

WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are warned that this record contains graphic content and may cause distress.

It may include descriptions of violence, racist and offensive language, sexual assault and references to people who have died.

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will be in advance of the proportion in old and established communities. Above all, it is to be recollected that this Colony provides for the protection, by a special Border Force, of its outlying pastoral settlers throughout an extent of more than eight hundred miles from North to South - from the frontier of New South Wales to the upper waters of the Burdekin; - and of more than four hundred miles from East to West - from the shores of the Pacific to the river Barcoo in the far interior. It is truly stated in a recent Minute of the Executive Council (transmitted in my despatch No 73) that Queensland does for itself what the Mother-Country does for the two other Colonies, viz: the Cape and New Zealand, - in which the Aboriginal natives present a serious difficulty.

4. The condition and results of the electoral franchise established in Queensland by the Order in Council of 6th June 1859, as exhibited by the Census returns, present a curious subject for speculation. It will be seen that these Statistics (see p. XVI) amply confirm the remarks made in my despatch No 43 of 14th August ult. (paragraphs 6 - 8). They also prove how little real ground there is for the agitation commenced by Mr. Justice

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Justice Lutwyche, on the allegation that the Order in Council materially curtailed "manhood suffrage", as established by the New South Wales Electoral Act of 1858.

I have tc. signed G. J. Bowen

His Grace The Duke of Newcastle K.G. tc. tc. tc.

No. 72

Government House, Brisbane, [Queensland](#article-32046729 " Queensland"),
6th December, 1861.

My Lord Duke,

With reference to your Grace's "Circular" despatch of the 30th August ult. I have the honor to report that the Auditor-General of Queensland has been instructed to transmit to the Commissioners of Audit in London, Quarterly statements of the remittances made from this Colony to Her Majesty's Emigration Commissioners.

I have tc. Signed / G. J. Bowen

His Grace The Duke of Newcastle K.G. tc. tc. tc.

No 73

Government House, Brisbane, 9th December 1861.

My Lord Duke,

I have the honor to report that I lost no time in laying your Grace's despatch No 28 of

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of the 26th September, ult, (respecting the proposed establishment of a small station "at Cape York, or elsewhere in the neighbourhood of Torres Straits,") with its enclosures, before my Constitutional Advisers. I now transmit copy of a Minute of the Executive Council, containing the decision of the Government of Queensland on this important question. I cannot do otherwise than concur in that decision, and I solicit your Grace's particular attention to the enclosed Minute, which expresses the general opinion of practical men in Australia on the subjects of which it treats.

2. For greater facility of reference, I annex a printed copy of the correspondence which took place subsequently to [Sir George Lewis](#article-32042259 "Sir George Lewis")' despatch, No. 23 of 23rd July, 1860.

3. Looking at the universally recognized importance of establishing one or more stations on the north coast of Australia, I have considered it my duty to make myself thoroughly acquainted with the question in all its bearings. With this object I have carefully studied everything that has been published upon it, from the Relation* of the old Spanish navigator Luis Vaez de Torres, who discovered, in A.D. 1606, the strait called after his name, down to the latest reports

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Enclosure No. 1. (See Minutes of Ex: Council 2nd Dec. 1861.)

Enclosure No. 2 (See Parliamentary Papers)

* Reprinted by the Hakluyt Society in 1859.

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reports of Her Majestys Surveying ships, and to the most recent Admiralty Charts. I have also consulted with Sir William Denison, and with a number of scientific and practical men both in Australia and in England. Their opinions are aptly summed up by Sir Roderich Murchison, in his "Address at the Anniversary Meeting of the Royal Geographical Society" on 27th May 1861. (See pages 7

and 69-71) when he pointed out the great advantages to be derived, both in peace and war, from settlements on the north coast of Australia.

4. The general principle being universally admitted, it remains to fix the precise locality where such settlements can be most advantageously founded. The most competent judges agree in holding that two stations should be established, one in North Western, and one in North Eastern Australia; the first (a) on the river Victoria, by the Imperial Government*; the second by the Queensland Government with Imperial assistance, either (b) at the head of the gulf of Carpentaria, or (c) at Cape York. Now, it appears from your Grace's despatch No 4 of 25th February, 1861, that Her Majesty's Government decline, for the present, to found a settlement on the river Victoria (a); or to accede to the Address of the Queensland Parliament, which would have been willing, on certain conditions, to establish a

[left margin] *See Sir R. Murchison's Address p.70. Also despatches from Governor of Queensland No.s 79 and 92 of 1860, with enclosures from Mr. Gregory

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a station at the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria (b). It remains, therefore, to consider the proposed establishment of a station at Cape York, to which Your Grace now invites attention.

5. It appears that, if regard be had chiefly to the extension of colonization, it would be expedient to form a station at the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria* but if objects of Imperial policy and general commerce are mainly taken into consideration then Cape York offers the most eligible site for the new settlement. The whole case in favor of Cape York will be found fully stated in the "Voyage of H. M. S. *Fly*" (Captain Blackwood) Vol. I - pages 138-145, 302-310; in the Voyage of H.M.S. "*Rattlesnake*" (Captain Owen Stanley) Vol. I pages 124-134, 316-328, and in the official "Australia Directory" published by the Admiralty, Vol. II pages 185-187. The beneficial results to be expected from the formation of a settlement at Cape York may be summed up as follows:-

A. A vast service would be rendered to the cause of humanity by affording a port of refuge to the crews of vessels wrecked in Torres Straits and its approaches; who have now no option but to attempt, in their boats, to reach, according to the season of the year and the

*See, among many other high authorities, Sir T. Mitchell's "Tropical Australia" p. 428.

the prevailing winds, either Port Denison, in Queensland, six hundred miles to the south-east or the Dutch settlement of Copang in Timor, eleven hundred miles to the west. "However complete and accurate may be the surveys of Torres Straits and the Coral Sea (that lying off the North-East coast of Australia,) it must always remain a dangerous navigation. Slight accidents, such as hazy weather, mistakes in the reckoning, unknown errors in the chronometer or sextant, or want of completeness or soundness in the rigging or finding of the vessel, (to say nothing of carelessness and incapacity in the navigator,) will always cause a pretty high average of wrecks in the vessels passing through Torres Straits. In the greatest number of these cases, if not in all, the vessel will merely be stuck upon a coral reef, with ample time to save the lives of the crew and passengers in the boats. These circumstances are of annual occurrence Now a post at Cape York, or the neighbourhood, would not only render these long and perilous passages needless for a crew thus situated, but in many cases it would be able to send assistance to the wreck if the boats could not contain all on board, or would be able to save some of the more valuable part

part of the cargo or ship's store. Neither would the wrecked crews or passengers (probably) suffer much detention, as in a few days they might be forwarded by a passing vessel to some port in the East Indies, such as Singapore for instance",* or to one of the harbors of the Australian Colonies.

B. In addition to speedy and effectual aid in case of shipwreck, passing vessels might be supplied with stores, such as anchors tc., (which are often lost in threading the coral reefs;) and above all, with water, and with fresh meat and vegetables. Herds of cattle, and gardens, would soon grow up round the projected settlement.

C. It is most improbable that many years can elapse before the establishment of steam navigation between Australia and India and China, via Torres Straits. There is already periodical steam communication from Singapore to Copang in Timor, on the one hand, and from Sydney and Brisbane to Port Denison on the other. The link to be supplied is an interval of only about seventeen hundred miles. And whenever steamers pass regularly through Torres Straits, a coal depôt at Cape York will become as absolute a necessity, as the coal depôt at Aden for steamers navigating the Indian Ocean and

[left margin] *Voyage of H.M.S. Fly. Vol I. pp. 304, 305

and the Red Sea. Coal of good quality can be supplied from the pits on the Brisbane River.

D. The knowledge of the existence of a station at Cape York would speedily exercise a beneficial influence over the natives of the islands in Torres Straits and the neighbouring mainland, and would cause them to refrain from the outrages which they have frequently committed on Europeans. The feeling of security would have its never-failing effect on the growth of commerce; and the present trade in trepang, sandal-wood, tortoise-shell &c. would be greatly increased.

E. Cape York is admirably situated as a central point whence geographical research, missionary enterprise and eventually perhaps, British Colonization, would spread over the north-eastern peninsula of Australia, New Guinea, and other portions of the Indian Archipelago.

F. In a military point of view, a post at Cape York would be most valuable; and its importance is daily increasing with the augmentation of the commerce passing by this route, especially since the establishment of a French Colony and naval station at New Caledonia. It has been pointed out on high authority that a small armed steamer

Steamer with a light draft of water - (such as one of the gun-boat used in the Crimean and China wars, having a settlement at Cape York as her point d'appui would command the whole of the commerce between the South Pacific and the Indian Oceans. By establishing a signal post on one of the neighbouring hills, she might be warned of the approach of all ships, and of their number and character, while, "by making herself thoroughly acquainted with the neighbouring reefs and shoals, she might easily pick out tortuous and dangerous channels, which would afford her refuge and means of escape from a force superior in strength to herself." It is stated that the Admiralty intend shortly to increase the naval force on the Australian Station. If so, it is hoped that a gun-boat of light draft may be sent out for service at Cape York. In time of peace she might keep up occasional communication between the proposed new settlement and the seat of Government at Brisbane; and might complete the surveys and charts of the Torres Straits and of the Great Barrier Reef.

G. In a political point of

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of view, a station at Cape York could not fail to extend the influence and prestige of Great Britain over the Indian Archipelago, while it would form a link between our possessions in Australia, India, and China, assure us the possession of the north and north-east coasts of the Australian Continent, "and, as it were close the ring-fence with which we have girt the fifth quarter of the globe."*

H. The foregoing observations are eminently practical, and applicable to the present time. It has been remarked, however, that we may confidently augur for a settlement at Cape York a further destiny of a higher and more important character than would result from the above considerations alone - Fifty years ago, the somewhat similar position of Singapore - then also a barren promontory, inhabited only by wandering savages, - was chosen by the genius of Sir Stamford Raffles as the future site of a great emporium of commerce and navigation. Now it has been said: - "the time must ultimately come, when that great chain of islands, stretching from the east end of New Guinea to New Caledonia, shall be brought within the region of civilization and commerce; when the veil that rests upon New Guinea itself

[left margin] * Voyage of H.M.S. Fly. Vol. I. p. 366

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itself shall be raised, and when the Moluccas shall be freed from the trammels in which they have hitherto been bound. Torres Straits will then be the channel of the Commerce between these regions, as well as between the more remote and mighty ones which lie beyond them. It will resemble the Straits of Malacca in this respect; and another Singapore may be expected to rise on its borders, just where the converging streams of Commerce are compressed into the narrowest and closest channel. This must be somewhere about Cape York, or the entrance of Endeavour Strait. It is here, indeed, if anywhere, that the true analogy is to be sought for between Singapore and any point of Australia, the narrow strait, where, from physical necessity, the wide spread commerce of neighbouring seas must inevitably converge; the pass through which one of the great highways of the world must necessarily run." *

6. Your Grace will perceive from the enclosed minute of Council that the Government of Queensland will be willing, with the sanction of the Colonial Legislature, to undertake the formation and management of a Station at Cape York, and to support the civil establishment there on conditions

* Ibid. p. 309-310.

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conditions which will entail no trouble and only an insignificant expense on the Imperial Government. Those conditions cannot, I think, be considered as otherwise than very liberal and reasonable, and as strong proofs of the public spirit and of the attachment to the parent State with which I have ever found the members of the Queensland Parliament to be animated. For this Colony as such, has manifestly no direct interest in the foundation of a settlement at Cape York, which is twelve hundred miles from Brisbane, that is, further than Gibraltar is from London.

7. It will be expedient that the decision of the Home authorities should be communicated to me not later than by the Mail which will leave London in March next, (or, at the very latest, in April,) so that I may be enabled to lay it before the Queensland Parliament during the session of 1862. Otherwise, a year's delay will occur, as the annual session here will probably last only from the beginning of May to the end of July. The Admiralty should also (I submit,) instruct the Commodore on the Australian Station not to demand "Colonial Allowances" from this Colony for the crews of any of Her Majesty's ships which may be employed on

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on Imperial duty in the waters of Queensland, under the circumstances referred to in the enclosed Minute, paragraph 7. E. It would be disagreeable for all parties if such a demand were advanced, and afterwards refused by the local Legislature, and yet your Grace would probably deem such a refusal to be, under the circumstances of the case, only just and natural. "It will be remembered" observe the Council, in the enclosed Minute (paragraph 7. E.) "that the thirty thousand inhabitants of Queensland already tax themselves far more heavily for armed protection than the thirty millions which inhabit the United Kingdom are taxed for the maintenance of the British Army and Navy. The inhabitants of Queensland pay about £1. 4/. per head for this purpose, whereas the inhabitants of the United Kingdom pay only about eighteen (18) shillings per head. Now the boundary of the settled districts in Queensland, which is also the boundary of the Empire, is protected against the hostile tribes of Aborigines by a Mounted Corps, maintained entirely at the expense of the Colony. In other words, the Queenslanders do for themselves, what the Imperial Government does for the two other British Colonies where the Aboriginal Natives

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Natives are a source of serious difficulty, viz: the Cape and New Zealand. It is submitted that this fact should not be lost sight of, whenever any further contribution towards the general defence, unity, or advantage of the Empire is demanded from Queensland. When Her Majesty's ship "Herald" recently sailed from Sydney for England, a demand was made on Queensland for "Colonial Allowances" for her officers and crew, while she was traversing the Pacific Ocean in the latitude of this Colony, though she never entered any of our ports on that voyage, & probably never was even in sight of our shores, - except, perhaps, while she was passing through Torres Straits. This demand was in part conceded by my Government; but it can hardly be expected that a similar claim would again be allowed, after the expression of opinion made in the enclosed Minute, where your Grace will find the case fully stated. The truth is that the whole question of these "Colonial Allowances" is in an unsatisfactory state. Almost all reflecting men in Australia concur in the opinion that an error was committed when the revenues of the Crown Lands, the property of the British nation at large, was surrendered to the absolute control of the Colonial Legislatures.

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Legislatures without first providing for the payment out of those revenues of permanent contributions (like those fixed in the Ionian Islands, and elsewhere) towards the general defence and unity of the Empire.

6. It will be perceived that the government of this Colony propose that the precise site of the new settlement shall be "that agreed upon, after personal inspection, by the Governor of Queensland and the Officer Commanding Her Majesty's Naval Forces on the Australian Station". Looking at the reasons given in the enclosed Minute, (paragraph 7. A.) this condition also will probably be deemed reasonable. Of course I am entirely at your Grace's disposal; and am ready to proceed to Cape York, or elsewhere, on receiving your commands. Only it will be necessary that the Commodore should be instructed to convey me thither. I should be, during the whole voyage, in the waters of Queensland, and need not be absent from the seat of Government at Brisbane for more than one month; - a shorter period than that occupied by some of my official tours of inspection in the interior.

9. The great majority of the authorities which I have consulted, and of the practical men

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men with whom I have conversed, recommend Evan's Bay, near Cape York, as the best site for the proposed station. The anchorage there is roomy and safe. In the Voyage of H.M.S. "Fly" (Vol I p. 307) it is stated. "If the post were stationed in Evans' Bay, high dry rocky places might be selected for the houses, easily defensible, and exposed to the full draught of the sea-breeze, and overlooking a strip of rich garden ground between them and the sea; close on one side are several hundred acres of good grass land, leading to some fresh water pools, and environed by some steep rocky hills, about 300 feet in height, which are covered by an almost impenetrable thicket, forming a natural fence. On this grass land the Cattle and horses for immediate use would be kept. On the other side is Bremer Peak, 500 feet in height, where the signal post would be within sight to give notice of the approach of vessels. A beautiful sandy beach two miles long would be in front of the garden on which it would be perfectly safe to bathe at all times of the tide without fear of sharks or alligators. In addition to these means of health and support, might be mentioned the frequent and comparatively rapid communication with

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with the rest of the world, and the excitement of passing intercourse with strangers, so cheering to the spirits of a small ~~party~~ isolated party. Even the varied scenery of the hills and islands around would not be without its beneficial effect on the health and minds of the residents."

10. As to Albany Island, I am informed by Naval Officers, and otherw who have visited it, and I also gather from the official "Australian Directory" (Vol.II p.178) that, so far from its affording "an excellent harbour with plenty of fresh water", as is stated in Mr.Romaine's letter to Sir F. Rogers of the 10th September 1860, only one ship can moor there at a time, while it is doubtful whether there is any permanent supply of fresh water at all. The real state of the case, however, can be ascertained from personal inspection by the Commodore and myself, which the Government of Queensland reasonably make an indispensable condition of their co-operation. The Lords of the Admiralty suggest that "possession should be taken of Albany Island". It surely cannot be intended by this phrase that there is any doubt as to this Island being already a part of the possessions of the British Crown, and of the territory of this Colony. The Commission of

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of the Governor expressly gives him jurisdiction "over all and every of the adjacent islands their members and appurtenances, in the Pacific Ocean". Albany Island is separated from the mainland by a channel only one third of a mile broad. If there be any doubt as to British Sovereignty extending over this, and all the other islands lying off the Australian Coast, I respectfully submit that no time should be lost in removing such doubt. I need only glance at the inconvenience which would arise from any of them being occupied by any foreign power.

11. In Conclusion, I may be permitted to observe that it is certain that the successful establishment of the long projected settlement on the northern Coast of this Continent would be universally considered both in England and in Australia, by all persons who have given their attention to the subject, as not the least among the many trophies of Your Grace's Colonial administration. I have etc. Signed / G.F. [Bowen] His Grace The Duke of Newcastle, K.G. etc. etc. etc.