

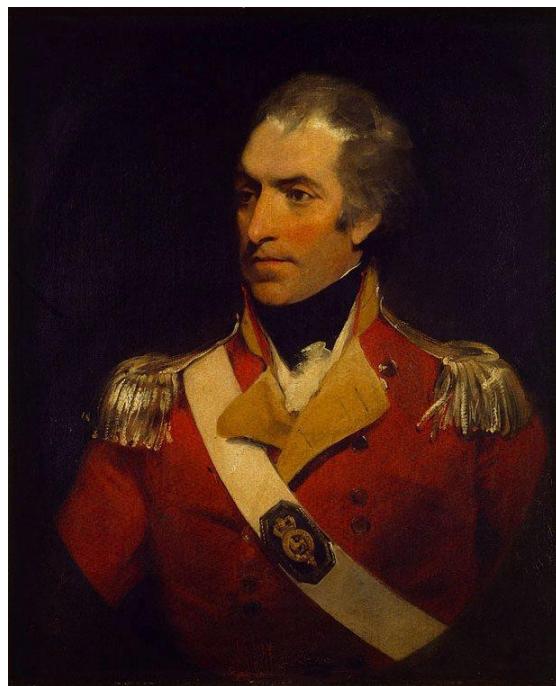
# COLONEL WILLIAM PATERSON

(1755-1810)

By

Reg. A. Watson

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SOLDIER, EXPLORER AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

William Paterson, born 17<sup>th</sup> August 1755, coincidentally died in the same year as his southern Tasmanian counterpart, David Collins, in 1810. Paterson was a military officer who had arrived in Sydney in 1771. He had a distinguished career. A Scotsman, born at Montrose, he was greatly interested in scientific study, especially botany. He was a friend to Sir Joseph Banks. In 1777 he visited South Africa and wrote a book about his expedition. In 1781 he enlisted in the 98<sup>th</sup> Regiment and served in India, returning to England in 1785 and transferring to the 73<sup>rd</sup>.

In 1787 he married Elizabeth Driver who outlived her husband, marrying again to Francis Grose and died in Liverpool, England in 1839.

Two years later he was gazetted as Captain perhaps because of the influence of Joseph Banks of the New South Wales Corps. Arriving in Sydney in 1791 he served some time at Norfolk Island where he corresponded with Joseph Banks regarding the island's fauna and flora as he had done while in India. Back in Sydney, now major, he was second-in-command of the New South Wales Corps and endeavoured to find a route through the Blue Mountains but failed. He administered the colony as Lieutenant Governor in 1794-5 after the departure of Lt-Governor Francis Grose, until the arrival of Governor Hunter in September. Paterson's administration satisfied Hunter and London, although it is

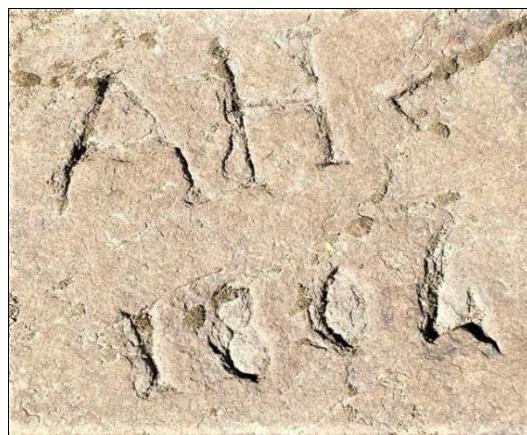
quite apparent he allowed the military personnel to strengthen their hold on the colony. This would prove to be a problem later on.

In June-July 1801 Governor Philip Gidley King sent him to explore the Hunter River. It was Paterson who challenged John MacArthur to a duel during which MacArthur, much to the consternation of Governor King, nearly killed him. Paterson had accused MacArthur of disclosing material from a letter from Mrs Paterson to Mrs MacArthur. King sent MacArthur to London for a court martial, but nothing came of the affair with MacArthur returning to earn a 5,000 acre grant.

#### NORTHERN TASMANIA TO BE SETTLED.

The main reason for the haste to settle the northern part of Tasmania was the French fear. Paterson, accompanied by his wife Elizabeth, set sail in 1804 with 57 soldiers and convicts in the *Integrity* and the *Contest*. Bad winds, however, forced them back to Port Jackson. Paterson wrote to the Under-Secretary Sullivan about his immediate future. "I am preparing to make a second attempt for Port Dalrymple I hope it will be what Government has been led to believe it is; but if the entrance into it is so dangerous as is reported by the different surveys, I fear we will never be visited by ships of burthen. However, when I get there it will be my constant employment and study to ascertain every advantage and disadvantage it has for a settlement likely to prosper, which I shall communicate to you without reserve for the information of Government." (14<sup>th</sup> August 1804)

A.W. H Humphrey (Adolarius William Henry) who was with David Collins at Port Phillip was sent to Port Dalrymple to see if the northern part of the island was suitable for settlement. Humphrey found fresh water a problem although he found a source which he called Supply River. Whilst there he carved his initials into the dolerite rock. He then left the site, sailed back to Port Phillip returning to southern Tasmania with David Collins.



Initials A.H. carved into a rock at Supply River, West Tamar 1804. A.H. stands for A.W.H. Humphrey who rowed the river looking for fresh water. (Nigel Burch photo)

A second attempt was made, late October, this time with a total of 181 persons. Four vessels were used, *Buffalo*, *Lady Nelson*, *Francis*, and *Integrity*. The River Tamar was successfully reached, but on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1804 the *Buffalo* went aground in Outer Cove, later to be named George Town on the eastern side of the Tamar. Paterson made the decision to unload the vessel and set up camp at Outer Cove, while he undertook a more detailed inspection of the River Tamar.



Paterson memorial, George Town, West Tamar, Reg Watson photo.

Paterson penetrated as far as the later site of Launceston, which was more fertile, but he made the decision to settle at the head of West Arm and founded York Town (George Town), while still maintaining the small settlement at Outer Cove and also at Low Head and Green Island. Why Paterson decided on such procedures has always baffled historians. Most probably they were based on strategic concerns. Even so, it soon became painfully obvious to him, that neither settlement, Outer Cove nor York Town were suitable. As a consequence in March 1806 he made his move to the present site of Launceston.

Paterson was unsure of his status, with Lt-Governor David Collins in the south. It was questioned who was in over-all charge of Van Diemen's Land, which in turn was under the command of Port Jackson. Governor King made a decision. Paterson was to be in charge of the northern settlement, while Collins was in charge of the southern settlement below latitude 42 degrees.

The northern colony struggled, although Paterson took great interest in the fauna and flora about him, including the digestive system of the Tasmanian Wolf. In early 1807 a decision was made in Sydney to officially name the new settlement at Launceston, calling it firstly Patersonia or Paterson's Village. Launceston won out.

In early February 1808 Major George Johnson reported to Paterson the arrest of Governor Bligh. Major Johnson was one of the leaders of the rebellion in Sydney. He was later 'cashiered' after a court-martial in England in 1811. Paterson was obviously in no hurry to return to Sydney and support Johnson, for he did not arrive in that city until January 1809, nearly one year after he was informed.

Paterson (to become known as Colonel Pat) did his best when at Launceston. He devoted himself personally to providing the little community with as much food as possible in attempt to stave off famine with grain, salt meat and the planting of crops. The main staple diet was wallaby

and kangaroo. He asked Sydney and London to send free skilled settlers and administered the colony with little interference from Governor Macquarie in Parramatta.

Paterson had his complaints. He had few military under his command to ward off troublesome natives and to oversee the convicts. Neither did he have no means of holding a Criminal Court, there being no Judge-Advocate.

Once back in Sydney Paterson took over the administration from Joseph Foveaux who had been acting as Lieutenant Governor. Paterson acted with firmness and insisted that both Bligh and Johnson return to England, confining Bligh to barracks until he agreed to go. Unfortunately Paterson was not enjoying good health and spent much of his time confined in Government House at Parramatta. When Governor Macquarie arrived he retired. He embarked with his corps in the *Dromedary*, but he died on board when it was off Cape Horn 21<sup>st</sup> June 1810. Paterson's widow had stayed at Sydney and after his death and was granted 810 hectares of land in Van Diemen's Land.



Government House, Parramatta

By the time of Paterson's venture to the River Tamar in 1804 there were to be three settlements in Tasmania with three commanders; Risdon Cove under Lt John Bowen RN , Sullivan's Cove under Lt- David Collins, and of course Outer Cove under Paterson. It was a strange situation and it was Governor Macquarie (see separate section) who placed the whole island under the command of one commander who administered from Hobart Town.