



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Prepared and presented by: G. H. Cumming.

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**Bro. LIEUTENANT CHARLES JEFFREYS R.N.  
(1782 - 1826)**

Charles Jeffreys, a naval officer, was born on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1782 at Cowes, Isle of Wight, England, the son of Ninian and Mary Jeffreys. He joined the navy at age 11 and served as midshipman in various ships before his passing certificate as lieutenant was issued by the Admiralty in August 1803. He was commissioned lieutenant in March 1805.

In August 1810 at Lambeth, Surrey, he married Jane Gill of London. In January 1814 he arrived with her at Port Jackson in the brig *Kangaroo*.

Jeffrey's first commission was to transport convicts and other passengers in the *Kangaroo* from Port Jackson to the Derwent. After an unsuccessful attempt in May 1814 he finally sailed for the Derwent in August and arrived at Hobart Town in October.

Instructed to return to Port Jackson by way of Port Dalrymple to collect a cargo of wheat, Jeffreys travelled overland, but though the *Kangaroo* sailed for Port Dalrymple later in October it did not enter Port Jackson until February 1815.

The Governor, Bro. Macquarie was dissatisfied with Jeffreys's explanation of the delay, wanted to send the brig back to England as unfit for service and to discharge Jeffreys, whom he thought a timid seaman and ignorant of his duties. Macquarie also described him as incompetent, insolent and ruled by his wife. However, in April he dispatched Jeffreys to Ceylon with the remainder of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Regiment.

Whilst on this voyage Jeffreys named the Molle group of Islands in the Whitsunday Passage after Lieut-Governor Bro. George Molle and Mount Jeffreys (194m.) On South Molle Island after himself. In 1815 after he had made the first charted voyage through the strait, and the other prominence on the island Spion Kop (154m.)

When sailing around Cape York Peninsula in May 1815, he discovered and named Princess Charlotte Bay after Charlotte Augusta (1796-1817) only child of Bro. King George IV and Caroline of Brunswick.

After his return to Port Jackson in 1816 he made two trips with convicts and stores to the Derwent, which he carried out satisfactorily, but in April 1817 the governor, still critical of Jeffreys's incompetence, reported that he was sending him in the *Kangaroo* to England.

Macquarie instructed him not to touch at any port in either of the colonies, but Jeffreys disobeyed his instructions.



He entered Hobart at the end of April under the pretext that he had lost a boat and suffered some damage, but with the real purpose of landing a large quantity of spirits.

While the brig was in the Derwent it was learned that several prisoners were missing from Hobart, that two prisoners had been stowed at Port Jackson, and that the escaped Sydney Merchant, Garnham Blaxcell who owed a large sum of money to the government, was on board.

When Lieut-Governor Sorell ordered two boats to patrol the river on the evening of 6<sup>th</sup> May, Jeffreys boarded one of them, beat and abused the commander, Captain Jones, and took him and other crew members on board the *Kangaroo* as prisoners. The captured men were released next day and Jeffreys sailed for England a week later.

Macquarie hoped that Jeffreys would be suitably punished but legal impediments prevented his trial in England; however, at least he had given the British Government the means of successfully prosecuting its claims against Blaxcell.

While in London Jeffreys arranged for publication of his *Geographical and Descriptive Delineations of the Island of Van Diemen's Land* in 1820.

He wrote with much praise of the Aboriginal women and the pleasures of a bush life. He also told of field sports and shooting emu and kangaroo but commented on the large reduction in numbers of the food supply for Aboriginals by the use of the gun by sportsmen.

Most of the information for his work was obtained from the manuscript of Surveyor Evans who had travelled in the *Kangaroo* between Van Diemen's Land and Port Jackson. The book, now rare, was the first of many guides for immigrants intending to settle in Van Diemen's Land.

In May 1820, Jeffreys and his wife returned to Hobart in the *Saracen*, and later obtained a grant at Pittwater of 800 acres, which he named Frogmore. The first house and all its contents were destroyed by fire soon after being built, but he immediately laid the foundations of another. However, Jeffreys did not prosper as a farmer. He died on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1826 and was buried at Sorell. His widow remained in the colony, and was allowed an additional grant of 500 acres.

There is a Jeffrey's Bay some 50 km west of Port Elizabeth which has one of South Africa's best known surfing beaches. It is not known but unlikely that it was named after him.

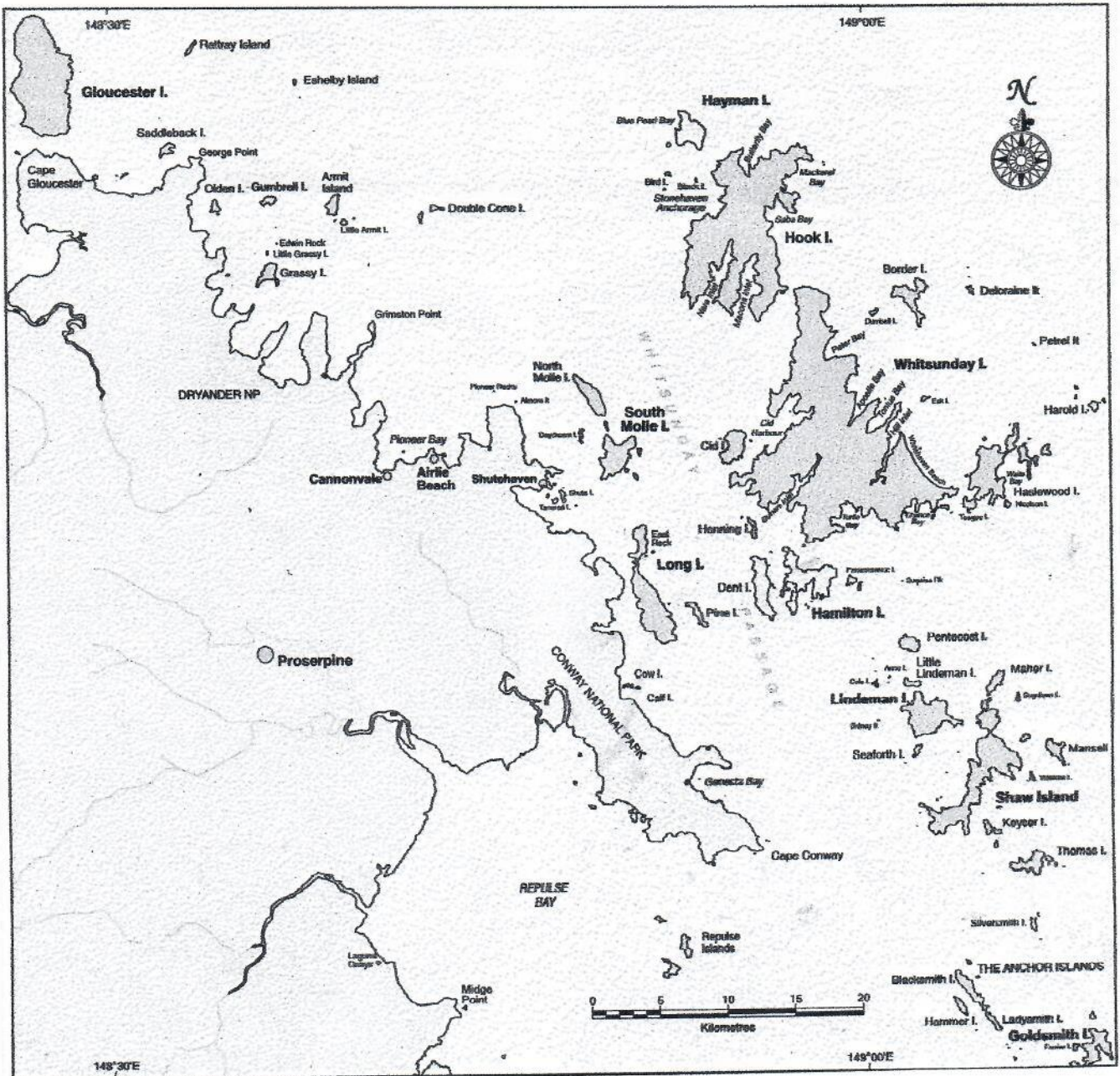
Bro. Charles Jeffreys was a member of the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues No. 227, Irish Constitution held within the 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment which was garrisoned in New South Wales from 1814 to 1818.

His membership was registered with the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1816.

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# Whitsunday Islands National Parks



Mainland National Parks
  Island National Parks





## SOUTH MOLLE ISLAND (National Park)

