



First issue. Double-page engraved map, with contemporary hand-colour in outline.

MITCHELL'S EXPLORATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The South Eastern portion of Australia, Shewing the Progress of Discovery, in the Interior of New South Wales. By Major Mitchell. Surv.r Gen.l of the Colony.

Author

MITCHELL, Sir Thomas Livingstone; and John ARROWSMITH

Publication date

1837.

Publisher

Published for the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society by J. Murray Albemarle Street,

Publication place

London,

Physical description

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Dimensions

333 by 417mm (13 by 16.5 inches).

Notes

Subsequently published, with differences, in Mitchell's official account of his 'Three expeditions into the interior of Eastern Australia' (1838). Between 1832 and 1880, the Royal Geographical Society published 25 maps recording the exploration of inland Australia, illustrating the journeys of 27 explorers.

The mapmakers

In 1827, when Mitchell and his family arrived in Sydney, "the Survey Department was in an unsatisfactory condition. Surveying instruments were scarce and some surveyors were incompetent; their technical problems were rarely appreciated by the public or the government; moreover successive surveys of small areas were made without attempt to relate them to a general survey, so small errors accumulated till they became serious. Thus title deeds and the collection of quitrents were delayed and doubts and disputes arose about boundaries. Mitchell in 1828 started on the necessary but seemingly impossible task of making a general survey. Tent poles were used to measure a base line, and hill-tops, denuded of all trees save one, as trigonometrical points. In 1828, on Oxley's death, Mitchell became surveyor-general" (Baker for ADB online).

During his time in Australia Mitchell undertook three major expeditions:

- 1831, in search of a river that allegedly flowed to the north-west, he explored the Namoi, Gwydir and Barwon rivers.
- 1835, he investigated the course of the Darling River, but failed to confirm whether, or not it flowed into the Murray River.
- 1836, he set out to chart the Lachlan River, then follow the Murray River, and some of the Darling, while following the Loddon River, Mitchell "discovered Victoria's rich western plains, naming them Australia Felix (meaning Happy Australia). Mitchell also named the Grampians in western Victoria after a mountain range in Scotland,... Thomas Mitchell was a fiery character who upset many and fought one of the last duels in Australia, in 1851. He contracted an illness during a survey in southern New South Wales, developed pneumonia and died in 1855" (The Australian Museum online).

The founder of the Arrowsmith dynasty of cartographers was Aaron Arrowsmith (1750-1823). On his death, he was succeeded by his sons Aaron (1802-1854) and Samuel (1805-1839) who worked as partners from 1823 to 1832, when Aaron resigned, ultimately to join the church. On Samuel's death in 1839, the business was acquired by John Arrowsmith, his cousin. John had trained with Aaron sr., joining him in 1810, but leaving on his death to set up his own firm. In skill, John was in no way inferior to the elder Aaron. He too was a notable publisher of important wall-maps, focused largely on British possessions abroad, including important wall-maps of Canada, Trinidad, British Guyana, Africa and of the rapidly expanding settlements in Australia and New Zealand. However, these are only rarely encountered and little known. Instead, he is best known for his maps published in books; he had an enormous output, supplying some 800 maps for Hansard, and other government publications, making and engraving maps for travel books and also, acting as semi-official mapmaker for the Royal Geographical Society, he contributed large numbers of maps for the Society's Journals, illustrating the most recent discoveries contributed by Fellows of the Society.

Bibliography

Literature: Clancy, 'The Mapping of Terra Australis', 3.3; Tooley, 'The Mapping of Australia', 96 (later edition).

Provenance

Price: £4800

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