

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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COURIER, THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 1872.

THE LAST OF THE NEW GUINEA EXPEDITION. _____

THE following is the official report of the trip of the Governor Blackall, in search of the survivors of the brig Maria, which has been furnished by Lieutenant Gowlland to the Hon. Sir James Martin:-

Governor Blackall, Sydney, March, 1872 Sir, - I have the honor to inform you of the arrival of the steamer Governor Blackall in Sydney Harbor, having on board thirty-four survivors of the crew and passengers of the brig Maria, wrecked on the Bramble Reef, on the 26th February.

In accordance with the instructions which I received from you to prosecute the search after the shipwrecked members of the New Guinea Prospecting Expedition, who were supposed to be cast on shore, or drifted on rafts along the coast and islands in the vicinity of Cardwell, I left Sydney in this vessel shortly before day break on Sunday morning, the 10th instant, having on board thirteen relatives or friends of the castaway crew - [these gentlemen proffered their services on this occasion as volunteers] - as well as a crew of Water Police, with a supply of arms and ammunition ; and, considering the short notice at which the ship was dispatched, I thought myself fortunate to secure the services of so many efficient associates in an undertaking which would assuredly tax their powers of endurance.

After taking in 240 tons of coal at Newcastle we proceeded north with all possible speed, and arrived at Cardwell on the 16th instant. Found H.M.S. Basilisk at anchor. Captain Moresby gave me every assistance in his power, and communicated to me all necessary information in reference to the object of our search.

From him we gained the important intelligence that he had rescued eight of the crew of the larger of the two rafts off Point Cooper (see plan of coast annexed), and had also discovered three dead bodies on the shore further south, supposed to be those of men who had landed from the second raft. The reception on board the Governor Blackall of these poor fellows was a scene that none of the spectators will be likely to forget. They were all in a more or less destitute state, and most of them suffering from ulcerated sores on the body, and low fevers, the result of three days' and nights' partial submersion on the raft, without food or water, bad, or no food at all, with the blacks, and some seven or eight days' weary journeyings along burning beaches and sharp jagged rocks, looking for sustenance and succor. They had providentially fallen in with a tribe of natives shortly after their raft touched the shore, who treated them with great kindness, and allowed them to share in such food as was procurable - a strange contrast to the fiendish cruelty of the tribes south of Shoal Rivulet, who, at the same time, and at only a few miles distance, were barbarously murdering their companions.

Having received on board Sub-lieutenant Jones, from the Basilisk, to aid in the search, as well as a detachment of native police under the command of Mr. Johnstone, for whose services I had made application to Mr. Sheridan, the Police Magistrate at Cardwell - we started shortly after noon of Sunday, 17th instant, to commence the examination of the coast and sea board lying between Point Cooper and Card well. Northward of Point Cooper the coast had been very carefully searched by boat parties from H.M.S. Basilisk ; but to the southward the coast had only been cursorily examined. I resolved therefore to confine our scrutiny in the first instance to the line of coast extending about ten miles north and south of the spot where the second raft (*i.e.*, the smaller of the two) had drifted on shore.

Accordingly, having anchored the ship off Shoalhaven, distant about fifteen miles south of Point Cooper, I dispatched three armed boats in the afternoon, manned by sailors, volunteers, and native police, with instructions to search certain given sections of the country and adjacent coast on the following day.

For four days a similar system of investigation was followed, the ship shifting her anchor age from time to time as circumstances required.

Each boat's crew detached an armed landing party, who walked along the beaches, and over the rocks, and whenever feasible, made excursions in various directions through the dense scrub and jungle which fringed the shore of the mainland.

A strong party of volunteers, reinforced by the native trackers, forced their way inland along the banks of the river which falls into the sea at the spot marked Shoalhaven on the plan, through an all but impassable country, and in their passage intersected the footmarks of blacks in numerous directions.

Every native camp between Cardwell and Point Cooper, a distance of about fifty miles, was visited and minutely searched for any traces of white men that might permit us to hope that some of our missing countrymen might even still be alive, though languishing in captivity.

A second party with two boats, and accompanied by Mr. Johnstone and the native police were sent to examine the banks of a large river, still further to the northward, marked on the plan as Shoal Rivulet. They were absent about two days, but with the exception of a felt hat found in a native encampment four miles north of the river, no traces of the existence of living white men in this neighborhood were discovered.

The coast north and south of Point Cooper was the next selected for examination, and the appearance of the night of the 18th instant of a large fire on the declivity of that promontory (which was thought by Mr. Johnstone to be a signal fire made by white men) inspired us all with a fervent hope that success might at length reward our labors.

Having shifted the ship to a berth eastward of the Point, I proceeded about midnight, immediately after anchoring, with armed crews of volunteers and

native police to examine the position of the fire. After a most rigorous search, our expectations were again doomed to disappointment, as the fire proved to be merely a conflagration of grass and underwood, originating no doubt in the fire of a natives' camp

Nevertheless, I felt it my duty to continue the search in the direction of Cardwell.

A strong party was therefore detached on Thursday, the 21st instant, in two boats to examine the coast southward of Barnard Islands, and whilst the ship was taking in water at Dunk Island, the whole of the coast as far as Tam O'Shanter's Point was scoured by both land and boat parties, but with no other result than the discovery of three more skeletons of murdered men in the neighbourhood of Louisa River. Description of these remains will be found in annexure No. 2.

Both boats returned to the ship at Dunk Island on the 22nd instant, and the watering having been completed, after consulting with Mr. Johnstone, and the volunteers on board, we arrived with no little reluctance at the painful conclusion that the further prosecution of our search would be merely waste of time, as no hopes could now be entertained of the existence of a single survivor from the wreck.

On arrival we embarked the remainder of the shipwrecked party - twenty-six in number - and started for Sydney on the afternoon of the same day (Saturday, 23rd instant).

The doctor of the New Guinea Prospecting Expedition, whom I had taken on board the Governor Blackall on our first arrival at Cardwell, here left the ship, consequently it fell to my duty during the return passage to attend to the sick so far as my medical knowledge, which is but scanty, permitted me.

I am happy to be able to state that no casualties or accidents of any kind have occurred during the trip, and that the sick and wounded are in a fair way of recovery.

The Governor Blackall arrived in Sydney on Thursday evening, the 28th instant.

Before concluding my report, I may perhaps be permitted to invite attention to a few observations, which, though only collateral to the object of my mission, are yet clearly connected with this most melancholy shipwreck and loss of life.

In the first place, then, I would desire to allude to the fact-as I have already done on a former occasion-that in this, as in the instance alluded to, the cause of disaster is clearly traceable to the culpable ignorance of navigation evinced by the master of the vessel. He took his ship to sea, as it appears by the testimony of the survivors, almost destitute of charts or proper appliances for navigating. Blown away by a gale of wind when almost within sight of New Guinea, his vessel is allowed to drift-I cannot say piloted-among the most dangerous reefs of the Coral Sea. Her position before striking the Bramble Reef appears to have been altogether unknown to her captain, or indeed to any of his officers, although,

in fact, both Palm Palm Island and Hinchinbrook Islands were plainly visible from the wreck. And this is not all, for after his ship has struck, he takes the best boat, and with a crew of only six, when twenty-five might have been safely carried in her, he deserts,- leaving the rest of the passengers and crew to perish or not, as Providence might ordain.

It is with great pain that I feel myself constrained to record this opinion of one who has, alas ! expiated his errors by a violent death at the hands of the savages of Tam O'Shanter's Point.

The next circumstance connected with the wreck which I cannot pass over without noticing is,-that the boats and their crews abandoned the rafts to their fate, instead of (as is invariably the rule in such cases) keeping in their company, and towing them when practicable.

The necessity of boats remaining by rafts on occasions like this cannot be urged too emphatically.

It is not too much to say that all hands might have been saved from the wreck of the Maria had this well-recognised course been adopted.

It must always be a subject of the deepest regret, that the search of the Tinonee was not extended north of Double Point, for it is now ascertained that at least five of the shipwrecked crew were alive and wandering along the beach within a few miles of Double Point, at the very time when that steamer was on the coast engaged in the search.

Lastly, I desire to acknowledge the obligations I feel under to those gentlemen who accompanied me on this expedition as volunteers. Their willing subordination to discipline, and cheerful readiness to undertake any duty, or undergo any fatigue ashore or afloat, by day or by night, are deserving of the highest praise.

The assistance rendered to the searching parties by Mr. Johnstone and his detachment of native police was, from his accurate knowledge of the habits of the natives and his professional skill, of inestimable value to the expedition ; and in Lieutenant Jones, of H.M.S. Basilisk, whose services had been lent for the purposes of our search by Captain Moresby, I found a most efficient and trustworthy coadjutor. In my absence that gentleman fulfilled very responsible duties whilst in charge of the manned and armed boats of police and volunteers, and carried out my instructions with discretion and ability.

The crew of the Water Police boat, and the hastily-shipped complement of hands required for working the ship and manning the boats, have also conducted themselves entirely to my satisfaction.-I have the honor to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

JNO. J. GOWLLAND.

The Honorable Sir James Martin, Q.C., &c., &c., Attorney-General.

Description of the bodies found by the Governor Blackall-all supposed to belong

to the second raft:- A.-Was that of a young man, about middle height, hair medium brown, two double teeth were wanting on the right side of the lower jaw and one on the left side, one incisor on the left upper jaw decayed ; the body was a perfect skeleton, although probably not dead a fortnight. The poor fellow had evidently landed from the raft much exhausted, and crawled a little way along the beach looking for food. His remains were found about a quarter of a mile north of the raft, lying out of reach of the sea, with a sailor's monkey jacket doubled up under his head for a pillow-and from sleep he seems to have passed calmly into death. A black and

rivers running through the beach into the sea ; in both cases the front of the face was dashed in, as if from the blow of a stone or club. These bodies are supposed to be those of Polin and O'Malley, and apparently had been killed only about eight or nine days.

I.-Found further south than the two last was murdered in the same brutal manner ; the body could not be recognised.

In addition to these the burnt bones of what are supposed to have been the captain and his two men were found in a large native camp, near Tam O'Shanter's Point.

A quantity of wearing apparel seized in the blacks' camps, and taken from the bodies of the corpses found, are under charge of Sergeant Little, of the Water Police, and may be seen by friends wishing to identify the bodies. All the corpses from A to F were found between Shoal Rivulet and Shoal River, at intervals of distance of from half to one mile apart ; lying on the sandy beaches or rugged rocks fringing the coast line-and it would appear they were making their way south separately-when overtaken or surprised by the blacks; so that there seems to have been a want of unanimity of purpose and action amongst these poor fellows as to their proceedings.

The remaining bodies-G, H, and I-were found ten and twelve miles further south, or about twenty-five miles from Cardwell, having only escaped the fate of their companions from the tribe north of Double Point to fall under the murderous blows of the same savages who killed and burnt the captain and his men near Tam o' Shanter's Point.

List of Crew of Maria on leaving Sydney, showing the numbers rescued, murdered, and drowned:-

Passengers to Sydney by Governor Blackall: Messrs. Sonnichsen, Chulon, Wright, Good, Foster, Coyle, Bardon, Schwelbling, Konig, Fox, King, Robinson, Siddell, Haydon, Phillips, Ingham, Crommelin, Dickwan, Powell, Misdell, Smith, Wilson, Sullivan, Finnie, Lane, Pegus, La Fui, Hocraft, Barclay, Grey, Broadbent, Arps, Maag, Wallen.

Drowned on wreck : Messrs. Andrew, Repran, Crout, Crook, Shewell, Bolton, Zimmerman, Coburn, Arkley, Stewart, Weehan, Cook.

Drowned of rafts, ond otherwise : Messrs. Morris, Saunderson, Tanner, Haylebrook, Tren chard, Grant, Taylor, Anderson, Roden.

Killed by blacks : Messrs. Davis, Stratham, Parnell, Polin, O'Malley, Hardy, Williams, Dal gleish, Thompson, Heakman, Hooker, Rome, Solomon, Angel.

Left at Cardwell : Messrs. Hess, Goble, Ram- say, Tate.

Left Cardwell for Sydney : Messrs. Hargrave and Hyman.

A long list of articles found in blacks' camps, and near and upon bodies lying murdered on the shore between Point Cooper and Tam O'Shanter's Point, is also appended.

FRAME 1 OF 2

2

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A strong party of volunteers, reinforced by the native trackers, forced their way inland along the banks of the river which falls into the sea at the spot marked Shoalhaven on the plan, through an all but impassable country, and in their passage intersected the footmarks of blacks in numerous directions.

Every native camp between Cardwell and Point Cooper, a distance of about fifty miles, was visited and minutely searched for any traces of white men that might permit us to hope that some of our missing countrymen might even still be alive, though languishing in captivity.

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Having shifted the ship to a berth eastward of the Point, I proceeded about midnight, immediately after anchoring, with armed crews of volunteers and native police to examine the position of the fire. After a most rigorous search, our expectations were again doomed to disappointment, as the fire proved to be merely a conflagration of grass and underwood, originating no doubt in the fire of natives' camp discovered in the immediate neighborhood.

The results of our examination of the country between Point Cooper and Double Point, were thus, so far as concerned the recovery of the survivors of the shipwrecked crew, dispiriting in the last degree ; and our utter failure in this locality filled us all with sad misgivings for the success of our further search in the direction of Cardwell.

But, although we were not destined to rescue any lives, we have succeeded in discovering six dead bodies, between Shoal Rivulet and Tam O'Shanter's Point, all of which have been, with nearly absolute certainty, identified by their shipmates as the remains of the unfortunate occupants of the smaller raft.

The places where these bodies were discovered are laid down in the annexed plan, No. 1, and the descriptions of the skeletons, their clothes,

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B.-That of a tall man ; but the body was beyond identification, being divided into three separate parts, and washing about in the seaweed; the head or skull and one arm adhering together ; legs separated at the lower vertebrae of the spine forming another portion, and the trunk by itself.

C.-A tall man, with brown beard ; nothing but the bones left from the fact that the bones of the arms were missing, it was surmised that part of him had been eaten ; head smashed in by blows from a stone or club.

D.-A man of middle height with good teeth, skull small and well formed ; whiskers red ; the

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and other distinguishable marks, wheresoever such descriptions were possible, are set forth in the annexure No. 2.	body was perfectly naked, except a small piece of tweed trouser tied round the foot by a piece of shoe leather, to protect it from the sharp jagged rocks, along which he was travelling south ; the whole of the right side of the head was smashed in by a large stone which was found lying close to the body. It would seem, from the posture of the body, that he had been suddenly alarmed by the blacks, and while endeavoring to get into the bush for shelter, had received his death blow whilst clambering up a little rocky gorge, as the appearance and position of the limbs are those of a person in the act of climbing. The corpse was well kept, and could not have lain there more than five or six days. It is undoubtedly that of Parnell.	
This raft was found stranded on the beach, about quarter of mile to the south of Shoal Rivulet, and though somewhat smaller than that which came on shore a few miles to the northward, was better constructed, and though very frail was probably a better support to the poor fellows who, in their extremity, were obliged to trust to it than the larger raft.	E.-A tall man with a long brown beard; body perfectly naked ; the whole of the front part of the face completely broken in beyond identification ; a pair of nearly new colonial made blucher boots were found near the body. Supposed by the beard to be Rowe or Thompson.	
Their bleaching skeletons lie clustering around, but chiefly to the southward of the raft, and with but a single exception the skulls of all bear horrible testimony of the nature of that death which awaited them.	F.-Was Williams, discovered by H.M.S.	
All but one have been most barbarously murdered by the blacks. Sometimes the skull has been shattered by huge stone; sometimes the jaw-bones and face have been crushed in with waddies or clubs, and in one instance the body had been divided into fragments, and the leg found in one place, the head and shoulders in another, and portion of the trunk in a third.	Basilisk-murdered by blows from a wooden sword, the whole of the back of his head having been dashed to pieces.	
Of all who came on shore or left the wreck in this second raft, but two now remained unaccounted for, and these could not, in all human possibility, have escaped the fate of their murdered companions, if indeed they had not been previously drowned off the raft.	G. AND H - Found on the beach, on the south side of a stream twenty-two miles from Cardwell; the poor fellows seem to have reached so far in safety, and were barbarously murdered	
just after swimming one of the numerous small		

[In right margin] FRAME 2 OF 2