me to name Mount Brookes) S51°E, and the direction of the River about East 1 /2 a point of South we descended towards the boat; & on our way thither I was within 2 feet of treading upon a [] coloured snake about 7 feet long, that was coiled up near a hole, into which it had already commenced its return [*page 3*] before I perceived it. An old skin that had formerly belonged to this disgusting reptile was lying near the hole almost covered with ants & seemed to be of the species called a Diamond Snake, from the shape of the scales on its back. Traces of small kangaroo were seen, but no signs of the place having been recently visited by Natives (or Savages as they are generally called in other countries) & at 20 minutes after 11 we re-embarked to follow up the examination of the River. The having by this time risen about 3 feet, was running strong in our favor, and the depth at Low water was 3 fathoms. The River took a general trend of about ESE from this place for 8 or 9 miles, when the Main branch took a Southerly direction among steep high hills on both sides, and a minor Arm still continued to run in an Easterly direction among land not so elevated; I preferred following the former as being the most considerable, & likely to lead to fresh water, and 5 or 6 miles farther we laid the boat alongside some steep cliffs about 200 feet high to taste some water that was trickling down near their base, but it was found quite salt.

The River was here about 70 yards in width, thinly lined with mangroves (a plant that grows on the shores of salt water in many warm parts of the world), the shores very rugged & full of charms that bore evident marks of the great quantity of Freshwater that occasionally runs down them. It afterwards preserved a breadth of between 70 & 60 yards, between steep rocky ranges of hills upwards of 300 feet in height (& in many parts more than 500 feet) which were washed by its waters as they took a winding direction to the Southward at the rate of 2 miles an hour. Deep gullies and Ravines appeared to afford an abundant supply of fresh water during the Rainy Season, but were at this time apparently dry. At 1/2 past 1 PM. an alligator was seen crossing the River astern of the boat, his head very rugged, of a dirty yellowish brown colour, with very prominent eyes & nose, rough scaly back, part of which with the ridge of the tail were toothed like a large saw, similar to those which we have formerly seen at other parts of the Coast. The Boat was

about 300 yards distant, and we laid upon the oars for him to come up, but he would not approach very near & as I was anxious to prosecute the service I was upon while the Tide was favorable for that purpose the boat's crew again applied to their oars, & an hour afterwards we landed near some cliffs on the West bank of the River to dine. The depth of water in mid-channel at this place was $4 \frac{1}{4}$ fathoms at High Water, which took place at $1 \frac{1}{2}$ past 2 PM.; and as I had reason to suppose that the boat would be left nearly dry when the Tide was out, we established ourselves here for the remainder of the day, and I intended following up the further examination of the River at break of the following day. The River somewhat more than 70 yards wide at this part, which I estimate to be about 26 or 27 miles from the Cutter's anchorage in its various windings; and it has every appearance of being navigable for our boat, without much diminution in the depth at least $\frac{1}{2}$ that distance farther; the shores very steep and rocky, about 300 feet high on both sides, & thinly lined with mangroves at the water's edge.

While Mr. Cunningham and I were busily employed setting up one of the boat's sails for a tent, one of us had trod upon a light coloured brown snake about an inch & $\frac{1}{4}$ in circumference, which we consequently cut into 2 pieces and the head part escaped into the stubble and drift wood upon which it was lying. The near neighbourhood of such unwelcome visitors & their harbouring among the very wood that we had so nicely chosen for our bed, made it necessary to clear away our quarters, and the whole was consequently burnt off within $\frac{1}{2}$ a dozen yards of us, to the total discomfiture of numerous insects that sallied forth from every part. After we had dined, Mr. Cunningham & myself with one of the boat's crew, armed, ascended the hill over this landing place & with much difficulty, scrambling and climbing, gained its summit, from which however nothing could be seen but a continuation of rocky wooded ranges as far as the eye could penetrate in every direction, and one more elevated than the rest about 9 or 10 miles distant to the ENE. Eucalyptus, or the common Gumtree of Australia was the principal wood found here, but was thinly scattered & did not grow larger than from 20 to 40 feet in height & the greatest diameter about 18 inches. Ant hills, from 1 to 3 feet in height, & some of them inhabited, were numerous near the summit, & were formed of red dusty which composed the only soil that was to be found.

The rocks were of sand stone, in some parts thickly studded with crystals & crystalized quartz which was also found in loose pieces together with dark [chestnut] coloured stones that bore the appearance of having been much burnt by the Sun. Traces of small kangaroo were numerous on every rock, and holes in the ground either for rats, snakes, or some other animals met our search. Not a solitary smoke or sign of a human being was any where

observed, excepts the hills having been burnt here and there, which in a country like this where fire is so easily produced by friction & extended by excessive drought is by no means an infallible proof of the immediate existence of our Species. We descended before the Sun set, and with the exception of 1 man stationed in the boat to keep her afloat in the deepest channel abreast the tents, we found very good beds (though rather hard) among the rocks 6 or 8 feet above the High Watermark, surrounded by several fires to keep our friends the Alligators at a distance. Neither mosquitoes or Sandflies troubled us much, but we were continually disturbed throughout the night by what appeared to be the rushing of Alligators into the water & their rustling among mangroves which line both banks of the River. This made me rather anxious for the man in the Boat, who was left quite fast in the soft muddy bottom when the tide was out & remained so upwards of an hour until the Flood Tide set in 1/2 an hour before midnight with a complete rush of 4 or 5 miles an hour & rose about 5 feet in 10 minutes.

A constant rustling among the mangroves on the opposite bank of the River, with sometimes a rushing noise on our own side, made [page 4] us freshen up our fire occasionally with additional logs and keep a smart look out upon those spots that we thought accessible, but at daylight we had reason to suppose that the latter noise was occasioned by lumps of stone and mud at High water mark being undermined or pressing too heavily upon the soft mud beneath which consequently gave way & the whole of the upper mass would then roll down towards the bed of the River & occasion a noise exactly resembling that of an Alligator taking to the water. The rise and fall of Tide here is about 23 or 24 feet and would perhaps be more did not the bed of the River become dry. It was H. Water on the morning of the 14th. at 3.20, and it did not rise so high by 6 feet as on the preceding afternoon. When the water ebbed, all communication with the boat except by a small sounding line, was cut off by a broad flat of mud that fronted the shore and prevented our re-embarkation till the flood tide was in its last quarter at 1/2 past 1 PM, when instead of being able to follow the River in its windings among the broken hills that appeared in the SE and Southward I was obliged for want of a larger supply of water & Provisions to retrace my route towards the Cutter. Small birds of various kinds were numerous on the banks and together with others possessing harsh discordant notes (including the Curlew, Cuckoo, the noisy screaming white Cockatoo, & a bird whose note very much resembled the beating of a blacksmith's small hammer on an anvil) awoke us at day-break in full chorus which had a most singular effect as it echoed from side to side of the steep rocky hill.

The Tide was against us on our return down the River till 1/2 past 2 PM, after which we proceeded rapidly against a fresh sea breeze that had blown



*Detail of Prince Frederick Harbour, from King's 'Chart of part of the N.W. Coast of Australia'
(Sheet V, 1825). NLA.*

nearly all day from the NW, & shortly before the Sun disappeared behind the hills had arrived within 9 or 10 miles of the anchorage; some water was then perceived trickling down a steep rocky overhanging cliff on the sea shore, & upon landing to taste it, we were much gratified to find it perfectly fresh & good, though in too small a quantity to run faster than in drops. Since quitting the place at which we slept, 11 Alligators or Crocodiles from 4 to 10 feet in length were seen in the water and invariably made towards the Boat till within about 30 yards distance, when they would stop & examine us until fired at with a musket. I sincerely wished to obtain some of their ugly & hideous carcasses, & struck 2 of them on their heads with musket balls, though apparently without wounding them. One of these fellows, however, at 10 or 12 yards distance, gave a desperate plunge when he felt the ball & shewed the whole of his tail out of the water in a vertical position while going down: his head was above water again at 30 yards off in 5 or 6 seconds, but seeing the boat so near him, he did not wait for a repetition of the dose which I had ready for him, and disappeared altogether.

Without meeting with any incident worthy of further notice in a Journal, except observing some fires on the hills upon both sides of the River, we ar-

rived onboard the Cutter at 8 o'clock in the evening, all well; and Lieutt. King was then kind enough to name the River I had been examining Roe's River, after my Father the Rector of Newbury in Berkshire; a high hill on the Main at South Side of its Entrance was named Mount Brookes after the Maiden name of my Mother, and is the same near which the black natives were seen on the 13th. instant. From the appearance of the steep rocky hills among which it winds, and the numerous deep gullies & ravines that lead into it, there can be no doubt of its being a considerable fresh water River during the rainy season; as there were marks on the rocks and among the lower trees on its banks of freshes or floods having risen 12 or 14 feet above the common level at High Water, & deposited great quantities of small drift wood, grass, leaves, &c. among the rocks. At the present time no fresh water was found except the very small quantity above mentioned; and when the Tide was at its lowest ebb where we slept & terminated the examination, the water that was draining through the mud tasted quite salt, independent of which, catfish, guard fish, &c. saltwater fish) were numerous, & a plentiful supply of the former that were caught with hook & line regaled the Boat's Crew for their dinner before we started on our return."

I have now my dear William given you a long abstract from that day's journal which contains my examination of Roe's River & have been more induced to do so, from the impression I have of our Journals, Logs, &c. &c. being demanded of us by the Admiralty at the conclusion of the Service we are engaged upon, in which case there is more than a probability that we shall never obtain possession of the former again, and perhaps the Log Books may share a similar fate, for which I shall be truly sorry, as the whole contain an account of our proceedings upon an expedition which I can never forget as long as I live. We must not however dwell on the dark side of the question, but "live in hope if we die in despair".^[10] I took 2 views of the River before I knew whose name was to enjoy the honor of being attached to it, and should have taken more could I have anticipated that circumstance, but on so interesting an occasion Memory must supply the deficiency & will enable me to commit to Paper more of the desirable scenery that made an impression on it at the time.

I have now been dwelling so long on this subject that you will stand a good chance of paying heavy postage should I continue longer upon it. I will therefore vary the scene a little by anticipating the termination of our present service at the end of the next voyage we make (in the *Bathurst*) which will probably be of about 11 or 12 months duration, should no unfortunate occurrence oblige us to return sooner than intended. She promises to afford us

[10] Proverbial.

more comfort in every shape than the little *Mermaid*, for which I cannot avoid entertaining a great affection ~~for~~, on account of the numerous dangers & difficulties through which, with the assistance of the Almighty, she has so safely carried us. The Governor has now appointed her to carry out the Officers, part of the Men, Stores, Provisions, &c. for forming a new settlement at Port Macquarie, a harbour about 150 miles to the Northward of this Port, which you may perhaps recollect my having mentioned in a former letter as having been examined & surveyed by us, in company with the Land Surveyor General, in May 1819.^[11] The vessel has now been nearly fresh fastened all over & will be afloat again in about a week, as tight & sound as ever, and under the command of a young man who has previously had the command of one of the vessels on the Colonial establishment here.^[12] She of course ceases to be under the regulations of the Navy & Articles of War from the time we gave her [*page 5*] up & her name will no longer appear on the List of the Navy. She certainly does not retract much of its strength but it is gratifying for us to reflect that during the time she has been under the command of Lieutt. King she has done her duty & in no instance has she disgraced the pendant that has waved at her Masthead.

It is my sincere hope that I may hereafter be enabled to record the same of the *Bathurst*, & that our services in her will meet with the same encouraging approbation from our employers that we have hitherto had the good fortune to receive. The convict carpenters that are at work fitting up our Cabins on-board the Brig carry on their operations in so dilatory a manner that it will be at least a fortnight before they are fit for our reception and we shall then have to purchase paint and oil at our own expense rather than subject ourselves to the mortification of being obliged to beg & pray for it from those who ought to blush at their extreme meanness & misplaced economy. In reference to the latter subject, of which it is perhaps advisable to say as little as possible, I will merely add that we find the greatest difficulty in getting many of our absolute wants supplied by the Officers that are placed by the Governor in chief superintendence of the Public Works. You will not be surprised at this when I say that the Superintendent of Government Works is a Major

[11] The Land Surveyor General was John Oxley RN (see ADB).

[12] Rather incredibly, given the condition of the ship when they returned in December 1820, the *Mermaid* was ready to sail for Port Macquarie far in advance of the *Bathurst*, leaving on 21 March 1821. The overall command of the small party was given to Capt. Francis Allman of the 48th Regiment, but I have not yet confirmed the name of the “young man” whom JSR stated had previously commanded a vessel on the Colonial establishment and who was now put in charge of the *Mermaid* itself. By October 1821 it is clear that the ship was commanded by Capt. John Rodolphus Kent when it sailed in convoy with the Colonial-built *Prince Regent* to present the latter vessel as a gift to the King of Hawaii, but a notice in the *Sydney Gazette* in June has Kent earlier commanding the *Prince Regent* when, the same notice confirms, the *Mermaid* was still in Port Macquarie.

in the Army who must be supposed totally unfit for the guidance of a dock yard, or to decide as to the propriety or impropriety of our demands: but on this subject I will say no more except that his treatment of us has occasioned our taking no notice of him either in Public or Private, although we are on the most intimate & friendly footing with the Colonel of his Regt. (Erskine) and his Brother Officers, by whom he is also equally beloved (alias detested).^[13]

The Governor & Mrs. Macquarie invariably enquire after our dear Parents & you all by every ship that arrives from England, as cordially as if bound to do so from old acquaintance, & always appear happy when the arrival of letters enable me to say that you are all well. They continue to be very kind and attentive to us & we are frequently at Government House. Bedwell & I are thinking of asking his Excellency for a grant of land each in this Country, under the plea that he is better able to appreciate our claims thereto than his Successor who will probably be an entire stranger to the extent of our Services & will in consequence refer us to Earl Bathurst on our arrival in England. Now, we can have no objection to the latter measure, except the probability of our not again returning to New South Wales, which is indispensable to a person's taking at his grant from the Governor; therefore in the event of our succeeding in this measure & obtaining a few hundred acres apiece, if we really have no intention of returning to the Country we might sell it for between 5 & 10 Shillings pr. acre according to its value to any individual who chose to purchase it. Such a chance of making prize money in time of peace is not to be neglected when so good an opportunity offers & we will endeavour to try it. The only obstacle that presents itself against this scheme in an order that had lately been arrived from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, forbidding any grants of Land being made to Officers holding situations under Government, but our service cannot be said to have any immediate connexion with the Colony here although the interests of the latter are most materially influenced by the success of our expedition. The benefit that has resulted to the Navigation of these Seas by our feeble but willing efforts, certainly gives us all a strong claim upon the Government, and the circumstance of our duty being such as might be neglected by any attention that might be paid to farming concerns, may possibly tend to remove the above objection.

At all events a refusal can be the only or utmost extent of the answer to an application of this kind, and we may be sure that nothing of the [~~xxxx~~] sort will be done without asking – but on the contrary, I may possibly obtain

[13] An interesting if extremely partial view of Major George Druitt (?1775-1842) who had transferred to the 48th Regiment in October 1816 and became a prominent settler in New South Wales: Druitt was, the notice in the ADB comments in summary, “blunt on occasions but in the main plausible and charming, with perhaps a touch of the confidence man.”

something in the shape of a New South Wales Estate (how vain this fellow is!) as one step towards the possession of some worthy female that it is my ambition should share all my cares, pleasures, pains & so forth as I grow old (still more presumptuous & most confoundedly vain!). You will always know me my dear W. to be a warm friend to the Marriage State which I very sincerely respect & should be very glad to enter tomorrow did my station in Life permit – but these, you will agree with me, are at present mere empty dreams that ought to be banished from the Mind as soon as created.

Your late trip into Lincolnshire will enable your interesting and amusing pen to give me some slight account of the family's relations in that quarter, about whom I am totally in the dark, & unable to form the most distant idea whether or no the Revd. Thos. Turner Roe is included among them. My principal reason for making the enquiry arises from having read the following paragraph in the *Morning Herald* "The Right Honble. Frederick Robinson and Sarah Albina Robinson have presented the Revd. Thos. Turner Roe to the Rectory of Bennington in Lincolnshire."^[14] The name of the place is sufficient inducement for supposing that there exists a relationship. I have also heard in a very indirect way that Sr. Richd. Keats is married but cannot find out to whom or whether the report rests upon any foundation.^[15]

I have no news whatever to communicate except the very rapid arrival here of settlers from all parts of Great Britain but principally from Scotland, who all receive grants of land according to the Capital embarked, or by Order of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. My old Ship the *Dick* is daily expected with Convicts, having received her Orders for sailing at the same time with the ship *Prince of Orange* that arrived here 3 weeks ago after a passage of 4 months. I trust that she has met with no accident & that she or some other ship will bring out the uniform buttons & shirting that I requested in a former letter. The latter I have been so much in want of that I have been obliged to have 1/2 a dozen made & pay at the rate of 4s/2 pr. yard for very common linen indeed; the making, marking & buttons 4s/8 each, exclusive of frills which are at a price equally exorbitant. I was actually alarmed for the safety of the head on my shoulders yesterday when I called at a Cabinet Maker's & on enquiring the price that would be demanded for a Chest of Drawers for my Cabin, I was modestly assured "it would only be 12

[14] The *Morning Herald* was a British daily. Thomas Turner Roe, BA (Oxford) in 1810, was originally simply Thomas Turner but took the name Roe in order to fulfill his rights to a bequest. He was the Rector at Swerford for many years until his death in 1836. There was presumably a distant family connection to JSR.

[15] Keats was married on 27 June 1820, at the age of 63, to Mary Hurst (the daughter of Francis Hurst, of Alderwasley in Derbyshire). He went to Greenwich the following year.

guineas"! The hope!! Although merchandise of every description is pouring fast into the place, the Sharks here (which, if we are to believe the natural History of the place are noted for being particularly voracious) have no idea of lowering their prices; as a specimen of which I may merely say that 2 days ago I gave no less than 11 dollars pr. Ream of 19 quires (a Botany Bay Ream by the bye) for the Paper I am now spoiling.

We continue to reside onshore in the Lodgings that were originally provided for us by Government, & shall remain there until the smart set of Carpenters that have been appointed to work onboard [page 6] the *Bathurst* shall have fitted up the accommodations fit for our reception. Our mess at this house has recently been augmented by Mr. G.S. Rutherford, Surgeon R.N. who arrived in charge of the Convict pr. Ship *Prince of Orange* & is a cousin of our Surgeon Mr. A. Montgomery.^[16] The latter has now been with us long enough to [~~xxxx~~] admit of our forming an opinion as to his value as a friend, messmate & companion, and I am happy to think that we have every prospect of being comfortable in his society as well as in that of Mr. Baskerville who lately

joined us from the Storeship *Dromedary*.^[17] The former is a complete Irishman, full of anecdotes respecting the intentional mistakes of his countrymen, & comes from the very extremity of that land of Potatoes & Butter-milk – but he complains so much of the oppressive heat even of Port Jackson (which is in Latitude 33 degrees) and has moreover a diseased liver which his woeful countenance too plainly indicates, that I am afraid he will not be able to stand the fryings he will get, & that we may

probably have to leave him on the North Coast of Australia – which God forbid.

I have ventured to request Dr. Rutherford to take charge of a box of insects for your Museum, which will be esteemed very valuable in England among Entymologists & will be additionally so at home, I am inclined to flatter my-



[16] George Shaw Rutherford RN first arrived in Sydney as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Prince of Orange* (February 1821), and went on to be a vastly experienced convict surgeon, sailing a total of eight times. He was the brother of another Surgeon-Superintendent, James Rutherford, who sailed four times himself (and became embroiled in a dispute with the notorious settler James Mudie, author of a *Vindication* (Sydney: 1834) and *The Felony of New South Wales* (London: 1837). I have not seen it noted elsewhere that the Rutherfords were the cousins of the surgeon who sailed on the *Bathurst* voyage, Andrew Montgomery RN, which is an interesting aside.

[17] Percival Baskerville (abt. 1802-1858) had a long career in the RN, ultimately serving on the Kessingland Coast Guard (in Suffolk).

Inset showing JSR's sketch of the cabinet he was having made.

self, from the circumstance of their having been collected by myself, & arranged as you will find them. I need not, my dear Wm. commit them to your very particular care and attention; with a caution to be sure and keep them in a dry place, but not too much so, or they will become very brittle. Should animalculae collect about some of them (which their perishable nature will perhaps occasion) those insects that are infested with them should be taken out and carefully brushed over with a dry camel's hair pencil so as not to break off any of the legs of antennae, &c., and the pins with which they are transfixed should on no account be removed from their owners. A strong smell of Camphor kept up in the several tills, in addition to the scent of the wood (which is called Huon Pine & grows in some part of Van Diemens Land) will succeed in expelling ants or any other destructive insects that may venture to intrude into such pestilential church yards, & which would otherwise quickly destroy every insect in the box.

I have also sent a rough outer case of the same wood, as I suppose you will consider it valuable & rare in England, & will only make use of it for particular occasions. The whole I have requested Dr. Rutherford to send to the Custom House in order to their greater security & to prevent the possibility of being seized; you will therefore be obliged to pay a slight duty upon them, which you must not mind, for to a person making a collection they are worth at least 20 guineas, tho' many indifferent by-standers would scruple about giving as many sous. As it is quite uncertain into what Port the *Shibley* will put on her arrival in England you must look sharp & immediately on the receipt of this endeavour to obtain possession of the box before it gets so abominably knocked about as it otherwise will be in the Custom House.*

It is also unnecessary to remind you of the heavy duty they will attach to it if they perceive that you set a high value on the article. You will yourself be the best judge of the [~~xxxx~~] plan to be adopted for preventing the destructive consequences that will ensue from a rough cruize in a coach, through the streets of London unless held in the hand – therefore with every good wish for their safe arrival, I will dismiss the subject after the voluminous (& you will perhaps think unnecessary) instructions that I have given you.

That till which contains 2 large brilliant green coloured beetles looking at each other near the middle & a small butterfly with figures 88 on the underneath side of its wings is the whole of my collection from Brazil in So. America. The remainder are from various parts of this country and I will endeavour to increase them with another box whenever an opportunity offers. I am

* Unless any accident happens all Ships from any Port to the Eastward of the Cape of Good Hope are obliged by an Order to that effect, to discharge their cargoes in the London Docks, River Thames. [JSR's note]

sorry that the *Shipley* will not convey Home something more substantial than the accompanying, in the shape of another Chart which I was in hopes would have been completed in readiness for her; but as she is now (March 7.) expected to sail in a week & the Chart is not yet commenced, we must wait for the next opportunity. Lieutt. King has just told me that he is almost ready for my assistance: I shall therefore begin upon it in a few days, & will spare my eyes as much as possible. By the way, this reminds me of the lateness of the hour & bids me retire, offering you all every good wish that you can wish yourselves.

March 8.

The subject with which I concluded last night recurs & makes me sorry that I cannot have the pleasure of saying that my eyes get better; though it is satisfactory to be able to write that they do not get materially worse, [~~xxxx~~] notwithstanding the use I am obliged to make of them at the present period. I have long since ceased the application of any remedy to attempt their relief except sparing them as much as possible, which I consider to be a step most likely to produce a beneficial result. All other measures would be rendered useless & abortive, as long as the cause of the complaint exists. My general state of health I feel happy in saying is good, & is greatly benefited by sea bathing every morning before breakfast, which has an excellent effect by bracing the nerves, invigorating the system & tending to keep the spirits above their common level. Sharks are the only impediments to this amusement, being considered a perfect luxury in a climate like that of Port Jackson, and they are by no means to be contemptuously treated, being more numerous than in most other places on the same parallel of Latitude, & considerably more voracious. We do not however venture beyond our depths & therefore have little to apprehend.

After bathing & breakfasting my time is usually occupied drawing or writing up my Log, which is now as far behind hand as February 1820 without one sketch or drawing having been inserted in it since the commencement of [~~xxxx~~] our present service. You may therefore well imagine that I have a great deal of work on my hands that fully occupies all the time and affection I can possibly devote to it, besides having to attend to my share of the duty afloat. The latter is however principally conducted by my brother officer Bedwell as in fair & good right it ought to be to balance the brunt of the heaviest part which invariably fell on my shoulders at Sea. That portion will now be considerably diminished since the addition of young Baskerville to our Establishment, and will give me an opportunity of writing my Log and copying my Journal in course of our [*page 7*] approaching voyage. The possession of a cabin apiece will also greatly facilitate that desirable object, besides adding in many other respects most materially to our Comfort.

The {bore or boar or boare or bhore} of making and receiving visits, to maintain the footing we have gained in Society, greatly interrupts business sometimes, and particularly with the lovers or admirers of Drawings, Charts, &c. which I am sometimes obliged to expose to the extremely tedious ordeal of being exhibited to 10 or a dozen people in an unfinished state before they can individually be completed, committed to the Port Folio, & forgotten. They are of course variously received by different persons, some of whom will not blush at paying the grossest & most fulsome compliments to one's face (than which nothing can be more irksome and disgusting) while others who never had a brush in their hands will point out all the imaginary faults [~~xxxx~~] of the piece but very few of its real ones: and some of a more lenient & sparing disposition will be contented with going through the form of turning over the papers, and after giving a grunt or two, that may be construed into whatever is most convenient, will walk off, leaving me much better pleased than with either of the 2 former species. I have now become accustomed to these scenes & have to congratulate myself upon not being made up of so combustible a nature as to be greatly influenced by them in any other way than looking upon them as additional proofs of the dangerous dissimulation that is to be found in some men, & of the shameful & relentless manner in which they will sacrifice Truth & Candour to a false delicacy or an unwillingness to offend, which to make the best of it, cannot be called under a more modified term than disingenuous conduct. This however is moralizing upon a mere bubble, unworthy of the occupation of my paper or of your time.

To continue the general plan of my daily employment, we generally dine at 1/2 past 3 o'clock, with wine or any of those flimsy things that only serve to pamper the stomach [~~xxxx~~] while they fail to impact that nutrition to the body which is the natural consequence of a participation in common plain dishes. The remainder of the day is devoted to bodily exercise, or I take part of a sketch, & am at this time in progress with a view of the Town of Sydney. The evenings are appropriated to writing or reading, as long as is found consistent with the proper feeling of the eyes, & that occupation is then succeeded by conversation (which by the way we never lack; for the 2 Professional men are also 2 Irishmen, very talkative & fond of tough & boisterous argument) or making a noise on the flute, for my own amusement, but to the annoyance, I apprehend, of every one within hail.^[18] This is the manner in which I usually pass away the Time until near Midnight, when if I do not fall asleep & break my nose against the Table, I go to bed – but so many accidental circumstances will always contribute towards the derangement of this Plan, that it is sometimes totally different. This is all I have to say to night, for

[18] An uncommon (unique?) reference to JSR playing a musical instrument in his youth.

Dr. Rutherford has taken up his flute to drown the voice of our fiery little landlady who has [*just*] started up in a great rage with her husband below.^[19] I will therefore wish you good night.

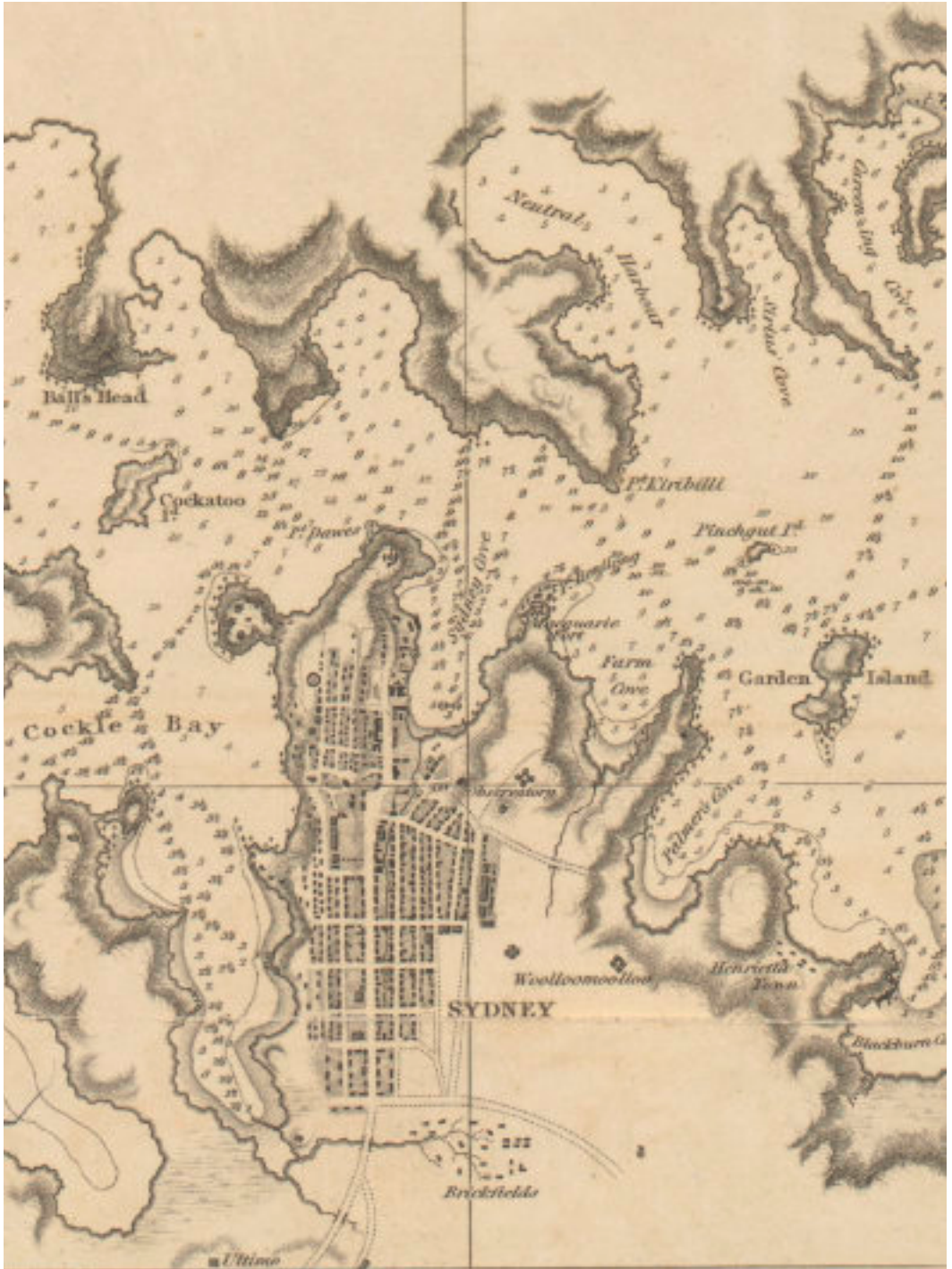
March 17. 1821.

[] after the great & painful anxiety under which I laboured for the safety of our dear Bror. [T.] I need not say that my gratification is equally great at having the pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of his kind letter from London of Sept. 28. 1820, which came to hand this morning by the ship *Duchess of York*.^[20] Pray offer my sincere thanks for the same, with a promise of giving him a speedy answer & accept for yourself &c. a severe reprimand for not having written to me since April 1820 – a space of 13 months. My regret at the improbability of my having the pleasure of an interview with Thos. before he quits England is very great but cannot be avoided; though I do not altogether give up the hope of seeing him in such a villainous place as Port Jackson, the communication between England & India through this place, being very frequent. Four-fifths of the Ships that arrive in this country with convicts sail from hence for Batavia, Calcutta, Madras, & Bombay, for cargoes, together with several private Merchantmen that now frequently arrive here with Settlers &c. onboard of which it may possibly be found both convenient & economical for T. to undertake the voyage. The expense of a passage from England to Port Jackson in a ship of the latter description would be 90 or 100 £ to mess at the Master's Table & from this place to Madras or Calcutta 30 or 40 £. Now as we expect to sail in a month or 5 weeks & to be absent nearly 12 lunar months, the period of our arrival here from the approaching voyage, will perhaps correspond with the departure of T. from England, & should he prefer this route to a direct one to India, how truly gratifying would be the meeting. It is too great to be dwelt upon without giving colour to a charge of entertaining too sanguine expectations.

I am very sorry indeed to hear of the indisposition of our dear Father, but sincerely hope that the next accounts will convey the welcome intelligence of his perfect recovery & of a continuation of that perfect state of health in which all other members of our family were at the date of T.'s letter, with the exception of himself, who it is to be hoped may be also added to the List of Convalescents. I am afraid he will suffer materially in his prospects of Promotion by having been obliged to return Home, but I perfectly agree with

[19] One of those times where JSR's reticence is simply infuriating: why won't he just name his "fiery little landlady"? It would make it possible to pinpoint where they were lodging, for one thing. They must have been staying somewhere in the Rocks and close by Sydney Cove proper.

[20] The *Duchess of York* (Capt. Collins) was in Hobart in late February 1821 and Sydney by April.



Sydney Cove as JSR knew it: detail of JSR's own map of Port Jackson, published at the Admiralty in 1826. NLA.

him in thinking that the invaluable blessing of Health ought not to be sacrificed to any consideration whatever. Your happy meeting at Newbury I can easily imagine must also have proved a truly welcome one to all parties & will venture to hope that the tender nursing of our worthy good Mother united with the care and attention of all hands will not fail to effect a perfect & speedy reestablishment of the health of the long absentee. My own happily continues good & I trust in the assistance of that Almighty Being who raises up & lays low, to assist me in roughing it out as I have hitherto done. Mr. Bedwell I am sorry to say is now labouring under a severe attack of complicated disease which with the assistance of our own Surgeon & Dr. Rutherford he is on the point of weathering. The late addition to our Establishment of Officers, Mr. Baskerville, is absent on an excursion into the Interior country with Mr. H. McArthur, where he will probably remain 3 weeks longer. The duty of fitting out the *Bathurst* therefore entirely devolves upon me at present, & leaves me very little leisure time to devote to anything else. The annoyance we meet with from those whose duty it is to supply our wants is very great & will perhaps reach your ears on a future day through another channel – but I mention this in confidence to go no farther than yourselves & am prevented by prudential motives, from committing more of this to paper. The *Shiple*y being expected to sail the day after tomorrow & Dr. R. on the point of embarking, obliges me to close this before I am tempted to commence another sheet & to pack up the insect box that is intended for your Museum. I wish time would admit of my sending Home a few Drawings of places about which we are all more or less interested, but my various occupations at this time prevent me and I will endeavour to send some by the next box that I forward. In the interim may God bless & protect you all & extend to you all the Blessings that can be wished for. Give my sincere & affectionate love to our Dear Parents, Brothers & Sophy, & with every good wish for your happiness & welfare believe me to be my Dear Wm., your affectionate Brother

John Septimus Roe.

Pray do not fail to write, as you must be fully aware how my acceptable your letters prove. [*margin of page 1*] [] [] asking & Captn. Moncrief, of the *Shiple*y, & he informs me that no part of his Cargo will be landed any where except at the London Docks; & Dr. Rutherford will send your box of insects to the Customs House there – do take care and look out for it as early as possible or the contents will be totally spoiled in a few days.

[*margin of page 7*] My old Ship the *Dick* arrived here a few days ago with 140 convicts in good health. Captn. Harrison was glad to see us again, & we have dined with each other since his arrival.

MARCH 1821
/ JUNE 1821

No. 13

His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*
off Breaksea-Spit, East Coast of Australia

“Although Bedwell and I are happily upon the best & most friendly terms with Governor Macquarie there appeared latterly a certain coolness or negligence about our Expedition that will better be explained hereafter which prevented our asking him for the grant of land which I hinted to Wm. in a former letter we proposed doing; as we think it better to wait for a more auspicious moment than run the risk of a refusal, or of our expectations being disappointed.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Revd. James Roe | at the Rectory of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black circular stamp “18 M. 1822.”

Location: SLNSW, no. 159.

The letter is the first JSR sent home while actually sailing on the *Bathurst*, describing the first few weeks of the voyage. It is clear that the rigours of the expedition and the bad news from home is beginning to weigh on him: “I am more than ever,” he comments at one point, “subject to have the dismals.” In short he is homesick and tired, and it is beginning to show.

The letter was sent home with his old friend Captain Harrison of the *Dick* and includes an interesting passage on the new settlement at Port Macquarie, the first part a half-incredulous description of the errors made by the commanders of the three ships sent north (ranging from the *Mermaid* being knocked about on the bar to the *Lady Nelson* having its bottom stove in), the second a more thoughtful comment on the ways in which Port Macquarie will repay settlement. Throughout there is a palpable air of glumness, in no small part because he feels compelled to note that “letters from dear Newbury are now so scarce that I have almost despaired of getting another.” His mood was likely not improved by the fact that he had only recently allowed himself to hope that he would soon be home, but here he calculates that his return is still some 20 months away, and maybe as long as three years (his first guess wasn’t far off: the *Bathurst* arrived off England in April 1823, 22 months later). At the same time, his fervently hoped-for Lieutenancy was still a remote dream, and – completely unspoken here – he had been unlucky in love (see his later letter to William, written at the Mauritius). The letter also includes one of his rare reflections on the difficult times in the years after 1815, and the lack of much “honourable employment” to choose from, as well as a comment about the changes at the top which mean that very few of the original planners of their expedition remain in their positions. On top of it all, he knows that he has seen the last of the Macquaries in NSW, and is genuinely touched at being remembered as “my dear Roe” in a note from Elizabeth Macquarie.

No. 13
His Majesty's Brig Bathurst, off Breaksea-Spit.
East Coast of Australia. 2d. June 1821.

My Dear Father,

I once more with much pleasure embrace the opportunity of writing to you by the kind hand of Captain Harrison of the *Dick* who is now in Company, being piloted by us through Torres Strait & among the intricate navigation on this side of it.^[1] My last was to Wm. dated March 19. 1820, by the Ship *Shipley*, which I hope will be received in due time together with a box containing subjects in Natural History &c. that accompanied it. Most sincerely do I trust that this will find you all in perfect health & good spirits, T. perfectly recovered from his severe attacks, & not yet returned to India, and you my dear Father, with Sophy, quite recovered from the indisposition with which you were both troubled at the date of Bror. T.'s last letter to me from London.^[2]

Letters from dear Newbury are now so scarce that I have almost despaired of getting another and am at a loss to know what all my hopeful Brothers & Sophy are about, that they will not devote a leisure half-hour apiece to write to their now only absent Brother, whose greatest pleasure he has so often said consists in receiving letters from those he holds most dear in the World. I shall nevertheless write by every opportunity that offers and cannot but feel very grateful to T. for the great anxiety & uneasiness from which he so kindly relieved me by his hasty letter from London. In return I have enclosed an answer to it, trusting that it may reach him before he leaves England, but have nothing more to say than has been communicated in the accompanying sheets. Should it arrive too late I must beg for its enclosure in the next packet & to be accompanied with my most affectionate love and regard.

You will see my dear Father by the date of my letter that we have at length got under weigh in H.M.Bg. *Bathurst*, the vessel purchased by the Governor at Port Jackson to supersede the little *Mermaid* in enabling us to prosecute our discoveries and examination of the unknown coasts of this Country. She is more than twice the size of our former vessel, and it gives me great pleasure to say that she is not only 6 times more comfortable but appears very well calculated for the service, being roomy, capacious & well aired between decks with stern-windows and scuttles of larger dimensions than vessels of her size ever carry. We each have a cabin 7 feet long by 5 feet wide, besides Lieutt. King's larger cabin, a mess cabin, and another appropriated for the use of

[1] The *Dick* (Capt. Harrison) was the ship on which JSR sailed to New South Wales: he and Harrison, as well as some of the other officers, became close.

[2] "Brother T." was his eldest brother, Thomas, who had returned to England from India for his health.

Officers using the Charts, writing Logs or Journals, drawing &c. In addition to the other advantages held out to view during the present voyage is the company of a Naval Surgeon, Mr. Andw. Montgomery, who was sent out here expressly to join us, and not only appears every thing we could wish in respect to professional knowledge, but is really a great acquisition to our society & mess, being possessed of a vast fund of humour, & laughable anecdotes.^[3] Both of these acquirements are particularly acceptable in a messmate, & the last not less so than the first, for I recollect having read somewhere (in Joe Miller, I think) that “~~Sorrow~~ Care to our Coffin adds a nail, no doubt, While every grin so merrily draws one out.”^[4] Unfortunately for himself & us his health is not too good, & he is afflicted with a bad liver, which in warm climates like that we are going to, is generally very much aggravated: but I trust that the sufferings he has already endured since his arrival at Port Jackson, are the last he will experience. All hands are now happily in the enjoyment of good health and excellent spirits.

We sailed from Port Jackson a week ago, with the sincere good wishes of all our friends there, and expect to be absent about 12 months, having provisions onboard for that length of time, besides 11 cwt. of Donkin’s Preserved Meats in tin cases for the sick, and to be occasionally issued to all hands.^[5] The increased size of our vessel also admits of our carrying more live stock to sea, than we were enabled to do in the *Mermaid*, and we now take 6 sheep, 6 pigs, 12 geese, 8 dozen ducks & 6 dozen fowls, as the whole of our live stock. Mrs. King has very kindly made us a quantity of preserves, we have made our own pickles & the kindness of our friends has supplied us amply with Oranges, Lemons & Pumpkins.^[6]

Previous to quitting Sydney Cove, we were honored with visits from nearly all the respectable inhabitants of the Town, to see our vessel, and should most likely have had the honor of a visit from the Governor & Mrs. Macquarie, had they not been absent on an excursion or tour of duty to the Southern Settlements in Van Diemen’s Land.^[7] The Lieutt. Governor however, came onboard, together with many of the Officers of the Regiment (48th.), the Honble. Mr. Justice Field & his lady, the Deputy Commissary General & family, Colonial Secretary, &c. &c. &c. including about 20 ladies – all of whom

[3] Andrew Montgomery, the RN surgeon appointed to the *Bathurst*.

[4] The line is actually by the poet John Wolcot, but must have been taken up from one of the proliferating joke or jest books published under the name “Joe Miller” (1684-1738), after an English actor renowned for his wit.

[5] Another approving notice by JSR of the usefulness of Donkin’s tinned and preserved meats, which had first been used on exploratory voyages by Parry a few years earlier.

[6] Harriet King.

[7] The Macquaries had embarked for Tasmania on the *Midas* in early April 1821.

were highly pleased with what they saw, & left us their best wishes for a prosperous voyage & safe return.^[8] We carry a complement of 32 persons altogether including the Commander, but do not mount more than 5 guns, supposing that number to be quite sufficient to protect ourselves with, in case of any hostile attempt from Savages, Malays, or Others, as we have also about 20 Muskets, 20 Pistols, same number of Cutlasses & boarding pikes besides.

The *Dick* arrived at Port Jackson again about 2 months ago with convicts from England, & now proceeds Home by way of Batavia & Madras; which appearing to be a safe and convenient opportunity for forwarding some more Curiosities for our Museum, I have made up a box full & entrusted them to the kind hand of Captn. Harrison, who has promised me either to keep them safe onboard until Willm. shall call for them & pass them through the Custom House, or he will see them deposited there immediately on his arrival in the Thames. This letter will apprise Wm. Of their arrival & he must lose no time in getting them from the Custom House as soon as possible on account of the destruction that will otherwise be made among the contents by damp, knocking about, &c. &c. I am afraid the duty will be found rather more heavy than I could wish, but I cannot help it, and sincerely wish I could [page 2] afford to pay the duties myself.

The collection, small as it is, I hope will not prove uninteresting or unacceptable, and with it I have sent a coloured drawing of a view taken on the River which Lieutt. King was so kind as to name after you; together with some other sketches in Pencil, which a multiplicity of business has not permitted me to send in a more perfect manner. Pray, however, my dear Father, accept them as they are, & believe that it would have given me great pleasure had I been able to send 10 times the number. You will also see the necessity of my adding that they must not be copied by any person out of the house, as I might probably get into a scrape for giving publicity to them.^[9] On a future day I hope to be able to make something more of them, to hang up alongside of your Portraits.^[10]

[8] The Lieut.-Governor was Col. James Erskine, CO of the 48th Regiment; judge of the Supreme Court Barron Field and his wife Jane; I presume the Deputy Commissary General mentioned by JSR would not have been the new appointee William Wemyss, who took the job on 19 May 1824 (but, equally, the incumbent, Frederick Drennan, was being dragged through the courts in early 1821 and unlikely to be making social calls); and the Colonial Secretary by this time was Frederick Goulburn, who reached Sydney in December 1820.

[9] The location of these views is not known to me. It is interesting to see how close to the wind JSR felt he was flying by sending so much material home to Newbury.

[10] I do not know the fate of these portraits. A silhouette of the Reverend is known at the church of St. Nicolas at Newbury, and a miniature thought to depict him as a young man is held in a private collection, but JSR seems to have something more substantial in mind.

Sincerely do I trust my dear Father that the time is not far distant when I may once more take my seat among you all around the happy fireside of the Rectory, warm recollections of which frequently dwell on my memory so forcibly as to make me almost fancy I am sometimes near it in reality. My absence from dear Old England has now been protracted to upwards of 4 years, and there appears every probability of my being away at least 20 months longer; for if this present voyage which we are in hopes will terminate our labours, lasts 12 months, it will be for 7 or 8 months from the period of our return to Port Jackson before we can reasonably expect to gladden our eyes with a sight of the white cliffs of Albion. There is even some probability of our being ordered to remain in this Country upon some further service, after the present is completed; orders to that effect being not at all unexpected on the part of Lieutt. King, who has received some private intimation from the Admiralty Quarter which leads us to expect it.

Should such a step be taken without promoting us, the world may cry shame indeed, & for my part I have not any other chance than an Order in Council, for promotion, until I have passed the requisite examinations for a Lieutenancy which can only be done in England, or where 3 Post Captains are assembled. I have now served 2 years above the term of 6 that are required to enable me to pass the examination; & as Promotion has never been known to precede it, I may serve 6 years more if I behave myself, in this or any other country, and still be no nearer the object at which I am aiming. However, as I am unwilling to view the dark side of the affair, & have already placed great reliance upon repeated promises, I shall neither suffer my expectations to be blighted, my spirits cast down, or my zeal & exertions to relax, by this intelligence, although these reflections will sometimes obtrude through the glossy surface of others of brighter aspect, notwithstanding great exertions are made to suppress them. Should we happily find that Promotion has been awaiting our arrival at Port Jackson, no one will shake her by the hand more cordially than John Septimus Roe, & he will then be ready again to serve His Majesty in this or any other Quarter of the Globe, as long as his exertions shall be deemed of any service, without the smallest shadow of disappointmt. at the expectation of being allowed to return Home: for however long the painful absence from thence may prove, that consideration ought to have no weight when duty is in the way, and a good situation at stake.

During these times, when many clever men are puzzling themselves for a method of making 2 ends meet, and others still more knowing are racking their almost addled brains for a plan to fill their mouths with bread, any honorable employment should not be shunned, however painful the sacrifices to our feelings may be, that we find it necessary to make. But individuals of consideration at the Admiralty have long since admitted our claim to Promo-

tion & have moreover said several undeserved things in commendation of my humble self & my poor exertions in behalf of the service, which I have heard of but do not find it necessary to repeat, that I am still very unwilling to harbour a suspicion of any individual of them being capable of injustice, and have only to apprehend that the length of our absence will have been so great as to leave in Office very few of those persons who were the Chief investigators & promoters of our Expedition, & who have already witnessed & approved some of its fruits. We must trust to the Successors possessing an equal share of liberality, & that they will not discourage or desert an expedition because not planned or executed by themselves, as is sometimes the case, at a place not very remote from that at which I am writing.

I have alluded to the probability of an additional service falling to our lot before we are enabled to return home, therefore it may not be very far from the Truth, if we suppose it to be the examination of New Zealand or New Guinea, & perhaps both; for we are aware that the Revd. Mr. Marsden, Principal Chaplain to the Colony, has made application some time ago, to the Missionary Society & other Bodies, for those countries to be visited thoroughly, & that he has stated the advantage of the present time for doing so while a vessel is on the station that is employed upon a similar service.^[11] How far his representations have been attended to we are not acquainted, but have reason to suppose that they may have been successful. Mr. D[arch]'s information to Bror. T. in September last, that it would be 3 years before we might be expected in England, tends to strengthen this supposition, although in the event of some untoward circumstance or unfortunate accident compelling us to return prematurely to Port Jackson, we could hardly complete our present service before that time, as we should be obliged to make another voyage.^[12] Of this, however, as of a circumstance by no means congenial to our feelings, we will say no more, & endeavour to think of it still less.

As the fate of the little *Mermaid* must interest all of you, as it does those who have seen so many dangers in her, having by mismanagement on part of her Commander been nearly wrecked in the Entrance of Port Macquarie, which you may recollect we visited in the same vessel 2 years ago to explore it, after undergoing a thorough fresh fastening fore and aft, and been got into as sound a state as when newly launched, she was dispatched in Company with the Colonial Brig *Lady Nelson* & Schooner *Prince Regent*, of 60 tons each, with a party of 60 convicts in charge of 30 soldiers of the 48th. Regt., the whole

[11] Samuel Marsden had only recently returned from a tour of New Zealand, sailing on HMS *Dromedary*. The newest officer on board the *Bathurst*, Perceval Baskerville, had been on board the ship, so it can be presumed he would have been the full bottle on the subject.

[12] Thomas Darch was, in 1820, listed as a Senior Clerk in the Admiralty Office. PPK named Darch Island after him.

under command of Captn. Allman, 48th. to form a settlement at Port Macquarie, that was to receive the name of Campbell Town.^[13] Three months provisions for the whole party, and the necessary supply of tools, stores, seeds, stock, &c. were embarked onboard the 3 vessels, & they sailed in the middle of March for their destination; but for some reason or other did not gain their Port till the expiration of 30 days, although with a fair & moderate wind not many hours ago, we were only 2 days in arriving abreast of it.

Such an unpropitious commencement was followed by the Schooner in which Captn. Allman, his wife, brother (Lieutt. 48th.) & 4 children were embarked, sticking upon some rocks while entering the Port & nearly frightening them all to death.^[14] She got into the Port with the loss of her Rudder, & was followed by the *Lady Nelson*, which got safely over the Bar & anchored, while the *Mermaid* which drew 1 or 2 feet more water than the others (9 1/2 feet) anchored outside to wait for the Tide. The wind freshening in the Evening [page 3] of the same day, she got under sail at 10 PM. & stood towards the Harbour's Entrance, but missing the broken channel over the bar, which had 3 feet more water on it than the vessel drew, she went upon the sands of the North Shore, where a very heavy & frightful surf lashed her about so unmercifully for 8 or 9 hours, that she was in eminent danger of being momentarily dashed to pieces. The thorough good fastening she had received was the sole cause of her holding together so well, & after all the passengers had been safely landed, at the great risk of those who ventured in a whale boat sufficiently near to pick them up as they jumped into the surf, she floated off with the Tide, and anchored inside the Harbour, making as much water (ladies excuse the term, 'tis a sea phrase) as when we were returning from our last voyage. She received considerable injury & must be repaired before they can venture to trust her to sea, even to perform the short passage to Port Jackson. As one of the 3 vessels was to be dispatched on her return, immediately she was unloaded, the *Lady Nelson* was fixed upon for that purpose & on attempting to get out of the Port she went onshore, & now lies nearly a wreck with her bottom stove in. We sailed from Port Jackson & in consequence of their being in want of Provisions, a small vessel was instantly dispatched with a supply & will soon be followed by another. All the party were in the enjoyment of good health & spirits & Captn. Allman was making progressive ad-

[13] The three ships, *Mermaid*, *Prince Regent* and *Lady Nelson*, had sailed for Port Macquarie under the overall command of Capt. Francis Allman of the 48th. Allman had been recommended by his CO Col. Erskine, as "a very steady, good officer, and perfectly competent in all other respects for such an important charge" (ADB). I think JSR had his wires crossed about "Campbell Town", which was actually a newly-named settlement in Tasmania.

[14] Allman's wife was named Sarah née Wilson: although I have not confirmed the hypothesis, surely this must mean that the brother JSR is referring to is Lieut. William Wilson of the 48th and that he must have been the brother of Sarah Allman.

vances towards the formation of a little settlement. Had circumstances permitted we should have sent a boat to look at them as we passed, but a fine fair wind was blowing and did not admit of so much delay. I hope their future proceedings will be attended with better success for the place is well worthy of the attention that has been paid to it, & will grow to advantage tobacco, sugar, coffee, cotton, &c. &c. the value of which will hereafter be duly appreciated when the sun of Independence begins to shine over the Land & causes the inhabitants to look to their own resources. The interior of the country behind Port Jackson is rapidly being explored by those whose interests are concerned; and every new discovery lays open tracts of country to the WSW & SWd., that vie with each other in fertility and richness.

Although Bedwell and I are happily upon the best & most friendly terms with Governor Macquarie there appeared latterly a certain coolness or negligence about our Expedition that will better be explained hereafter which prevented our asking him for the grant of land which I hinted to Wm. in a former letter we proposed doing; as we think it better to wait for a more auspicious moment than run the risk of a refusal, or of our expectations being disappointed. By what I have said, my dear Father, you must not for a moment suppose that we have had any rupture with them; but the circumstances would require a development of names &c. &c. which are better left alone at present, & I know I shall obtain your sanction for being silent. To the Govr. we feel indebted for the assistance he has afforded us, but we have to contend with difficulties & opposition which will perhaps one day or other be brought home to the recollection of the proper persons. Mrs. Macquarie has behaved exceedingly kind to me, & at the conclusion of an affectionate note which she sent me while their ship was sailing out of Port Jackson for Van Diemen's Land, she says "Farewell, my dear Mr. Roe, you cannot [be] more happy [than I sincerely] wish you to be, and so the Governor feels towards you. Believe me to be [your] affectionate [& sincere] friend. E.H. Macquarie." She could have no interested motives for writing this [] therefore [believe it to be] sincere.

Although they expect to be at Port Jackson on our return, I do not [] shall find them there, as Sr. Thos. Brisbane is confidently spoken of as being on his passage to supercede the [Govr.] though the quantity of persons here suppose that until the Report of Commissioner Bigge is given in to the [House] of Commons & digested, no new Govr. will be sent out.^[15] The *Dromedary*, Storeship, in which the Commissr. Sailed must have arrived in England by this time, and you will probably hear something about this remote colony through the medium of some of the public prints. I before mentioned in a

[15] The first part of Bigge's report was tabled in June 1823; Governor Brisbane arrived in Sydney in November 1821.

former letter to Bror. William sent by the *Shipley*, or to you my Dr. Father, by the *Dromedary*, that the Master of the latter Ship conveyed to the Admiralty a chart of our latest proceedings, copied & reduced from Lieutt. King's Originals by myself.

As this chart includes the River named after you & the Mount names after my dear Mother, I hope you have been able to procure a view of it from Captn. Hurd who I am sure would not hesitate at granting the request from any of you that were to make it, knowing how gratifying such a permission would prove.^[16] I regret that Lieutt. King was not able to complete the reconstruction of another chart in readiness to forward Home previous to our last departure from Port; but his various occupations & having to look so much after the equipment of his new command, prevented him. He united with his Sister & Mrs. King in kind enquiries after you all, & expresses equal regret with myself when his numerous packets produce no letters for poor me.^[17] Those good & kind people have supplied me with 5 months later intelligence of your all being well than any I have received from Home, if I except Bror. T.'s last letter to me from London.

As this letter will apprise you of the *Dick's* arrival in the River, Willm. to whom I have directed the box of curiosities, had better see it passed through the Custom House himself, as it will have to undergo a thorough examination for the purpose of fixing the duty upon every article, & will not be restowed with that care and attention which is required, unless he is on the spot to superintend. He will there have an opportunity of seeing Captn. Harrison who has been so good as to take it for me, and although he will not see in him the most polished man in the World (having risen in an honorable manner from a Sailor Boy to his present station in Life) he will find a most worthy good hearted man as ever breathed, and one to whom I shall ever feel greatly indebted for his disinterested goodness to me.^[18] He has several times during the last stay at Port Jackson made me the most handsome & liberal offers of assistance in money or any thing else I might want, taking my word for repaying him whenever we might meet in England – but my wants at present not exceeding my small means. I have had no occasion for his assistance, though urgently pressed to accept it in the most kind manner, and shall ever feel grateful for these additional proofs of his generous and true-hearted friendship for me.

By taking charge of his 3 chronometers while we were at Port Jackson & ascertaining their errors & rates along with our own, I was enabled to save him

[16] Thomas Hurd RN, Admiralty Hydrographer.

[17] His sister Anna Maria Macarthur and Harriet King.

[18] The closest thing to a description of Captain Harrison of the *Dick* that JSR wrote.

a good deal of trouble & many figures; but as I consider this to be merely the friendly act of one person to another, I shall at any time feel the greatest pleasure in being able to serve him, & must beg Wm.'s to receive him as one whom his Brother esteems most highly. He will also be able to give some account of us & our little Expedition, as he has been a great deal in our society & onboard the *Bathurst*. Having now arrived at the bottom of my page, I am obliged to conclude with my affectionate love to Dr. Mother, Sophy & brothers, trusting all are well; & praying the Almighty to protect you all & to bless you with every good thing, believe me to remain, my Dear Father, your ever affectionate Son

John Septimus Roe.

[*margin of page 1*] The address of the Gentleman who owns quarter part of the ship *Dick* is – Ward Esqr., Cock Hill, Ratcliffe, London – where Captn. Harrison usually resides while in London.^[19] He has offered that in case of Wm. being absent from Newbury in any part of the country, he will get his Broker's Son to attend at the Custom House to get the box of Curiosities overhauled, re-packed, & the duty for it settled, which would be a desirable thing, but a letter to Captn. Harrison at the [*margin of page 2*] the above address will be necessary to apprise him of it, if adopted. I nevertheless think Wm. had better attend himself, on account of the care that is requisite in re-packing the various articles, and seeing the box in a fair way for arriving at Newbury. [*margin of page 3*] Pray endeavour, for Charity's sake, to stimulate my dear Sophy & Brothers to the more frequent use of their Pens, for since our recent melancholy loss, I am more than ever subject to have the dismals.

[19] Thomas and Robert Ward, mast-makers, were at Cock Hill, Ratcliffe, London. The address is noted in a nearly contemporary guidebook as the continuation of Shadwell High Street "from the Cock to Broad St" (*Lockie's Topography of London*, 1810).

MARCH 1821
/ JUNE 1821

His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*
off Cape Capricorn, East Coast of Australia

“I cannot help anticipating the pleasure I shall derive from seeing a good collection of curiosities at the Rectory.”

JSR to William Roe. Four pages.

[No address]

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, numbered 160.

JSR, having just finished a letter to his father, has realised that he has time to write a follow-up to his brother and send it home with his friend Captain Harrison: the present letter is basically JSR's cover letter for a box of curiosities for their Museum in Newbury. The letter includes far and away his most detailed accounting of his collecting to date, and confirms the seriousness and the expense he has gone to, quite apart from the truly enormous customs bill he was expecting William to have to cover. JSR even expresses the hope that many of the less colourful insects, despite being of more value scientifically, might fool the customs staff into undervaluing them a little. He is sending insects, stuffed birds (but means to send only skins in future), some seeds, has left out his collection of rocks on grounds of weight, but does add some coral from a part of the country “never before visited by any Europeans,” and hopes to send home plants from Port Jackson (but the lack of blotting paper will make it impossible to do much on the present voyage).

The letter includes some fond thoughts of home, and a rather neat joke about how King and his officers seem to have been “transported” for seven years. At several points JSR evinces a rather martial tone, particularly in his comments about civil unrest in England but also regarding the Malays he expects to encounter on the voyage (“I always was very fond of powder...”). The letter also includes JSR's only mention of the young woman who stowed away on the *Bathurst* voyage, unwilling to be parted from their Boatswain: JSR is not, it is fair to say, terribly pleased with her decision. The letter also has an important comment by JSR on his new shipmate Bondel, as well as bitter commentary on their own outfitting when compared with the French and Russian voyages of exploration, both of which were “most abundantly supplied with books & Instruments of every description,” whereas they have to make do with whatever they can obtain.

No. 4.
His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*, off Cape Capricorn.
East Coast of Australia. June 6. 1821.

My dear William,

By the kind hand of Captain Harrison of the Ship *Dick*, I have the pleasure of forwarding you another box of Curiosities, which I trust will prove an acceptable addition to the collection you have already got, and that it will reach your hands safe. The nature of the articles makes it necessary that I should send them through the Custom House at the Port where the ship unloads, and you will therefore be obliged to pay a duty for them, which I could have wished it was in my power to save you – but not being able to send you the whole amount of what I imagine will be the expense, I have sent enclosed in the box a Bill on the Commissioners of His Majesty's Navy for £9.4s. being my pay as Master's Mate between the 28th. of March & 19th. June 1821, as you will perceive by the dates. The Bills being drawn in triplicate according to the prescribed form, I have now forwarded only one of them & will send the other two by other separate conveyances in case of accident. This will relieve you of part of the weight of duty that will be levied, & put you in a better humour to receive the next box which I propose sending by the next opportunity that offers – but that will not be till we return to Port Jackson when I hope to hear from you whether or no you approve of the plan I have adopted for supplying your Cabinets. The woods of which my packing cases, insect boxes, &c. have been formed you will of course not throw away, as I intend to send every different kind that I can collect, making them up in the form of rough cases not only to save the duty that would be fixed upon logs or planks, but that you may afterwards have them converted into whatever shape your taste shall decide.

The case in which these things are packed, is made of what is called the Cedar of this country, which abounds both to the Northward & Southward of Port Jackson, 30 or 40 Leagues, & is chiefly used here for furniture. You will perceive that it far inferior to the West India Cedar of which pencils are made, having no ~~smell~~ smell whatever, & being very open-grained. The yellow scented wood of which the insect boxes are made is called Huon Pine & is a species of cypress that grows only in Van Diemen's Land and should be reserved exclusively for the purpose of forming Cabinets to contain insects, as its scent keeps ants & other destructive insects from those you wish to preserve, & will even kill some of the more delicate kinds that find their way into the boxes without being able to obtain egress again. A little camphor is also very serviceable in every till for accomplishing the same purpose; but it should not be thrown in too large for fear of breaking off the legs & antennae of the insects ~~which~~ whose principal beauty & only value to an entymologist

is their perfection in every part. For the same reason you must never attempt to remove the pins with which the insects are secured, nor would I remove insects from one box to another. The last box I have not taken so much pains in arranging as the former one, and have in consequence not only been enabled to stow a greater number in the same space, but their appearance not being so imposing although their value is as great, may possibly be the means of curtailing some proportion of the duty: nor are any of the tills scientifically arranged; as that can be adjusted when I see them at Home and have gained a little more knowledge of them.

The Birds I am sorry to say are not so well stuffed as I could wish, but they are my first attempts, & must be put into the hands of a proper person to be set up with wires, &c., as they are packed in their present form to save room. In future I will not stuff them at all but merely preserve the skins. If you can possibly contrive it, I should much wish to know what you have had to pay for every thing, whether by separate articles or in bulk, as I might thereby be better guided in my choice of things to send. Specimens in mineralogy I have not sent on account of their weight, and the many papers of seeds that I had collected had been so long on my hands that had I sent them they would not have come up and I therefore gave them all away 12 months ago.

I will endeavour to collect some more on our present voyage, for our Dear Mother's friend Dr. Smith;^[1] and as they will pass through your hands you can take a small quantity out of each paper. If you can also continue to send me a ream of thick coarse brown paper similar to that in which the accompanying plants have been packed, I will endeavour to send you a collection from Port Jackson; and regret extremely that the want of it now prevents my collecting any where we are not going, which would give you a great chance of having some that are entirely unknown. The paper which you sent me I found would not answer for the intended purpose, but I have found it extremely useful for preserving other things with & have got nearly half of it remaining. The Coral you must be particularly careful of, as there are several specimens that I have never seen before in any collection of the kind; and as they come from a part of this country never before visited by any Europeans, they may be new. I hope they will arrive entire, & would recommend you having a small shallow box made for them where every piece may be placed without touching its neighbour; or they will be very good ornaments to put over a fire place. In the midst of all these directions, I cannot help anticipating the pleasure I shall derive from seeing a good collection of curiosities at the Rectory, when again I have the happiness of seeing it, and will do every thing in my power to augment it with every little thing I can procure.

[1] JSR elsewhere seems to confirm that this must have been the great botanist Sir James Edward Smith, author of the first published Australian botany (1793).

And now, my dear Wm., that I have nearly finished writing about what this letter mostly concerns, let me hope that it will find you all quite well at the Rectory, where the preserve of our elder Bror. Thos. cannot but have afforded considerably to the domestic happiness of your social circle, if you could but have banished from your minds the cause of his return from India. Most sincerely do I trust that the trip he has taken to England may have perfectly re-established his health beyond the probability of a relapse to his former state, & that our dear Parents may have completely recovered from the illness with which they had both been troubled a short time previous to the date of T.'s last letter in Sept. last. That letter I have now answered and have enclosed it with this in hopes that our Bror. may not yet have quitted his paternal roof for India; but should that be the case, I have left it unsealed for the perusal of you all (though it contains nothing but what you are acquainted with in my letter to Dr. Father & yourself) and I must beg you to forward it by the next packet that you send, with my affectionate remembrance & expression of regret at its having arrived too late.

How sincerely do I wish my dear Wm. that I could have completed our family circle with my presence during T.'s visit to England, and cannot [page 2] help supposing that such a happy meeting of us all would have given equal pleasure to you all; but it is gratifying to reflect that my privations in this respect are more than counterbalanced by the good I am working to my own interests and prospects in life; & that our meeting will be proportionally more desirable, according as the period of its accomplishment has been from time to time protracted.

The voyage before us is to be of 12 months duration, if no accident calls for an earlier return & by the expiration of that term we were in hopes that a completion of our present service would call for our return to England; but you will have seen by my letter to Father, that there is a prospect of our re-visiting England being still farther delayed until we have completed some farther duty as yet unknown to us. This is hardly fair, when the terms and extent of our present services is considered; and nothing but the earnest wish that I have of seeing every country in the known and unknown world would induce me to accept of the appointment unless it was accompanied by that Promotion which they have already acknowledged is due to our exertions – but the fact appears to be that the shortest terms of transportation being 7 years, [~~xxxx~~] they do not wish to commence making precedents for shortening it by beginning with us; as there is every probability of our completing that term before our eyes are again blessed with a sight of dear old England's cliffs.

Should you have an opportunity of calling at the Admiralty while you are in Town, it would be worth your while and I should feel very much obliged if

you would ask Captn. Hurd what he knows about our expected return to Europe,^[2] & whether we may be expected after the expiration of our present service – but be sure you do not even hint at having received the least intimation of what I have mentioned respected the additional service upon which we expect to be employed, as Lieutt. King received it from a private hand who was supposed to know nothing about it – nor would it be prudent for you to make any allusions to the disappointment we cannot avoid feeling at not being permitted to return. In all this, my dear W., I will trust to your own discretion, & need not say how happy I shall be to receive the result of your enquiries by letter if you have not given up writing, for it is now so long (no less than 20 months) since you wrote to me that I almost despair of hearing from you again. This I shall also leave to your own disposal – but have only to add that whether you wish or no, you shall always hear from one, in whatever parts of the World we are both situated.

Mrs. King has kindly favored me with the gratifying intelligence of your all being well as late as the latter part of September last, which is 5 months later date than I have received from home; I am therefore in hopes that there will be several letters awaiting my arrival at Port Jackson.^[3] The present disturbed state of England [~~xxxx~~] cannot be heard of by any true lover of his Country without feelings of regret, and I am happy to find that you are situated in a part of the country as quiet as can be expected, for although I have seen in the Newspapers the illumination of the Town mentioned, I have not heard of your having taken any active measures in passing events.^[4] From your pen I should like to hear an account of those proceedings at Newbury which accompanied the Queen's acquittal, & should have had no objection to have helped to man the battery from which I know you are accustomed to fire, upon similar occasions.^[5] I was always very fond of powder, as well as yourself, and have just finished making 150 rounds of pistol ball cartridges in

[2] Thomas Hurd RN, Admiralty Hydrographer.

[3] Presumably Harriet King, conveying messages she had received from England.

[4] JSR is typically oblique about exactly what he means by the “present disturbed state of England”. As he comments, his most recent information regarding home would seem to date from the last part of 1820, and as the next section confirms, he was well aware of the fiery public debate about George IV's attempt to separate from Caroline of Brunswick: given Caroline became associated with the reform movement, this must be the “disturbed state” to which he refers (although it would be possible to point to other events such as Peterloo (1819) and its aftermath, or the Cato Street Conspiracy (1820)).

[5] Curiously phrased, but JSR must be referring to the collapse of the so-called “Pains and Penalties Bill” (1820), which sought to dissolve the marriage of George IV and Caroline of Brunswick. The complicated and salacious case was passed by the House of Lords but subsequently withdrawn by the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool, in November 1820: Caroline became a figurehead of the reform movement, and there were protests and riots.

readiness for the Malays which we expect to fall in with towards the latter part of our voyage, when they arrive on the NW Coast of this Country to fish for Trepang. I got into several gunpowder squalls at school on various days of rejoicing and cannot even now desert the salt box (as we call the great gun cartridge boxes onboard Men of War) for although I do not take so active a part as formerly in the discharging of small fry, I have supplied my young friends with more powder for the same purpose than all the shopkeepers at Sydney have sold.

An accidental explosion of some loose powder that had been drawn from our guns 3 or 4 days ago set us all on the move on board this vessel 2 days ago, as it filled the whole place with smoke, set fire to a quantity of paper, [ropeyarns] & other combustibles, and for a few minutes left us doubtful whether the vessel would catch fire or not – but the teak wood is so very hard and close that it does not quickly ignite and after scorching some of the cedar & fir with which the store room had been fitted up we succeeded in putting it out with wet swabs. The explosion was occasioned by the steward imprudently taking a naked light into the store room contrary to repeated orders to the opposite effect, & it fell into a bucket in which the powder had been placed by the same man with equal impropriety.^[6] The Boatman happened to be with him at the time looking for some blocks & both instantaneously springing to the door jammed each other in the door-way of the cabin, & increased the alarm by singing out as lustily as 2 pigs stuck in a hedge or fence, a great deal more frightened than hurt.^[7] A small copper magazine containing about 300 rounds of musket ball cartridges, was in the next cabin, unknown to any one but the delinquent, but it is 100 to 1 if ever he commits himself again in a similar manner, even if we leave it in his power.

We have got a Native Port Jackson black onboard ~~with us this voyage~~, accompanying us on our voyage, to facilitate our intercourse with any Natives we may fall in with at different parts of the Country. His name is Bundle; he is a more useful man than any Australian Black I have seen, having sailed onboard several whalers & other vessels on this Coast; & although one of his eyes has been knocked out or in with a spear, his sight is excellent, like all other Australians.^[8] Bongaree, the Chief of the Broken Bay Tribe, was the

[6] The Steward on board was a man called William Lindsay, regarding whom I have not discovered any concrete information.

[7] There is a questionmark about the identity of the Boatswain on board: he is more commonly thought to have been one John Longford, the Australian-born son of a NSW Corps soldier, but may prove to have actually been John Woolfit, a Lincolnshire-born sailor who frequently worked on Indian ships.

[8] “Bundle” or Bondel was a well-known man in Sydney, a regular on colonial vessels (see a good biography at the Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie site hosted by Macquarie University).

man who accompanied us on our first voyage, & was to have sailed with us both on our present & last voyage; but his resolution forsook him when the time of embarkation arrived, & we were by no means disappointed when we found that he had secreted himself in the woods.^[9] Bundle is preferable to him, is about 40 years of age, 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high, & being now rigged out with a red cap, red shirt, & pair of white Trowsers, is a perfect dandy. We have not much prospect of his being able to understand the language of the strangers we shall communicate with on the opposite coast, as the language of the Australians differs so very materially that they do not understand each other 50 or 60 miles apart, although in the peculiarly slight construction of their arms & legs, the manner of dancing, which is also entirely peculiar to themselves, together with the womerah or throwing stick with which they discharge their spears, the natives of this Country exactly resemble each other on every part of the Coast that we have seen. He will nevertheless inspire with a greater share of confidence those Natives who have never before seen Europeans, & who may in consequence be induced to risk an interview with us, whereas they might otherwise have fled on our first approach.

Yesterday evening being fine, Captn. Harrison of the *Dick* came on board of us with the Surgeon that is going Home with him (Dr. Armstrong, R.N.) and drank tea, &c. with us. [10] He is a man for whom I feel the greatest friendship and esteem, & who has made me such repeated offers of assistance in any thing I may want, that I feel as if under great obligation to him; & should you be able to procure an interview with him I must beg you to receive him as a very worthy good fellow, possessing as kind a heart & as much friendship for your younger brother, as I believe ever fell to the lot of a stranger. By his conversation you will perceive that he has not received the most polished education; but this you will immediately make allowance for when you understand that he has risen to his present station from being before the Mast both of Merchant Men & several Ships of War, & that great credit is due to a man of his age (abt. 40) for that good conduct which has raised him. It was but yesterday evening that he repeated his kind offers privately to me, begging I would use no scruples with him, in case I wanted any thing; but fortunately I stand in need of nothing at present that he can supply me with, and in return, recommend you to pay him [*page 3*] any little at-

[9] Bungaree, one of the most famous of the Aboriginal men from Sydney, had sailed on the first voyage of the *Mermaid* (see ADB).

[10] Capt. Harrison of the *Dick*, as the present letter strongly underlines, became a close friend of JSR's, their association dating from the voyage out to New South Wales in 1817. Dr. Armstrong is not much mentioned by JSR, although PPK did get his second opinion when JSR was nearly killed by a fall from the rigging soon after the present letter was written. JSR notes that Armstrong is a Fellow of the Linnean Society and a keen amateur phrenologist.

tention in ~~his~~ your power. Should you not be able to find him onboard, the address of the Ship's Owner is ___ Ward Esqr., Cock Hill, Ratcliffe, London, where he is generally to be found & usually resides.^[11]

I was just going to close my letter without telling you that 2 days after we left Port Jackson, it was discovered that there was a female onboard the vessel, & that on bringing her forward out of a part of the hold in which she had concealed herself for 5 days, she was soon recognised as a young English girl of abandoned character, 15 or 16 years of age, & born at Port Jackson, where her parents now reside.^[12] On questioning her respecting the motives that induced her to conceal herself in so extraordinary a manner, it appeared that she had forsaken her friends to share the fate of our boatswain, a young man with whom she had long been intimate, & from whom she could not prevail upon herself to part. Of course Lieutt. King felt considerable annoyance from the circumstance as such a thing was so little to be expected, & there is a fine of £500 attachable to any Captn. of a Ship who shall take a person secretly away – but of this he can have no apprehension whatever, the girl being free & not a prisoner. As there was no remedy for the evil, she was consigned to the care of the Man for whom she had stowed herself away, & will be sent again to her parents when we return to Port Jackson.^[13]

I have left my dog Benbow behind me this voyage, in charge of Mrs. Hanibal McArthur who has very kindly promised to take care of him for me among the numerous other dogs that are on their property, & where he will learn to be a good watch dog, to fight, and do as other dogs do.^[14] From being so long confined onboard the *Mermaid* without any other dogs to associate with since he was a mere pup, he had grown so very shy of all other dogs that he met, as induced me to suppose I was the owner of a coward. My feelings were however very much gratified [~~xxxx~~] when I witnessed a very hard-fought battle indeed, between him and a brother of his from a former litter 6 months older, who was in consequence considerably heavier & had beaten every dog on the grounds. Little as such exhibitions are to my taste, I could not help exulting to see my own fellow so bravely falsify my expectations of him, and I am now more than ever attached to him.

[11] Thomas and Robert Ward, mast-makers, were at Cock Hill, Ratcliffe, London. The address is noted in a nearly contemporary guidebook as the continuation of Shadwell High Street “from the Cock to Broad St” (*Lockie's Topography of London*, 1810).

[12] Again, JSR is reticent about this girl, although his shipmate Allan Cunningham recalled that her name was “Sarah Chambers” (actually Chamberlain).

[13] JSR's dog “Admiral Benbow” had been a gift from PPK. He has left him with Anna Maria Macarthur, PPK's sister. It seems apparent that JSR is the classic dog owner, fondly imagining that the animal must be a general favourite.

[14] The descriptions are too vague to be sure of the exact titles JSR has been lent.

He is what I call a very handsome dog, black & white with black head, & remarkably fond of the water: when Dr. Montgomery & I bathed every morning at Port Jackson, Benbow always swam out with us, & when tired would come to each of us by turns as we stood, to rest himself. He also invariably jumped overboard after me if he saw I was going onshore without him in Sydney Cove, & always swam off to the vessel again, making a noise when he arrived alongside, for some one to take him in – in short, he is a great favorite with every one, as universally admired as he is known, and we are all extremely sorry to be deprived of his Company. Lieutt. King takes a pointer bitch & a spaniel pointer or setter with him this time instead, and we trust they will prove useful in finding any game that may be knocked down.

The Surgeon is very fond of shooting, and we are all equally fond of seeing our table supplied, particularly during so long a voyage as we have now before us. He is supplied with a good 2[*bh*] barrelled gun, and since the hair-breadth escape that I had from being taken by the Natives of Goulburn's Islands during the early part of our last voyage, I have supplied myself with a brace of pocket pistols which I shall always carry about with me whenever I land, independent of a musket.

We are in hopes that Captn. Harrison will accompany us as far as these same Goulburn Islands, which are situated in Latde. 11° 37' South and Longitude 133° 30' Et. of Greenwich, on the North Coast of Australia; as it lies not 12 hours out of his way to Batavia, whither he is proceeding for a cargo to take to Europe. Should you have an opportunity of seeing him, he will be able to give you a great deal of information about us and our little Man of War, as he has been a great deal with us both onboard & onshore, but more particularly while we resided onshore for 16 or 17 weeks during the preparation of the *Bathurst*; the Naval Barracks (as people were pleased to call our Quarters) was then a very convenient place of recreation for him & Dr. Armstrong; the latter of whom is a very clever sensible man, [~~xxxx~~] an M.D. and F.L.S. and besides other things is a very good craniologist, for discovering the disposition, faults, failings, & good qualities of any person by feeling his head attentively & taking particular notice of its formation.

This is a system which I among others should have laughed at as ridiculous, had I not been so fully convinced of the stability of its foundation as to leave very little doubt in my own mind of its Truth and reality: when he and I first became acquainted but before he could have obtained any knowledge of my disposition, he told me some peculiarities & traits in my character which I could not but agree to, and he moreover informed me of some which I was not previously aware of, but which I then became sensible were made up in the composition which formed my disposition. He is a complete scientific

man, and I should greatly rejoice did it fall to my lot to serve in the same ship with him; as I should anticipate great improvement from the cultivation of his acquaintance and society; and he is always very ready to impart his knowledge to those who desire it. He has given me 2 large planispheres of the Stars upon the Polar Projection and a very useful Book on Marine Surveying, with the promise of another on Algebra which I intend to study during my leisure moments,^[15] if I can find any, though I am now no less than 13 months astern with my Log, and have not yet commenced a single sheet of my fair Journal, which in bulk is about 1/2 a ream of paper. When I shall be able to get these things and my Sketches completed, puzzles me to find out; but the addition of another helpmate to Bedwell & myself has so far eased my shoulders of the great weight which they were formerly obliged to bear,^[16] that Lieutt. King has voluntarily told me I am to keep no watch when we arrive on our station, but am to attend on deck to assist him as formerly during the day. From this regulation I anticipate the result of many advantages to myself, independent of the great bodily fatigue that harassed me on former voyages, as I shall now be able to find time to write & draw a letter for myself, besides more than the usual duty which [~~xxxx~~] formerly fell to my share in respect to quill-driving.

I hope my eyes will not suffer by this new arrangement & am sorry I cannot report that they are getting better. They do not as yet get worse and I shall endeavour to spare them as much as possible. Mrs. King has very kindly made me a green shade to use by candle light, & I find great relief from its keeping the glare of light from my eyes while writing or reading. I have no doubt you will be happy to hear that we are very comfortable onboard the *Bathurst*, with a Cabin for every Officer containing a scuttle or port in the vessel's side, that admits of a free circulation of air from side to side when the weather is sufficiently fine to admit of their being [~~xxxx~~] opened. This has not been the case more than once as yet, & then by keeping them open after the breeze had freshened. I among others got a few gallons of water in my bed, which completely soaked it & obliged me to rough it out elsewhere for the 2 following nights. Experience, however, makes us wise; and in future we shall be aware of what we have to expect. On the Northwest Coast, where the weather will be warmer, it will also be finest, & will very seldom make it necessary to bar in the Ports at all. We have not had very fine weather altogether since leaving Port; and after sailing in so small a vessel as the *Mermaid*, we find all possible difference in our present Brig, which we find very dry and

[15] JSR alludes to the new junior officer on board the *Bathurst*, Percival Baskerville.

[16] JSR had fallen out with Hunter during the previous voyage of the *Mermaid*, and was barely on speaking terms with him by the time they returned to Sydney. The relationship between Montgomery and the officers would likewise sour by the end of the *Bathurst* voyage.

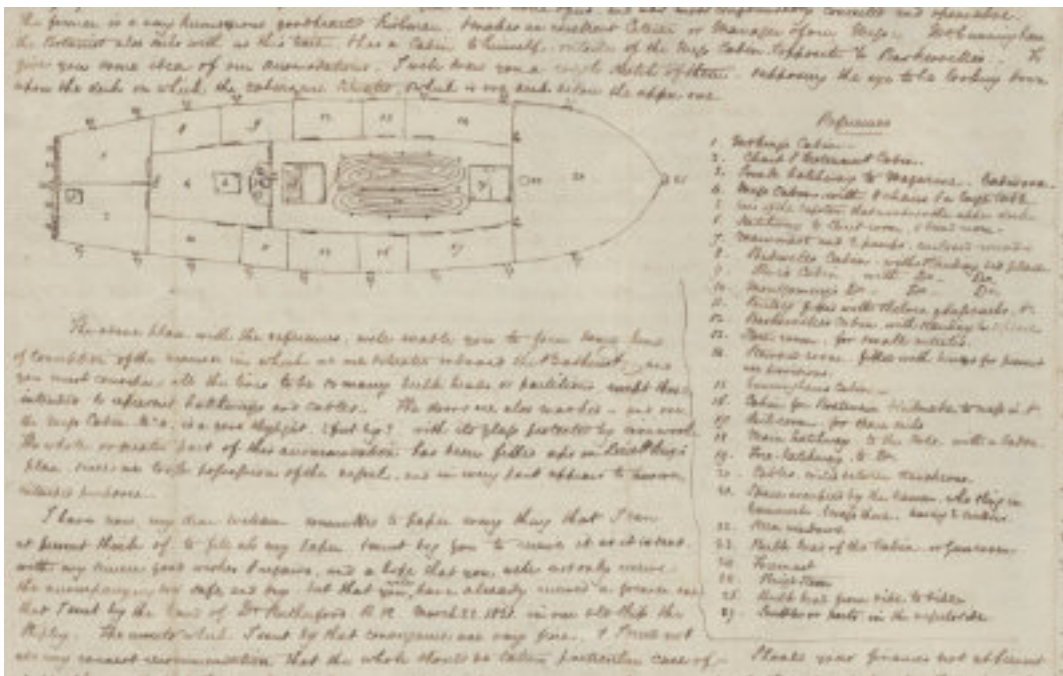
a good sea-boat; neither did I suffer so much from sea-sickness which usually affects me for 2 or 3 days after leaving [*page 4*] Port, much to my inconvenience & annoyance, though it does more good than harm.

Dr. Montgomery is a most acceptable change for Hunter our late Surgeon, who could agree with none of us, and was most confoundedly conceited and opiniative.^[17] The former is a very humorous good-hearted Irishman, & makes an excellent Caterer or Manager of our Mess. Mr. Cunningham the Botanist also sails with us this time, & has a cabin to himself, outside of the Mess Cabin & opposite to Baskerville's. To give you some idea of our accommodations, I will draw you a rough sketch of them, supposing the eye to be looking down upon the deck on which the cabins are situated, & which is one deck below the upper one.

References

1. Mr. King's Cabin.
2. Chart & Instrument Cabin
3. Small hatchway to Magazine – leaded over.
4. Mess Cabin with 8 chains & a large table.
5. Axis of the capstan that works on the upper deck.
6. Hatchway to Spirit room, & bread room.
7. Mainmast and 2 pumps, enclosed round.
8. Bedwell's Cabin, with standing bed place.
9. Roe's Cabin with Do. Do.
10. Montgomery's Do. Do. Do.
11. Pantry fitted with shelves, glassracks &c.
12. Baskerville's cabin, with standing bed-place.
13. Store room, for small articles.
14. Steward room, fitted with bins for present use provisions.
15. Cunningham's cabin.
16. Cabin for Boatswain & Sailmaker to mess in &c.
17. Sail-room for spare sails.
18. Main hatchway to the Hold, with a ladder.
19. Fore-hatchway to Do.
20. Cables, coiled between stancheons.
21. Space occupied by the Seamen, who sling in hammocks & mess there, having 2 scuttles.
22. Stern windows.
23. Bulk head of the Cabin or Gun room.
24. Foremast.

[17] George Shaw Rutherford RN first arrived in Sydney as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Prince of Orange* (February 1821), and went on to be a vastly experienced convict surgeon, sailing a total of eight times.



Detail of JSR's sketch and accompanying key to the layout of the Bathurst.

- 25. Brig's stern.
- 26. Bulk head from side to side.
- 27. Scuttles or ports in the vessel's side.

The above plan with the references will enable you to form some kind of conception of the manner in which we are situated onboard the Bathurst, and you must consider all the lines to be so many bulk heads or partitions, except those intended to represent hatchways and cables. The doors are also marked and over the Mess Cabin No. 4 is a good skylight 5 feet by 3, with its glass protected by ironwork. The whole, or greater part of this accommodation has been fitted up on Lieutt. King's plan since we took possession of the vessel, and in every part appears to answer intended purposes.

I have now my dear William, committed to paper every thing that I can at present think of to fill up my paper & must beg you to receive it as it is sent with my sincere good wishes & regards, and a hope that you will not only receive the accompanying box safe and dry, but that you will have already received a former one that I sent by the hand of Dr. Rutherford R.N. March 22. 1821. in our old ship the *Shiple*. The insects which I sent by that conveyance are very fine, & I need not add my earnest recommendation that the whole should be taken particular care of. Should your finances not at present

admit of having the birds & animals set up in an appropriate manner, you had better pack them carefully together in a close box with some camphire in it to keep out all unwelcome intruders that would otherwise ruin them; and the Huon Pine of which the packing case was made will be of great service hereafter in making Cabinets. I will if possible send more of that wood, as it is valuable & by no means common in England, & possesses not a disagreeable smell.

Having now nothing more to communicate, I must beg of you Wm. to request a favor from our Dr. Father for me, which I forgot to mention in my letter to him before it was closed. It is to send me out the followg 3 Books which I very often feel the want of, & which I have failed in all attempts to procure at Sydney; viz: Bowditch's Navigation, Kelly's Practical introduction to Spherics & Nautical Astronomy, & Ferguson's Astronomy.^[18] To these I must have assurance to add, a cake of Carmine (water colour) & a cake of Indigo, which may be procured for 1 shilling each, & the books at about 12 shillings each. Murray, Bookseller to the Admiralty, who lives opposite to the Public Office, is the most likely person to have the above books;^[19] & if Father will be good enough to let me have them I shall feel very much obliged to him, & to yourself for procuring them. Kelly's book I once possessed & lent it to an old Schoolfellow while in the *Rippon* & he never returned it to me.^[20] It was given to me while at Christ's Hospital by the ~~Proprietor~~ Author, who in the absence of Dr. Hutton was our half-yearly examiner, & was pleased to make the head boys a present of his book as a mark of his approbation of their proficiency.^[21] (hem!)

I do not think the Admiralty act either with liberality or just economy by failing to supply a small library of useful scientific books to such expeditions as ours, which must undoubtedly be benefited by such a plan, & the books might be returned when done with. The English being the greatest Maritime Nation in the World should not be obliged to copy from the Nautical Plans or Maxims of any other Nation under the Sun; but it certainly appears like a kind of reflection upon the spirit of liberality and generosity, for which we

[18] Three standard works of navigation. Nathaniel Bowditch's *New American Practical Navigator* was first published in 1802 and much reprinted, being Bowditch's extensive revisions on earlier work by John Hamilton Moore RN; P. Kelly's *A Practical Introduction to Spherics an Nautical Astronomy* was originally published in 1796 and was in its fifth edition by 1822; and "Ferguson's Astronomy" would be James Ferguson's *Astronomy explained upon Sir Isaac Newton's principles* (first published 1756 and revised by Sir David Brewster in 1811).

[19] Better known for publishing Lord Byron and Jane Austen, John Murray would publish King's book on the *Mermaid* and *Bathurst* voyages in 1826.

[20] I have not been able to discover who this school mate in the *Rippon* was.

[21] Charles Hutton (1737-1823) was the professor of mathematics at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.

stand famed, that the French & Russian Expeditions that have visited [~~xxxx~~] Port Jackson lately, have been most abundantly supplied with books & Instruments of every description that were thought likely to be serviceable, while our own Expedition, supplied from the same country that produced them, is in absolute want of many things essentially necessary, and the Officers which compose it are obliged to purchase their own Instruments & Books. Comparison are at all times odious: but it is a fact no less true than [~~xxxx~~] surprising that a Russian Expedition of Discovery to the South Pole that arrived here the other day procured while in England 6 or 7 Sextants of the best maker (the inimitable Troughton) ^[22] while one of another Man's (Jones. Charing Cross) ^[23] was sent out to us the other day, in which we have discovered such errors that it now lies on the shelf, useless, & has never been used more than twice, when the results of Observations taken with it differed a whole degree or 60 Miles from those taken with other instruments of Troughton, which we know can be depended upon for accuracy. If such is the system they intend to continue, I hope they will not expect too much accuracy in the result of our labours – for labours they really will be, where once a degree of pleasure was felt in carrying them on: but I should by no means wish you to take any notice of what I have been writing, as I am not the proper person from whom any thing in the shape of a remonstrance should come, and might probably put my head in the fire by doing so.

My eyes are however great sufferers by having bad instruments to observe with, & I have therefore as much reason as any one to cry out. 'Tis all the same 100 years hence, my dear Wm., so we must even grin & bear it, and if we get well through all our difficulties we may naturally expect greater credit for our exertions. I have now only sufficient room to re-assure you how sincerely I wish you all well, & what happiness it will give me to rejoin your happy circle once more. A joyful anticipation of the arrival of that period will very often fill my mind ere it will arrive in reality, and I can only in the interim pray that the Almighty will preserve you all in health & peace, & extend His All powerful & protecting arm over us all with as much goodness as He has been graciously pleased to do formerly. Pray remember me most affectionately to Dr. Father & Mother, Sophy, & all our Brothers that may be at home, offering every good wish that can issue from the heart of, my Dear William,

Your ever affectionate Brother,

John Septimus Roe.

[22] Edward Troughton (1765-1835), a leading manufacturer of scientific instruments and one of the founders of the Astronomical Society in 1820.

[23] Thomas Jones (1783-1829), an optician at Charing Cross.

P.S. I shall anxiously look out for Letters from you all. God bless you.

[*margin of page 1*] [] the accompanying Bill on the Commissioners of the Navy, may appear rather strange to you who perhaps have never had to do with one before, if no person on the Spot will negotiate it for you (of which there can be very little apprehension) you must take it to the Navy Office at Somerset House for the signatures of Three Commissioners of the Navy. From thence it goes to the Navy Pay Office, Somerset House, & at the expiration of ten days Cash will be delivered for it. Upon receiving the [*margin of page 2*] the other 2 Bills which make the Triplicate Set, they will of course be of no service after one Bill has been presented, & had better be destroyed as soon as received, to prevent the possibility of any one laying hold of them, to make an improper use of them.

JUNE 1821
/ JULY 1821

His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*
Goulburn Islands, No. Coast of Australia.
Lat. 11° 30' S. Long. 133° 30' Et.

“When it is considered that I fell from a height of about 80 feet perpendicular, this is not to be wondered at, and it may be very justly called a truly miraculous escape.”

JSR to Sophia Roe. Four pages.

Miss Roe | at the Rectory of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: red “Portsmouth Ship Letter” and red circular “G 6 De. 1821.”

Location: SLNSW, no. 161.

Most uncommon in the JSR correspondence: an extant letter to his sister Sophia, in which he tells the harrowing tale of his near-fatal fall from the rigging of the *Bathurst*. On 30 June 1821 JSR was aloft helping guide the vessel through some shoals when, not attending as the ship was suddenly brought-to, the ship jerked violently and he fell some 80 feet to the deck. The letter is written in a hesitant scrawl, the handwriting alone testament to his injuries. The letter has clearly been sent via the King family in England, who have added a note taken from a letter PPK sent to his own mother, with some further updates. How JSR survived seems to be anyone’s guess, despite the tale of how his fall was broken by a rope in the rigging. The Doctor let a staggering 4 lbs. of blood from him in the first 30 hours; the wound over his eye was still troubling JSR years later.

In the Bay of Adventure. & Joshua's Boat
 2^d East of Australia. Lat. 11° 30' S. Lon. 157° 10' E
 July 7 1821

My Dear Sister

I feel very grateful that the
 Almighty has been graciously pleased to spare me to write to you all
 once more by the Ship's Boat, which parts tomorrow from us to
 proceed for myop to Batakia & Taha. I have just
 had one of the most hair-brushing & phenomenal escapes that I suppose
 ever fell to the lot of man, having fallen from the Boat's fore-topmast
 head to the deck without breaking a single bone in my skin, though you
 may perceive by the hand in which this is written that I am still very weak.

Nothing whatever could have induced me to write a word about it but the
 curiosity which I am aware exists that the report would find its way to
 the Society and make you all miserable if you did not receive a
 line from myself. I need therefore make no apology for my measure.

My style of writing, but earnestly beg you all to rest assured that I
 am getting some gain very fast indeed. & although the accident happened
 this day week, I am happy of returning to my duty again in 3 or 4 days.

The extent of the damage I have sustained is a ribbed cut over the
 right eye, which lacerates the skull base for 2 or 3 inches without fracturing
 it; and my whole frame but particularly the head, has sustained a
 very violent shock. When it is considered that I fell from a height
 of abt 80 feet perpendicular, this is not to be wondered at, and it
 may be very justly called a truly miraculous escape. As I am

now writing out of 2 or 3 inches of daylight from my left eye, you
 will not blame me for being so concise. I therefore confine myself to
 a few particulars. No person could have been kinder to me than my

Commander who has gone up his Cabin to a large easy bed chair for me
 to sleep in, & I have every respectful attention from my inferiors. The
 Doctor takes me very low of course, and took 4 lbs of blood from my
 arm in the space of 30 hours, on account of my accessions to
 his

No. 3.
His Majesty's Brig Bathurst. Anchor Goulburn Islands.
No. Coast of Australia. Latde. 11° 30' S Lon. 133° 30' Et.
July 7. 1821.

My Dear Sophia,

I feel very grateful that the Almighty has been graciously pleased to spare me to write to you all once more by the Ship *Dick*, which parts Company from us tomorrow morning to prosecute her voyage to Batavia & India.^[1] I have just had one of the most hair-breadth & providential escapes that I suppose ever fell to the lot of man, having fallen from the Brig's fore topmast head to the deck without breaking a single bone in my skin, though you may perceive by the hand in which this is written that I am still very weak.

Nothing whatever should have induced me to write a word about it but the certainty which I am aware exists that the report would find its way to the Rectory and make you all miserable if you did not receive a line from myself. I need therefore make no apology for my manner or style of writing, but earnestly beg you all to rest assured that I am getting round again very fast indeed, & although the accident happened this day week, I am hopes of returning to my duty again in 8 or 10 days.

The extent of the damage I have sustained is a severe cut over the right eye, which laid the skull bare for 2 or 3 inches without fracturing it, and my whole frame but particularly the head, has sustained a very violent shock. When it is considered that I fell from a height of abt. 80 feet perpendicular, this is not to be wondered at, and it may be very justly called a truly miraculous escape. As I am however writing out of 1/2 an inch of daylight from my left eye, you will not blame me for being so concise, & I therefore confine myself to a few particulars. No person could have behaved kinder to me than my Commander, who has given up his Cabin & a large easy bed chair for me to sleep in, & I receive every possible attention from my Messmates.

The Doctor keeps me very low of course, and took 4 lbs. of blood from my arm in the space of 30 hours, in consequence of my answers to [*page 2*] his Questions having at the offset been rather incoherent. All danger he assures me is past, and everyone is astonished at my good fortune. I have seen a man deprived of his existence my dear Sophy, by an accident of far more trifling nature, & you may recollect Mr. Bodman's Son met his Death by a similar fall.^[2] I cannot certainly be too highly sensible of the great & numerous mercies of Almighty God towds. me, particularly since my last departure from

[1]JSR had become very close to Captain Harrison of the *Dick*.

[2] The Bodman family was certainly prominent in Newbury, and clearly acquainted with the Roes.

the happy Rectory, and I must pray that He will be graciously pleased to turn my heart to his ways, & give me a just estimate of their value & importance. I intended to have written a long letter to my dear Sophy from this place, & to have included some account of our voyage along the East Coast of this Country, but as I now write under strict injunctions from Dr. Montgomery not to over strain my eyes, I know you will excuse me.^[3] Another opportunity will probably offer for me to write to you again in 3 or 4 months from the Isle of France, where we expect to be under the necessity of touching for the purpose of re-placing 2 Bower anchors and cables which we parted from in bad weather on the night of my accident. In the mean time pray assure Dear Mother that I am getting on admirably well, and have no doubt Captn. Harrison will give William a very good account of me when he applies for the Box of Curiosities that I have sent him.^[4] Make yourselves very easy on my account my dear girl, & with most affectionate love to Dr. Father & Brothers, believe how sincerely I am your affectionate Brother

John Septimus Roe

Lieutt. King had kindly offered to write to Dr. Father for me but I preferred the present plan, for the reason I have previously given. God bless you all.

[page 3] From Capt. King's Letter to his Mor.

“June 30th. Sorry am I to commence this Sheet with recording out misfortunes. We got underweigh this mornng. from a Safe Anchorage where we had been layg. 3 Days, with some appearance of fine weather but soon afterwds. set in thick wet constant rain and I was obliged to anchor under and Island which I had last year visited & passed a night at anchor off, but affording very bad shelter. However, on bringing to poor Mr Roe, who was at the Mast Head looking out for Shoals & Reefs, was holding by a Rope, which on hauling down the sail attached to it, was somehow let go, & precipitated him headlong from an Height of 80 Feet on Deck. Providentially in his Descent he fell on a Rope, which in some measure broke his Fall – he fell on Deck, & cut a severe wound over his right eye for some time he was senseless, but on being taken below & his wound dressed, I was rendered truly happy to find by the Surgeon's Report that he as sensible and that the wound, although serious, had not any dangerous symptoms – of course every care has & will be paid to him. I have just been assisting the Surgeon in taking some blood from him and I hope before the *Dick* leaves us to send his Friends good Tidings. You will easily imagine what a Damp this has cast upon us but as I shall have

[3] Andrew Montgomery RN, the surgeon on the *Bathurst*.

[4] As described in detail in JSR's letter of 6 June 1821.

From Capt. Kings letter to his mo^r -
"I have so^o sorry and to commence this sheet with recording our misfor-
"tunes. We got underway this morn^g from a safe anchorage where we
"had been lay^g 3 Days, with some appearance of fair weather but it
"soon afterw^{ds} set in thick wet constant rain and I was obliged to
"anchor under an Island which I had last year visited & paid a
"night at anchor off, but affording very bad shelter. However, on
"braving to pass Mt. Ben, who was at the Mast Head looking out for
"Shoals & reefs - was holding by a Rope, which on hauling down the
"sail attached to it, was some low let go, & precipitated him
"headlong from an height of 80 Feet or Deck. Providentially in his
"Descent he fell on a Rope, which in some measure broke his fall he
"fell on Deck, & cut a severe wound over his right eye - for some time
"was insensible, but on being taken below this wound dressed, I was reas-
"ured truly happy to find by the surgeons Report that he was sensible
"and that the wound although serious, had not any dangerous symptoms
"of course every care has & will be paid to him. I have just
"been assisting the surgeon in taking some blood from him
"and I hope before the Deck-leaves us to send his Friends good
"tidings you will easily imagine what a Damp this has cast upon us
"but as I shall have some Time after this to tell you how he goes on, I shall
"at present leave this subject in the Hope of giving better news."
"July 3^d your Brother got up and July 5th Phillip says 'Mr. Roe still
"continues to mend"

The second part of the letter, quoting from PPK.

some Time after this to tell you how he goes on, I shall at present leave this subject in the Hope of giving better news.

July 3d. Your brother got up and July 5th. Phillip says 'Mr. Roe still continues to mend.'"

JULY 1821
/ SEPTEMBER 1821

No. 14
His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*
Port Louis, Isle of France

“Although peace might now be said to exist between the 2 parties, the Savages appeared so sensible of our having consented to it merely because we had no weapons to oppose them with, that we were more like their prisoners than any thing else, & they commenced a kind of running search over our persons, while we walked as quickly as they would permit us towards our party.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Ten pages.

The Rev. James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black “India Letter Deal” and red circular “E 16 Fe. 1822.”

Location: SLNSW, no. 162.

A detailed and quite fascinating letter written from Mauritius. The letter begins with JSR’s recounting of his remarkable recovery from his 80-foot fall from the rigging of the *Bathurst*, and it certainly shows JSR is back up to pace, filling nine pages in his usual neat hand. The letter includes a dramatic retelling of events on shore near the wreck of the *Frederick* at Cape Flinders on Stanley Island (where they were scavenging parts), and of their rough handling by a group of four Aboriginal men. In indignant tones JSR recounts how he and a few others (including PPK) were frogmarched back to the beach: incensed at their treatment, JSR frankly admits that in his warm temper he would have shot one of the men for the insulting way in which his hat was knocked off. The tone of this section is unsettling, the more so as he alludes to the fact that the situation got further out of control when men from another ship sailing in their convoy, the brig *St. Antonio*, later fired on the Aboriginal party despite an uneasy truce having been made.

The letter also includes his thoughts on his fall – “50 thoughts seemed to flash like lightning across my brain” – and the care which he received afterwards. It is easy to sympathise with his relief that Dr. Montgomery did not, after all, trepan him. There is a long passage on conditions at Hanover Bay, where Montgomery was speared and a local man shot in retribution, and a detailed description (including a fine pen drawing) of the spear. The letter finishes up with notes on life in Port Louis, and especially the work JSR had been compelled to do for Capt. Fairfax Moresby RN in preparing yet more charts. As an aside JSR also mentions that he would have had a few more pounds of blood let, were it not for this work (and the lack of any leeches on board). JSR also includes a description of a ball given in Port Louis by the English “Batchelors”, which allows of no doubt that feelings remained rather partisan between the French and the English in Mauritius. In this passage JSR makes some not atypically clumsy remarks on the “solid sterling worth” of English girls compared with their French counterparts, “some of whom paint.”

No. 14.
His Majesty's Brig Bathurst. Port Louis, Isle of France.
September 28th. 1821.

My Dear Father,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I once more embrace an opportunity of writing to all my dear connexions at the happy Rectory, to assure them of my perfect recovery from the severe accident that befel me on the last day of June, when I had the misfortune to fall from our foretopmast head to the deck & nearly broke my head. Little as we are generally accustomed to think of these things when they are blown over, I certainly shall ever be very sensible of the great goodness of the Almighty in saving me, & that I was not killed on the spot, as is usually the case in 9 instances out of 10, under similar circumstances.

I am afraid my last letter to Sophy dated off Goulburn's Islands, North Coast of Australia, must have alarmed you all a little, as it was written 7 or 8 days after the accident happened, when I was till labouring under its effects: but my motive for writing at that time was to prevent the mischief that would arise from your hearing of it from other quarters & supposing that I was too unwell to write myself. Thank God all has ended well, I have a scar through my right eye brow & across the forehead about 3 inches long, which may perhaps serve as an additional claim for Promotion, & some other remuneration; the wound having been received in actual service, during the execution of my duty. I will at all events obtain the necessary certificates from Lieutt. King & the Surgeon Mr. Montgomery of its having taken place at the specified time, & by making use of it at a proper opportunity, may perhaps turn the affair to advantage, making good the old adage that "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good."

I had intended to give some account of our voyage as far as we were accompanied by our old ship the *Dick* off Cape Van Diemen, but the above affair frustrated my purpose, & I will now give you a few of the particular occurrences that befel us; preceding them by saying that we arrived here the day before yesterday after a month's voyage from the NW Coast of Australia (abt. 3800 miles) to replace the anchors we parted from on the night of 30th June. After sailing from Port Jackson on 26th. of May with the best wishes of all our friends there, and accompanied by the *Dick*, Captn. Harrison, bound to Batavia,^[1] we had rather boisterous weather & were gratified at finding that the ample means we had of trying the strength of our new vessel fully equalled our wishes & expectations, and we found her perfectly tight. It was with some difficulty that we kept company sometimes before we entered

[1] JSR's good friend Captain Harrison of the *Dick* had sailed with them en route to Batavia.

among the reefs; but after that time the 2 vessels always anchored every night, and we were joined on our passage by a Brig called the *St. Antonio*, which followed in our track, as we led the way among the intricate navigation of that Sea.^[2] Having twice passed before on the same route, with little deviation, we were well acquainted with the best channels, & through them we led these vessels as well as could have been wished, without meeting with any thing particularly worthy of notice here until our arrival at the wreck of the Ship *Frederick* in Latde. 14° S. on 21st. September.^[3]

Here we stopped 3 days to procure spars, timber, & other useful parts of the wreck, which we might hereafter find serviceable during the period of 12 months that we expected to be absent from Port Jackson, & which we had not been able to procure at that place. On the day after our arrival at this spot, we had communication with some natives in rather an unpleasant manner, which cannot be more fully described than by giving the copy of my Journal for that day; which is as follows:

“Friday June 22. 1821. At 4 o’clock this morning the Carpenter was dispatched to the *Frederick’s* Wreck under Cape Flinders, with a party of hands to select spars & planking that might be of service to us in case of accident, and an hour afterwards I accompanied Lieutt. King, & Mr. Harrison, the Commander of the *Dick*, to the wreck for the same purpose. We found not more than 1/2 the quantity of timber that had been left there by us last year, and the stern frame & bows, which had not then been broken to pieces, were now found intermixed in the general confusion which strewed the beach. The *Dick’s* jib-boom, which she [~~was~~] sprang off Cape Grafton, was now replaced by a spar for another; & besides a great many bolts, sheaves, blocks, cross ties, strike nails, &c., we procured some excellent teak timbers & planking & masts, yards & booms of pine, to replace any that might hereafter be found defective on board the *Bathurst*, & which we should have no chance whatever of [~~finding~~] finding on the Northwest Coast of this Country (whither we were bound).

While these selections were being made in readiness for sending onboard after breakfast, Lieutt. King & Mr. Harrison separated from the party, & walked over towards the opposite side of Wreck Bay with their fowling pieces, each pursuing a different route. The latter was attended by 2 of his boat’s crew, without arms, & had arrived nearly at the opposite side of the bay, which is about a mile & a half wide, when he was alarmed by the shout-

[2] The brig *St. Antonio* (Capt. Heming).

[3] The *Frederick* (Capt. John Williams) was a Batavia-built merchantmen which wrecked on Cape Flinders, Stanley Island, under Williams’ command in August 1818 (Charles Bateson, *Australian Shipwrecks*; report in the *Sydney Gazette*, 15 May 1819, p. 2).

ing of many armed natives on the hill immediately over his head, who threw 5 or 6 spears at him & his men, as they made a precipitate retreat across the extensive flat that lines the bay. Four of the Natives, armed with 2 or 3 spears each, followed them, while the others took a more circuitous route, as if to cut them off. The fowling piece of Mr. H. unfortunately missed fire several times, as did also that of Lieutt. K. (who heard the shouting, & had joined in about 4 or 5 minutes), their powder having been wetted by running through the pools of shoal water on the flat.

I was at the wreck when the shouting commenced, and instantly comprehending what was going forward, I called as loudly as I could for any of the Boat's crew that might be within hearing with muskets; but no one answering me, I seized a good serviceable steel as the best weapon within reach, and with all possible dispatch hastened over the flat towards Lieutt. King, to increase his number, though not his strength – arriving near them, I perceived they were closely pushed by the natives, who were throwing their barbed spears whenever opportunity offered for their taking good aim, as our party made a gradual retreat backwards. The oldest of the *Dick's* men had just been wounded through one of his fingers, by a spear that would have gone through his body, had he not received it in a hat which he was carrying full of shells. Being an old Man of War's man, he felt & expressed himself highly indignant at not being able to return this; but having no alternative, he hastened after the other man who had ran for assistance at the early part of the affray, & I joined the 2 gentlemen just as Lieutt. King was re-loading his piece, after having fired ineffectually with small shot at the nearest Native, who was 50 or 60 yards distant.

Perceiving this [*page 2*] man take a deliberate aim at him, he levelled his piece again at the fellow, though it was not loaded, & it had the effect of diverting his aim to Mr. Harrison, who had just received a pin from me to prick his touchhole, & we both avoided it narrowly by jumping quickly on one side – his piece, however, would not go off (the powder being wet) nor was Lieutt. King more fortunate; for, in the hurry of re-loading, the wadding had got abreast of the touchhole, & rendered the piece useless until drawn with a worm. We were now reduced to the last extremity for want of weapons of defence, (the natives following us up within 40 & 50 yards, making a great noise), & to have made a precipitate retreat would have been certain destruction; for our ~~boats~~ men being out of hearing at the boats round the high rocky point at the wreck, not one of them was in sight. The only chance therefore of escaping with our lives from these merciless savages (who had commenced their attack without any apparent provocation) was to endeavour to make peace with them; this was accordingly effected, though rather

unexpectedly, by my throwing down my stick, which there appeared no chance whatever of my getting near enough to make use of, and holding out my arms with open ~~arms~~ hands, to shew myself unarmed, as I advanced towards them.

I must confess that I expected nothing else than a spear from each of them & was prepared accordingly, but it fortunately had the contrary effect, for they immediately dropped their spears, & on the nearest man patting his breast with an open flat hand, I imitated the motion as a sign of friendship; which being repeated by all present, seemed to complete the truce. Knowing the treacherous disposition of the Australians I could not but distrust them, even at this time, for they kept their spears poised & pointed to us, in readiness to throw on the slightest impulse, & we were completely in their power. They were perfectly naked, and smeared with red or yellow ochre, or mud, by way of making themselves look fierce I suppose, and one of them had a treble row of sharks' teeth slung by a hole in each on a piece of string round his neck. The oldest & tallest man was about 40 years of age, 5 feet 10 inches high, surly & very suspicious, with a bushy chin, & face powdered with charcoal dust; the next was about 10 years younger, 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, & of a more robust stout construction, the top of his head caked with mud which he appeared to have placed there after the commencement of their attack; the other 2 were lads of 16 & 18 years of age, very slightly made, who were very active throwing spears & making violent gesticulations with legs, arms, & weapons, in which they seemed to be encouraged by the men.

Although peace might now be said to exist between the 2 parties, the Savages appeared so sensible of our having consented to it merely because we had no weapons to oppose them with, that we were more like their prisoners than any thing else, & they commenced a kind of running search over our persons, while we walked as quickly as they would permit us towards our party. The man about 30 years of age, with 3 spears in his right hand, caught hold of the corner of my handkerchief as it hung out of my pocket with his left hand, & began to grow very angry when I attempted to draw it from him. Finding the fellow determined to possess this novelty, I was compelled to relinquish it, or run a pretty certain chance of being speared; while the other gentlemen were treated in a similar manner, and we kept every thing as close as possible, in order to ~~xxxx~~ prevent their taking a fancy to our watches & clothes, which would unavoidably have shared the same fate. Four or 5 black women had by this time closed up pretty near to the party, and one of them 18 or 19 years of age, being called by name, ran from among the rest & was offered to us by the old man, offering herself at the same time by words & signs which we could not misunderstand.

As we have ever had good reason to suspect them of treachery when similar offers have been made on former occasions, we paid no farther attention to their offer than by putting up the hand & shaking the head to decline it, & Madam walked away, perhaps somewhat piqued at the apparent slight with which her sable charms had been treated. She was a good looking girl, perfectly naked, somewhat above the middle size, & wore a string of something round her neck; but the slight glance I took of her did not enable me to perceive whether she wore any other ornaments or not. As we walked quick, & the Natives occasionally dropped behind us, it was necessary to keep a watchful eye upon them; but it was several times very doubtful whether they would allow us to proceed at all: for they did all in their power to detain Lieutt. King & myself occasionally, by keeping fast hold of our Jackets, until we used all the violence that could in prudence be exerted, to shake them off. We at length got as far as the wreck, by dint of perseverance & amusing them with endeavouring to guess at what we were saying to them, making motions at same time of our going to get something to eat, & inviting them by signs to follow as we proceeded along the water's edge, in hopes of seeing a boat or party of men coming round to our assistance. The 2 men & one of the lads giving their spears to the other lad, proceeded with us along the rocks, carrying in their hands the sticks with which they throw their spears, & which would act as wooden swords if found requisite, being sharp at both sides & 3 feet in length & at this time they shewed great attention & assiduity in assisting us along the rocks; for the sole of one of my shoes having nearly separated from the upper leather, I slipped several times during our rapid but rugged progress from rock to rock. I was supported on either side by a Native who walked alongside of me holding up my arms. One of these was the eldest lad, who but a few minutes previous I would certainly have shot if I had been possessed of a musket or pistol, for having in the most insulting manner knocked my hat off my head with his spear, while behind me, & then presented the latter at me to defy me to resent it. Such an insult I could very ill brook, although from an armed man at whose mercy I was placed; but being determined he should not have the hat, I caught hold of it at the same instant as himself, & snatched it from his hand, being ready to have knocked him down with my fist if he had attempted to throw his spear: he however retreated back to the old man, who seemed to rebuke him, either for what he had done or for having betrayed fear in presence of an unarmed opponent: & he did not dare repeat it, or I do not know what my natural warmth of temper might not have prompted me to do to the fellow.

When the vessels came in sight round the point, about a mile & and a half distant, the Natives viewed them as if they had seen them before, without

Overleaf: JSR's own plan of Endeavour River, published by the Admiralty in 1826. NLA.

RIVER,

Cochechooset

the above dis-



any loud expressions of surprise; & Mr. Harrison who (for reasons which it is unnecessary to mention here) was some distance ahead of Lieutt. King & me, made all possible haste in his fast pulling Deal gig,^[4] for the ostensible purpose of obtaining a ~~supply~~ supply of arms from the vessel. The men that had been dispatched for the Boat crew to our assistance, were obliged to remain by the Boat with the rest for want of arms, the only musket that was onshore having been accidentally left at the wreck, & a boat having by mistake taken 2 muskets off to the Brig but a few minutes before. We therefore found all our men in the water up to their knees, ready for immediate embarkation, expecting, by the women & lads appearing in the pathway we usually occupied on our passage over to the wreck, that Lieutt. King & I had been taken prisoners or killed. In this they were not undeceived until we appeared in view, but the Natives having become very boisterous & clamorous for our departure when they once more obtained possession of their spears, we thought it imprudent to embark, as [page 3] felt confident they would have thrown spears into the Boat.

Another of our boats appearing round the point, with 1/2 the *Bathurst's* crew to take off spars, made us feel a little more at ease, as they had been informed by Mr. Harrison that we were taken Prisoners & were pulling as hard as they could to our assistance. They soon landed with 8 or 10 muskets, & we then walked over to secure the musket that was at the wreck, the Natives keeping at a respectable distance. As we were now able to act on the offensive, it was the intention of Lieutt. King to endeavour & ~~seize~~ seize the young man that had thrown the first 2 spears, & who appeared to be the greatest aggressor throughout the affair, in order to make an example of him, by detaining him for a day or 2, & frightening the young savage by threats. To do this it became necessary that we should seize the men who carried the spears in order to prevent mischief & save bloodshed if possible. They however seemed aware of our intention, & having sent forward the women across the flat towards the spot from which they emerged, they kept a sharp look out upon us as we accepted a forced invitation they gave us to accompany them, and we found no opportunity of carrying our purpose into effect without firing at them – which we wished to avoid. We therefore returned to the wreck, to await a better opportunity, after accompanying the Savage 1/2 way across the flat.

The party who had been onshore early in the morning then returned on-board to breakfast (& the Commander of the *Dick*, who had left us in such a perilous situation was only then landing again from his Ship, with some muskets, after an absence of upwards of an hour. However as every thing had

[4] A “light, narrow, clinker-built ship’s boat, adapted either for rowing or sailing” (OED).

fortunately ended well, we said nothing about having been deserted by a man for whose safety we had risked our lives; and as he was a very good fellow in every other respect, we endeavoured to forget that he was no fighting character, & returned to breakfast with him onboard the *Dick*. This of course I have not included in my Journal). Upon our quitting the shore for the *Dick*, Mr. Bedwell was left in command of the working party, with orders from Lieutt. King to carry the above purpose into effect if the Natives again came down to them, but to avoid firing at them unless in self-defence. A number of men from the *Dick* & *St. Antonio* also landed to procure spars from the wreck, & made the number amount to about 50, including 30 muskets.

About an hour after our departure from the shore, while the feelings of the Seamen were still irritated with the recollection of one of their shipmates having been so undeservedly wounded, the natives again made their appearance across the flat, to the number of 4 or 5, & were met by 16 or 18 men belonging to the *Dick* & *St. Antonio* (over whom Mr. B. had no controul). I am informed that they appeared to come in a friendly manner; for they laid down their spears & from a bag threw several of a species of eatable fruit towards the Europeans, some of whom laid down their muskets to fetch them, while others belonging to the *St. Antonio* (who take more delight in a quarrel of this nature than in having a peaceable intercourse with these deluded savages) took a circuitous walk to get behind them & cut them off, the remainder at the same time being under no controul, closed so fast upon them, that they found themselves in danger of being taken, & one of them took up a stone or shell & threw it at or towards one of the Mates of the *St. Antonio* who was nearest to him, & who immediately returned it. This caused a 2d. stone to be thrown from another Native, & a firing immediately commenced at the distance of 50 yards from the Natives, who instantly took to their heels & ran for their lives, without daring to attempt throwing their spears. No less than 14 or 15 muskets were fired, & strange to say, not one man was brought down, & only one wounded with buck-shot in the legs, which did not prevent his running, a circumstance almost as disgraceful to the European party concerned as their behaviour at the commencement. The 4 Natives ran as fast as their legs would carry them towards the opposite side of the Bay, where they were joined by several more, & the whole going over the hill as if the Devil was after them, probably left the island in their canoes, for they have not since been seen or heard of.

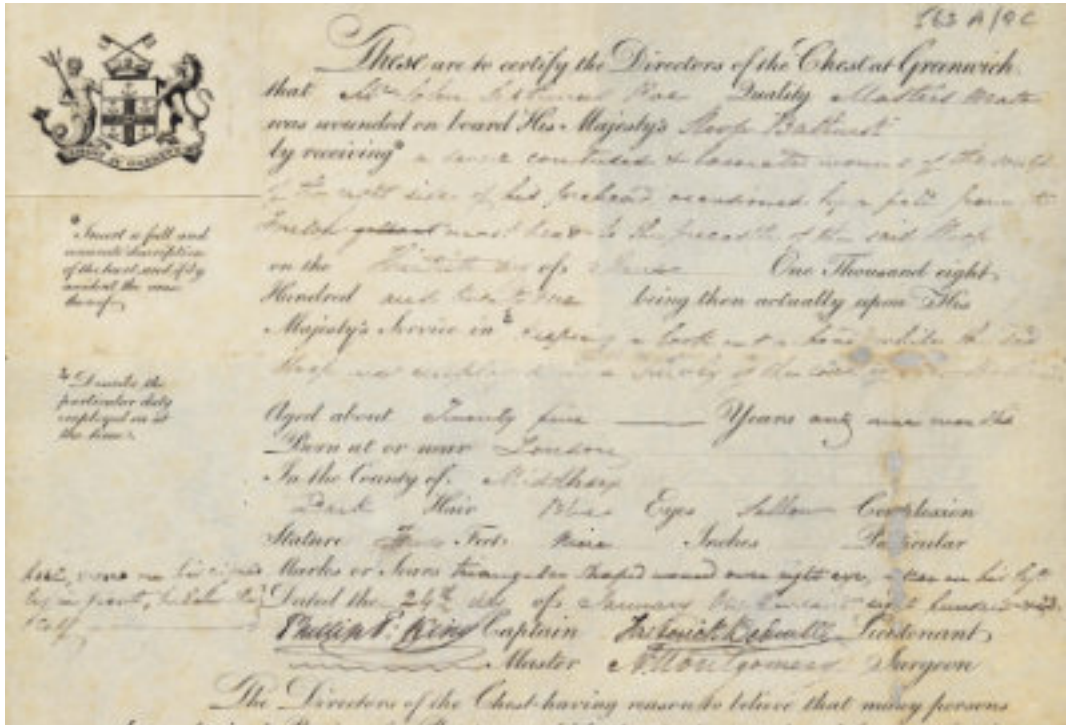
It is greatly to be regretted that we could not part in a friendly manner from these men, as it may be the means of some mischief being done to future navigators who may visit these islands without being aware of the hostile spirit & disposition of the Natives. The 1st. attack having been made by

them, & 5 or 6 spears thrown before a shot was fired either by Lieutt. King or Mr. Harrison certainly places them in the situation of aggressors, who would fully have deserved the fate that would have befallen them, had the gentlemen's firearms been in good condition & not wet. The poor opinion which they must now entertain of our Musketry may also embolden them on future occasions & lead to fatal consequences: but it is to be hoped they will not have an opportunity. Previous to going onshore in the morning I had put a small pistol in my pocket, together with 8 or 10 rounds of ammunition, but upon attempting to load it had rusted in the worm & I could not unscrew the barrel. This induced me to leave it in the boat, which as events turned out, may be considered a fortunate circumstance."

Thus ends my journal for June 22, 1821, & I need not express my hope that the sentiments which I have expressed in one part of it may go no farther than our family circle. We considered ourselves fortunate in getting clear of these Savages, who appear to have no other spring of action than the mere impulse of the moment, which induces them to throw their spears merely because the object is retreating from them, & without being able to assign any reasonable cause. I certainly thought Lieutt. King & I should not have been able to regain the boats at one period, when the Natives did all in their power to stop us, & it required little short of actual violence to prevent it, but I have dwelt much too long on this subject, & must proceed with a running account of our voyage. At the commencement of our intricate navigation among the reefs, which we reached about a fortnight after leaving Port Jackson, Lieutt. King arranged matters so that I was to keep no watch (Night or Day) as formerly, but to be on the lookout all day, & assist him in carrying on the Survey (both of which I always did on our former voyages).

My duty was therefore lightened considerably by having 6 or 7 hours regular sleep nearly every night, witht. being obliged to rouse out except in cases of necessity; this enable me to do considerably more towards assisting Lieutt. King than formerly, and I took the station which he usually occupied at the mast head while running among the reefs off the NE coast, to see the vessel steered clear of danger. It was on the afternoon of one of these days, when we had been obliged to run with very thick blowing weather, past the most intricate part of our Navigation, that the accident befell me, which had nearly proved fatal. I had been as usual at the mast head all day with very little intermission, looking out for shoal water with my glass, & had been wet & dry 7 or 8 times before we arrived at a place called Cairncross Island, where it was proposed the 3 vessels should bring up & anchor for the night.

We were leading the way into the best anchorage, & were passing within 1/2 a mile of a reef that extended for a considerable distance off the island, when I thought I saw shoal water ahead, & was so intent upon its examination with



Detail of JSR's official notice of having been injured on service.
 SLWA ACC 563AD/9C

my small opera glass in one hand & holding on by the jib halliards in the other, that I did not hear Lieutt. King give orders for hauling down the jib, & when the halliards were let go they jerked me forward so instantaneously that I had not time to catch hold of any other rope, & away went poor I down a perpendicular height of about 80 feet. 'Tis not an easy thing to describe the feelings of a person in the very Jaws of Death, nor can I describe mine, for my senses soon left me, & all I remember is having called on the Almighty to deliver or save me, & 50 thoughts seemed to flash like lightning across my brain during the period of this short ejaculation. Providence certainly steered me, for I fell on the only clear part of the fore-castle where there was not a chance of breaking every bone in my skin, & my head having struck against some teak planks that were lashed across the deck, they gave me the only wound I received, turned me completely [page 4] round on my back, & I landed with my head about 1/2 a foot from one of the guns.

Being in an instant all over blood, my messmates & every one else thought it was all over with me, & I was carried, apparently lifeless, into the Cabin, where Dr. Montgomery examined me & brought me to in some measure, but

as I continued to talk very incoherently, & give strange answers to his questions, he took a great quantity of blood from me & I became gradually better. The *Dick* was hailed & Dr. Armstrong R.N.^[5] who was going Home in her came onboard & I believe no one was more gratified than Lieutt. King at finding that the 2 Surgeons did not apprehend any immediate danger from the accident, except in case of fever or internal injury. Never shall I forget the kindness & humanity of Lieutt. King & Dr. Montgomery on this occasion, and the readiness with which the former gave me up his cabin, as more convenient than my own for sleeping in. I could not have been treated with greater attention if I had been his brother, and hope I shall ever feel grateful to him for it.

The night of the accident was particularly unfortunate for us, for we had [anchor]d. in a hurry after I fell, & not having a good [*struck out*] position under the lee of the island & its reef, a heavy swell set in with an increase of wind, the vessel pitching very heavy. Before midnight it blew very hard in squalls & we parted the cable. Another anchor was immediately let go, with a patent chain cable bent to it, but this also broke shortly afterwards, leaving us only one more. Lieutt. King was determined not to risk the loss of this, & although the night was very dark, he resolved upon keeping under weigh as long as he could. Sail was accordingly made upon the vessel, & by firing muskets, burning blue lights, false fires, &c., occasionally, the merchant ships answered them & hoisted lights at their mast heads, by which we able to perceive our situation as we stood off & on. We lost 100 fathoms of chain cable with the last anchor that we parted from, & to replace these anchors is ~~one of~~ the principal reasons for our visiting this Island.

As we perceived the other 2 vessels were driving from their anchors, this dark & dismal night was, as you may well imagine, spent by all hands in a most anxious state, & in momentary expectation of hearing guns of distress. Although on my beam ends, with only an occasional glimmering of reason in my poor head, I was sensible of what was going forward, but the Almighty once more protected us & delivered us out of the dilemma, for by keeping a good lookout, & sounding constantly, we steered clear of all the numerous dangers that surrounded us, & at break of day were joined by the *Dick* & *St. Antonio*, the former having parted from an anchor as well as ourselves, & the latter having drifted upwards of a mile from her first anchorage. Before the evening of the same day we were fortunate enough to clear all the dangers of this intricate labyrinth of reefs, & passed safely through Torres Strait round the northern extreme of New South Wales or Australia.

[5] Another brief mention of Dr. Armstrong, a Fellow of the Linnean Society and a keen amateur phrenologist.

For some days I suffered much from the violent shock I had received, my head seemed split in 2, & I was nearly on the point of undergoing the operation of trepanning, but symptoms appearing more favourable deprived me of that pleasure, & I gradually recovered so far as to be permitted to sit up a day or 2 before I scrawled my last laboured letter to my dear Sophy, which I trust will be the last that any of you will receive under similar circumstances. Sincerely do I trust that it had the effect I intended it should, & that you were all satisfied with the assurances I gave. My strength gradually increased after I was permitted the use of nourishing food, but my jaws were so very sore with the rattling they had received & the pieces which I had broken off 4 of my teeth, that I could masticate nothing & lived on weak broth & boiled bread.

On the 5th. of August we touched at Goulburn Islands on the North Coast of Australia for water, but the places at which we had on former occasions procured it were now perfectly dry, & we were obliged to quit without obtaining any. This is the place at which we have always found the Natives so extremely hostile on 3 former voyages, & where 8 or 9 of them so nearly cut me off last year. We obtained a supply of firewood, without seeing any of them, & it was supposed there were none on the island – but the 2 Surgeons went onshore there with their fowling pieces on the afternoon preceding the departure of the vessels, & while the 2 men (who ought to have been taking care of the boat) were strolling along the beach about 200 yards off, 6 or 8 Natives ran down to the boat out of the woods & seizing hold of a new boat-cloak, the boat-hook & 2 of the oars, made off with them into the woods as hard as they could pelt.

The boats crew perceiving them while they were making off, fired a musket at them, & they dropped the 2 oars, but got clear off with the other things before a 2d. could be discharged at them, to the no small mortification of Captn. Harrison when he heard of it. This shews the daring villainy of these fellows, & the manner in which they watch us. They were not afterwards seen, or they would perhaps have paid dearly for their temerity. Off Cape Van Diemen in Longde. 130° East, we sent all our letters & packages, &c., onboard the *Dick*, & a feeling of real regret seemed to pervade every bosom when we parted company, having been so long together, & known each other so intimately I really believe Captn. Harrison to possess as kind & warm a heart as any man breathing, notwithstanding what I have said; & to me he has behaved very kind indeed, making me free offers of any thing he had onboard that would add to my comfort, & several times proposed that as Dr. Armstrong was onboard his Ship, I should take up my quarters there as long as the Ships remained together; not only because his spacious cabin afforded

more room, but the motion of the *Bathurst* was much greater than that of a larger Ship, & consequently not so pleasant for my head. They gave us 3 cheers as we parted Company, & it was returned by us in as hearty a strain, which they steered to the NWd. for Batavia, & we prosecuted our voyage to the SWd., for that part of the Coast at which our Surveying was to recommence.

On our way thither, by passing on a different route, we corrected several parts which had previously been seen by us only at a great distance, & we anchored off Careening Bay, where we last year laid the little *Mermaid* onshore to stop her leaks. I was not well enough to go onshore at this time, but Lieutt. King & a party of the Gentlemen having landed found every thing nearly as we had left them, the places at which he had pitched our tents were still observable, & a sheet of copper upon which I had inscribed the Cutter's name, & the year in which she visited that part, was found still affixed to the same tree on which I had nailed it last year.^[6] All the freshwater places were found dry here also, & we were obliged to go to a large River a few leagues farther on, which was named last year after the Prince Regent, & which is near the one that Lieutt. King was so kind as to name after yourself. Here fresh water was found in great abundance at a cascade 100 feet high & 40 feet broad, & the River was traced several miles farther towards its source than had been ascertained last year, until the boat being conveyed over 2 fresh water rapids could proceed no farther. The banks of the River from being very high & steep & rising abruptly began to wear a more fertile & pleasing aspect, & there can be very little doubt that Roe's River is the same, had opportunity offered of making farther examination.

We have every reason to suppose that the 2 Rivers take their rise from the same elevated country, as they were both left inclining towards each other, though 30 or 40 miles apart. The boats having a laborious row of upwards of 20 miles to the Cascade in P.R. River, & 20 miles to return, we should have knocked up our men by endeavouring to complete water there, & we did not therefore obtain more than 2 turns, but sailed as soon as possible to carry on our Survey, which recommences from the Entrance of this River, and extends in a SWly. direction towards the NW. Cape. A few days afterwards, while at anchor in a place named by us Hanover Bay, we had another unpleasant interview with the Natives, which terminated more unfortunately for both parties than the one I have already recounted, for our Surgeon Dr. Montgomery was severely wounded by a spear in the back, & we were obliged to shoot one of them as a punishment for their base & treacherous conduct. Luckily for me, the wound in my head being green at the time, I

[6] The famous "Mermaid Tree" at Careening Bay, a boab, still has the incised letters "HMC Mermaid 1820" clearly legible.

had not yet obtained the Surgeon's permission to go onshore, except on a sandy beach to take astronomical observations, & was therefore prevented from being present, [*page 5*] as I certainly should have been, had it been otherwise. But as I have been obliged to commence another sheet, the particulars of this affair, taken from my rough journal, will shew you the treachery & cowardice of the Australians in general, & serve to illustrate their almost universal character.

"Tuesday. Augt. 7. 1821. Soon after breakfast 3 Natives made their appearance to the Eastward, & their calls being answered by our Port Jackson friend Bundle,^[7] at 11 o'clock Lieutt. King went onshore to communicate with them, accompanied by Dr. Montgomery & Messrs. Bedwell & Baskerville. They took some biscuit & a few of the fish that were caught with the seine last night, as presents, & Bundle formed one of the Boats crew of 4 hands. As the boat neared the shore (which was rugged, steep, & consisted of large rocks & stones, with bushes interspersed among them), the Natives slowly retired up the hill as if unwilling to hazard an interview with so many strangers, & carried with them their spears, of which each had 3 or 4. But when some of the Gentlemen had landed with Bundle, & advanced towards them with open arms & hands, they laid their spears down, & suffered the party to approach without offering to retreat.

One of the 3, which the gentlemen had reason to suppose was a female, was however ordered by the others to retire, & the remaining 2 held the conference. They were well made men about 35 years of age, & one of them abt. 6 feet 4 inches high, with a long bushy beard & perfectly naked; the other was not so tall by several inches but had his black hair tied up in a bunch at the top, & he wore a small knot or tassel of hair in front, suspended from a cord round his loins, apparently for the same purpose as our common Father, Adam, wore his apron of fig-leaves, but I apprehend not with equal effect. The teeth of both were represented to be perfect & fine & their shins were very severely lacerated or tatoed after the manner of all the Australians, in long stripes raised about 1/2 an inch above the common skin, on their arms, legs, back, breast, shoulders, &c. The tallest man had in his hand a stick (called a "Waddie", or break-head, at Port Jackson) about 2 feet in length, an inch & 1/4 in diam. & sharply pointed at both ends to answer either as a club or a double dagger for close quarters; & at such times, in the hands of a man so quick in his motions as an Australian, this would be a formidable weapon. He parted with it to Lieutt. King who had given him some biscuit, & who immediately gave him a clasp knife in return; but on making a

[7] "Bundle" or Bondel, a well-known man in Sydney, a regular on colonial vessels (see a good biography online at the Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie site hosted by Macquarie University).

motion for the knife again, it was returned & he was shewn its use by pointing the end of the stick with it to a greater nicety & precision than before.

Lieutt. King supposes that the Natives did not like to see the knife opened & shut for this purpose of explanation, for he immediately perceived the man shifting his hand gradually along towards the middle of one of his spears, (all of which they had taken up soon after the party joined them) & the other had previously poised his spear at Mr. Baskerville, while the latter was advancing towards him at the commencement of the interview. None of the party had taken any muskets with them from the boat in order to prevent the appearance of hostile intentions, but Lieutt. King had a brace of small pistols in his pocket & Dr. Montgomery carried a loaded pistol in a belt round his waist. The knife having been shut & returned to the Native, Dr. M. came up to the party with some fish in his hand which he had brought from the boat, & which he distributed equally among the 2 Men, & the one with his hair tied up gave Bundle a small fillet made of bark which he wore round his head. Thus every thing passed very well, & after having conversed somewhat unintelligibly for about 1/2 an hour, the party turned their backs to go to the boat, but such was the consummate treachery of these brutes who scarcely deserve to be ranked among the human species that they began to throw spears while the party were yet within 12 or 15 yards, presuming upon their unarmed state & inoffensive conduct. Such an act of cowardly baseness was so totally unexpected by the party that Dr. M. received a spear in the middle of his back, a little to the right of the back-bone, & another struck a stone at the foot of Mr. Baskerville.

Dr. M. was nearly knocked down with the violence of the blow. He immediately called out "Good God, I'm speared", & drawing out the spear with both his hands, he had strength enough to turn round & fire his pistol at the Native who struck him, but unfortunately it did not take effect, for the cowardly rascals not daring to stop longer than to throw one spear each, darted like lightning among the trees behind them, & were out of sight in an instant. Lieutt. King however got one of his pocket pistols to go off, though he thinks without doing any good, & the other missed fire. Bundle (the Port Jackson black) snatched up one of the spears, & in a very spirited manner ran a little way off after the brutal cowards, while some of the other gentlemen threw stones after them, but unfortunately the instantaneous call that was made to the boat for muskets could not be attended to before they were out of reach.

I had witnessed the whole of these proceedings with a spy glass, & immediately on the spears being thrown I manned the small whale boat & with 6 hands armed pushed off to the assistance of the party suspecting that the same base treachery might have placed another party of Natives in ambush,

but unfortunately our hopes of punishing these miscreants as they deserved were disappointed, & we saw no more of them. Dr. M. being assisted into the boat was conveyed onboard as soon as possible in a very weak state, where his wound was dressed, he was bled, put to bed, & every thing done that we thought conducive to his recovery. He however lies very weak, & from the appearance of some unpleasant symptoms we cannot avoid entertaining alarming apprehensions that his liver or kidneys have been wounded, & that in the event of his becoming too faint to give personal directions, his case will require more surgical skill than we are masters of, but there is a Divine Providence that has hitherto been ~~so~~ manifestly watchful over us in all our troubles & difficulties, & so that Almighty Power we still look for a continuance of favor & protection.

The 2 spears that were thrown have been brought onboard & measure about 12 or 14 feet in length, without barbs, & are rather heavily made. They were thrown by the hand, nor had the Natives any of the throwing skills that are in such general use for discharging these weapons in nearly every other part of this country. After returning onboard the Brig, I landed with Messrs. Bedwell & Baskerville to obtain the meridian altitude of the Sun at the sandy beach I visited yesterday, which is about 3 or 400 yards from the scene of the above affray, but that circumstance occupied so much ~~of my~~ time that we were too late for the desired observation, & returned without having seen any of our black friends, as we were well prepared for the pleasure of repaying them for their kindness to our messmate." This is all that the Journal for that day says of this affair, but on the day after, we had the gratification of punishing the same monsters, while they were in the act of repeating the scene of the preceding day. I must however relate it in as few words as possible, or my paper as well as your patience will very speedily be expended. I must give you an extract from that day's long-winded Journal, my recollection of the circumstances not permitting me to give you a running account of them.

"Wednesday Augt. 8. 1821. We remained at our yesterday's anchorage in the bottom of Hanover Bay during the whole of this day, intending to have sent away the watering party when the tide should suit after they had fined, but soon after 11 o'clock in the forenoon we had the pleasure of seeing 3 Native men (or 2 men & a woman) with a little boy, land on a point of the main that leads to Munster Water, & which is about 1/3 mile from our anchorage. They went onshore in 2 canoes or catamarans, which the supposed woman secured in a little sandy bay, while the 2 men walked alongshore with spears in their hands, towards the spot at which yesterday's interview had taken place. We soon recognised them with our glasses to be the same that had behaved with so much baseness & treachery yesterday, & they were now bent

upon a repetition of the scene, for they went to the same trees as before, placed their spears close at hand within arm's length & then began calling out as before to attract our notice. This was an opportunity not to be passed over for punishing them as they merited, therefore manning both our whale boats, & carrying a musket or brace of pistols for every man, in case of any treacherous attempt at surprize from an looked for quarter, I accompanied Lieutt. King in one boat towards them, while the other, in which were Messrs. Bedwell & Baskerville, received orders to push off & secure the catamarans as soon as we arrived near the shore, or if the Natives ran away.

The latter having seated themselves on some commanding rocks with their faces towards us, endeavoured by signs to persuade us that there were not armed; and as we now considered ourselves perfectly justified in using any means to get them in our power we made the same motion of [*page 6*] holding our arms & hands, though our fire arms laid ready loaded on the seats of the boat. They sat awaiting our approach with apparent confidence & unconcern until we had arrived about 100 yards of them & within 5 or 6 yards of the large stones that formed the landing, when being apprehensive that they would run away if we advanced towards them with muskets, the boat was laid broadside on to the shore, & seizing hold of our muskets before they had time to see what we were about, 3 or 4 were fired at them, to make [] of our men while they were within reach.

They appeared not aware of our intention while we were taking aim at them, & were probably exulting in the idea of having once more entrapped us in their net; but as soon as the first discharge was over, one fell 8 or 10 feet down the perpendicular rock upon which they were seated, & the other not being touched, sprang upon his feet in an instant & had retreated out of sight before the promiscuous running fire with muskets & pistols touched him. The first one was wounded in the right shoulder or upper part of that arm, though he was at first supposed to have been killed, but he soon shewed signs of life by watching his opportunity to get up & run away; for having fallen into a hole among the large massy stones, only his head occasionally appeared popping up & down, & we endeavoured, by pointing our muskets, to keep him there until we could land & secure him. He however was wise enough to avoid this, by springing on his feet & up the steep rock, with surprising activity; & by crouching his body he was out of sight behind the rocks before the boats crew had fired more than 3 or 4 more shots at him without effect. My musket having unfortunately missed fire 3 times, I did not get a shot at either of them, or I should have felt no greater repugnance at doing it, than at shooting any other Murderers, or Mad Dogs, &c.

Concluding that they would immediately make for their catamarans for the purpose of crossing the water again & making their escape, we made all possible haste in that direction to secure them both, & landed there almost as soon as the other whale boat, but the Natives had not ventured near them. Here we found 2 catamarans hauled up on the beach, with 15 or 16 spears upon each; & a little higher up among a grove of pandanus trees, we had the good luck to fall in with what appeared to constitute the whole of these people's treasure, & which it will cost them a considerable length of time & great trouble to replace. Having stationed some of the men to get the spears into the boats & to take the catamarans in tow, the remainder of the party covered them & scoured the adjoining thickets, while the whole of the utensils, &c. &c. were conveyed to the boats.

This being effected, the boats were sent round to the spot from which we fired at the Natives, while Lieutt. King, Messrs. Bedwell, Baskerville & Myself, with 1/2 a dozen men & Bundle the Port Jackson Native, all armed with muskets, walked overland to the same place, in hopes of falling in with some more of the Natives, & that if there was any body of them they might be emboldened by the absence of our boats to make their appearance – but in this we were disappointed, for the strictest search we could make into every hole that was capable of holding a man was fruitless. However, the traces of blood upon the stones were observed as we walked along, & we followed them up smartly for about a mile & a half, until they disappeared at the edge of a swampy muddy morass, where the feet marks of 2 men in the mud plainly indicated the route they had taken. As this direction was towards the hills all farther search would have proved fruitless. We therefore retraced our steps towards the boats, & on arriving at the spot where the Native had been wounded, the severity of the injury he had received was sufficiently conspicuous from the quantity of blood that he had lost, & which was streaming down the rocks. It was satisfactory to find that the wounded man was the same that had wounded Dr. M. yesterday, with a spear, though I am of opinion that we should have been perfectly justified in shooting them both had we been able, & which would certainly have been accomplished, had not the motion of the boat prevented the possibility of our taking a correct aim, for the intention of both was undoubtedly the same, although the spear of one fell harmlessly.

On our return to the brig, we had the opportunity of examining more minutely into the Nature of our prize, & found as the most curious object of all, 7 or 8 heads for spears, made of stone like flint or dark coloured quartz, 5 or 6 inches in length, 1 1/4 & 1 1/2 inches in the broadest part, & 1/4 of an

inch thick, most finely pointed, & jagged like a saw at both edges, in such a manner as to make a most desperate wound. The following is a rough representation of one, as it is fixed with gum, to the head of the spear shaft, the latter having an incision made to receive it.

One of these spears was found near the catamarans, standing ready for use against a tree, & the other heads (10 or 12, of which I got one) were carefully wrapped up in hair & soft bark of a tree for their better preservation.”

Then follows a long account of description of the several utensils, implements, &c., which we captured, & which the want of room & interest to you all induces me to leave out. They consisted of 6 or 7 stone hatchets, 10 or 12 spear heads, 35 spears besides 3 picked up where the Native was shot, several fishing lines & hooks, thread made of human hair, other thread, &c. of animal hair, large shells for carrying water, bark buckets for the same purpose, several throwing sticks, clubs, particular kind of wood for creating fire by fric-



Detail of JSR's drawing of the spear.

tion, kangaroo bones for opening oysters, &c., gum for making spears, different coloured pigments for painting themselves with, 3 or 4 bunches of feathers similar to those mentioned in a former part of my letter, a great quantity of wild figs, turtle's eggs, bark for making rope, 2 catamarans, & several small things not worth mentioning, except a small piece of iron hoop converted into a kind of chisel, & fitted into a handle. This we suppose must have been procured from Careening Bay, 7 or 8 leagues to the Eastward, where we last year repaired the little *Mermaid*.

We were greatly rejoiced at having been afforded an opportunity of punishing conduct so revolting to human nature as that we had experienced from these Natives, & we do not think they will again be in any great hurry to communicate with strangers, for next day we saw 6 or 7 of them on the top of a hill near the same spot, very busily engaged making spears to replace those we had taken. Supposing themselves perfectly secure from the distance they were off, & on account of the muddy flat before mentioned, lying between us, they called out to us all the time, & it would have served them per-

fectly right had we fired a round shot among the trees over their heads, to have convinced them how dangerous it is to play with strangers, even when at so great a distance as to suppose they cannot be seen.

For several days we were under great apprehensions for the life of our Surgeon, & did every thing in our power (under his own guidance) for his recovery, till at length it pleased the Almighty to crown our exertions with success, & at the end of 3 or 4 weeks he was enabled to afford us his valuable assistance. Since the above affair took place, we have seen a very interesting part of the coast of New Holland, containing some excellent Ports & Harbours, formed by Islands principally, & some in the Main Land. They have been named severally after George the 4th., Sr. Byam Martin, Marquis Camden, Sr. Geo. Collier, Dr. Montgomery, Mr. Baskerville Captn. Rogers R.N. &c. &c. &c. and some parts that were visited by that celebrated navigator Dampier have his name & that of the Buccaneer's Archipelago attached to them.^[8]

We quitted the coast of New Holland for I. of France on 26th. of August, to procure anchors & a few repairs, after which we again resumed our station on the West & NW Coasts of Australia, until we [*page 7*] shall have explored all its unknown parts & completed our Survey. That desirable epoch we are in hopes will arrive by the time we have completed 12 Calender months from Port Jackson, which will not be till the arrival of far distant May next, when, if no fresh orders arrive from England, we shall begin to make preparations for revisiting our Native Country. Remote as that period always appears, we cannot help frequently cherishing the happy thought, & indulging sometimes in the anticipated joy we shall all feel at once more being blessed with the society of those we hold most dear. Still these visionary scenes are not unmixed with a considerable portion of [delay], occasioned by the prospect in view, that we may be detained in this part of the world for a longer period, to execute some further service, an event which will not be hailed with any feeling of pleasure.

[8] A list of well-known names, including notice of Dampier as well as two of PPK's officers, Montgomery and Baskerville. Otherwise there is mention of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Thomas Byam Martin (1773-1854), for many years Comptroller of the Navy; John Jeffreys Pratt, Marquis Camden and Earl of Brecknock (1759-1840), who was closely associated in Australia with John Macarthur (hence the name of the Macarthur estate at Camden Park); Sir George Collier (1738-1795), about whom PPK commented in his published narrative that the landfall was named at the request of Surgeon Montgomery after "the late Captain Sir George Collier, Bart., KCB RN" (vol II., p. 80), famous for his efforts in the American War of Independence (and not the man of the same name and title (1774-1824) who served in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars); and Capt. Robert Henley Rogers RN, who joined the Navy in 1796, was promoted Captain in 1816, and retired in 1846, eventually ranking as Rear Admiral on the retired list.

On our passage across the Indian Ocean from New Holland I have been engaged about 2 Charts (3 feet by 2) which Lieutt. King intends sending to the Admiralty by the same conveyance as this, together with another smaller one, not yet finished. I am at present employed upon a large chart of these Seas for Captn. Moresby, C.B. of HM Ship *Menai*, who is senior officer upon this station, & is lying in Port Louis with his Ship.^[9] The chart contains many corrections & additions to the numerous islands, dangers, &c. that were previously known to exist in this part & to the Northward of Madagascar, & when finished Captn. M. has kindly desired me to put my name to it & he will send it to the Lords of the Admiralty, which may probably do me some little good, & at all events can do no harm, except to my eyes which I am sorry to say suffer by so much fine work that requires such care & attention. Captn. M.'s chart is particularly tedious & tiresome, for he not only keeps his memoranda in such a disordered & different state to our own, but I have to search for all the materials in his journal & those of his officers, which are, some of them, scarcely legible, & many of the observations require a total re-calculation. These circumstances are so favourable to the making mistakes by a person who is constructing a chart where he has not himself been, that I would most willingly dispense with my name being attached to its title, but cannot say so without offering a downright insult to Captn. M. I shall endeavour to haul off from the danger if possible, & if I cannot weather the rock, must take a future opportunity of explaining matters to any person who may hereafter happen to disprove any of the alterations which the Chart contains.

Although I have just mentioned that my eyes suffer from the accumulation of work that requires such intense application as the completion of charts in order to do credit to the draughtsman, I feel happy in saying that they have not materially suffered from their late & present execution, & that during the 6 weeks I was on low diet on account of my head, & lost so much blood, they derived considerable benefit from the plan which Drs. Stevenson & Hemsted recommend of reducing the System, & preventing the blood vessels from being too plentifully charged with their precious claret.^[10] They had

[9] Capt. Fairfax Moresby (1786-1877) was an experienced naval officer, who took command of the *Menai* in April 1819, and was stationed for several years at the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius with the task of suppressing the slave trade in the Indian Ocean. In later life he was Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Station and heavily involved in the relocation of the Pitcairn Islanders to Norfolk Island.

[10] The reference is to John Stevenson's recent monograph *On the Morbid Sensibility of the Eye, commonly called weakness of sight* (Hartford: 1815). The Rev. James had scrawled a note relating to the work on the address leaf of JSR's letter of 14 August 1817, part of the family's continuing endeavours to improve JSR's eyesight. In his 21 January 1820 letter JSR had mentioned a "Mr. Hemsted" with medical training in Newbury, very likely to have been Henry Hemsted Esq. (abt. 1773-1839), Coroner for the County of Newbury.

also so long a respite at that time, that when our present service is completed, the Charts ready for publication, & my logs, &c. finished (& God knows when all this will be fully accomplished) I entertain great hopes of obtaining a new pair of eyes by strictly adhering to a similar plan. I have had several conversations with Dr. Montgy. upon the subject, & talked over Stevenson's *Treatise* with him – he admires it very much, & attributes the state of my eyes to the same cause as I have always done myself, namely to being overworked, particularly by candle light. I now leave off writing or reading every evening as soon as a heaviness, dizziness, or soreness at the corners of the eyes warn me that I have done as much as prudence dictates, & which usually happens before I have been more than 1/2 an hour at it.

On our passage across to this place I followed Dr. M.'s advice & took a small quantity of calomel every evening for 8 or 10 days, & a few tumblers of salts, all of which served to keep me on the trot, & did me much good. Had I not been employed about the Charts I would have had a few lbs of Blood taken from me, to assist the medicine in working a beneficial result, but such a proceeding would have been extremely inconvenient at the time, & there were no leaches onboard the vessel. I never use the strengthening eye-water of which I sent you a Recipe, being convinced from what the *Treatise* says upon the subject, that it will do more harm than good in the present state of my eyes, though hereafter it may be used with advantage. Now I am on the subject of the Doctors' shop, it is gratifying to say that we are all at present in the enjoyment of tolerable good health, the Surgeon & Botanist being the only 2 complainants among us, though they are not troubled with any thing serious. I am in excellent health, thank God, & should rejoice to hear of the welfare of you all at the Rectory, & how Thos. left home, &c.^[11]

There are several India Ships now in this Port, & I shall take the opportunity of writing by one of them, though they all go to Calcutta. We have now (Octr. 8/1821) been in Port Louis, 12 days, & there is every probability of our being at least 12 days more, before the necessary repairs are completed, as they are all to be effected by the Artificers of the *Menai*, if possible, in order to save expense. That ship was unluckily placed in Quarantine for 10 or 12 days yesterday, for a boat from her having contrary to orders, boarded a Dutch Ship that arrived off the Port, before the Officer of Health had been onboard of her. It turned out that she had the Batavia fever onboard, of which several of her crew had died, & many were at that time sick. She was instantly placed under strict quarantine, without being suffered to have the least communication either with the Shore or with boats, for the inhabitants

[11] Brother Thomas Roe had returned to England from India for his health, but around 1821 made a brief return trip to India.

have been greatly alarmed since the Cholera Morbus swept off about 1200 of their number a few years ago. The Ship (*Friends*) got under weigh this afternoon, & has gone, God knows where, not liking the prospect of riding 60 days within view of the Town, without being able to procure any of its comforts & refreshment.^[12] We are apprehensive of their finding some excuse for putting us in Quarantine also, & if they do, I certainly shall go mad, for as yet I have seen nothing of the Island except the Town, & it is really a very picturesque pretty place.

The high land behind the Town rises to many irregular sharp peaks of considerable elevation & variety of forms, the most conspicuous of which, from its resemblance to a Bishop's Mitre, has received the name of the Mitre Mountain, though it is called Petre Botte, by some, after a Dutchman who is said to have penetrated farthest towards the perpendicular & overhanging pinnacle, with which it is surmounted. I must endeavour, if possible, to visit the famous tomb of the celebrated Paul and Virginia, whose story so completely lays hold of the soft & acceptable side of the human heart, that to quit the island without having visited that spot would be incurring the imputation of a want of a due share of those kinder feelings of which our nature is sometimes so truly susceptible.^[13] I never remember having in my early days read any story that opened my heart so effectually as this very affecting tale, & long to see in reality that interesting spot, which in imagination has ere now brought tears in my eyes.

Since our arrival here, there have been 2 extensive Balls given onshore, by the French Batchelors, & the English Batchelors. We were invited to both, but not being acquainted with a single individual onshore I did not go to the first, & was induced to accept the 2d. (which took place 2 days ago) principally for the gratification of witnessing a display of all the beauty & fashion that the place afforded. This far exceeded my expectations, & I returned on-board at daybreak completely over head & ears in love with no less than 8 or 10 of the finest girls I have seen since quitting dear Old England, & had the consolation of finding that in this respect I was not alone, for the same feeling seemed to occupy the sole attention of some of my Messmates, & we have done little else but talk about them, whenever we have met together since. This relates solely to their external figures, which for beauty & symmetry of form can be equalled only by our own Countrywomen, but when we contrast the solid sterling worth of the one with the light volatile coquettish

[12] I do not have any further information on the ship *Friends* which dodged the cholera quarantine at Mauritius. There was a convict transport called the *Friends* which arrived in New South Wales in 1811, which might be the same vessel.

[13] *Paul et Virginie*, the famous novel by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, was first published in 1788. Set on Mauritius, the novel's themes of the artificiality and corruption of society had a tremendous impact on contemporary readers.

behaviour of the other, the comparison will not bear the test, & makes one a greater admirer than ever of all that is to be found good, virtuous, & desirable, in the dear creatures of our own little Island. God bless them.

There is very little intercourse carried on here between the English & French families, & on the above occasion, out of 40 or 50 English families of respectability residing at Port Louis, the Ball Room was not graced by more than 10 or 12 English Ladies, & at the French Batchelor's Ball there were not more than 2, although, I believe invitation were sent to all hands. The dancing is almost entirely composed of Waltzes, & French Country dances, & only one English Country dance was got up on each of the above nights (the French call them Kitchen dances). The 1st. of these was [*page 8*] kept up for a long time by the 8 or 10 couples who were dancing, & at its conclusion, the Frenchmen had the impudence to give a deep groan. This drew forth hisses from the English, & was nearly creating a serious disturbance, which the presence only of about 250 ladies seemed to restrain. You may suppose by this that the people of the 2 Nations are not on very good terms in this colony, & with no one are they more exasperated or indignant than with an Officer wearing an uniform coat, & particularly a Naval one, on account of the vigorous measures that are now being enforced to suppress the Slave trade which is still carried on in these parts in the most daring manner. Had they dared to hiss or groan down the only English Country dance that was called for at the last Ball I do not know what would have been the consequence, for I am well aware that it would not have been borne with impunity, & had occasion required, I should certainly have lent a hand to resent so gross a national insult.

The French people here cut the most ridiculous capers imaginable while dancing, & by the manner in which they keep their eyes fixed upon their feet, so many studied steps appear more like those of an Opera dancer, than the graceful & easy movements of a Gentleman dancing with a pretty girl of his acquaintance. There is also such a vacancy in the looks of a Frenchman while dancing that I cannot imagine he feels that degree of gratification from the amusement, which his national character induces us to expect. The ladies dance uncommonly well, & dress beautifully, but some of them paint, others will not dance with Englishmen, while there are some who appear to prefer them. My hair not having yet grown sufficiently long to screen the wound in my forehead, I have observed many Frenchmen (& women too) making their remarks upon it to each other, & not a few are the pleasant looks that I occasionally receive from those among them who suppose that it may have been left me as a legacy from some of their Countrymen, but I cannot help smiling at their grins, & feel happy in the reflection that I never have been, & hope I never shall be ashamed or afraid to shew my face to any Frenchman

under the Sun. Was it not for the poor opinion I entertain of French morality, I could admire the Ladies very much, but hope that my opinion of them may ever continue the same as it is at present. I cannot help regretting very much that I do not speak the language.

Every article here is excessively dear in price, except Noyeau which is abt. 37/- pr. dozen,^[14] Claret at same price, & a few other things on a similar scale. Live stock of every description is very scarce & exorbitant in price, ducks being 6 or 7 shillgs. pr. couple, Geese 10/- each, Fowls, I don't know what price, their eggs 3/6d pr. dozen, rancid butter, fit only for greasing our topmasts with, 3/6 pr. lb., other butter, somewhat better, 5/- pr. lb., a quarter of miserably poor Mutton, weighing abt. 7 lbs., 12 or 14 shillgs., bad beef, abt. 1/- pr. lb., fish very dear, potatoes 15 & 16 pence pr. lb., a cabbage of 4 or 5 lbs. weight, 3/-, carrots not quite so dear, sugar fit for the Table, 12 and 14 pence pr. lb., & nearly every thing else in proportion. This affords us a prospect of going to sea rather badly provided for a voyage of 8 months, which we expect will expire before we again see the Lighthouse of Port Jackson, though want of Water (if none can be found on the Coast of New Holland) may probably take us to Timor. Mr. King resides in apartments at Government House, & I have dined there once by invitation from Mrs. Farquhar, the Governor's Lady, who is a very pleasant agreeable young woman.^[15] Govr. F. is laid up with the gout, & not visible to strangers.

Oct. 9. The people here are frightening themselves into some kind of sickness or other, but whether they chuse the Batavia fever or Cholera Morbus I am at a loss to say as yet, for they have just placed 3 more vessels under Quarantine, one of which has been in this Port for the last 3 weeks, has discharged 1/2 her cargo, & had every possible communication with the shore before their wise heads discovered that the latter sickness had not quite quitted the Port from which the Ship sailed. Another Ship let in for the same good thing, is the *Catherine* that arrived this morning from Calcutta, & I was 1/2 way to her in a boat, to endeavour & obtain some India news, when I had the mortification to perceive the Quarantine Flag hoisted with great reluctance at her foretopgallt. masthead, but I have not heard that there is any sickness onboard, & suppose it to be merely a measure of precaution for a few days.^[16] As soon as this impediment is removed I shall try again.

[14] Crème de Noyaux is an almond flavoured liqueur.

[15] Sir Robert Townsend Farquhar (1776-1830) was the Governor of Mauritius for almost thirteen years, beginning soon after the English occupation of the island in 1810, and lasting until 1823. He married his wife Maria Frances Geslip in 1809 (History of Parliament, online).

[16] I have found notice of the *Catherine* from Calcutta (Capt. William Knox) sailing from Madras to the Downs in 1819/1820, which is likely to have been the same ship.

The Ship *Orpheus* arrived here the other day from Bombay, but I was disappointed in my hopes of obtaining papers or information.^[17] She sailed from B'bay on 2d. Sept., at which time all was quiet & the place healthy. I am just going to write a long letter to Tom, to be forwarded by one of the many opportunities that will shortly offer for Calcutta.

Oct. 30. Many days have now elapsed since I last laid down this sheet, & I now proceed to close it, to send by HM Brig *Cygnét*, that sails tomorrow by the C. of Good Hope.^[18] A vessel of war (supposed the *Shearwater*) will sail for England with dispatches immediately on the *Cygnét's* arrival at the Cape, & this is therefore a good opportunity.^[19] By the *Cygnét*, Lieutt. King sends 3 Charts which I have completed for the Admiralty, & which contains the whole of our late Survey of about 250 miles of coast since leaving Port Jackson. With respect to these & all the other Charts we have sent Home, I should only repeat what I have before said upon the subject, was I to say any thing at all, & I therefore content myself with hoping that you or some of brothers have succeeded in gaining a sight of them. I can only regret that so considerable a change should have taken place among men in Office at the Admiralty, before our return to England, but sincerely trust that the same spirit of liberality which the Secretary, Mr. Croker evinced towards our little expedition, will not be found wanting in his Successor, or in the new First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Canning.^[20]

I have at length finished the Chart I was about for Captn. Moresby, C.B. after a great deal of trouble, & have been fortunate enough to do it to his satisfaction. A few years ago Govr. Farquhar patronised a Chart of this Sea, that was dedicated to him & published under his auspices by a Frenchman here named Lislet Geoffroy,^[21] but it was found to be so grossly erroneous & incor-

[17] The *Orpheus* from Bombay was a regular on the Indian run, and can be traced in the records for several years.

[18] The *Cygnét* was a Cherokee class brig launched in 1819, became a packet in 1824, and was sold in 1835 (Portsmouth Dockyard, online).

[19] HMS *Shearwater* was another Cherokee class brig.

[20] John Wilson Croker (1780-1857) was for many years Secretary to the Admiralty, and had of course been instrumental in outfitting the King voyage. PPK wrote many important letters to Croker during the *Mermaid* and *Bathurst* voyages. Regarding Canning, I can only assume that JSR had his wires crossed: presumably he is referring to George Canning (1770-1827), a British statesman, who was not involved with the Admiralty.

[21] Jean-Baptiste Lislet Geoffroy (1755-1836) was a French botanist and cartographer who spent most of his life in the Indian Ocean (he was born in Saint-Pierre, Réunion and died in Port Louis, Mauritius). His father was a French engineer employed by the Compagnie des Indes, and his mother a Senegalese woman called Niama who had been a slave. Elected to the French Academy of Sciences in 1791, he is thought to be the first person of African descent to be so honoured.

rect that he got severely handled by some Reviewers & the Hydrographer to the E.I. Company, & Govr. F. has almost succeeded in persuading Captn. Moresby to publish his Chart, which is formed principally from observations taken by him & his Officers, or by others upon whom he places reliance: but having had the trouble to construct this chart, and to overhaul both the public & private materials of which it is composed, no one has had a better opportunity of ascertaining the real merit & value of the observations, than myself, & I have gone as far as I could with propriety in endeavouring to dissuade him from it. He has told me that he will not, but being very changeable (& I think, ambitious to have a chart published under his name) he will not adhere to his promise. I could not succeed in procuring the release of my own name from the paper, short & unimportant as it is, or I should not give myself any farther trouble about it, for I do not scruple to own that I have such a modest confidence in what I have done, that I am not afraid to meet any of their criticisms, provided they will confront the materials with the Chart, & judge me fairly, but that is seldom the case, & I hope there will be no necessity for my making any public explanation of the part I have taken. Tom stopped here a week on his voyage from India, but being an invalid he did not make his appearance I suppose in the gay world, & could not accept many invitations. The Regt. (56th) that were at this Town at the time, are now stationed on the opposite side of the island, & I can find no one who knew him.^[22] The Governor now resides at his Country House, called Reduit, & I have by invitation spent a couple of days there very pleasantly, & seen some beautiful cascades in the deep ravines which intersect that part of the Island.^[23] The scenery is really very beautiful, the vegetation having a very rich & luxuriant appearance, which is strikingly contrasted with the numerous fantastic peaks of almost bare rock which are presented to view in whatever direction the eye roves. A romantic disposition would feast in so delightful a place, & a common observer like myself cannot help looking with

[22] After service in the Napoleonic Wars the 56th Regiment was posted to Mauritius as the standing garrison with the specific task of helping in the suppression of the slave trade. The Regiment did not return to England until 1826.

[23] Réduit is in central Mauritius, and the site of the Governor's house. In an Australian context it is perhaps best known as the place where Matthew Flinders spent some time during his imprisonment on the island: he commented in his *Voyage to Terra Australis* (1814) that he had, in 1805, "visited the country seat of the governor, called the Reduit, about seven miles from the town, and at the edge of my limit of two leagues from the habitation at Wilhems Plains. It stands upon an elevated point of land between the Rivière de Mocha, which comes from the east, and an equally large stream which collects the waters of Wilhems Plains from the southward; their junction at this place forms the Grande Rivière, and the Reduit commands a view of its windings in the low land to the north, until it is discharged into the sea about a mile on the west side of Port Louis."

increased interest upon a place which revives the recollection of many tender but fictitious scenes which are so beautifully described in the little *History of Paul and Virginia*. I have not yet had an opportunity of visiting the Tomb of these young persons, but shall endeavour to do so, & if I am able, will report what I see, in a short letter, which I must write to Willm. before we sail again for the Coast of Australia.^[24]

I have received considerable attentions from several individuals to whom Captn. Moresby has introduced me, & yesterday received a 2d. invitation to go out to Reduit, but was obliged to decline it, in order that I might be enabled to finish my letters, previous to making an excursion to a different part of the Island, as we expect to sail from this in less than a week. From the Surgeon of the *Cygnets*, I am happy to hear that my cousin John Tarn has been promoted at last to Surgeon, & that he is now in HM Brig *Satellite*, attached to the East India Squadron.^[25] This will afford him several opportunities of seeing Bror. T. by occasional visits to Bombay, & I have just written him a long letter addressed to him at Trincomallee, in Ceylon, where the Naval establishment is now removed, as being more central than Bombay, Madras, [page 9] or Calcutta.

By the same vessel I am also much gratified to hear of Sr. Richd. Keats having been appointed Govr. of Greenwich Hospital, a circumstance which fully proves (if any proof was wanting) the high estimation in which he is held, & the value they set upon his Services.^[26] As I shall be obliged to pass my examination at Greenwich, whither it is in contemplation to remove the Royal Naval College, from Portsmouth, I shall have an opportunity of seeing the Admiral, & in fact he will have something to do with my passing, if the same system is adhered to, as at Portsmouth. By the arrival of a Ship from Batavia a few days ago, we hear of the Ship *Dick* being there procuring a cargo, with which she was not expected to sail before the beginning of the present month (October) which I am very glad to hear, for although she carries a Box of Curiosities to be added to the collection already made by Willm., Captn. Harri-

[24] Readers of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's book will be aware that things don't end well for the young lovers. Their "tomb" in the Botanic Gardens at Pamplemousses was long a tourist destination.

[25] John Tarn of HMS *Satellite* was JSR's cousin. John was the son of John Tarn MA and his wife Charlotte: in turn, Charlotte was the sister of JSR's mother Sophia. "Aunt Tarn", a widow since 1801 living in the Bloomsbury area of London, is fondly referred to several times in JSR's correspondence. John Tarn went on to serve as the surgeon under Robert FitzRoy on HMS *Beagle* before transferring to the command of PPK on HMS *Adventure*. Mount Tarn, near the Straits of Magellan, was named after him by PPK, in honour of the fact that Tarn was thought to have been the first European to ascend the peak.

[26] Sir Richard Keats was appointed to Greenwich in 1821.

son is also charged with my broken headed letter to dear Sophy, which I continued to write shortly after the accident befel me, that I mentioned in the commencement of this letter. In case the box does not arrive before this letter, it may be necessary to mention that besides a variety of Specimens in Natural History, it contained a letter to Willm. (to whom the box was also addressed), an open letter for Bror. T. in case he had not sailed for India, & a Bill of mine on the Commissioners of HM Navy for £9/4s being my pay as Master's Mate between March 28 & June 19. 1821, to lend a hand towards defraying the charges of the box, through the Custom House.

There were also several rough sketches of Roe's River, Mounts Bedwell & Roe, Mount Brookes, & Mount Goodwyn, which I sent in case of being obliged to deliver them up on my arrival in England, as we fully expect. A valuable box full of excellent insects I have likewise included in the box, & need not caution Willm. against removing them from their places, but while I am writing in this strain, it is necessary that he should first receive the box, & all other matters can be adjusted afterwards. I am sorry there is no probability of my making any great collection of curiosities at this place, for every person here is perfectly curiosity-mad, & on

our arrival from New Holland we were boarded in all directions by males and females, for any additions we could make to their collections, which however consist principally of shells. Had I possessed the finest collection that ever was made I could not have withstood the frequent applications I have repeatedly received from many Ladies, & should have parted with the greatest proportion in order to increase their collections had it been in my power, but having been laid up so long with my damaged head, & deprived in consequence of those opportunities which others had, my collection has been very trifling & not sufficiently extensive to make it worth forwarding at present.

Having now spun out my letter to an unwarrantable length, & exhausted not only the patience of you all, but my own small stock of matter to write about, I must, before I make a finish, beg you to urge on my 2 Brothers & Sophy to write, as their letters written soon after the receipt of this, will reach Port Jackson about the time of the Bathurst's return thither from her present voyage. The news of the Storeship *Dromedary* having arrived in England with the Commissioner of Enquiry from Port Jackson,^[27] in the beginning of July last, gives us all great pleasure & is extremely welcome, for we not only sent 2 Charts by her to the Admiralty, but I sent you a long letter, my Dear Father, dated in the early part of February, about a week before the *Dromedary* sailed. This I trust you have received safe, & that an answer to it is now on the wing

[27] J.T. Bigge, the Commissioner of Inquiry into New South Wales.

to the Land of Felons, as Port Jackson has descriptively been called the other day, by the Reviewer of a work written there.

With respect to our own voyage, we have not seen much in the Reviews or Magazines, as they have little else than mere conjecture to build upon at present, & can form but an indifferent opinion of our proceedings without the help of something more than a public letter. It is also but fair that the chief incidents of the voyage should be confined only to a few, until they are made public in a small work that will accompany the Charts, which will thereby excite that degree of novelty & interest which a previous exposition of the facts would have done away with altogether. But my eyes begin to warn me off, & I must conclude with my earnest prayer for the health & welfare of you all, sincerely trusting that the indisposition with which Dear Mother and You were troubled previous to the date of Tom's letter to me (Sept. 28. 1820) has entirely left you, & that you both, together with all hands, are in the full enjoyment of that inestimable Blessing, which it ought to be our Chief Study to preserve, & which I feel happy in stating is now apportioned to me in as ample measure as at any time since the commencement of our present Service. For the pains which I felt for a long time in my head are gradually wearing off, & I hope soon to be entirely rid of them. With my most affectionate & kind love to dearest Mother, Sophy, & the Boys, committing you all to the care of the Almighty, I pray you to accept the same, with every good wish I can offer, & to believe how sincerely I remain, your ever affectionate & dutiful Son,

John Septimus Roe

P.S. My last letter to you (No. 13) was delivered to Capt. Harrison, before I fell from the Masthead, & it ought therefore to be received at the same time as Sophy's, though dated a month before it, & the Post Mark will shew in what Port the *Dick* has arrived. She will be obliged to [], I believe, at the London Docks in the Thames, but Wm. had better ascertain this point as early as possible in order to procure his box before it gets knocked about. The principal owner of the *Dick* is a gentleman named Ward, who lives in some part of Wapping, & will be the most authentic source from which information can be derived. I am sorry to say that Captain Harrison's Chief Mate (Mr. Hanibal) & 2 or 3 of his men have died since they left us, & more particularly so on account of Mr. H. being a married man. He was to have had command of the Ship after the present voyage was completed.^[28] God Bless you all, & may Heaven protect you.

[28] JSR was delighted to be able to contradict the report of his old friend's death in his following letter.

JULY 1821
/ NOVEMBER 1821

His Majesty's Brig *Bathurst*
Port Louis, Isle of France

“I do not mind your laughing, for I do not hear it, but I heartily pity any poor devil that is soft enough to get inveigled in that curious net called Love, as I have been 5 fathoms over head & ears in it myself.”

JSR to William Roe. Four pages.

William Roe Esqr. | at the Rectory of Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: black “Liverpool Indian Ship Lr.” and circular red “A 8 Fr. 1822.”

Location: SLWA, ACC 563AD/2C.

An important companion letter to the previous one sent home by JSR, giving much more on the Isle of France, and with a fascinating passage on the trade in artificial curiosities – especially shells – at Port Louis, where particularly fine pairs are changing hand for more than a guinea. As with many of his letters to his brother this has some more personal reflections, notably the submerged outlines of the story of his failed romance in Sydney. He is also quite candid about the pro- and anti-Macquarie rivalries then splitting Sydney, and droll on the reports he has had of the arrival of HMS *Dauntless*, the dashing RN sloop which had anchored in Port Jackson in June 1821 as part of its East Indies service. His description of the ladies of Port Louis is, as per usual, part wide-eyed fascination and part snooty disapproval.

No. 4.
His Majesty's Brig Bathurst. Port Louis, I. of France.
November 6. 1821.

My Dear William,

Previous to quitting the Isle of France, I feel much gratified at having an opportunity by the Ship *Arab* of writing to you & to all my dear Relations at the Rectory again, though from having so very recently dispatched a long letter to our dear Father by HM Brig *Cygnnet*, I have nothing to write about. That letter was dated from this place between Sept. 28 & Oct. 30, but the *Cygnnet* having to stop at the C. of Good Hope, & to forward her letters from thence by the *Shearwater*, so much delay may be occasioned as to admit of your receiving this first.^[1]

My last to you was (I think) from Port Jackson in the middle of March last, accompanying a box of curiosities which I sent by the friendly hand of Dr. Rutherford, RN & which I trust you have received safe.^[2] The *Dick* has another box of much larger dimension for your Cabinet, which I hope will gradually be increased to a size sufficiently extensive to render it worthy of the notice of the scientific as well as curious, in course of time. For Time & Perseverance alone can accomplish that object, & you may depend upon my most cordial co-operation in augmenting the collection you have begun, by every means in my power. The insects I need not again caution you to be particularly careful of, for they are perishable articles not easily to be replaced, & some of them are perhaps altogether new to the scientific entomologist.

I regret not being able to send you anything from this place, for the people here are perfectly curiosity mad, & grapple eagerly at any thing of the kind that makes its appearance, giving the exorbitant price of 8 or 9 piastres (26 or 28 shillings English) for a pair of a particular kind of shell called a harp. These expences I cannot afford to incur, & the accident which befel me on the NE coast of Australia having deprived me of an opportunity of making a collection at the only place where opportunities presented themselves. I am considerably farther astern than my neighbours. We are now nearly ready for Sea, & expect to sail in 3 days, in which case we shall probably be at King George's Sound by the middle of December, off the NW Cape of New Holland in the middle of the following month, & at Port Jackson in May, preparing for our voyage homeward, but whether that voyage will be in the *Bathurst*

[1] I guess that the ship *Arab* referred to by JSR was the same ship as the one that transported convicts to Tasmania the following year, Capt. Robert R. Brown. Both the *Cygnnet* and *Shearwater* were Cherokee class brigs.

[2] George Shaw Rutherford RN first arrived in Sydney as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Prince of Orange* (February 1821), and went on to be a vastly experienced convict surgeon, sailing a total of eight times.

or by a private Merchant vessel, we cannot tell till Mr. King receives farther instructions to that effect from the Admiralty. We hope it will be by the former as less expensive, & affording us much more comfortable accommodations.

A Ship arrived here 2 days ago from Port Jackson, by which we learn that Governor Macquarie was not relieved on 18th. September, though Sr. Thos. Brisbane was daily expected there for that purpose, & that party spirit was then very violent.^[3] The Governor's enemies shewing their teeth at the prospect of his speedy departure, & his friends as strenuously supporting him. The *Dauntless*, Sloop of War, arriving there to refresh, on her passage to So. America, has created a sensation in the minds of the young Colonists, to whom such a sight was totally new, that they did not fail to evince as much astonishment as a blackfellow attempting to take potatoes out of a saucepan of boiling water.^[4] Balls & Parties of Pleasure were the order of the day while she remained there, & many of the most respectable inhabitants had received the novel treat of dining onboard her. We were disappointed in our expectations that the *Dauntless* would convey Govr. Macquarie home, for we hear that she sailed for South America, where she is supposed to be bound, for a freight of Dollars.

I am sorry to hear that the Governor has set his Enemies vigorously to work, by the publication of a pamphlet in England, to answer one from Mr. Bennett, the Member of Parliament.^[5] I have not seen it, but many names having been mentioned, is the cause of the parties being so closely at it again. You have by this time probably seen something in the Newspapers respecting the Commission of Enquiry that was recently sent to ascertain the state of the Colony at Port Jackson, under the chief management of Mr. Bigge.^[6] Nothing about it has as yet transpired here, but we are glad to hear of the

[3] An unusually frank assessment by JSR of the friction between supporters of Macquarie and Brisbane: the incoming Governor Brisbane arrived in Sydney in November 1821, and Macquarie sailed on the *Surry* in February 1822.

[4] HMS *Dauntless*, a Cormorant class sloop, was launched in 1808. After service in the Napoleonic Wars the *Dauntless* was refitted and, in 1818, was put under the command of Valentine Gardner for service in the East Indies, visiting China, the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. By the time the *Dauntless* reached Sydney in June 1821 Gardner had died, and the ship was then commanded by George Gambier. JSR's account of the wonder which the sloop engendered is unusually cutting by his normally polite standards, but certainly it was a popular sight in the harbour, and the officers did give a "select Ball and Supper to the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Colony" on 23 July (see the report in the *Sydney Gazette*, 28 July 1821).

[5] A judicious comment by JSR on the folly of Macquarie publishing his *Letter to the Right Honourable Viscount Sidmouth* (1821) defending himself from the attack pamphlets published by the MP Henry Grey Bennet, *Letter to Viscount Sidmouth* (1819) and *Letter to Earl Bathurst* (1820).

[6] Commissioner J.T. Bigge, the Commissioner of Inquiry into New South Wales, had sailed for England on the *Dromedary* in February 1821.

arrival of the *Dromedary* in England, as she not only conveyed the Commissioner home to make his report, but took a young Son of Mr. H. McArthur's to his Grandmother (Mrs. Govr. King) to be sent to School.^[7] Whenever you see or write to any of that worthy family, I must beg you to give my kind remembrance.

I am sorry I have not been enabled to make any more excursions into the interior of this island, and the report of our Botanist, Mr. Cunningham, who has visited the Tomb of Paul & Virginia in his occasional rambles among the hills, has served to banish from my mind that degree of regret which I should otherwise have felt at not having visited the spot myself, for he says the only appearance of any thing of the kind is in the private grounds of an individual, who permits the unlimited examination of the spot by the few persons who have the curiosity to visit it, & who invariably express surprise & disappointment at not finding their fanciful dreams realised.^[8] The tomb consists of 2 stone representations of urns, raised about 2 feet above the ground, on pillars, with a small stream dividing them, emblematical of the incidents which are related in the interesting tale. A few names having been cut out upon these urns by occasional visitors, a notice & request that the Proprietor wishes they may not again be defaced by similar or any other means is fixed with a wafer upon them, & no care appears to have been taken to preserve the ground on which they stand in any kind of order. Such is the account given by Mr. C., who is generally very minute on these occasions, & so little is this spot noticed or even known to many of the inhabitants, that there are not many of them acquainted with its existence.

I have been occupied lately in exercising my poor pencil at taking a few sketches of this picturesque little Bay & of the Town, though the Sun is so confoundedly warm during greater part of the day, that very little can be done except in the Mornings & Evenings, unless under cover. Although I have got rid of Capt. Moresby's Chart, I am still tied by the leg with a long tether Rope, having the agreeable task of superintending 2 of his Mids. whom he is anxious to have initiated in the little knowledge which is requisite for committing to paper any observations & corrections he may hereafter have an opportunity of making, & who are now making a copy of the Chart I have finished.^[9] I am not however so soft as to allow this to occupy the whole of my time, and it cannot indeed be expected that I should, for anx-

[7] Given the date, the "young Son" of Hannibal Macarthur must have been his eldest, James (1813-1862).

[8] The "tomb" of Paul and Virginie, from Bernardin Saint-Pierre's novel, was in the Botanic Gardens at Pamplémousses.

[9] JSR had been asked by Capt. Fairfax Moresby to update some charts for him, a task which taxed his energy and eyesight. Who were the two young Midshipmen he was instructing?

ious as I am to make myself useful (to the extent of my poor abilities to Capt. M. – or any other person), I have given several very broad hints of my close application at his Chart, having hitherto prevented my seeing much of the Country, & that it is my earnest desire to exercise my pencil at taking a few sketches of the surrounding scenery. Upon the strength of this, I now go to his house only 2 or 3 times a day for a few minutes, & employ the remainder for the execution of my own plans.

My collection of insects has also been a little increased by occasional walks, & I am endeavouring to [*page 2*] make up a sufficient quantity of seeds that I think would be acceptable to our dear Mother's friend, Dr. Smith, the Professor of Botany at the University of Cambridge.^[10] I have at present about 40 different kinds & a few from Australia, which with 8 or 10 bulbs from the latter place, I will make up in a small box & send them as if at the request of dear Mother. This small quantity would cost upwards of 2 guineas at Port Jackson, but if they are not acceptable, he need give himself no farther trouble than allowing them to rot in the Custom House, for I have not the honor of knowing the Dr., & he knows as little of me, which may perhaps induce him to think it an intrusion on my part, or that I have a great stock of impudence & am endeavouring to force myself on his notice – but he never was more mistaken in his life, and it is solely the wish to oblige my Mother's friend that induces me to take the step.

I will also endeavour to make you up a small box of coral with the few other things I have for your Museum, & I can only regret having nothing better to send. It will go by the Ship *Mary*, Capt. W. Kneale, & will be landed at the Custom House where the Ship arrives, but as this letter must be sent by the same conveyance you will know when she has arrived, & farther particulars may be had at Lloyds when you are on the way to pass the box thro' the Custom House.^[11] I have just written something & as quickly erased it, about sending you a box of curiosities by the *Mary* without having considered that she is a Liverpool Ship & that there are many chances against her going to the Port of London, which would render it more than probable that the things would be broken to pieces by travelling so great a distance overland in-

[10] At no point in his letters does JSR ever provide the given name of "Dr. Smith", but it must be that he is referring to Sir James Edward Smith (1759-1828), author of the first Australian botany (1793) and founder of the Linnean Society. The latter's website confirms that Smith unsuccessfully lobbied for the Cambridge professorship, which must explain JSR's confusion: "Smith was knighted in 1814, and from 1813 to 1819 was involved in an ill fated campaign to become Professor of Botany at Cambridge University. Smith was a nonconformist and supported causes including the abolition of slavery and Greek independence, and his criticism of the French monarchy ended his professional relationship with Queen Charlotte." But what was the connection between JSR's mother and Smith?

[11] The ship *Mary* (Capt. W. Kneale) was registered in Bombay.

dependent of the expense attending their carriage, & the inconvenience or impossibility of getting them through the Custom House without great trouble. For the same reason I must defer sending the seeds, &c., until a more fit opportunity offers, though there is every likelihood of their being passed, free of expense, to Dr. Smith, by a Treasury Order, usually given on similar occasions.

Novr. 8th. PM.

As we are given to understand by Lieutt. King that it is his intention to sail tomorrow morning from this Port I must wind up my letter, my dear Willm., & cannot help feeling extremely sorry that it is out of my power to lengthen it, for want of materials. Pray however accept it as you find, & believe how joyfully I shall greet that happy period that restores us all once again to the society of each other, under the roof of the Rectory, when letters will not be necessary to convey to each other our sentiments & affectionate good wishes. I have just dispatched a letter to our brother T. by the hand of Assistant Surgeon McMunn, who is on his passage to Madras, to join his Regiment, the 38th., & has promised to forward it from thence by Overland Post.^[12]

We have got onboard what live stock we can continue to take with us from hence, having procured them at the following rates. 4 dozen Ducks at 6s./pr. couple, 12 Geese at 9s./4 each, 26 fowls & chickens at 3s./10 pr. couple, 12 small roasting pigs at 8s./6 each, & a quantity of vegetables, fruit, Indian Corn, &c. for the Stock, at similar rates. Each member of the Mess has had to contribute about £12 towards defraying the expenses of this fit out, & our Mess for the six weeks we have been here has stood us in about £8 apiece, living as economically as possible.

Not being acquainted with many of the Resident inhabitants here we have not been much among them, & could expect no particular attentions from any but besides the invitations I accepted to Govt. House, I have dined once at Genl. Darling's (Commander of the Forces) 2 or 3 times at the house of Coll. Hassard of the Engineers who has family & a pretty daughter, 2ce. with Captn. Moresby, & at the houses of 2 civil officers here.^[13] Our acquaintance

[12] The 38th Regiment had been at the Cape of Good hope since 1818 fighting the Xhosa, and was redeployed to India in 1822, serving in the First Anglo-Burmese War. I am not aware of the identity of Assistant Surgeon McMunn (he is not noted as part of the 38th in the *Army List* for 1822).

[13] General Ralph Darling (1772-1858) was Commander of the Forces in Mauritius between 1819 and 1824, but achieved higher office – and a degree of notoriety – when he was appointed Governor of New South Wales, serving from 1825 to 1831; Col. John Hassard was a long-serving officer in the Royal Engineers serving in Mauritius with his family; JSR also notes having dined with Capt. Fairfax Moresby, who had been keeping him busy making charts.

Overleaf: view of Port Louis from Richard Temple's Eight Views of the Mauritius (1813). SLNSW.



A View of the Town, Harbour, and Country

The Town, Harbour, and Country



View Eastward of Port Louis.

is therefore not very extensive at this place, though I know at least 3 or 400 Ladies & Gentlemen of both Countries by sight, having seen them at the Ball & elsewhere several times. There is a very fine promenade every evening at a spacious level green behind the Town, called the Camp of Mars, where 20 or 30 carriages, barouches, gigs, &c. of various descriptions filled with Ladies, drive round the skirts of the Ground, which is abt. a mile & 1/2 in circumference, & a great assemblage of Ladies & Gentn. begin to promenade as soon as the Sun disappears behind the hills.^[14] The air is then cool, a fine refreshing breeze blowing almost constantly at this Season of the year, from the Eastwd. or NE, enabling every person to take that exercise which the extreme heat of the Sun debars them from enjoying during the day.

The French Ladies invariably walk out without bonnets or caps, but dress their hair extremely neat, & upon the whole are very good figures. There appears to be either a surplus of respectable looking girls here, or a great want of gallantry among the opposite sex, for it is no uncommon thing to see 8, 10, 12 & even 14 of the former walking together, without one gentleman among them, and although nearly the whole of them are possessed of sweet pretty faces that would almost induce a person to forget himself by looking behind to enjoy the gratification of another glimpse, they are not so scrupulous on that head themselves, but fairly try to stare one out of countenance both while passing & afterwards. I do not intend to say this is universally the case, but it is generally so, for there are occasionally some to be found, who are possessed of too much modesty or forbearance to attempt it. It is an abominable practice, & adds very little to the interest & pleasure with which one beholds their pretty little faces. My dear Sophy need not be jealous because I admire the beauty of the French girls so much, for I can assure her that I have seen & admired many of her country women infinitely more, not only for their equal participation in this lovely gift of nature, but for their possessing those solid qualifications & ornaments of the mind, which alone render a female all that is amiable in the eyes of our sex.^[15]

I wish I could have the happiness of talking over these & other affairs with you at home, for I am anxious to see you all once more, & very anxious for more reasons than one, to quit for ever a quarter of the Globe that has been productive of more uneasiness & pain to me than comfort & enjoyment. I grant you this smells very like Cupid's Gunpowder, but cannot help it, for salt water sprays, bilge water, and all the other antidotes usually recommended

[14] The Champ de Mars was, as the name implies, originally the military parade for the French forces, but became more famous after 1812 as the site of the Mauritius Turf Club and evidently, as JSR details here, a popular park and meeting place.

[15] "Sophy" was JSR's younger sister, and it's difficult not to wonder what she made of this blazon of ham-fisted gallantry from her brother.

on similar occasions are not infallible remedies for the heart-ache, nor do I admit that the presence & society of other females, however virtuous & good, holds out sufficient inducement for a person to forget one particular object that possesses his greatest affection & esteem. I do not mind your laughing, for I do not hear it, but I heartily pity any poor devil that is soft enough to get inveigled in that curious net called Love, as I have been 5 fathoms over head & ears in it myself (but not with a French girl, or at the I. of France, recollect) and am now obliged to turn over & over, and over again in my own mind, to ascertain whether I remain so still.

Next to the sweet pleasure of enjoying the disinterested esteem & love of our dearest relatives and friends, there is no gratification which a young man estimates more highly than the possession of the pure love & affection of a virtuous good girl, in return for his own, & surely no disappointment is more keenly felt than when a variety of circumstances conspire to render it necessary that such mutual attachment should be forgotten. For now that I have got so deep in the mire, I do not scruple to acknowledge that such has been my case very recently, & that I am still smarting under the pain which these pleasing delusions have left behind. I hinted at this subject, my dear Willm., in a former letter to you, & regretted my inability to enter into the marriage state, but as it is now no more necessary to enter into particulars (which would only make you laugh at my expense perhaps) than it was at that time, I am sure you will now all excuse me for saying any thing more upon a subject which can afford very little interest to any other persons than those immediately concerned.^[16]

I can only assure you & our dear Parents, that in whatever situation I may be placed at [*page 3*] so great a distance from those whose counsel & advice I ever value so much, I trust my actions will ever be guided by that honorable & upright principle which never fails at a future time to afford that healing balm to the wounded mind which an opposite line of conduct knows not how to impart. I feel as much gratification as circumstances will permit in reflecting that I have hitherto acted upon that solid & honorable basis which leaves me nothing to be ashamed of, or to fear, & only one thing to regret, which is, that I was ever loved & was loved again (the vanity of this conceited fellow knows no bounds!!). You may perhaps think me not serious in what I am writing, but I assure you I am, & since the irrevocable determination of both parties has been made, there is a probability of our peace of mind not

[16] JSR had earlier alluded to his affair of the heart in Sydney, in a letter to William dated 8 July 1820, in that earlier letter describing her as a “peerless fair lately arrived from dear old England.” Obviously by the time he sailed on the *Bathurst* the romance with this unnamed woman was in trouble. In 1824, JSR was writing to his “friend Sophia” in Sydney (under cover of letters to John Piper), and she could feasibly be the same woman. See introduction.

being again interrupted, for there is nothing like taking these things philosophically & considering that every thing is ordained for the best & wisest of purposes, by that Supreme Ruler of Events who frequently interposes His fatherly hand, where it is found most wanting.

I have now given you something to laugh & joke about for some time to come, but hope no one will be uneasy on my account, for although I have been miserable enough, I am far from being so now things are brought to a crisis, and I sincerely trust (though with very little hope) that my sweetheart will have encouraged another Admirer, before the expiration of 7 months. With an earnest entreaty that you will all write to me soon, I must now conclude, for want of more nonsense to talk about, and beg you to give my kindest & most affectionate love to our dear Father & Mother, Sophy & Chas., trusting all are well & happier than myself, and with every possible good wish I can offer you all, I pray the Almighty to bless & protect you, and remain my dear William your ever affectionate Brother

John Septimus Roe

P.S. I have enclosed the second Bill of Exchange which I drew for you to pay the Custom House charges upon the Box of Curiosities I sent you by the *Dick*, Captn. Harrison, in case the 1st. (which I enclosed in the Box) should not reach you safely. The 3rd. Bill I will forward to you by another opportunity, and would advise you to destroy 2 of them as soon as you have negotiated one, to prevent any unpleasant recurrences by their falling into the hands of other people to whom they can lawfully be of no use whatever.

Since I commenced this letter, I am sorry to say that Mr. Bedwell has been prevented from doing his duty by illness, but is now a little better. Dr. Montgomery is far from being well. The Botanist is almost on his beam ends. Baskerville (our newly acquired messmate who has not yet seen much service with us) is beginning to complain. Lieutt. King & myself are, thank God, as well as can be expected from the repeated Fryings we have received, and I am happy to say that my head troubles me so little that it is only now & then I am reminded by a twitch or 2 of my having once nearly broken it. My eyes are the same as usual, and if our passage across the West Coast of Australia is favorable, I intend steering by the Doctor's Compass, & to take some Medicines for their benefit. God bless you all.

It was my intention originally to have sent this by the Ship *Arab*, bound to England, but she sailed 2 days ago, and could not therefore convey you so late an account of our movements as the Ship *Mary*, which leaves this for England in about a week. I have great pleasure in stating that Captn. Harrison's Chief Mate, Mr. Hanibal, was not dead when we received the last ac-

count from Batavia, as I stated in my last agreeable to information received, but was very ill, & as you may probably have mentioned the circumstance on receipt of my letter.^[17] I need not add how much it would relieve the mind of his distressed wife, was you to contradict that statement in the same quarter that it was made. I regret having written about it, without having made due enquiry, but have heartily thanked the individual who led me into the error, for having stated that he was dead merely because he supposed he could not recover!

I have now written what Sophy will admit amounts nearly to a Lady's post-script, which is said to be nearly as long as the body of the Letter (though I expect to have my hair combed for using the expression). I will therefore conclude it with every good wish for your future welfare, hoping to have another opportunity to write, if we touch at Timor in 5 or 6 months time. May Almighty God bless you all.

[17] In his letter of 28 September 1821 JSR had broken the sad news that the Chief Mate of the *Dick*, one Mr. Hanibal, had died, and was obviously delighted to be able to contradict his own report.

AUGUST 1822

HM Sloop *Bathurst*
[Sydney]

“I have the misfortune to report to you the loss of 4 of your crew in consequence of the launch capsizing about 2 hours ago, near that part of the North Shore opposite Sydney Cove.”

JSR to Phillip Parker King. Four pages.
File copy, unposted.
Location: SLWA, ACC 563AD/9C.

JSR's retained copy of a heartbreaking letter to his commander, in which he reports the deaths of four men from the crew of the *Bathurst*, who had drowned when the ship's boat under his command had overturned in difficult choppy weather near the north shore opposite Sydney Cove. It is accompanied by another document in which he recounts the evidence he gave at an inquest into the deaths which was hastily convened in Sydney.

As JSR describes it, the boat was about 200 yards from the shore when it turned clumsily in a heavy squall and flooded, filling quickly with water before taking three of the men – Joseph King, James McMurtry and Thomas Robinson – to the bottom, each apparently tangled in the ropes. A fourth – William Anderson – struggled towards the shore but was overcome almost within striking distance of safety. At McMurtry's Inquest JSR gave a long statement of the events of the day, and how he had been planning to tack into Cockle Bay to get more ballast when the accident occurred. His account was corroborated by one of the men on board the launch, Samuel Parker (signed with his mark). McMurtry, King and Anderson were buried in the Devonshire Street Cemetery, JSR paying for a memorial stone to be raised. The body of Robinson was never found. When the cemetery was built out to make way for Central Railway Station the bodies were moved to Bunnerong, Section 3S plot 114, although the headstone paid for by JSR is no longer standing.

(Copy as near as I remember).

HM Sloop *Bathurst*, Augt. 18* 1822
(ought to have been 19th).

Dr. Sir,

It is unfortunately my lot to report to you one of the heaviest misfortunes that fallen to our share since the commencement of the service upon which we are employed, & it is rendered still more bitter to me from the conspicuous part I have taken in the affair. In short, I have the misfortune to report to you the loss of 4 of your crew in consequence of the launch capsizing about 2 hours ago, near that part of the North Shore opposite Sydney Cove. ~~Her crew consisted of Josh. King, Wm. Anderson, Jas. McMurty, Saml. Parker & Wm. Condell. Your Steward Robinson was also in the Boat on his way to Parramatta.~~

The boat was on her passage to Parramatta to bring down your baggage, & as I considered it a good opportunity to obtain the soundings of the Harbour above Sydney Cove, I had determined upon beating her up against the strong westerly wind which was then blowing from the westwd. Her crew consisted of Josh. King,^[1] Wm. Anderson,^[2] Jas. McMurty,^[3] Saml. Parker,^[4]

[1] Joseph King (abt. 1782-1822), had only just arrived in Sydney: he was one of five men who had arrived on the *Almorah* which was reported to have arrived on 19 June 1822. His body was recovered on 29 August, identified by one of his crewmates, Joseph Gliddon, and was one of the three interred at Devonshire Street Cemetery.

[2] William Anderson (abt. 1790-1822), had joined the crew on 16 July 1822. His body was recovered and brought on board the *Bathurst* on 25 August 1822, and identified by a survivor of the incident, Samuel Parker. He was interred at Devonshire Street Cemetery.

[3] James McMurty (actually McMurtry) was a free sailor who arrived in Hobart on the *Mary Anne* (Capt. Warington) in March 1822, one of several sailors on board the *Mary Anne* held in confinement by his captain for having "contumaciously refused to do their duty". McMurty and six other men were sent to Sydney on the *Richmond* under confinement on the command of Lieut.-Gov. Sorrell, but although the *Mary Anne* arrived in Sydney soon after, and Captain Warington wrote to Governor Brisbane about the case (Col. Sec. papers), the men were formally discharged soon after, and there the matter rested. His was the first of the bodies to be recovered, taken to the coroner's on 20 August 1822 and therefore it was at the Inquest into his death (on 21 August) that both JSR and another survivor, Parker, gave evidence. He was also interred at Devonshire Street Cemetery.

[4] Samuel Parker joined the *Bathurst* on 9 July 1822, having arrived in Sydney as part of the crew of the *Jane* in October 1821. Parker appears to have stayed with the *Bathurst* after the accident and may have returned to England with them.

& Wm. Condell,^[5] & your Steward Robinson ^[6] was also in the boat as a passenger.

With the topmast struck & main tack triced up, we made our first board & on tacking about 200 yards from the North Shore, the wind increased considerably in a squall & the boat paid off more than was necessary. I immediately ordered the job sheet to be let go, & kept the helm hard alee, but having no way through the water she would not come to the wind sufficiently fast, & the water came in over her lee gunwale. The order was instantly given to let go the peak halliards & it was twice repeated before the unfortunate man Anderson, whom I had stationed at that rope, got hold of it. The boat was then half full of water, & in another instant filled entirely, & was instantly carried to the bottom by the ~~xxxx~~ large stones with which she was ballasted, carrying with her King & McMurty who must have been entangled in some of her ropes, for they were not seen by any of us. Poor Robinson struggled for a moment or 2, as if entangled also, & then disappeared ~~to rise~~ [page 2] ~~no more~~.

Parker & Condell reached the nearest part of the North Shore with difficulty & it was the assistance of the Almighty alone enabled me to do the same, being so totally exhausted that I had not strength to crawl up the rocks. It was then that I felt what I never experienced before, in witnessing the disappearance of poor Anderson, who had contended with the element until within 50 yards of the shore, when Nature was quite exhausted, & he sunk to rise no more without our being able to offer him any farther assistance than reiterated words of encouragement, for the water was very rough & the shore hollow swells broke over our heads at every stroke while swimming onshore.

[5] William Condell (born about 1789?) joined the crew of the *Bathurst* on 17 June 1822, with a stint in the Rum Hospital in July. He is very likely to have been the convict of that name who arrived on the *Marquis of Wellington* in January 1815, in the indents recorded as a 26 year old native of London and a lighterman (which is a neat fit). In December 1817 Condell petitioned Governor Macquarie for a mitigation of his sentence. He had been, he stated, two years in the service of Richard Jones of Parramatta, and hoped to be able to continue in “honest industry” with his ticket-of-leave. I assume his petition was successful, and I also assume that he sailed with PPK, as he does not appear in any of the usual records after that date (if true, he must have hardly believed his luck to be safely delivered back in London by 1823).

[6] Thomas Robinson was an old Navy hand who definitely arrived in Sydney on the *Tiger* (Capt. Brash) in February 1822, but ran before the ship sailed in April. Robinson petitioned Governor Brisbane soon after, hoping to be allowed to settle in New South Wales. In his Memorial he noted that he had arrived on the *Tiger* and, with an adroit touch, informed Brisbane that he had spent some five years sailing on HMS *Belle Poule*, commanded by Brisbane’s brother, Sir James, always acting “in an upright and gallant manner, becoming a Sea-man and a Briton.” At the time he wrote the Memorial he was living at 39 Clarence St. In June Robinson stated that he was due to leave on the *Thalia* (*Sydney Gazette*, 21 & 28 June 1822), but obviously signed up on the *Bathurst*. His body was never recovered.

The accident had been seen from Dawes Battery, & immediate information being given to the Dockyard, 2 boats came off quickly to our assistance, but unfortunately too late to affect any good towds. saving the valuable lives of the 4 poor fellows that are drowned. I cannot find words to convey to you the bitterness of my regret on this melancholy occasion, but it is one of those lamentable & unfortunate accidents which no human foresight or precaution can avert when the Almighty is pleased to visit us with Calamity. With kind regards to Mrs. King & the inmates of Vineyard Cottage, where I anticipate you are residing, I remain, dr. Sir, your unfortunate

J.S. Roe

5 P.M. To Captn. King, HM Sloop *Bathurst*

Mr. Bedwell desires me to say that the first cutter arrived safely about 2 o'clock with part of your baggage.

My deposition on oath as near as I recollect, at the Coroner's Inquest held on Jas. McMurtry, Seaman of the Bathurst, drowned when the Launch capsized in Port Jackson, Augt. 18, 1822. & signed by me.

I left Sydney Cove in the Bathurst's launch about 1/2 past 2 o'clock P.M. Augt. 18, 1822 with an intention of beating her up to Parramatta against a fresh westerly wind which was then blowing, considering it a good opportunity for obtaining soundings of the Harbour of Port Jackson, upon a Survey of which I am employed.

The ballast had on the same morning been necessarily shifted for stones, & on getting outside Sydney Cove I found that a sufficient quantity of ballast had not been placed in her instead, for it blew considerably stronger in the offing than in the Cove. I therefore expressed to Josh. King my intention of going into Cockle Bay for more, & had tacked the boat for that purpose, (the topmast being struck, & tack of the mains triced up to diminish the size of the sail), about 200 yards from that ~~xxxx~~ part of the North Shore opposite Sydney Cove, when the wind increased considerably & paid the boat's head off more than was required. I immediately ordered the head sheets to be let go, & with the helm alee was in hopes ~~xxxx~~ the boat would come to the wind, but she would not do so, & the pressure of the wind upon the mainsail was so great that the water began to come in over the lee gunwale. The order was instantly given to let go the peak halliards, but the man ~~xxxx~~ (poor Anderson, drowned also) whom I had stationed at that rope, had not resumed his station after the boat was tacked, & I had twice repeated my order before he got hold of the rope. The boat was then 1/2 full of water & almost the same instant filled entirely & immediately went to the bottom, carrying with



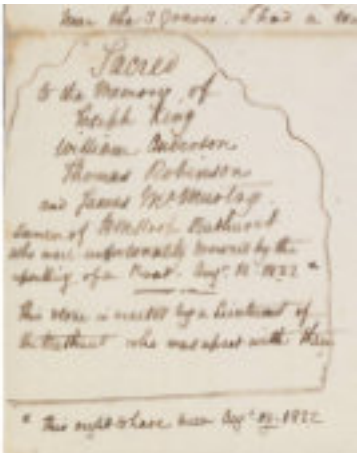
The top half of the headstone can just be made out on the far left of this photo from the c.1900 photograph albums of Mrs Arthur George Foster. SLNSW. Inset: JSR's sketch of the same. SLWA.

her King & McMurtry who must have been entangled in the ropes. Another man, named Robinson, disappeared also a few minutes afterwards being ~~xxxx~~ apparently entangled likewise.

After I had disengaged myself, I with 2 others, Parker & Condell, reached the No. Shore with much difficulty, the sea breaking over our heads at every stroke. I was so echausted that I had not sufficient strength to crawl up the rocks, & then experienced the indescribable misery of watching the disappearance of a 4th man, poor unfortunate Anderson, who had struggled until within 50 yards of the rocks, when nature was totally exhausted & he sunk to rise no more, without our being able to afford him any farther assistance than our re-itterated words of encouragement to persevere & take it coolly. Nothing more has been seen of these unfortunate men until McMurtry's body was found yesterday.

(signed) John Septimus Roe

N.B. The coroner was Mr. Slade ^[7] with about 12 Jurymen.



The bodies of Wm. Anderson & Joseph King were soon afterwds. found & decently interred by me in the Churchyard,^[8] but Thos. Robinson's body was never discovered & may be supposed to have drifted to sea. Near the 3 graves I had a tombstone erected with the following inscription:

Sacred | to the memory of | Joseph King |
William Anderson | Thomas Robinson | and
James McMurtry | Seamen of HM Sloop
Bathurst | who were unfortunately drowned
by the | upsetting of a Boat. Augt. 18, 1822*
| This stone is erected by a Lieutenant of |
the Bathurst who was upset with them.

* This ought to have been Augt. 19, 1822.

Particulars respecting the loss of 4 men that were drowned by the upsetting of a Boat in which I was upset.

[7] George Milner Slade (d. 1848) was appointed coroner of the Sydney district on 19 October 1821. He had been the paymaster to the 60th Regiment (in Jamaica) but was court-martialled after serious irregularities were discovered in the books. Despite his history, he gained grants and sinecures in Sydney, was later associated with the Australian Agricultural Company (a store he opened in Port Stephens went bankrupt), and later settled in Queensland.

[8] The old Devonshire Street Cemetery, on Brickfields Hill, had only been opened by Governor Macquarie in 1820. It closed in 1867 and the land was resumed to make way for Central Railway Station in 1901, people being allowed to petition for the remains of relatives to be removed to Bunnerong Cemetery, near Botany.

NOVEMBER 1821
/ SEPTEMBER 1822

No. 15
H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, Port Jackson

“I have been employed for the last 8 or 10 weeks (to keep me out of mischief I suppose) upon making a regular Survey of this Harbour of Port Jackson upon a very large scale.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Revd. James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: three illegible red circular stamps, black circular stamp for Portsmouth, April 1823.

Location: SLNSW, no. 164.

The last of the expedition letters, chiefly dealing with the events ashore since their return to Sydney: JSR is, he writes, within a week (actually two-and-a-half) of “starting for dear old England”. The letter describes the great kindness of PPK in arranging for him to be examined for a Lieutenancy in Sydney with the help of officers from the *Satellite*, then in harbour (one of whom, Captain Gore, had earlier served with JSR on the *Horatio*). JSR is also starting to really imagine that he will soon be home, noting at one point that he has hopes of meeting his brother Thomas again, although he expects he “should not recognise him in a crowd”, given that JSR was “so complete a youngster when he left home”. JSR has been working on his survey of Port Jackson, but – almost incredibly – does not here mention the tragic events of late August 1822, only a few weeks previous to his writing, when a small boat under his command sank and four sailors drowned. The letter is also a little disappointing because he announces his hope that he will all but beat it home, so does not discuss the last section of surveying done by the *Bathurst*: doubly disappointing as this means that he does not write down his thoughts on the interesting second visit to King George’s Sound they made.

No. 15.
H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, Port Jackson
Sept. 7. 1822.

My Dear Father,

I have at length another opportunity of writing direct, by our old friend, the *Shipley*, and with great pleasure assure you of my being in excellent health, thank God, & within a week of starting for dear old England, the very thoughts of which quite discompose my head, & I am fearful will prevent my committing to paper any thing like a connected train of ideas.^[1] You will, however, I trust, excuse my writing so short a letter, as I fully expect to arrive in England a week or two after it.

In the first place, my dear Father, pray accept all the acknowledgements & thanks, in common with those around you, for your exertions at the pen, & believe how truly acceptable your letters have been, as well as affectionate, & really kind. I should be ungrateful indeed, to accuse you of wanting parental affection, after such repeated proofs of the contrary, but was painfully convinced of the reason your communications by letter were not so frequent as before, & could not but admit the plea, although so contrary to my inclination & the best wishes of my heart. I trust however that you are all enjoying good health at this period, & that Dr. Mother has quite recovered from her late indisposition.

On arriving here, April 24, from our last cruize in the *Bathurst*, I had the pleasure of receiving several letters from the Rectory, together with the Shirt-ing, Lieutt.'s uniform, &c. &c. which you was so kind as to send me out, & for which I have to return my best thanks. The most substantial piece of information we received at that period was the Promotion of Captn. King and Lieutt. Bedwell, & the temporary advancement of myself to a Lieutenantcy in the Navy, by Order of the Lords of the Admiralty, an honorable & gratifying step, to which I had no right to look up until after the usual examinations had been passed in Seamanship & Navigation. An order in Council is the only means by which more could have been done for me, & as I have no business to flatter myself with such a proceeding on my account, I consider myself extremely fortunate, & am now enjoying the situation & pay of a Lieutt. equally with Bedwell. I am nevertheless losing considerable seniority by not having passed the requisite examinations, at the time their Lordships were pleased to order our Promotions, as Mr Stilwell, of Arundel Street, who wrote to offer his services as my Agent, recommends my passing as soon as possible, on receipt of his letter, & by as many Officers as I can procure the attendance of, in order to transmit the necessary form of a passing Certifi-

[1] The *Shipley* was a familiar vessel on the New South Wales route, and is regularly mentioned in JSR's letters.

cate to the Admiralty, adding (& no doubt with good authority or reason) that my “commission cannot be made out until such Certificate is received”.[²]

It very fortunately happened that H.M. Sloop, *Satellite* had just arrived here from India, & on application to Captn. King, I was passed in the usual manner by him & Captn. Gore (one of the *Horatio*’s Lieutts. & a worthy good fellow) together with the First Lieutenants of both vessels, on the same day, April 25 1822.^[3] Captn. King immediately gave me an Order to act as Lieutt., & with one of my Passing Certificates enclosed the following very handsome letter to the Admiralty, by the *Satellite*, which sailed for Trincomalle about a week afterwards.

(Copy) “H.M. Surveying Sloop *Bathurst* May 7 1822. Sir, I have the honor to state that in obedience to their Lordships’ directions I have given Mr. John Septimus Roe, an Order to act as Lieut. of H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, whose Passing Certificate I have now to forward herewith. In consequence of the improbability of the arrival of any other of H.M.’s Ships at this Port, I saw no chance of providing the usual number of Officers of the prescribed rank, & therefore seized the opportunity of the visit of H.M. Sloop *Satellite* from the India Station, & with the assistance of Captn. Gore, & the First Lieutt. of that Sloop & the *Bathurst*, we have examined Mr. J. S. Roe as to his qualifications to receive the appointment ordered by their Lordships. Mr. Roe, on account of his having been only 8 weeks in England since the year 1814, has not had an opportunity of passing his examination at the Naval College at Portsmouth, as the Ship to which he was attached (the *Horatio*) was during that time at Deptford.^[4]

[2] Thomas Stilwell (1762-1846) was an influential and very successful naval agent. He had originally been the junior partner of the firm of James Sykes and his son (also James) in Arundel Street, but after 1816 Stilwell carried on the business alone, later establishing Stilwell & Sons, which was still trading in the early twentieth century (RBS heritage hub, online).

[3] Some of JSR’s own paperwork relating to this examination is now held by the SLWA. The examination into his proficiency took place on 25 April 1822, and his examiners on the day were his two long serving companions from the *Bathurst*, PPK and Frederick Bedwell; together with Capt. Robert Gore and 1st Lieut. John Paulson of HMS *Satellite*. Capt. Gore graduated from the Royal Naval College in 1808 and saw a deal of service on the Home and Mediterranean stations, was made Lieut. on 6 December 1813, shortly before he joined the *Horatio* (where, as JSR comments here, the two men got to know each other). He was made Cmdr. of *Satellite* July 1821, but it was his last active service, ultimately being invalided home. John Thomas Paulson had joined the RN in 1812, serving on the Home station, in the West Indies and the Mediterranean, before sailing to the East Indies on the *Leander* and transferring to the *Satellite* in late 1822. He had been promoted Lieut. 29 March 1822, and Cmdr. on 21 September 1842 (see O’Byrne, *A Naval Biographical Dictionary*).

[4] JSR was on the *Horatio* from August 1814 to February 1817, and made a long voyage to China and the East Indies.

She was paid off, on 10th Jany. 1817, & he left England on this Service on 17th February following, but in this interval he was examined for Navigation at Christ's Hospital, at which Institution he was educated, & bears ample testimonials to his good conduct & attention to his Studies. I have also to state that on the 4 voyages of Survey that I have made upon the coast, Mr. Roe has proved himself perfectly acquainted with the usual calculations attendant on such a Service, & has constantly assisted me both in taking & working "Lunar [*page 2*] distances, azimuths & amplitudes, & finding the Longitude by the Chronometers, which have always been in his charge, and in fact he is perfectly acquainted with all branches of Mathematics, & all other particulars requisite for the Service on which he has been employed under me. A reference to the Charts transmitted home by me, all of which were reduced & copied by him, will sufficiently prove to their Lordships his qualifications in that line of his duty, and I can with pleasure certify that all his other duties have been performed with equal care and correctness. Trusting that their Lordships will here find a proper opportunity of dispensing with the usual forms, & of rewarding Mr. Roe's assiduous & meritorious Services, I have the honor to be, Sir, M. O. H. Servt., (signed) P.P. King Captn. To J.W. Croker, Esqr., Admiralty Office, London."^[5]

It would answer no purpose for me to make a single comment upon the contents of this handsomely expressed letter, whether just & true, or otherwise, but it shews the disposition of the writer, & his friendly feeling towards your Son, who will probably derive all the benefit from it that he anticipates or expects. I think it likely to answer every purpose that could result from any thing else of same kind in shape of a Memorial, as this letter will be read before the Board, & will not be so tedious as one of the latter. I feel greatly obliged to Bror. Thos. for his applications at the Admiralty on my account & for his wholesome advice with respect to memorializing, which I certainly should have done had not the other taken place before. A duplicate of this letter was forwarded with a 2d. Passing Certificate to the Admiralty about 3 months ago by the Ship *Richmond*,^[6] via Batavia & perhaps India, & I now

[5] John Wilson Croker (1780-1857) was for many years Secretary to the Admiralty, and had of course been instrumental in outfitting the King voyage. PPK wrote many important letters to Croker during the *Mermaid* and *Bathurst* voyages.

[6] The *Richmond* (Capt. Kay) had arrived in Sydney with male prisoners and a small guard detachment from the 3rd Regiment (the Buffs) in May 1822. The ship is best remembered for bringing Surgeon-Superintendent Thomas Braidwood Wilson to the colony, and for wrecking off the coast of Hog Island (on the west coast of Sumatra) after they sailed from Sydney (see the report in the *Sydney Gazette*, 22 November 1822; 'Loss of the Ship *Richmond*,' in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, vol. XV (1823), p. 415; and Wilson's 1835 book, *Narrative of a Voyage round the World*).



JSR, A Survey of Port Jackson (1826). NLA.

send a 3d. of same nature, by this conveyance, seeing that if the Admiralty will not date my Commission before the arrival of a Certificate, it is an important object for me that one should arrive in the hands of their Secretary with all possible dispatch.

Mr. Stilwell very obligingly obtained & forwarded to me from the Navy Board, a certified time of my Servitude in the Navy, without which I should not have been able to pass here, & I fortunately had 2 or 3 copies of my Baptism by me, which answered as well as could be wished, & the main point now to be contended for, is to get my Commission dated, if possible, on 7th July 1821, being the same as Bedwell's, when the Admiralty Order was given, for I had then served more than 8 years in the Navy, & the accompanying letter fully explains the reason of my not having been able to pass the requisite examinations. The good offices of the Admiral might here be solicited perhaps with great effect, to bring this matter about, & I am so very much pinched for time, or I would contrive & write a line myself.^[7] In case the certificate for Navigation should prove an obstacle, I have instructed Mr. Stilwell (whose well known character & late kind exertion in my behalf have induced me to accept as my Agent) to forward a letter which I enclosed him for the Treasurer and Governors of Christ's Hospital, begging for the Certificate which was deposited in their Counting House after I passed that examination which you may recollect detained me in town on my arrival from China.^[8] Mr. S. will forward it to the Admiralty if so fortunate as to procure it.

And now my Dear Father that I have dwelt so long upon this selfish topic, allow me to apologize for engrossing so much of your attention & my paper upon one subject relative only to myself, trusting that I shall soon have the happiness of spinning as long a yarn as any Ropemaker in our Dock Yards, when I am again blessed with a seat alongside you all at the dear Rectory. This is now protracted to a very long absence from it, & if I again know the house, I much doubt whether I shall recognize any of the faces around you except those who are the immediate inmates of the Rectory, & whom I can never forget. Since the receipt of your last kind & affectionate letter, of March 8, finished by my Dear Sophy 2 days afterwards, I have dared to encourage a hope that I shall yet see Thos. previous to his departure for India, as you mention his having before him at least 12 months more in England, & we expect to arrive some time about the latter end of February, or perhaps earlier should the winds oblige us to go round Cape Horn instead of the route at present fixed upon, through Torres' Strait & by the Cape of Good Hope, where it supposed we shall touch for a fortnight to refit & refresh.

[7] Sir Richard Goodwin Keats, JSR's most influential patron.

[8] JSR had returned on the *Horatio* in December 1816, and had been highly frustrated at his inability to sit his exam at the time (see JSR to the Rev. James Roe, 16 January 1817).

It was originally intended that we should touch at an interesting part of the Northn. Coast of this Country on our passage Homewards, where a deep opening was left unexamined when circumstances obliged us to quit the Coast for Port Jackson, but the advanced state of the season, & our repairs not being [page 3] completed in time, will prevent our doing so, & we shall make the best of our way homewards. I have been employed for the last 8 or 10 weeks (to keep me out of mischief I suppose) upon making a regular Survey of this Harbour of Port Jackson upon a very large scale (8 inches to a mile) and am sorry to say my eyes have been great sufferers by it, though I spare them as much as possible, & console myself with soon being able to lay by, or to return them to the first Dock Yard we arrive at, & get a new pair.^[9] I am greatly at a loss for a pair spectacles & cannot procure a pair of proper kind in the Colony. The coloured glasses proved of very great Service in bright weather, but I have now unfortunately lost them, & they cannot be replaced here. I have now taken a great deal to wearing a green shade, which I find of very essential use, particularly by Candle Light.

You have perhaps heard that I was much gratified at meeting John Tarn here as Surgeon of the *Satellite*.^[10] He was very well, & gave me several curiosities for the Roesial Museum, desiring his kind remembrance, when I wrote to the Rectory. As he had every wish to remain in India, it is not at all improbable that Thos. may have an oppority. of seeing him. I cannot but sincerely rejoice at the happy re-establishment of my Dr. T.'s health & need not say how happy I shall be at shaking him by the hand.^[11] I have but a very faint recollection of him, except that he always appeared to me very tall, & should not recognise him in a crowd. I was so complete a youngster when he left home that I can have very little hope of being better off, but let our faces be ever so strange to each other, our hearts I am sure are united, & will doubtless beat with becoming affection at the happy meeting I anticipate. Pray thank him, Dr. Father, for all his kind letters to me, & say that did time permit, I would gladly seize half an hour to answer some of them, but it is now near Midnight (there go the eyes you will say) & the *Shipley* is positively to sail at daylight. She goes round Cape Horn, & has several passengers, amongst whom [is] Dr. Rutherford who took my Box of Insects home last for Wm.^[12]

[9] JSR's survey of Port Jackson was published as 'A Survey of Port Jackson, New South Wales, by John Septimus Roe, Lieut. R.N.' on 15 November 1826.

[10] Mentioned in several of JSR's letters, John Tarn of HMS *Satellite* was JSR's cousin and later sailed with PPK on the South American voyage of the *Beagle* and *Adventure* (see also JSR's letter of 28 September 1821).

[11] JSR is referring here to his brother Thomas Roe (1789-1876).

[12] George Shaw Rutherford RN first arrived in Sydney as the Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Prince of Orange* (February 1821), and went on to be a vastly experienced convict surgeon, sailing a total of eight times.

I explained mat[ters] about the freight [tha]t was charged for that box with rather more minuteness than appeared ac[] either to the [] the person who had undertaken to land it as his private property, but all has [] well & in fut[ure I s]hall know who I have to deal with. That Ship has been sadly disappointing us for the last [] months, having appointed & re-appointed days for sailing until no person has believed they will sail till they have now dropped down into a fair way. I have received Mrs. Cobourn's letter to her Son, which was enclosed in her usual kind & affectionate manner, by Mrs. Govr. King, who very obligingly informs me on the outside of all your letters that pass through her hands, of your being quite well up to the date on which they are forwarded, or of her last news from you.^[13]

Captn. and Mrs. King & Mrs. H. McArthur are pretty well. Mr. H. McA. & all the families of both are quite well, & every party receives your kind expressions of remembrance with great pleasure & returns of their sincere good wishes. I have purposely omitted saying any thing connected with our last voyage, because I shall expect (if the Almighty is pleased to spare me) that my arrival will so quickly follow this letter that I may spare my tired eyes, for one of my sheets is not filled in an hour. You cannot express too warmly my affectionate love & duty to my ever dear Mother, whose health I trust will not again suffer, as it has recently done, & with kindest regards & best wishes to Dr. Brother & my Sophy, not forgetting Chas. when any one writes, believe me to remain, my dear Father, with fervent Prayers to Almighty God for his Gracious preservation of you, & our family circle, your ever affectionate Son
John Septimus Roe

P.S. Should the sailing of the *Shibley* be delayed still further, I will write something more. I trust Wm. has received the *Dick's* Curiosities safe by this time. I am collecting together every thing which my means will admit of, though promise nothing grand, & am sorry that this is the wrong time of year for insects, & indeed for every thing.

[13] Unclear: JSR evidently corresponded with Mrs. Cobourn, who was also known to the King family, but I have not unraveled the connection.

SEPTEMBER 1822
/ JANUARY 1823

No. 16

H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, Simon's Bay

Cape of Good Hope

“A few days before we sailed from Port Jackson I had the pleasure of hearing, through the medium of Mrs. King’s letters, that the Dick had arrived safe in England, & that Wm. had received a box of Curiosities from me. I sincerely hope they reached his hands safely & in good state of preservation, as there were many valuable specimens among them, that would not disgrace the first Museum in the Country, & among the insects it is likely there are a few, that were previously unknown, the parts of Australia in which they were caught having never been examined by Europeans or civilized man since its creation.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe.

The Revd. James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: three illegible red circular stamps, black circular stamp for Portsmouth dated Ap (?) 1823.

Location: SLNSW, no. 164.

JSR is fairly on his way home, and can barely constrain his excitement. He notes that they have been forced to call in at King George’s Sound (Albany) again en route, but is frustratingly silent on what transpired there. There is a little on Harriet King and her pregnancy, a little on life on board, and a lot of castles in the sky about his plans for his return. Probably the most significant part is his comment on his ambitions for his collections of curiosities, including his rather startling admission that he did not have any “book of Natural History to refer to” while he was making them (although perhaps he means that their library has been diminished because the botanist Allan Cunningham is no longer on board). There is besides a little on his chart-making, more on the agony of his eyesight, and a dreary assessment of Simon’s Bay at the Cape of Good Hope.

Wendell Phillips, Union Chapel, 100 Park St.
19 January 1851

My Dear Father

You will remember by the above date that in regard to the
 in our papers because it was long out of the system and it has become better & more pro-
 able in our view than it was formerly. It is probably a reflection of the respect shown to
 in all your other papers. I greatly enjoyed and by looking over mine in the morning
 finding. My heart beat high at the prospect of seeing that looking. I recently had
 a letter from you after by my going away of you on the Boston visit. The last by the Middle
 last Sept. 1850. I must you have seen by this time. I that you will not have been without
 friends which I hope my enquiries at our own addresses. For various reasons I have
 writing. But father, in early as was possible, but he not take any attempt to get the 21st
 likelihood. I am very glad to hear of your health. In fact, I believe it has long been
 the likelihood of the letter, I believe you enjoy, I believe, I believe not more than the 21st
 of the heart month. All last summer we happily in good health with the exception of a few
 the nature of my own father. It always has been very fine because of the low, or rather being
 from home, in some things. We have particularly another paper, which is being
 low. Another in case of Mr. King's proximity to Boston with a young Mother, there is
 nothing to be effected for want of mutual affection. I have not observed best time
 have been with you. In the past few days my father, the same was being felt and
 and his son. I think the same of every day. My father's name has not all his family in a
 good health. He certainly seems to have which has got across a chance of my name. It
 in my mind in Boston or other in an hour to take still father's name by his departure
 being in the late for home. He later mentioned with to my mother's speaking, though I am
 when to take for home. I must have had my father's name been better than
 times. My father in relation, that he is after I have made my enquiry with him, but
 without being. I must not not father, it is very much to be desired of a well
 when I hope to return. It is very much of your good. He is not without. Next to my
 in relation of the wedding celebration. That you are all well and happy at the
 time. In great pleasure from hearing that the Lord of the Admiralty has confirmed my
 being appointed as lieutenant upon the strength of our of the 3rd Army to the 1st which I
 have provided to him in relation to a different measure. He has no opinion by the
 Middle. I believe you hope that this will be well. In order to get my commission, if
 which from the time of the 1850 from Boston, or shall write from the date of my
 and 21, 1850. which was also the date of my father's day to set in order. Please to
 the board's next night have been given to illustrate, from the 1st of June. I believe
 the selection of a Lieutenant which I believe to be the same for me from
 the names of the board. which seems to be an object of great attention, with him, than
 the board of my father's for himself. The next thing will be only made in
 to return the letter. before that will be (the 1st of June) in 1851. I believe from July 1851
 to April 1852 but it may very likely have of course, we are very glad to hear
 however might be called in question to doubt, and then or just at once, of which
 in my mind to be the best of it. I believe the other news which was made the 1st of June, the
 the case of a man which cannot be allowed here. I am glad to see that father's name among the
 lieutenant, although it is all probably, it will be very much, after all, a circumstance, which
 their respect for me. I believe the next which will be given to have received the order
 I believe that is very much to be desired, but he has brother of joining his commission at
 by other, I believe, to have the board's name my father's name of our then will be
 to be by your return to them - but of course, I believe, and I believe, and I believe, and I believe

H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, Simon's Bay, Cape of Good Hope
19 January 1823

My Dear Father,

You will perceive by the above that we are at length on our passage homeward to dear long lost Old England, and all those beloved Relatives & Friends from whom we have now been so long separated. May God Almighty in continuation of His infinite mercies to us all, grant us safe passage, & gratify my dearest wish, by landing me once more at the much loved Rectory. My heart beats high at the near prospect of enjoying that happiness, & I earnestly trust it will suffer no alloy by my finding any of you on the Doctor's List. My last by the *Shipley* dated Sept. 8 1822 I trust you have received by this time, & that you will not have been induced from its contents, to suffer any uneasiness at our non-appearance, for various causes prevented our quitting Port Jackson so early as was expected, & we did not take our ultimate departure till 25th September. Contrary gales, boisterous weather, & a fortnight's detention at King George's Sound on the South Coast of New Holland, protracted our voyage considerably, & we did not arrive here till 14th of the present Month. All hands however are happily in good health, with the exception of our Surgeon who instead of being our factotum, is always on his beam-ends, from diseases of the liver, &c., contracted during former Service in warm climates.^[1]

We have fortunately another Surgeon onboard, taking a passage home, therefore in case of Mrs. King's presenting her husband with a young Bathurst, there is nothing to be apprehended from want of medical assistance.^[2] Her Nurse died off the South Coast, & we buried her at King George's Sound,^[3] but another female servant being onboard, the loss was not so severely felt, as it otherwise would have been, & I have the pleasure of adding that Mrs. King arrived here with all her family in perfect good health. I am extremely anxious to know whether there yet remains a chance of my seeing Thos. on my arrival in England, or whether we are doomed to suffer

[1] The Surgeon on board at this point was still Andrew Montgomery RN, but he and the officers on board had been arguing since towards the end of the expedition, for reasons never made clear: his ill-health, clearly alluded to here, can't have helped. He left the ship at the Cape of Good Hope to attend to some private business.

[2] One of the reasons that PPK was able to allow Montgomery to jump ship at the Cape was because they had on board James Hall RN (1784-1869), formerly Surgeon-Superintendent of the *Mary Ann*, a convict ship for New South Wales. Hall sailed on the *Bathurst* as a passenger, but after Montgomery left was formally appointed as the surgeon on board.

[3] The servant of Harriet King's who died at King George's Sound was Mary Lenny, formerly a mantua maker from Southampton, transported on the *Friendship*, arriving in January 1818. PPK had petitioned Governor Brisbane to allow her full pardon so that Lenny would be able to accompany them. She died on 14 November 1822 and was buried at sea by PPK.

still farther disappointment, by his departure having been taken for India.^[4] The latter circumstance will be very vexatious & provoking, though I am inclined to hope for the best, & cannot learn that any passengers of our name have touched here outward bound. Being also in expectation that Chas. is afloat, I have made every enquiry after him, but without success, & must wait with patience till Newbury Church bears South West 1/4 of a mile distant, when I hope to receive all & every particle of news, good, bad, and indifferent. Next to my being in possession of the gratifying intelligence that you are all well and happy at the Rectory, I shall derive the greatest pleasure from learning that the Lords of the Admiralty have confirmed my Acting Appointment as Lieutenant, upon the strength of one of the 3 Passing Certificates which I have forwarded to them in Triplicate by 3 different conveyances. The last was forwarded by the *Shipley*, & I entertain great hopes that their Lordships will be induced to date my commission (if at all) from the time of their Order for our Promotion, or at all events from the date of my passing Certificate April 25 1822, which was also the date of my Order from Captn. King to act as Lieutt. I have no doubt this desirable point might have been gained by application from Sir Richd. Keats,^[5] particularly upon the production of a Navigation Certificate, which I instructed Mr. Stilwell to procure for me from The Treasurer of Christ's Hospital, & which appears to be an object of greater attention with them than the certificate of having passed for Seaman-ship.^[6] This antedating will not only enable my Agent to obtain the difference between Master's Mate's pay (£9/4s pr. quarter) and Lieutt.'s (£27/12s) from July 1821 to April 1822, but it may very likely prove of considerable use at any future period, when Seniority might be called in question to decide any claims, or point at issue, 2 objects which are by no means to be lost sight of. There are also other reasons which would make this step desirable, tho' they are of a nature which cannot be explained here.

I am glad to see Richd. Griffiths' name among the Lieutenants,^[7] although in all probability it will stand above mine after all, a circumstance which I shall regret only for one reason, & that is, the success which will be found to have crowned the undue & what I should term unfair means that were taken by his Mother of procuring his advancement at my expense, & endeavouring to prevent the Admiral's gaining any farther knowledge of me than could reach his ear by mere accident or chance, but of illiberality & narrow minded conceptions, more hereafter at a proper [*page 2*] time and place, as also of the in-

[4] JSR's eldest brother, Thomas.

[5] JSR's patron Sir Richard Goodwin Keats.

[6] JSR had evidently asked his agent in London, Thomas Stilwell, to acquire some paperwork from his old school, Christ's Hospital.

[7] Richard Griffith RN was made Lieut. on 14 December 1821 (*Navy List*). I can shed no light on his behaviour which had so offended JSR; nor on that of his mother, for that matter.

ward satisfaction arising from having done something, & of having done nothing, for an equal reward.^[8] I am sorry to hear of the Admiral's ill state of health, for without any allusion to my benefiting by his present or future patronage, I sincerely wish he may live, many more years. His behaviour to me, when I last had the pleasure of seeing him at Newfoundland, was very kind & condescending, & I trust he will not have found that my conduct since that period has called for any change in his sentiments.^[9]

We have to congratulate ourselves upon being much more fortunate than 2 vessels, the *Leven* & *Barracouta*, that were employed surveying the East Coast of Africa.^[10] They were here a few days before we arrived, having put in to refresh in a very sickly state, with the loss of 2 Captains, a Lieutt., 3 or 4 Midshipmen, & a great many men, from the prevalent fever & sickness which exists all along the coast, & to which they are all in a very great measure exposed by the duty of Surveying requiring them to be so much onshore. The Captains who died were Cutfield and Lechmere, the latter acting as Surveyor.^[11] Capt. Owen commands the whole, and a nephew of his, who was also a schoolfellow of mine at Christ's Hospital, commands a small tender attached to the Service.^[12] It is perhaps fortunate that they had sailed previous to our arrival, or an attempt might probably have been made to detain some of us, to fill up the vacancies, & for my own part I would have sacrificed every thing I had in view rather than have submitted to it, but we have all reason to rejoice at not having been put to the trial.

[8] Here again, the "Admiral" is JSR's patron, Sir Richard Keats.

[9] Keats was known to the Roe family, but JSR first met him when he went to Newfoundland on the *Rippon*, where Keats was the Commodore-Governor from 1813 to 1816.

[10] Captain William Fitzwilliam Owen (1774-1857) had overall command of the Admiralty survey of the east coast of Africa between 1821 and 1826. Owen was commander of HMS *Leven*, accompanied by HMS *Barracouta* (Capt. William Cutfield). The African survey exacted a terrible toll on the crews, as JSR notes here with a note of respect, and he is evidently glad that he was not tapped on the shoulder to help augment their ranks. On the survey see Ritchie, *The Admiralty Chart*, pp. 105-135; and Boteler, *Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery* (1835).

[11] Owen's officers and men were ravaged by fever in late 1822, and there were many deaths. Cmdr. Charles Lechmere was an officer on half pay who had been allowed to join the crew of the *Leven* for the purpose of learning the art of maritime surveying. He caught a fever on 3 November 1822 and lingered for a few days, taking some comfort from being sung to by his fellow officers, but died late on the ninth. Capt. William Cutfield was the commander of HMS *Barracouta*, but by 29 November was raving with fever, "uttering the most frantic and fearful shrieks", and died either that night or early the next morning (for an account of this dreadful period, see Boteler, *Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery* (1835) vol. I, chapter 5).

[12] Capt. Owen's nephew was Richard Owen, the son of a clergyman in county Wexford, who joined the RN in May 1811 and saw service during and after the Napoleonic Wars, including a good deal of work on the African coast while on board HMS *Ulysses*. He joined the African service under the command of his uncle in November 1821, during which period he "was for some time intrusted with the command of the *Cockburn* and *Albatross* schooners" (O'Byrne, *A Naval Biographical Dictionary*).

A few days before we sailed from Port Jackson I had the pleasure of hearing, through the medium of Mrs. King's letters, that the *Dick* had arrived safe in England, & that Wm. had received a box of Curiosities from me. I sincerely hope they reached his hands safely & in good state of preservation, as there were many valuable specimens among them, that would not disgrace the first Museum in the Country, & among the insects it is likely there are a few, that were previously unknown, the parts of Australia in which they were caught having never been examined by Europeans or civilized man since its creation. I hope therefore that none of them will be exchanged or given away until I have the pleasure of seeing them again, which will enable me to point out those which were most difficult to be procured. As to the names of such an extensive Musquito Fleet I can say nothing at present, not having had any book of Natural History to refer to, & am therefore not in possession of the specific name of more than a very few. But more of this when Wm. & I put our heads together in the Roesial Museum.

It is to be hoped that he had less trouble & expense in getting this box passed through the Custom House, than attended the first, & had I been any thing but a blockhead, I should not have sent the Bill of Exchange in it, but have enclosed it in a letter, though I trust every thing has long since been satisfactorily adjusted. I have only just commenced making a small collection of Curiosities at this place, being busily engaged preparing more Charts for the Admiralty, among which is my Survey of Port Jackson, which after a few interruptions occasionally, I managed to complete a few days before we left that Port, & I am now drawing it out fair together, with a plan of the Town & its Suburbs.^[13] This kind of work has been my constant occupation ever since we left the Coast of Australia, & having also to take observations of the Sun, &c. &c. as usual, & write up my Log & Journal, my eyes have not been much benefited, & it is now high time I gave them a long & salutary respite, being fully aware that it would be useless, attempting any cure for them so long as the existing cause of their suffering could not possibly be removed, I have not applied any thing to them for the last 20 months, as strengthening washes & eye water might only serve to confirm & render durable any imperfection, which might otherwise be removed by the application of other remedies of a contrary nature, & which I have ever found most beneficial to them, when the system has been reduced by loss of blood, or opening Medicines, for other purposes. At such periods also, not having been able to follow my usual occupations, the eyes have had a respite, & every thing has proceeded in so beneficial a manner to them that I entertain great hopes of again being able to recognise a friend across the street, without being obliged to quiz him to

[13] JSR's survey of Port Jackson was published as 'A Survey of Port Jackson, New South Wales, by John Septimus Roe, Lieut. R.N.' on 15 November 1826.

his face. But a medical man will perhaps have a different opinion onshore, & I must abide by his directions.

At present I am at work in my comfortable & pleasant lodgings which Captn. King has taken at Clarence's Hotel, situated near the waterside about the middle of the town.^[14] There has been considerable improvement in Simon's Town since my last visit to it in the *Horatio* in 1816, & there is room for 10 times as much more, for every thing appears in complete disorder compared with the clean and well-regulated Town of Sydney at Port Jackson. I have not yet been out of the town, but [*page 3*] intend taking advantage of an early opportunity to visit Cape Town, in Table Bay, situated (by the road) about 20 miles off. You would be a little surprised at first perhaps to see 10, 14 and 16 Bullocks driven at once in a light waggon or caravan, by a Hottentot, who sits in front of it, with a very long whip, which he handles with such peculiar dexterity, that he seldom fails touching up the animal he aims at. These kind of vehicles are the common conveyances at this place, & it is said that upwards of 20 bullocks are frequently harnessed to one of them, but I never saw more than 18, & they generally keep up a short trot. Simon's Town appears a very dull place to a stranger, from want of Society, & the only amusements are shooting or riding, either over soft white sand enough to blind him with its dazzling brightness, or on rough stony roads. There is nothing in shape of a Theatre in the place, nor any place of public amusement except one Billiard Room, which is perhaps better avoided. They have one very small church or chapel, that will not accommodate 150 persons, & it is served by the Revd. G.W. Sturt, the Resident Chaplain at Simon's Town.^[15] The Commandant is Captn. Somerset, a son of the Governor, Lord Chas. S., who appears about 60 years of age, & has a young wife, 6 or 8 & 20, & a daughter about 30. Lady S. is a very pretty woman.^[16]

[14] Clarence's Hotel was still running in 1837, when Sir John Herschel put up there during his long tour of South Africa with his wife Margaret.

[15] At the time Simon's Town was a small settlement, with a church relatively recently established in a converted warehouse ("The only thing which can much gratify a stranger, who visits Simon's Town," comment the editors of the *State of the Cape of Good Hope* in 1822 with some feeling, "except the leaving it, is a ride by the mountains, to the real Cape Town"). I do not know much of Sturt: he had not been the chaplain in 1819, when the post was filled by the Rev. Thomas Erskine MA (*The Cape of Good Hope Calendar and Agriculturist's Guide*).

[16] Lord Charles Somerset (1767-1831) was governor of the Cape Colony from 1814 to 1826. He had married Lady Elizabeth Courtenay in 1788 and they had a large family including their son, Capt. Henry Somerset (1794-1862), a veteran of the Peninsular War and Waterloo, who travelling to the Cape Colony to join his father, serving with the Cape Mounted Rifles. After the death of Lady Elizabeth in 1815, her husband remarried the much younger – and "very pretty", comments JSR – Lady Mary Poulett. Which of Lord Somerset's daughters had travelled with him? Given that JSR says she was about 30, perhaps the Hon. Mary Georgiana Somerset (1793-1856), who did not marry until 1833.

Jany 23.

The *Ariadne* arrived here yesterday, & the *Cygnets* being ordered to sail for England tomorrow, I am obliged to bring my letter to a close, & must apologise for not writing more, on account of the prospect of so soon following my letter.^[17] As we shall not be ready for Sea again before the first week in February, & the *Cygnets* sailing better than the *Bathurst*, we shall probably be in England about a month after the arrival of the former, or about the 1st of May, therefore you must not look out for us till that period arrives, & I entertain great hopes of spending my next birth day happily at the Rectory. Mrs. King is now within a few days of being confined, with her 4th child & we are in hopes that anxious period will have been safely encountered before we go to sea again.^[18] A Ship, & particularly so small a one as the *Bathurst*, being very ill adapted to making a female comfortable on those occasions, or indeed on any other.

I am happy to see by the Papers that Governor and Mrs. Macquarie have arrived safely in England, & we are all on the alert to get a sight of the Report which we find has been published by the late Commissioner of Enquiry on the state of the Colony at Port Jackson.^[19] It would prove very interesting to us, but as yet we cannot learn that it is in this Colony. There is some talk of the same Com[missioner] being sen[t here] to act in conjunction with others in instituting similar enquiries into the state [] at the Ca[pe of Good H]ope, & it is said that Ld. Chas. Somerset has in that case, signified his intention of retiring f[rom the] Government of the Colony rather than submit to it. Having now no more news to communicate, & being in anxious expectation of seeing you so soon after the receipt of my letter, I trust you will excuse my writing so short a letter, & again express my earnest hope that you will have weathered all the winter gales, &c. &c. and be in the full enjoyment of good health. Pray give my kindest & most affectionate love to Dear Mother, Sophy & William, & with every good wish I can possibly bestow upon you all, pray the Almighty to bless and protect you, & am my Dear Father your most affectionate & dutiful Son

John Septimus Roe

[17] Presumably JSR refers to HMS *Ariadne*, a Hermes class ship, which saw service on the Cape of Good Hope station. HMS *Cygnets*, previously mentioned by JSR, was a Cherokee class brig launched in 1819, became a packet in 1824, and was sold in 1835 (Portsmouth Dockyard, online).

[18] Harriet King's fourth son, Robert Lethbridge King (1823-1897), was born at sea a few days after they sailed from the Cape, PPK feeling that he could not delay in Simon's Bay for personal reasons.

[19] The Macquaries had sailed from Sydney on the *Surry* in February 1822, and were back in England by July; Bigge's first report was published in June 1822.

P.S. Under the fearful apprehension that Brother Thos. has some time since embarked for India, I have omitted mentioning his name, but should that not be the case, pray give my affectionate regards & best wishes to him, as also to Chas. when any one writes, whether he is at Plymouth or afloat, & I hope has fully recovered his health, & that he may still have a prospect of spending a few months more in his Native Land.

Jany. 26 11 PM.

The departure of the *Cygnets* having been delayed till tomorrow morning at break of day, I have kept my letter open to the latest hour, & must now close finally, but without being able to give any news in addition to the above. There appears more than a probability of our touching for a few days at St. Helena, & should Mrs. King not be confined until that time, the stay we shall make there will be very uncertain as to its length, therefore do not make yourselves uneasy if we do not arrive as soon as expected, for the *Bathurst* has carried us safely through a few dangers & we must rely with confidence upon a continuance of the favorable protection of a kind Providence. May that Providence ever watch over and guard you all my dearest friends, & bring us all together again in perfect health & happiness. God bless you all, ever my Dear Father your affectionate Son, J.S.R.

JANUARY 1823
/ APRIL 1823

H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*
Plymouth Sound

“I expect & hope to find the Roeiah Museum, Willm.’s hobby, in a flourishing state, & shall feel extremely happy in making a few additions to it, on our arrival in the River, where we are in hopes of obtaining a Treasury Order, for landing all curiosities free of duty, & in the mean time he may entertain himself clearing away one corner of his Room for some Tigers, & a few other small things. I would also recommend his fitting up a Cage there to exhibit no less a personage than myself in, for I reckon upon being the greatest curiosity of the whole, & that I shall run mad before I am blessed with a sight of the Old Newbury Church Tower, bearing S.W.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe.

[No address].

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 165.

JSR and the *Bathurst* are finally at anchor in Plymouth Sound. He is cold and weary, but delighted, and in high hopes of being paid off and allowed home to Newbury soon. His first thoughts are of his brother Charles, A Lieutenant in the Royal Marines, whom he hopes is still in Plymouth, and his second are to get his hands on a Navy List and see if his formal promotion has gone ahead as planned.

Misses of the Plymouth Sound.

23^d April 1823.

My dear Father.

I feel in extremely anxious at our annual one.
one in in England. But that I recently have time to dictate a short letter
to assure you of that happy event, & that we ourselves here about in hours of
in perfect health & safety, to await news from the account. I cannot but
feel very grateful to the Almighty for the many & good services to us & shall one
in addition to that of thankfulness if it shall have pleased Him to preserve you
all in perfect health & safety also of this piece of agreeable intelligence. I trust to
arrive by return of Post, which will also bring Capt Kings news from London, which
will be read upon immediately. We expect to be ordered soon to the First Frigate to be
paid off. — As yet I have not been able to learn whether Charles is here or whether he
has been ordered to embark on board my mother's numerous ships which have been lately
fitted out, but on Capt Kings return from waiting on the Senior Officer of the Port,
I shall soon be enabled to hear in hand. I hear of his quarters in high style,
with a brother officer of his Lieut. Hooky. &c. to whom he is intimately known.
I cannot venture to attempt giving you an atom of news, scarcely knowing how to
write intelligibly, & so to be consistent, but hope in a very few days to have the
pleasure of meeting you all face to face at the happy Rectory, where it is to be hoped
I shall contribute to the joys of a sensible friend, by the addition of his presence.
I am glad to hear for his sake, that you have had a very severe winter, which I trust has
completely tossed him up, but trust you & my dear Mother have weathered it safely without
saying that you are looking forward with joyful anticipations to the approaching
fine weather that may shortly be expected. The dear blessed Lady (God bless her & you
all) with William's I consider are no worse for it, being young & vigorous. It is fortunate
we

H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, Plymouth Sound,
23d. April 1823.

My Dear Father,

I feel so extremely rejoiced at our arrival once more in an English Port that I scarcely know how to dictate a short letter to apprise you of that happy event, & that we anchored here about an hour ago in perfect health & safety, to await Orders from the Admiralty. I cannot but feel very grateful to the Almighty for his many & great mercies to us, & shall owe an additional tribute of thankfulness, if it shall have pleased Him to preserve you all in perfect health & safety also. This piece of agreeable intelligence I trust to receive by return of Post, which will also bring Captn. King's Orders from London, which will be acted upon immediately, & we expect to be ordered round to the River Thames to be paid off.

As yet I have not been able to learn whether Charles is here or whether he has been ordered to embark onboard any one of the numerous Ships which have been lately fitted out, but on Captn. King's return from waiting on the Senior Officer of the Port, I shall storm the Barracks, sword in hand, & beat up his quarters in high style, with a brother officer of his, Lieut. Hockly RM, to whom he is intimately known.^[1]

I cannot venture to attempt giving you an atom of news, scarcely knowing how to write intelligibly so as to be understood, but hope in a very few days to have the happiness of meeting you all face to face, at the happy Rectory, where it is to be hoped Thomas will contribute to the joys of a domestic fire-side, by the addition of his presence. I am glad to hear for his sake, that you have had a very severe winter, which I trust has completely braced him up, but trust you & my Dear Mother have weathered it safely, without suffering, & that you are looking forward with joyful countenances to the approaching fine weather that may shortly be expected. The dear blossom Sophy, (God bless her, & you all), with William, I consider are no worse, being young & vigorous. It is fortunate [*page 2*] we escaped the cold weather, though I now can scarcely hold the pen in my fingers, for it would have cut us up famously before we should we should have got seasoned.

I hope you have received my letter from the Cape of Good Hope, by HM Brig *Cygnets*, for we have not heard of her arrival, nor have I been able to get sight of a Navy List to see whether I have been confirmed in my Acting Ap-

[1] Looking through the 1824 *Navy List* it is certain that this must be Lt. Edward Hockly RM, promoted 2nd Lt. in the Royal Marines on 15 January 1811 (Charles Roe attained the same rank on 1 June 1811). Hockly was made 1st Lt. on 15 October 1827. Marsden Hordern (*King of the Australian Coast*, p. 381) listed Hockly as having come on board as a supernumerary in Port Jackson but he had in fact joined the ship as a supernumerary in Simons Bay, invalided from HMS *Andromache*.

pointment as Lieut., pray be sure & mention that, or any thing material upon the subject when you write, that I may prepare myself for any examinations they may think proper to make me pass through. We have been more than busy on our passage homewards, bringing every thing to a close for the Admiralty & ourselves, & I am sorry to say that Captn. King's instructions have obliged him to demand from us all Journals, Drawings, Setches, & every Document relative to the voyages we have made in the *Mermaid* & *Bathurst*, that they may be transmitted to the Admiralty for the information of their Lordships, after which there is every probability of their being returned to us. I expect & hope to find the Roeiah Museum, Willm.'s hobby, in a flourishing state, & shall feel extremely happy in making a few additions to it, on our arrival in the River, where we are in hopes of obtaining a Treasury Order, for landing all curiosities free of duty, & in the mean time he may entertain himself clearing away one corner of his Room for some Tigers, & a few other small things. I would also recommend his fitting up a Cage there to exhibit no less a personage than myself in, for I reckon upon being the greatest curiosity of the whole, & that I shall run mad before I am blessed with a sight of the Old Newbury Church Tower, bearing S.W. Patience, however, which we have had such frequent occasion to invoke on our late very long voyage of 7 months from Port Jackson, must now be called in to my assistance, & right glad shall I be, on the arrival of the happy day.

I must now prepare to set my foot again on English ground, & great as the gratification will be of seeing Charles, it will be with an anxious heart that I shall beat up his Quarters, being so long without having heard of the welfare of all I hold so dear. That Almighty God may have been graciously pleased to preserve you all in health, & that He will continue his All Powerful Protection, I shall ever pray, & with affectionate kindest love to Dear Mother, Sophy, & Brothers, remain, my ever dear Father
your affectionate & long absent Son

John Septimus Roe

APRIL 1823

Plymouth Dock

“My fingers are so very cold I can scarcely hold the pen, having just been out walking with Chas., & returned almost too late for the Post.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Two pages.

[No address].

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 166.

Success. Not only has JSR been ashore, but he has spent the day with his brother Charles. He is even colder than before, and very sad to have missed his brother Thomas who has already sailed for India with his wife: however, even this disappointment barely makes a dent in JSR's jubilation.

Plymouth Dock 23. April 1775

My Dear Father

I feel so excessively rejoiced at
the happy news of the Bathursts safe arrival. at Plymouth
this morning that I scarcely know how to circumvent it
& hope in a very few days to leave this happiness of soon
seeing the happy Rectory & all its dear inmates in
perfect health. My fingers and so my cold I can scarcely
hold the pen, having just been out walking ^{with Cha^s} & returned
almost too late for the Post. Thank God I am
in the enjoyment of excellent health, & Cha^s though poorly
is getting better. May the Almighty have been
graciously pleased to protect you all in safety & that he
will continue his protection shall ever be my earnest prayer.
The news Cha^s gives me of Tho^s speedy embarkation on board
the Layton, has quite confounded me & captures all the
fond prospects I had formed of shadowing him by the land
previous to his departure for India - but must beg my
kindest

Plymouth Dock 23 April 1823.

My Dear Father,

I feel so excessively overjoyed at the happy news of the *Bathurst's* safe arrival at Plymouth this morning, that I scarcely know how to communicate it & hope in a very few days to have the happiness of soon seeing the happy Rectory, & all the dear inmates, in perfect health. My fingers are so very cold I can scarcely hold the pen, having just been out walking with Chas., & returned almost too late for the Post. Thank God I am in the enjoyment of excellent health, and Chas. though poorly is getting better.

May the Almighty have been graciously pleased to protect you all in safety, & that he will continue his protection shall ever be my earnest prayer. The news Chas. gives me of Thos.' speedy embarkation onboard the *Layton*, has quite confounded me, & capsized all the fond prospects I had formed of shaking him by the hand previous to his departure for India, but must beg my [page 2] kindest remembrance & sincere congratulations on his recent marriage, a step which there appears every likelihood of making him happy & comfortable.^[1] I earnestly hope you & my Dear Mother feel quite well after the severe weather you have recently weathered, & that the lovely young blossom Sophy, with Wm., have retained their wonted vigour & freshness, in spite of all squalls.

To the Almighty I feel very grateful for his gracious protection of me through many squalls, & earnestly trust He will conduct me in safety to the happy fireside of those I love so dearly. Pray give my kindest affect. love to dear Mother, Sophy & Brothers, & with every good wish, & a promise of particulars at a future time in very great haste, My Dear Father, your ever affect. & long absent Son

John Septimus Roe

[1] An important passage about JSR's brothers Charles (an officer in the Royal Marines) and Thomas (who served with the Army of the East India Company). Charles endured indifferent health, but had quite a lot to do with both JSR and brother William. Thomas had returned to England for his health in 1820 but had, as JSR implied here, only very recently boarded the *Layton* (Capt. Taylor) to return: in fact, as JSR's next letter noted, Charles had not yet sailed, but JSR realised his brother would certainly be gone by the time the *Bathurst* made Deptford. Thomas had married Eleanor Bennett at St. Stephen's, Liverpool, on 31 March 1823 (less than a month before the present letter). JSR would later spend quite a long period of time with Thomas and Eleanor when he was in India during the *Tamar* voyage. Sadly, Eleanor died in India leaving two young daughters, who were duly sent home to be brought up in England (when they arrived in London in 1828 JSR was working at the Admiralty and with a heavy heart helped put the two young girls on a coach to Newbury). Eleanor Bennett had a younger sister called Matilda, whom JSR would meet when she visited Newbury in late 1828. After an initially sedate romance, JSR got news of being posted to western Australia and they were married in the first days of 1829, just months after they had met and days before they sailed for the Swan River on the *Parmelia*.

MAY 1823

H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*
at anchor off Seaford
3 Leagues westward of Beachy Head

“We shall be under sail again the moment a favourable slant of wind presents a probability of our being able to do any good, but at present we perceive vessels in the Offing, going fast to leeward, while they would do much better at anchor.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Two pages.

[No address].

Postmarks: none.

Location: SLNSW, no. 167.

JSR and the *Bathurst* have been five days waiting in Plymouth for good winds, and now a further week beating up towards Deptford: everyone's patience is wearing out. He can only write because a young midshipman (not named here but known to have been James Gilbert RN) who had hitched a lift with them, is so heartily sick of the bad sailing that he was going back on shore to continue overland. Mrs. King and her family all went ashore at Plymouth.

Waltham Abbey 22^d of May 1723
Waltham Abbey 22^d of May 1723.

My dear Father.

I trust your Beloved has found you all much
better than he may think, which I hope has done to satisfy me. for some
time has appeared a day since we quieted Plymouth in 28th last. some to Bedford
where it has not appear that we shall come, for several days to come. The cross has
been obstinately from the Britons the whole time & by dint of perseverance & constant trading
& wandering we have not been able to accomplish a greater distance. I now have had
doubtly in our track. & in a very ill humour I wait myself of an opportunity to write
you a few lines to say that thank God I am quite well, & anxiously looking forward to the time when
I shall have the happiness of seeing his Grace come to the City. I trust you receive the few happy
lines I write from Plymouth ^{in 28th last} to announce that Bedmont's arrival there yesterday, has not
yet sail from hence till the 28th moment of contrary winds. I was in great hopes of receiving
a few lines acquainting me of your welfare, though I was greatly gratified at perusing Dr. Stophy's
last letter to Chas. of a late date, by which I receive the greatest satisfaction at finding you
were all in the enjoyment of good health. Good bye is not so well as could be wished, being
greatly troubled with nervous head aches & hangings, which amount he had been recommended
by his Surgeon to take lodgings for a week or fortnight abroad, where it was to be hoped a little
quiet & retirement would re-establish him. He seems his kindest love to all. Having been but
some weeks since he has been full at Plymouth. I was not much surpris'd at finding he had been
wound & lacerated, & could not but congratulate him upon having got a fair new frigate, with
a prospect of some about four & pleasant a Station as the Mediterranean, though that point was
not yet fully determined, & the great variety of opinion seems to render it probable the Fleet
would not be ready for sea so early as was said here 3 or 4 weeks ago. You will receive this by
means of a Miss, perhaps various other things - to the House, who is heartily his own, I have just
received letters from him & his wife & his children. therefore long much my being so brief, as
I must write a few lines to T. at Bedford, having one from of all hopes of seeing him
before

H.M. Sloop *Bathurst*, at anchor off Seaford, 3 Leagues
westward of Beachy Head, 4th May 1823.

My Dear Father,

I trust your patience has served you all much better than the small stock which I possess has served to pacify me, for every hour has appeared a day since we quitted Plymouth Sound on 28th ulto., bound to Deptford, where it does not appear that we shall arrive for several days to come. The wind has blown obstinately from the Eastward the whole time, & by dint of perseverance, & constant beating to windward, we have not been able to accomplish a greater distance. It now blows hard directly in our teeth, & in a very ill humour I avail myself of an opportunity to scribble you a few lines, to say that, thank God I am quite well, & anxiously looking forward to the time when I shall have the happiness of seeing the dear inmates of the Rectory.

I trust you received the few hasty lines I wrote from Plymouth on 23d. April to announce the *Bathurst's* arrival there on that day, & as we did not sail from thence till the 28th. on account of contrary winds, I am in great hopes of receiving a few lines acquainting me of your welfare, though I was greatly gratified at perusing Dr. Sophy's last letter to Charles, of a late date, by which I received the greatest satisfaction at finding you were all in the enjoyment of good health. Poor Chas. is not so well as could be wished, being greatly troubled with nervous head aches & lumbago, on which account he had been recommended by his Surgeon to take lodgings for a week or fortnight on-shore, where it was to be hoped a little quiet & retirement would re-establish him. He desires his kindest love to all. Having heard that several vessels of war had been fitted out from Plymouth, I was not much astonished at finding he had been ordered to embark, & could not but congratulate him upon having got a fine new frigate, with a prospect of going upon so fine & pleasant a station as the Mediterranean, though that point was not yet finally determined, & the great scarcity of seamen seemed to render it probable the *Thetis* would not be ready for Sea at an earlier period than 3 or 4 months.^[1]

You will receive this by means of a Mid. passenger onboard the *Bathurst* to the Thames, who is heartily tired out, & has just obtained Captn. King's permission to proceed overland,^[2] therefore pray excuse my being so brief, as I must write a few lines to T. at Deptford, having now given up all hopes of

[1] This passage a bit convoluted, but evidently his brother Charles had joined the frigate *Thetis* – by JSR's comment, this would have been the 46-gun Leda-class frigate launched in 1817, commissioned in March 1823 and later serving on the South America Station.

[2] Two midshipmen had come on board the *Bathurst* at Plymouth for transfer to London, James Gilbert RN and Thomas Charlton Meheux RN, but only the latter officer was still on board at the Thames, so it was evidently Gilbert who decamped overland.

seeing him [page 2] before the *Layton* sails.^[3] I wrote him a hasty line or 2, on the day previous to the *Bathurst's* departure from Plymo., by a transport, bound to Deptford, & am in hopes he has received it, although contrary winds must have greatly retarded her passage, for any vessel will now sail better than the *Bathurst* the latter being so very light, that she goes as much to leeward as ahead. We are now filling empty casks up with Salt water & trust our next essay will be more propitious.

Although it is of no use mentioning the subject here, I cannot forbear expressing my regret at finding my name is not in the Navy List among the Luff tackles, & that it is placed also against the vessel's name as Acting, full 3 months after the date at which you all suppose my commission to have been made out at the Adm[iralty].^[4] Chas. has assured me that Sophy informed him in positive terms that this point was very satisfactorily cleared up, & that she had even mentioned the date of my commission, but unfortunately the letter containing news so agreeable, was the only one which he could not lay his hand upon, & I shall now remain in cruel suspense until the *Bathurst's* tedious & long protracted passage shall have terminated. I hope for the best, however, & trust they will not oblige me to go to Portsmo. to pass an examination, so often weathered before.

We shall be under sail again the moment a favourable slant of wind presents a probability of our being able to do any good, but at present we perceive vessels in the Offing, going fast to leeward, while they would do much better at anchor. Mrs King & family left us at Plymo. for Launceston, in the highest spirits.^[5] Being absolutely obliged to wind up, pray accept the kindest love & best wishes for yourself, Dr. Mother, Sophy, & Brothers, & in anxious & earnest hope of spending my birthday at the Rectory, remain, till then, & ever your affect. Son

John Septimus Roe

[3] As JSR's previous letters acknowledged, he had narrowly missed seeing his brother Thomas and his new wife Eleanor (née Bennett) en route to India on the *Layton*.

[4] From the context it is apparent that JSR presumably means "Luff tackles" as short for "Lt.", that is Lieutenant. The saga of his ultimately unsuccessful attempts to have the earliest possible date put on his promotion would occupy JSR for several years.

[5] Harriet King and her four sons had disembarked at Plymouth and went on ahead to Launceston, Cornwall, her birthplace. The Lethbridge family lived in Cornwall for many years.

JUNE 1823

Deptford

“Yesterday made Lady Keats a present of 2 very handsome Lowries from New South Wales, with which she is quite in extacy.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.

The Revd. Jas Roe | Rector of Newbury | Berks.

Postmarks: red Greenwich stamp, black circular stamp for 2 Ju. 1823, third black stamp quite smudged but apparently also for June 1823.

Location: SLNSW, no. 168.

After (apparently) having quickly visited Newbury, JSR and his brother William have travelled up to London, where they both have been well-received at Greenwich Hospital by Sir Richard and Lady Keats: he has dined there three times, and breakfasted another. He had clearly enjoyed spending time with his brother, but is soon leaving for a quick trip to Portsmouth so that he will – at last – be formally examined for promotion. He has presented some Australian “lowries” and the only black swan still alive to Sir Richard and Lady Keats at Greenwich, and is also busy arranging his curiosities with William, who adds a long and important postscript to the letter., marvelling at the range and quality of the material.

Deptford, June 1 1823

My dear Father,

I am quite ashamed of not having written to you since my arrival in London, but have really been so occupied that I have not been able to do so & have also had the pleasure of knowing that Willm. Has communicated all particulars of our movements, & of our reception at Greenwich Hospital. The Admiral and his Lady have really behaved very kind indeed to us, & I dined there yesterday for the 3d. time in the space of a week, besides breakfasting once, Wm. being prevented, by a previous engagement with our good friend Lieut. Taylor RN, from enjoying the same honor.^[1] We are both thank God in very good health except a sore throat of Willm.'s & an obstinate cold & cough of mine, which we both intend to part with to the earliest customer.

I sincerely trust this will find you all in good health & condition, & am sorry to say that there appears no great prospect of my being able to revisit Newbury for at least a week as I start for Portsmouth this evening at 1/2 past 7, to be there in readiness for any form of entering my name, &c. that may be required on the Monday preceding the passing day. I shall then have Monday & Tuesday to brush up my dull intellect ready for the examination of Wednesday, & the result not being communicated to us till the following day. I am in hopes of being able to leave Portsmouth again before Thursday evening for Greenwich; the Adml. being desirous of knowing the result of my trip as early as possible.

I am not aware that Wm. has written since Sir Richd. went to the Admty. on my account last Wednesday, & will therefore state that he informed me after dinner on that day of his having had an interview with Sir Geo. Cockburn,^[2] & discussed with him upon [*page 2*] the practicability of my commission being antedated July 7 1821. After a long debate upon the subject, it was settled that the measure could not be adopted witht. direct application to His Majesty in Council, for want of any precedent of a similar case, as it was in direct violation of the Rules & Regulations of HM Navy for any young man to receive promotion as Lieut. who had not previously passed the requisite examination at the Royal Naval College: but the commission has been made out for the date of my passing the examination at Port Jackson, 25 April 1822, which is also the date of my acting appointment given on that day by Captn. King.

[1] The Taylor family was well-known to JSR, but the identity here is too vague to confirm.

[2] Sir George Cockburn (1772-1853), veteran of St. Vincent and commander during the burning of Washington D.C. in 1814. After the war he became an MP, a mainstay of the Admiralty and First Naval Lord.

Sir Richd. appears however to have good grounds for recommending that on the instant of receiving the passing certificate from Portsmouth, I should make out my case in as strong a manner as possible, by a letter to the Lords of the Admiralty, explaining the unavoidable cause of my not having passed previous to their order for out promotion, July 7 1821, & concluding it with expressing a hope that should the Regulations of the service not admit of my receiving a commission as Lieut. previous to 25 April 1822, that they will allow me the difference of pay for the interval, which will amount to upwards of £60, & which Sir Richd. says they will grant. I will now say no more upon this subject, but hope for the best, as nothing can be done till I pass the [fil- ing] ordeal at Portsmouth, whither I carry a letter of recommendation, pro- cured by the kind agency of Mr. Taylor's family.

I yesterday made Lady Keats a present of 2 very handsome Lowries from New South Wales, with which she is quite in extacy. I cannot divert her atten- tion to any other object for a moment. Sir Richd. Is also very much pleased with only remaining Black Swan out of 5 which Captn. King & myself were bringing home, & which he has kindly insisted upon my taking as a return for the great attention & care I had bestowed upon the whole during the voyage. He has also given me some very handsome certificates which may perhaps be of use at Portsmouth.

I have received a week's leave of absence from the Admiralty to commence this day, though it is thought the *Bathurst* will be paid off tomorrow. I have now got every thing on shore, all curiosities, not otherwise disposed of, are at the Custom House awaiting a treasury order for their release, though it is at present doubtful whether [*page 3*] an order will be obtained or not. Willm. Goes to town with me this afternoon, & by calling upon Captn. King will then be able to learn how long there is a likelihood of the things being cleared in less than week or 10 days. It would be attended with considerably less expense for him to remain & attend on that occasion than to go up to Newbury & return to town again. He intends trying the Harpers for a bed, & failing there, will make an attack elsewhere. We tried to find out the Bentleys the other day, but did not succeed, as they had removed, we could not find where.^[3]

I had the pleasure of seeing my Godfather Mr. T.H. Roe,^[4] who behaved very kind, & we were to have dined with him in town, but business inter- vened to prevent. He has now returned to Broomsgrove. Sir Richd. has kindly enquired after you all several times, & on the receipt of every letter

[3] JSR was related to the Bentleys on his mother's side.

[4] T.H. Roe of Broomsgrove (Worcestershire) was clearly a relation but the exact connection has escaped me.

Fee 2/6

IN pursuance of the directions of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, dated the 23d of January, 1823,
 Mr. *John Septimus Roe, Captain*
Lieutenant of His Majesty's Bathurst
 has this day been examined by the Professor of the Royal Naval College and his Assistants, in our presence, touching his knowledge of the elements of mathematics and the theory of navigation; more particularly in the necessary parts of arithmetic, in the mode of observing and calculating azimuths, amplitudes, and the variation of the compass, in the calculation of the tides, the various modes of ascertaining the latitude, as well by simple and double altitudes of the sun, as by the altitudes of the moon and stars; and the finding the longitude by chronometer and lunar observations; in all which subjects he has proved himself to be adequately qualified.

Given under our hands, at the Royal Naval College, in His Majesty's Yard, near Portsmouth, this *fourth* day of
1 June 1823

J. W. Scatcherd Admiral and
 Commandant in Chief

Jos. Grey Commissioner

John W. Scatcherd Lieutenant-Governor
 of the Royal Naval College

Passing certificate from the Lieutenant's examination for JSR. SLWA.

Wm. has presented your respectful compts. He is a very valuable friend, & in several points has even anticipated my wishes: I intend shewing him my letter before I send it to the Admiralty. [Having?] a very great deal of writing to, & very little [time] [] it in, I must [] conclude, leaving a small space for Wm. to fill up when [] returns from church, for I have been obliged to turn heathen today or I should make a great deal of leeway.

Pray give kindest affectionate love to dr. Mother & Sophy from us both, & trusting this will find you in the enjoyment of good health & spirits, believe me to be my dear Father, ever your affectionate son,

John Septimus Roe

N.B. I hope the Nankeen Crape arrived safe. I should have written by it but though it better not to do so.

Greenwich, June 2 1823 ^[5]

My dear Father,

John having left this little space to fill up I am now doing it at Mr. Wm. Taylor's (the eldest son, a surgeon in Greenwich) & beg to return my very best thanks for Sophy's 2 letters & yr. addition. I am sorry I cannot yet fix the day of my departure, not having yet been able to meet with Capt. K. I have come here to find him but have not succeeded. John left for Portsmouth yesterday evening & desired if I found the things wd. pass wd. pass the Custom House this week that I wd. remain till he returned on Thursday or Friday. I remain in my present Qrs. till Thursday when if I find occasion for my remaining in town longer I shall go to Mr. Taylor's in the Hospital for a day or 2. I called at Harper's last evening after seeing [Kings] & Mrs. Williams of Gloucester Place.^[6] Latter I am sorry to say is very unwell indeed. Harpers neither of them had the politeness to offer me a bed.

We have got every thing on shore at last & have had quite a task I do assure [*margin of page 3*] you to pack them up. I have now several packages to make up of his bed &c. which I think of forwarding by [Grobety's] [*margin of page 2*] wagon on Thursday.^[7] I hope you recd. the parcels safe I sent on the 30th. We took 7 packages & a log of wood to the 3 Cranes Wharf the other day but fear you will not get them these 10 days or a fortnight, there being a stoppage on the canal. I hope [*margin of page 1*] we shall be able to send the Curiosities by the same boat for the shaking of a wagon will do them more mischief than good. One of the cases is so very large & slightly made that the least shaking will knock it to pieces. Upon my Lord we shall have a most ex-

[5] Here begins the part of the letter written by William Roe.

[6] JSR was related to the Harpers (or Harpurs) on his mother's side. I do not know his connection to Mrs. Williams of Gloucester Place.

[7] Presumably a Newbury carter or coach service of some kind.

cellent collection, it is astonishing the no. of packages. I think you will stare when they come to be [filing?] in. I have not yet been able to call at Westminster but expect to be able either tomorrow or Wednesday. The Taylors have been very kind to us & the Admls. attentions very flattering indeed. You have no idea how delighted they all were at the Birds. I am in very great hopes of the 3rd. Lowry living – you will be highly delighted with it. I have quite enough to do for John has left me his dog, a Lowry, a Paroquet, 2 live land tortoises, & a small turtle to put into a Globe ^[8] – it is about the size of a [spoon?]. Let me know in your next if you can get any Indian Corn in Newbury, or whether I shall bring any with me. I have dined 2ce. at Sir R. Keats, John 3 times & breakfasted 1ce. He desired to be remembered as also [K], Taylors & [Herberts]. Sophy wishes to know how many shirts I have – 5 & 1 pr. cotton socks. I hope you are all quite well. My sore throat has left me. John has got a cough upon him wch. I hope he will soon get rid of. How is Fanny. Remember me to her. I must conclude to save post & [you] [shall] hear of me soon. [Hoping] you remain my dear Fr., with kind love &c. to all, your ever affte. son, Wm. Roe.

[8] Again, by context, a wagon or coach service.

JUNE 1823

Greenwich Royal Hospital

“I had almost forgotten to thank you for your recent enclosures of returned letters from New South Wales, & Sophy for her kind accompanying communication, the whole of which came duly to hand, & tho’ of old dates have been received with great pleasure.”

JSR to Rev. James Roe. Four pages.
The Revd. James Roe | Rector of | Newbury | Berks.
Postmarks: black circular stamp for 23 Ju. 1823.
Location: SLNSW, no. 169.

A last letter from JSR, recounting his time in London as he ties up loose ends from the voyage, and seeks to convince the Lords of the Admiralty to backdate his promotion (JSR is, in the words of his patron Sir Richard Keats, a “creditor”).

Greenwich Royal Hospital

23 June 1833

My dear Father

I have no doubt you have been looking
out for William & myself these several days past & I am very sorry we
have not been able to realise your expectations, being now unavoidably
retired till Wednesday, or the afternoon of which day we hope to have
the pleasure of meeting the Rectory with our family - Willa with a
few days ago to explain how matters stood with me & on Tuesday last
being Boar's day at the Admiralty, I took my official application there to
have my Commisure made out on 9th July 1831 instead of 25 April 1832.
stating the reason of my not having kept the requisite examinations previous
to the latter period. Sir Rich^d Keats very kindly corrected & suggested alterations
in the letter before it was taken. I accompanied it with a very friendly
& handsome note to Sir Geo Cockburn, one of the Lords Commissioners, a man
of great influence, requesting him to give it his support. The letter
was read on that day, though the kind interference of Mr Burch, to whom
I applied on the occasion, there was a long discussion about it, but
nothing was decided upon, nor have I yet received any answer. Sir
Rich^d, with whom we dined yesterday, told me he had been at the Admiralty
since that period pleading my case. That he had done all in his power to
persuade them to take my case into favourable consideration, but the want of
any thing like a precedent he unfortunately could furnish the accomplishment of it, though
he had succeeded in satisfying them with a sense of the hardship of my situation, and

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Greenwich Royal Hospital
23 June 1823

My dear Father,

I have no doubt you have been looking out for William & myself these several days past, & I am very sorry we have not been able to realise your expectations, being now unavoidably detailed till Wednesday, on the afternoon of which day we hope to have the pleasure of revisiting the Rectory with our family. Willm. wrote a few days ago to explain how matters stood with me, & on Tuesday last, being Board Day at the Admiralty, I took my official application there to have my commission made out on 9th July 1821 instead of 25 April 1822, stating the reason of my not having passed the requisite examinations previous to the latter period.

Sir Richd. Keats very kindly corrected & suggested alterations in the letter before it was taken, & accompanied it with a very friendly & handsome note to Sir Geo. Cockburn, one of the Lords Commissioners, & a man of great influence, requesting him to give it his support.^[1] The letter was read on that day, through the kind interference of Mr. Darch,^[2] to whom I applied on the occasion, & there was a long discussion about it, but nothing was decided upon, nor have I yet received any answer. Sir Richd. with whom we dined yesterday, told me he had been at the Admiralty since that period pleading my cause, & that he had done all in his power to persuade them to take my case into favorable consideration, but the want of any thing like a precedent he apprehended would prevent the accomplishment of it, though he had succeeded in impressing them with a sense of the hardship of my situation, and [page 2] was endeavouring to gain an important point by getting them to consider me in the light of a creditor on their books.

I cannot say when it is likely I shall receive an answer, & therefore do not intend waiting for it; for they do not so quickly decide upon points which may hereafter be brought forward as precedents upon which to ground any future proceeding. The Admiral and Lady K. are quite well & continue to behave very kind indeed to us, inviting us to dine again today, but this we were under the necessity of declining on account of the pressure of business in town, intending in the afternoon to call at Kentish Town upon the [] &c. We found out Mrs. Bentley in Regent Street, & saw there Miss Ann Lynch.^[3] They all enquired after you at the Rectory.

[1] Sir George Cockburn (1772-1853), veteran of St. Vincent and commander during the burning of Washington D.C. in 1814. After the war he became an MP and a mainstay of the Admiralty and First Naval Lord.

[2] Thomas Darch was, in 1820, listed as a Senior Clerk in the Admiralty Office. PPK named Darch Island after him.

[3] The Bentleys were "cousins" of the Roe family; the connection to the Lynches is not clear.

I am extremely sorry you did not succeed in the prospect of obtaining a curate for Dorchester gratis, & suppose Wm. has said in what way I transferred your commission to me to call on Mr. Nichols, & of the result.^[4] We intend calling on him today if possible. Called on John Barnes on Saturday, who is quite well & stout, intending to take a trip in a steam boat with his pretty sister Mary Ann to Margate on the following day. His brother George is with him & they have no commands, but desired their remembrance. I regret to hear from Miss M.A. Barnes that a serious illness is prevalent in Miss [Self's] School which had proved fatal to 3 individuals of her school, but I trust ere this that something has been done to prevent the mischief from spreading farther.^[5] Miss B. thought Sophy had gone to Basingstoke in consequence, but was not certain. Having heard that Chas. was expected from Plymo. a few days ago, I shall expect to find him at home & hope he is fast recovering from his late attacks.

I am afraid that Dr. & Mrs. Hall &c. will have left you before we arrive, but if so I must make the best apology I am able another time for being absent & taken an early opportunity of going over there.^[6] Should they be with you still I must beg my kind remembrance. We have fortunately got all our things out of the Custom House at last & have entered them at Hambro' Wharf to go by a boat which is said to start the beginning of this week. There is one [page 3] large case containing 8 or 10 boxes &c., one chest containing smaller boxes, and one long case of spears &c. Having learnt that the former shipment of 8 boxes, &c. &c. had started for Newbury about a week ago, I am in hopes they have reached you safely. The remainder we shall continue to bring ourselves & forward by wagon tomorrow.

I am happy to say for the sake of my eyes that Captn. King will not require my assistance at the Admiralty to assist him with the Charts, which will enable me to take immediate steps for their benefit or recovery, & I shall this morning endeavour to see our late surgeon, who had promised to put me in the way of having them cured free of expense, but I am afraid this would provide that I should be in London all the time, which cannot conveniently be managed. I had almost forgotten to thank you for your recent enclosures of returned letters from New South Wales, & Sophy for her kind accompanying communication, the whole of which came duly to hand, & tho' of old dates have been received with great pleasure.

[4] The Nichols family were important allies of the Roes, although JSR was not always enthusiastic about some of their interventions.

[5] I do not know the connection to John and George Barnes, nor Miss Self.

[6] Dr. and Mrs. Hall are referred to several times by JSR, but the precise connection is not clear.

Mr. & Mrs. Taylor & family are well [&] behave to us with their usual kindness & attention, which makes [me] [&] [Wm.] very comfortable here, although not much at home during the day. Tomorrow we go to Woolwich. Mrs. King is quite well, Elizabeth but indifferent & poor Mary just recovering but slowly from an attack of illness contracted by cold caught about a fortnight ago after a party which has reduced her a great deal. They are all going to Hastings with Miss Harpur, as soon as Mary is able to bear the journey.^[7]

I trust dear Mother is quite well together with yourself, Sophy & Chas. also, & with kindest love to al from us both, believe me to be, my dear Father, ever your most affectn. Son,

John Septimus Roe

[7] The Taylors are frequently mentioned by JSR and were among his correspondents; the Harper/Harpur family were relations.

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For Sarah & Sylvie Rose.

Cover image: detail of letter no. 149 (SLNSW)

Frontispiece: miniature portrait of John Septimus Roe (SLWA)

Facing p. [i]: detail of letter no. 153 (SLNSW)

1. John Septimus Roe (1797-1878). 2. Phillip Parker King (1791-1856). 3. Mermaid (ship). 4. Bathurst (ship). 5. Australia – Discovery and exploration. 6. Australia – Aboriginal history.



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