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Words that are printed in bold are explained in the Glossary on page 31.

Introduction

This series traces Australia's colonial history, from the very earliest of times when **Aboriginal peoples** and **Torres Strait Islanders** lived undisturbed on the Australian continent, to the arrival of the Europeans in 1788 to set up the first **colony**, to the turn of the century, when Australia became a unified nation and the colonies became states. Each book explores the history of a different colony, examining its **indigenous** people, European settlement, development and expansion, and the process of **federation** in the colony.

A Pivotal Moment in History

On 26 January 1788, a small fleet of British ships landed at Sydney Cove, establishing a permanent European settlement based on convict labour. Forces of change were unleashed by that relatively modest event that would reshape the continent.

From that moment, the devastation of the indigenous people began, laying waste to tens of thousands of years of culture. At the same time, the Europeans started carving out a life in this strange place. The trees kept their leaves, but shed their bark. The seasons were reversed. Animals hopped rather than ran. The soil was thin and easily exhausted. Still, these Europeans and the ones who came after them forced themselves onto this country permanently.

Over the years and decades that followed, the Europeans did what they could to tame the country and turn it into something they could call home. At the same time, the people living there came to think of themselves less as people from somewhere else who happened to be in Australia, and more as Australians.

About this book

This book covers the history of the colony of South Australia from before the arrival of Europeans to Federation in 1901. You can read about:

- who the indigenous people were and how they lived

- when Europeans first arrived and what they did

- how Europeans spread across the colony

- the economic development of the colony

- how governance evolved into a representative democracy

- how South Australia joined the other colonies to create an independent nation, the Commonwealth of Australia.
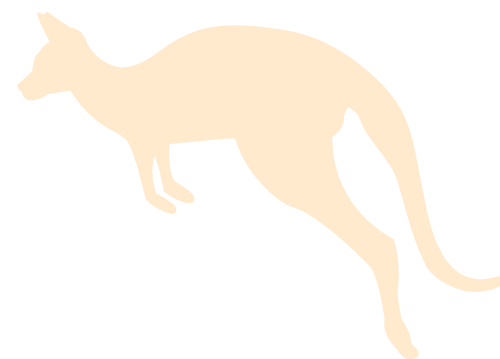
This painting shows the early settlement of Adelaide in South Australia.
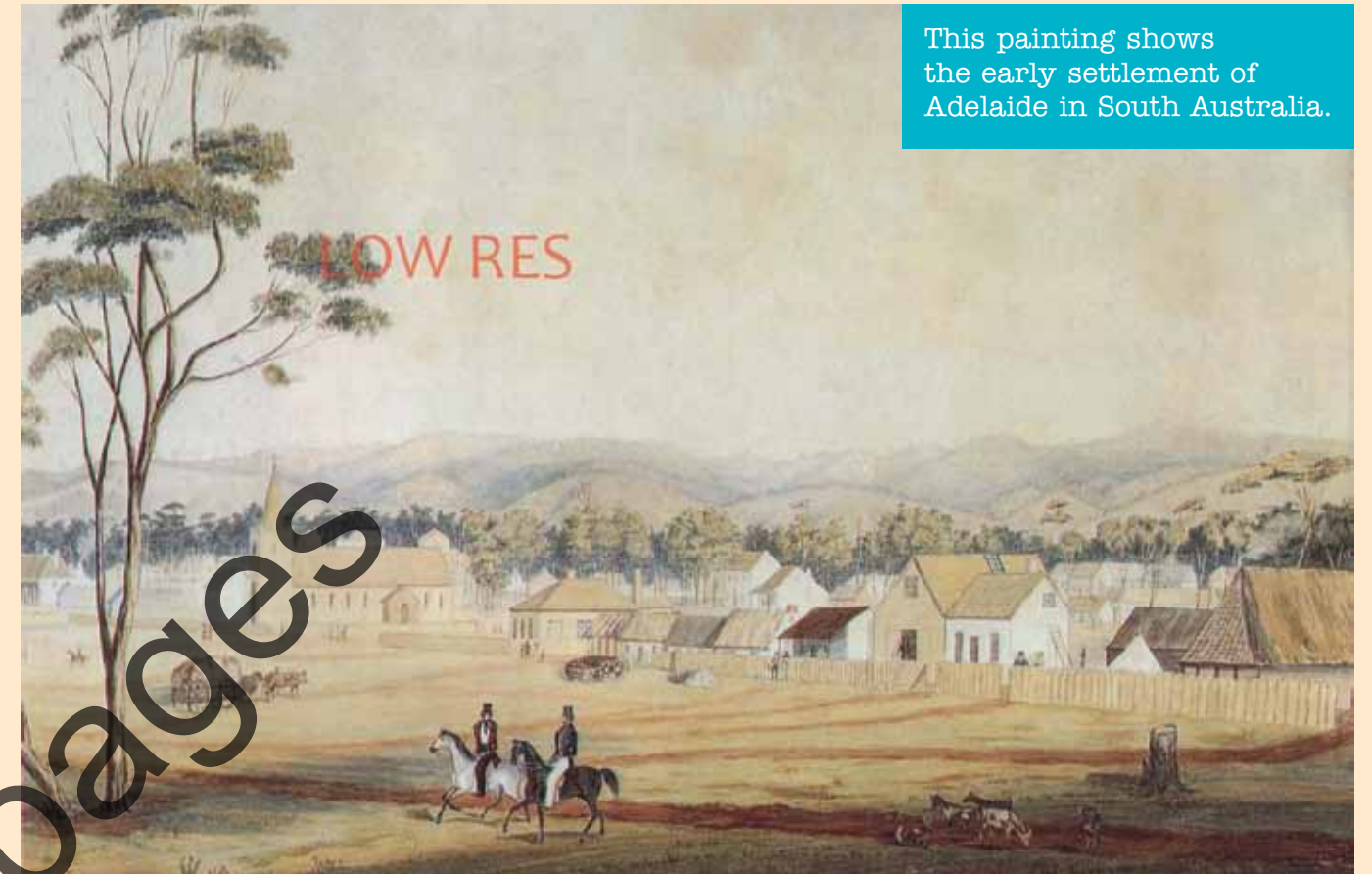
The First Fleet arrived in Sydney Cove in 1788.

Australia Before Europeans

The first human inhabitants of Australia were **Aboriginal peoples**, who came from South-East Asia tens of thousands of years ago. They, along with those who settled in the Torres Strait Islands, became the land's **indigenous** people. Their hunter-gatherer societies, some of which exist today, are the oldest continuous societies on the planet.

The First Australians

No one knows exactly when people first arrived on the continent of Australia. Current estimates usually put it at about 60 000 years ago, although they range from 40 000 to 125 000 years. Even if it were only 40 000 years, that is still 180 times longer than Europeans have been on this continent.

Australia's indigenous people were generally nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, there was a wide variety of lifestyles. The **Torres Strait Islanders**, for example, were surrounded by water and lived a lifestyle based on the sea. Those people who lived in the heart of the desert lived an entirely different lifestyle. By the time Europeans arrived, the Aboriginal peoples, who numbered between 300 000 and one million, had spread across the continent and adapted to every kind of environment.

Sophisticated Societies

Aboriginal societies and cultures were rich and varied, emphasising kinship, oral history, spirituality and connection to ancestral lands. In the late 1700s, there were over 200 Aboriginal languages and hundreds more **dialects**, with intricate grammar and large vocabularies. Many people spoke several languages and dialects. It was not uncommon for a person's mother, father and partner all to speak different languages.

Aboriginal social groups were tied strongly to particular territories and rooted deeply in the Dreamtime. Their societies lived sustainably on the land and with each other for hundreds of generations.

The Dreamtime

The Dreamtime is a broad concept covering Aboriginal peoples' mythology and spiritual beliefs. It includes the time when mythic beings formed the land, plants and animals, and left behind rules of behaviour for people to follow.

Archaeology at Lake Mungo

Lake Mungo, 760 kilometres west of Sydney, is the site of several important archaeological finds. The Mungo Man skeleton, which is about 46 000 to 50 000 years old, is the oldest known remains of a human in Australia. Mungo Lady is 20 000 to 26 000 years old.

Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

The term 'Aboriginal peoples' refers mainly to the indigenous people of mainland Australia and Tasmania. The term 'Torres Strait Islanders' refers to the indigenous people of the Torres Strait islands in Far North Queensland.

These images from a painting by George Fife Angas and published in 1846 depict South Australian Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Peoples in South Australia

Aboriginal peoples lived diverse lives across what is now South Australia for thousands of years. Some groups lived by the coast, such as the Kaurna, near what is now Adelaide, while others lived around rivers or lakes, such as the Ngarrindjeri of the lower lakes of the Murray River. Other groups lived in the desert, such as the Wangkangurru of the Simpson Desert.

A Variety of Peoples and Languages

When Europeans arrived in South Australia in 1836, the Aboriginal population was probably between approximately 12 000 and 15 000. However, this number was less than what it would have been before contact with Europeans. Diseases had already taken their toll, contracted either from the first explorers, or from diseases that travelled through the populations along the Murray River.

Aboriginal peoples were often identified by their language groups. In addition to having a distinct language, these groups had their own beliefs, ceremonies, customs and laws. The language groups would also have their own **dialects**. For example, the Pitjantjatjara language spoken by people of the north-west of South Australia had two dialects: Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara. Before European settlement in South Australia, there were six language groups, which comprised 30 individual languages, many of which were further broken into dialects. All together, more than 50 languages were spoken.

Lives of Hunting and Gathering

Like other Aboriginal peoples, those of South Australia survived on the resources found where they lived. Some groups were nomadic, for example the Pitjatjantjara to the desert area of north-west South Australia. They had to know every plant, animal and waterhole just to survive. Others were more settled depending on the resources available to them, for example, the Ngarrindjeri of the Murray and the Kaurna people of Adelaide lived where on fertile land with plenty of food and water.

Fire-stick Farming

Some people say that Aboriginal peoples did not farm, but that is not strictly accurate. While they may not have grown rows of sown crops the way Europeans did, they used fire in a method called "fire-stick farming".

Fire-stick farming involved deliberately burning areas of land in a controlled way. This had many effects. It kept paths clear and snakes at bay, and stimulated fresh growth, which in turn attracted kangaroos and other meat sources. Fire was also used to preserve open woodlands, to recycle nutrients into the ground and to encourage the growth of particular kinds of edible plants.

Fire-stick farming by Aboriginal people helped them manage their resources.

In 1847, this was an artist's impression of an Aboriginal encampment in Rapid Bay.

First Europeans

The First Fleet arrived in 1788 in New South Wales. However, it was several more decades before Europeans began to settle in South Australia.

First Sighting

The first known European sighting of South Australia happened on 26 January 1627. The Dutch East India Company's *Gulden Zeepaerdt* (Golden Seahorse), captained by François Thijssen, got as far as Fowler's Bay. However, the most senior person on board, East Indies Councillor Pieter Nuyts, gave an unfavourable report of the area. It was almost 200 years before Europeans showed any interest in the area again.

Flinders and Baudin

In 1801, Matthew Flinders, already a successful naval explorer of Australia, was put in charge of HMS *Investigator* and instructed to chart the "unknown coast", the southern coast of Australia from what is now Western Australia to Victoria. Flinders reached it at the start of 1802 and worked his way along the south. He spent three months in his ship exploring the coastline, making landings where he and his crew could to collect specimens and hunt for food.

On 8 April 1801, Flinders met the French ship *Le Géographe*, captained by Nicolas Baudin. The Frenchman and his crew had been exploring Australia's coast for almost a year. Despite the fact that their two countries were officially hostile toward each other, the captains shared information about what they had found, including the availability of water and food on Kangaroo Island. Flinders named the place at which they met "Encounter Bay".

Sturt Reaches the Mouth of the Murray

Late in 1829, Charles Sturt led an expedition to explore the Lachlan–Murrumbidgee river system. By 7 January 1830, having reached the Murrumbidgee and assembled a whaleboat, the party began their voyage down the river. A week later, a rapid current brought them into a "broad and noble river", which Sturt named the Murray.

Despite two tense meetings with **Aboriginal people**, Sturt's group reached Lake Alexandrina, south of Adelaide, on 23 January 1830. They were the first Europeans to venture into what is now South Australia. It was an accomplishment, but it was also disappointing. The opening to the sea that they found was unsuitable for shipping. In addition, the ship that had been promised at the end of the journey was not there. Sturt and his people, already tired and starving, faced the horrifying prospect of having to row upstream against the current.

From Charles Sturt's Diary, 14 January 1830

Suddenly the Murrumbidgee took a southern direction but in its tortuous course swept round to every point of the compass with the greatest irregularity. We were carried at a fearful rate down its gloomy and contracted banks. At 3 p.m., Hopkinson called out that we were approaching a junction, and in less than a minute afterwards we were hurried into a broad and noble river.

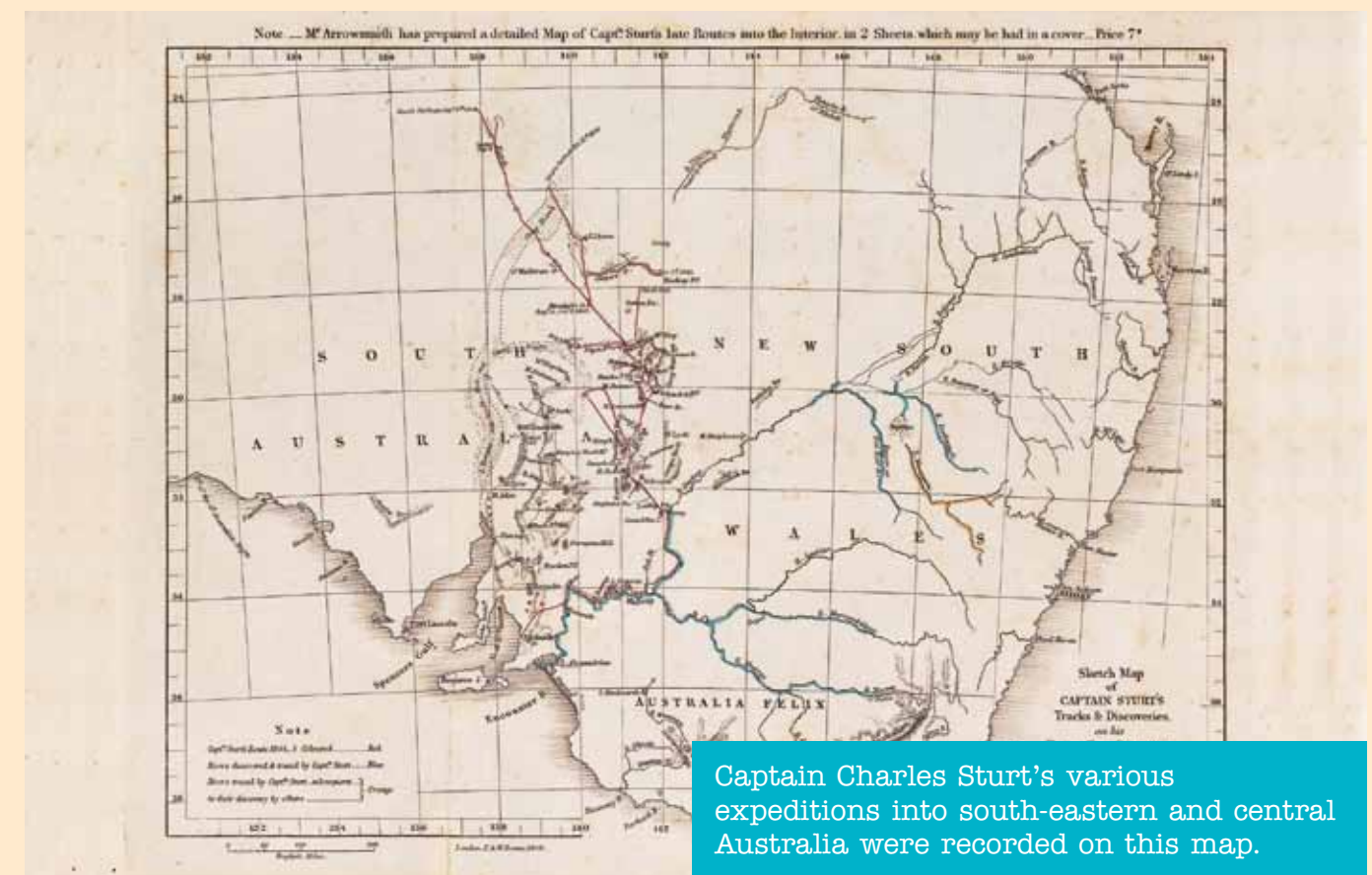*Source: http://www.murrayriver.com.au/about-the-murray/ captain-charles-sturt/ %5D*
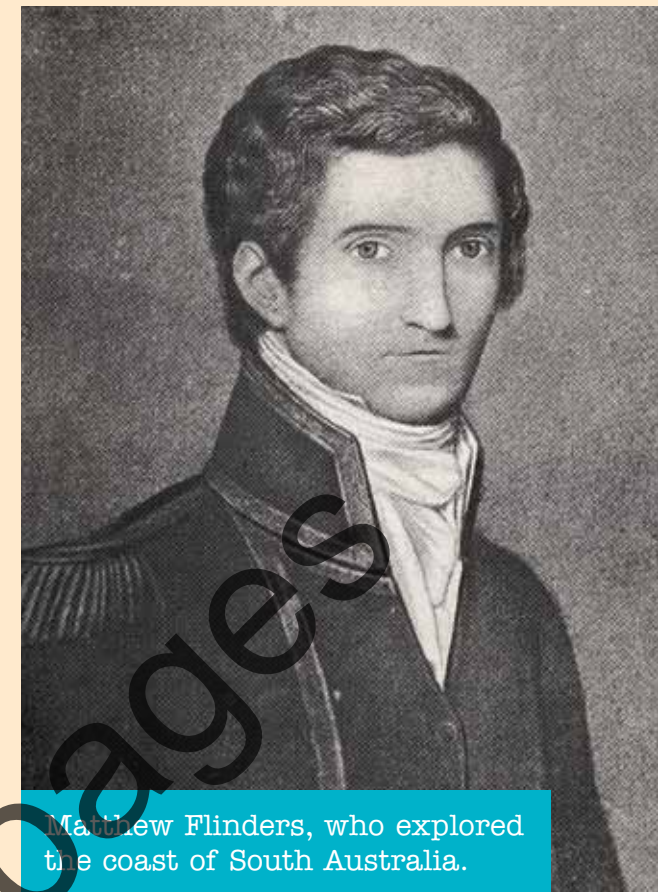
Matthew Flinders, who explored the coast of South Australia.
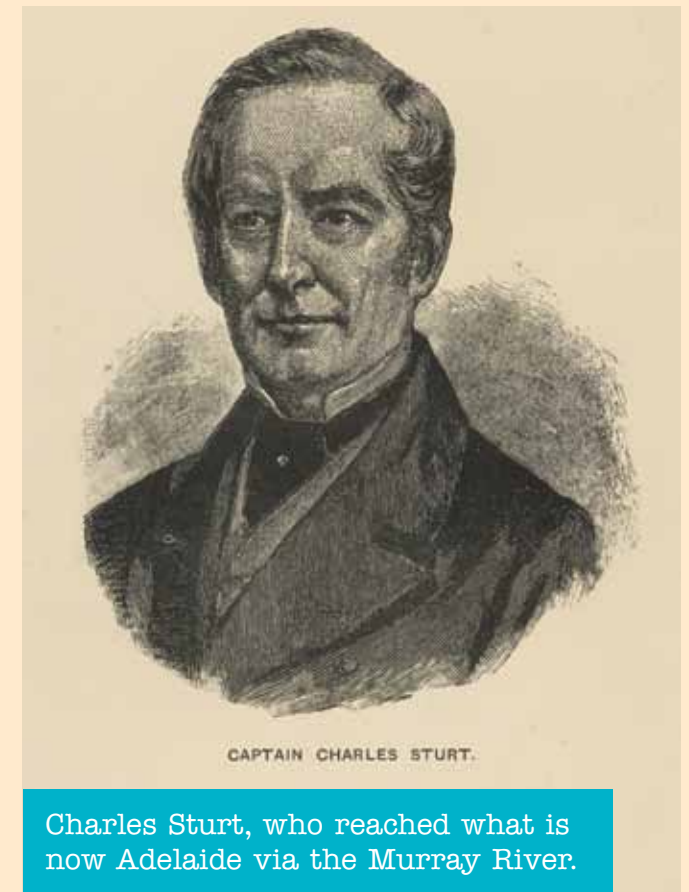
CAPTAIN CHARLES STURT.

Charles Sturt, who reached what is now Adelaide via the Murray River.

Captain Charles Sturt's various expeditions into south-eastern and central Australia were recorded on this map.