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LIEUTENANT JOHN OXLEY R.N. 1783 - 1828

John Joseph William Molesworth Oxley was born at Kirkham Abbey, near Westow, Yorkshire in 1783. There is an element of doubt about the year of his birth as some authorities give circa 1785. He was the eldest of a family of six sons and one daughter.

Throughout his life he used only the first of his four given names.

His father's family were of landed stock having moved to Yorkshire from Oxley Manor, in Westmoreland. His mother, Isabella, was the daughter of the fourth Viscount Molesworth.

The second son, Richard, joined the Navy, became a Lieutenant and was lost at sea in 1818. The third son, Henry, was educated at Canterbury, afterwards went to Saint Omers and was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. He later returned to the Church of England and died unmarried. The fourth son, Thomas, joined the Navy and, like his elder brother Richard, was lost at sea in 1819.

The two other sons died very young and the daughter, Isabella Margaret, married Captain Dixon, came to Australia and died in Sydney in 1839.

John, as a lad of sixteen years, joined the Royal Navy and became a midshipman on the "Venerable" under Captain Sir William Fairfax and later, in 1801, served in the same ship in the West Indies.

Later in the same year, he transferred to the "Buffalo" where he served in the East Indies under Captain Kent.

In 1802 he sailed for New South Wales in the "Buffalo" as Master's Mate.

Chester Smith states in an article published in the New South Wales Freemason, May 1st, 1953 that "it is on record that Oxley was entrusted with letters in Latin, French and English, from the Royal Navy and Army, for delivery to Freemasons then in the Colony". These were probably Master Mason's Certificates.

John Oxley's first introduction to survey and exploration work came in 1804 when he assisted in a survey of Westernport which had been discovered by

