Abstracts

Dr. Denver Beanland: Connections in Charting the Great Barrier Reef, 1770 – 1850

After the seven years’ war and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Britain turned its attention to the Pacific. However, the South Pacific became an area of strategic significance in Britain’s rivalry with France in particular, from this period and during the 1800s. It was part of the intense struggle between the two countries for power, territory and scientific glory. The significant loss of shipping together with the French Government’s efforts to gain a foothold in the South Pacific, by right of discovery, were major forces in stimulating the British Government into exploration and drove British hydrographical work in the region. This enmity with France was one of the factors that led to Captain James Cook’s discovery of the east coast of Australia. The need for safe shipping routes required the charting of the Great Barrier Reef and the Torres Strait the most perilous parts of Australia’s east coast. Amongst those that followed Cook were William Bligh, Matthew Flinders, Phillip Parker King, Francis Blackwood and Owen Stanley. This paper reflects on some of the connections between the leaders and the important role of Sir Joseph Banks as well as Cook.

Stephen Sheaffe: Captain Samuel Ashmore, navigator and marine surveyor

Samuel Ashmore was a maritime trader, a sea captain, hydrographer and author. As a young man aged 21 and captain of the *Hibernia*, he first arrived in Australia in December 1808. Two years later, and using Lt. Cook’s maps, Ashmore sailed north. He sailed up the east coast, learned from Cook’s experience and avoided the many shoals and reefs of the inner reef by sailing outside the reef. He made eight trips through the outer reef and mapped each of these passages. The maps were sent to the Hydrographic office in London – and published under the heading *Tracks through the Barrier Reef by S. Ashmore*. There are eight land and sea features in the north that bear his or his ship’s name.

Bill Kitson: With Great Zeal: Charting the Qld Coast 1860-1913

While the early navigators of the Queensland coastline such as Cook, Flinders, King and other had charted the coastline in some detail, vessels not following directly along their routes could easily experience difficulties. By the time Queensland became a separate colony in 1859, it had become apparent that more accurate charts were needed of its extensive 1500-mile coastline. To solve this problem, the Queensland Government entered into a co-operative agreement with the Admiralty for a detailed survey of the coastline from Point Danger to Cape York along the inner route. At that time the inner route was being used by many vessels trading to Asia as well as vessels servicing the new towns forming to the north of Rockhampton. The talk today tells the story of this precision survey that would form the basis of the present-day charts of our coastline.
Ian Jempson: The Mystery of John Oxley’s Field Books - solved

It may come as a surprise that Oxley’s records of his exploration of Moreton Bay and the Brisbane River were as good as presumed lost to Queensland for over 100 years. Concurrently during that period many historians criticized Oxley for not acknowledging the role of Pamphlet, Finnegan and Parsons in the discovery of the River. They mystery and criticism deepened with the discovery of six Field Books labelled with the name of the surveyor Robert Hoddle that placed him in company with Oxley and appeared to tell the true story. Join Ian Jempson of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland in an intriguing story of the unravelling of this 180-year-old question, which used Queensland State Archives’ books labelled with Hoddle’s name. This seminar will present the collaborative work undertaken by Queensland State Archives and the Royal Historical Society of Queensland to resolve this mystery.

Ray Kerkhove: The Casual Explorer: Unknown and lesser-known expeditions of South-East Queensland

The history of European exploration has largely focussed on official expeditions. Kerkhove here examines and reconstructs early exploration that has been either neglected or forgotten on account of their discoveries being part and parcel of their regular work as missionaries, whalers, timber-getters, squatters, bullockies etc. He notes the impact of these 'casual explorers' and their Aboriginal guides in providing some of the earliest mapping and European place naming of south-east Queensland.

John Pearn  Exploring the heavens: Historical Vignettes from Queensland

There exists an extensive archive of astronomical observation and research in Queensland. The City of Brisbane is named after the Nation’s first astronomer and pioneer of science in Australia, Sir Thomas Brisbane. This paper presents details of two celestial themes of significance in Queensland history – two accounts separated by time, place and culture. The first presents some examples of Indigenous astronomy, with pre—Settlement accounts of eclipses, comets and the use of celestial observations for annual cultural cycles, including (in the Torres Straight) Indigenous horticulture. The second, separated by a great gulf of time and culture, is an account of the astronomical research at Goondiwindi in September 1922, to test Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity, published in 1916. Einstein’s theory had predicted that even light would be bent by massive gravitational bodies. The eclipse of the sun, on 21 September 1922, and the topographical and meteorological desiderata in Goondiwindi, in the predicted eclipse path of totality, provided a priceless opportunity for astronomers from Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere to prove Einstein’s theory.