

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

CAPTAIN CHARLES STURT

Papers, 1844-48

Reel M403

**The Hon. Mrs Mary Anna Marten
Crichel House
Near Wimborne, Dorset**

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Charles Sturt (1795-1869), the son of Judge Napier Sturt, was born in India and grew up in England, where he was educated at Harrow. In 1813 he received his commission as an ensign in the 39th (Dorsetshire) Regiment. He served in Spain, Canada, France and Ireland. In 1825 he was promoted to the rank of captain. In May 1827 he arrived in Sydney with a detachment of his regiment and soon afterwards was made military secretary to the governor, Ralph Darling.

Sturt quickly became interested in inland exploration and in November 1828 he was given approval to trace the course of the Macquarie River. Accompanied by the experienced Hamilton Hume, three soldiers and eight convicts, he followed the river downstream from the Wellington Valley and discovered the River Darling, which he followed for some distance. In November 1829 he set off with a slightly larger party to explore the Murrumbidgee River. He followed it to the junctions with the Lachlan and Hume Rivers, re-naming the latter the River Murray. With seven men, he sailed in a whaleboat to the River Murray's junction with the River Darling and onward to the mouth of the Murray at Lake Alexandrina. There was no ship waiting for them and they were forced to row upstream, eventually reaching Sydney in May 1830.

In 1832 Sturt returned to England and in the following year he resigned from the Army. He published an account of his two exploring journeys, married Charlotte Greene, and returned to Australia in 1835. He bought farming properties in New South Wales and in 1838 travelled overland to Adelaide with 300 head of cattle and a flock of sheep. In 1839 he was appointed Assistant Commissioner of Lands in South Australia.

Following Edward Eyre's unsuccessful expedition to central Australia in 1840, Sturt became eager to lead a similar expedition and, if possible, prove the existence of an inland sea. In January 1843 he wrote to Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, proposing to traverse the continent from south to north. Stanley was sceptical, but authorised an expedition to central Australia with more limited objectives. In August 1844 Sturt left Adelaide with 15 men, six drays, a boat and 200 sheep. After leaving the Darling River and heading north-west, the party crossed harsh country and a scarcity of water. For six months they were trapped at Depot Glen, but after July 1845 they made a number of forays northwards. Sturt failed to discover an inland sea and, faced with the endless sand dunes of Simpson Desert, he eventually gave up. The expedition returned to Adelaide in January 1846.

Sturt subsequently held the offices of Colonial Treasurer and Colonial Secretary in South Australia, but his sight began to fail and he returned to England in 1853. His *Narrative of an expedition into Central Australia* (2 vols.) was published in 1849. He spent his last years in Cheltenham.

Reference: Edward Stokes. *To the inland sea: Charles Sturt's expedition 1844-45*, Melbourne, Hutchinson, 1986

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1. Letter of instructions and other documents, 1843-44

Sir John Barrow. Minute containing comments on Captain Sturt's proposals to cross Australia from the south to the north, n.d. (8pp, copy)

Lord Stanley (London) to Capt. George Grey (Adelaide), 6 Dec. 1843: proposals of Capt. Sturt; attaches memorandum of Sir John Barrow; Stanley authorises expedition on modified plan; Sturt's salary; despatch of instruments. (4pp, copy)

Lord Stanley (London) to Capt. George Grey (Adelaide), 16 Dec. 1843: selection of members of exploring party; recommends H. Stuart Russell; questions proposal to ascend River Darling in the first instance; prohibits extension of journey into northern tropical region; principal objective to ascertain whether chain of hills divides continent and whether rivers have their sources in those hills. (4pp, extract)

Capt. George Grey to Sturt, 1 July 1844: instructions. (13pp)

Sturt to Capt. George Grey, 9 July 1844: sends return of numbers of men and animals and provisions that he proposes to take on the expedition.

2. Journal of Sturt on his expedition to central Australia

Judging from variations in handwriting and ink, corrections and deletions, the journal is the original journal kept by Sturt during the expedition, rather than a later copy. The first two folders overlap, but some of the early entries in folder 2 are briefer than those of the corresponding entries in folder 1.

Folder 1 11 August – 5 September 1844 (17pp)

Sturt's delayed departure with Harris Browne and James Hawker (15 August), arrival at Moorundie on River Murray, list of members of the expedition, departure from Moorundie (25 August), journey with Edward Eyre along Murray Valley to Lake Bonney; landscape; barometer readings; organisation of camps.

Also inserted in the folder is a note on the Legislative Council (1p.), a memorandum on the sea mouth of the River Murray (2pp.), a sheet addressed to the publishers T. & W. Boone (London) and a note from Thomas Boone requesting more copy and illustrations.

Folder 2 10 August – 30 September 1844 (46pp)

The expedition's departure from Adelaide (10 August), journey to Moorundie, Lake Bonney, Rufus River (10 September), Lake Victoria and the Anabranche of the River Darling, the return of Eyre to Moorundie, report of massacre of overlanders at Laidley's Ponds (17 September), injury to Robert Flood, arrival at the Darling River (24 September), encounters with large numbers of Aborigines, journey northwards up the river.

The journal is preceded by some notes and calculations (2pp) and at the end is a loose leaf with parts of the entries for 27-28 Sept. 1844.

Folder 3 1 October – 20 November 1844 (69pp)

Journey up the Darling River, meetings with Aborigines, nature of the country, problems with bullocks, reports of lack of water beyond the hills, arrival at Laidley's Ponds (10 October), reconnoitre by James Poole, camp established at Cawndilla, departure of party for Barrier Range (28 October), scarcity of water in the hills, camp at a waterhole, departure of Sturt and five others on a search for Lake Torrens (4 November), Sturt's belief in the proximity of an inland sea.

Folder 4 21 November – 30 December 1844 (51pp)

Journey by Poole, Browne and David Morgan into the interior (21 November), departure of the main party from the Barrier Range, return of Poole, Browne and Morgan (2 December), their failure to find Lake Torrens, reductions in rations, establishment of base camp at Flood's Creek (11 December), journey by Sturt, John McDouall Stuart and Robert Flood eastwards to Barrier Range, rising temperatures, return of Poole, Browne and Morgan (25 December), their discovery of creeks to the north, departure of main party northwards (28 December), deaths of bullocks.

At the end of the folder is a weather table. (1p)

Folder 5 1 January – 23 February 1845 (54pp)

Temporary camp at large waterhole (Depot Glen), journey by Sturt, Browne, Flood and Joseph Cowley to north, great heat, failure to discover water, return to the main camp (24 January), journeys by Sturt and others northwards across endless sand ridges, Sturt's return to Depot Glen (21 February).

Folder 6 1 March – 20 July 1845 (44pp)

Continued heat, unsuccessful journey eastwards in search of water (12-21 March), monotony of life at Depot Glen, reduced rations, another attempt to discover Lake Torrens (22-25 April), Poole and Browne suffering from scurvy, visit by an old Aborigine to the camp, decision to send Poole and a third of the party back to Adelaide, departure of Poole (14 July), news of death of Poole (15 July), departure of Louis Piesse with a dray (18 July).

Folder 7 22 July – 12 September 1845 (54pp)

Departure of remaining party from Depot Glen, slow progress over stone ridges to Lake Pinaroo, meetings with Aborigines, new depot named Fort Grey, departure of Sturt and four men from Fort Grey (14 August), discovery of a broad creek (Strzelecki Creek), reached latitude 27°27'S (22 August),

scarcity of waterholes, geology of the region, difficulties of horses, 'terrible nature of this dreadful Desert', illness of Browne, decision to turn back after reaching latitude 24°40'S. (8 September).

Folder 8 13 September – 30 November 1845 (59pp)

Decision to return to Depot Glen, arrival at Strzelecki Creek (28 September) and Fort Grey (1 October), Sturt's final journey northwards with Stuart, Morgan and John Mack (9 October), discovery of large creek (Cooper's Creek), great Stony Desert, 'worse country than any we had seen on our previous journey', sufferings of horses, decision to retreat (24 October), abandonment of supplies to lighten the load, return to Cooper's Creek (29 October), meetings with Aborigines, return to Fort Grey (13 November), meeting with Browne and the base party (17 November), Sturt's illness, departure of Browne, Flood and John Jones from Depot Glen (27 November).

Folder 9 1 December 1845 – 12 January 1846 (21pp)

Departure from Depot Glen (7 December), arrival at Barrier Range (15 December), return to Darling River and Lake Victoria (8 January).

3. Letters of Louis Piesse, storekeeper on the expedition, 1845-46

Louise Piesse to Sturt, 7 Feb. 1845: sends return of provisions. (2pp)

Louis Pesse (Adelaide) to Sturt, 29 Jan. 1846: account of proceedings of the camp at Rola-rola and the journey from there to Adelaide. (6pp)

4. Vocabulary of the Murray River tribes, May 1844

Vocabulary of the dialect spoken by the Murray River tribes, May 1844. (34pp) The words are arranged alphabetically, with the translation on the right-hand side of the page.

Specimens of the language of the natives of the upper Darling, n.d. (4pp)

5. Letters of A. Miller Mundy, Colonial Secretary of South Australia, 1845-47

A. Miller Mundy (Adelaide) to Sturt, July 1845-May 1847: payments; despatches concerning the expedition sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; despatches from W.E. Gladstone (Secretary of State) on Sturt's return to Adelaide and natural history specimens; leave of absence granted to Sturt; approbation of Lord Grey. (6 letters)

A. Miller Mundy (Adelaide) to Charlotte Sturt, 6 Aug. 1845: Governor approves payment of £250 on Captain Sturt's account.

6. Drafts of notes by Sturt

On the royalties from mines in South Australia and on the general revenue of the colony. (7pp)

Opening paragraphs of Sturt's 'Account of the sea coast and interior of South Australia', published in volume 2 of his *Narrative of an expedition to Central Australia*. (2pp)

7. Drawings and charts

Three watercolours and a pencil sketch of an island, a settlement on a sea coast, a river scene with figures and a boat, and a view of mountains.

Two rough charts.

8. Letters, 1847-48

Louis Piesse (Calcutta) to Sturt, 16 Feb. 1847: account of his voyage to Timor, Ceylon and Calcutta in 1846; employment as an artist; aristocratic style of living; his attachment to South Australia; problems arising from tolerance towards convicts from Van Diemen's Land; debilitating effect of climate of Bengal; departure of part of 39th Regiment for England; gratitude to Sturt for favours and kindness. (6pp)

[Charlotte Sturt] (Boulogne) to [Charles Sturt], 3 Feb. 1848: receipt of a case of oranges; her mother; customs charges; her letter to Harriet; Henry Sturt; Sturt's visit to Crichel in Dorset to see relatives. (4pp, incomplete)

Note: Charlotte Sturt's mother, Charlotte Greene, died in Boulogne in 1852.