

Introduction

The **expeditions** undertaken by adventurous European explorers across the Australian continent influenced the spread of settlement in the country. Although Indigenous people had lived on the land for thousands of years, no Europeans had travelled inland since first arriving on the continent in 1788. However, as the settlements on the coast grew, there was an increased demand for new land.



Indigenous people are believed to have lived in Australia for about 60 000 years.

Very few of the early explorers were born in Australia. Most of them came from Europe, a very different landscape and climate from that of Australia. In their expeditions, they faced tough challenges as they ventured on foot, on horseback and camel, and by boat to make new discoveries. Some were skilled bushmen when they led their expeditions; others had little knowledge about the **terrain** they would encounter. But they all shared a sense of adventure and all pushed beyond their physical and personal boundaries as they ventured forth into a land that was vast and unknown to them.

They hacked their way through bush and rainforest and **trekked** across sand dunes. They survived droughts and flooded rivers and endured scorching heat in the desert and bitter cold in the mountains. They were attacked by flies, ants, leeches, snakes and crocodiles as they continued their explorations. Starvation and **dehydration** threatened their lives and they often became ill from exhaustion, **scurvy** and other diseases. They **persevered** against these extremely harsh conditions—sometimes to suffer bitter disappointment when they had to abandon their expedition and turn back. At other times, they succeeded in the face of great hardship. Some explorers, such as Mawson, ventured even further and explored the remote, unknown continent of Antarctica.

These explorers have become part of Australia's history through their feats of courage and **endurance**. Statues have been erected in their honour and landmarks, towns, universities and national parks bear their names, as Australians remember these explorers for their remarkable achievements.



A painting of the explorers Burke and Wills in the desert

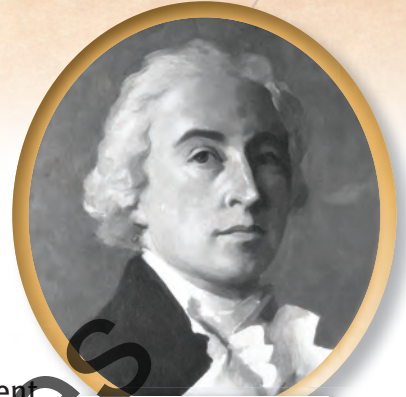
Australia's rugged coastline provided many challenges to early explorers.

Mapping the Coastline of Australia

George Bass, a **naval surgeon**, and Matthew Flinders, a **midshipman**, arrived in Sydney from England in 1795. Within a few months of settling, the two adventurers decided to explore the coastline south of Sydney.

In 1796 they set off on their first exploration in a small rowing boat. They named it *Tom Thumb*, as it was only 2.5 metres long and 1.3 metres wide. They investigated Botany Bay and the Georges River, mapping what they found and finding land that would be suitable for settlement. A colony was later built on this land and named Bankstown.

The following year, the two adventurers set off to explore the coast south of Sydney in a slightly larger boat, *Tom Thumb II*. They reached and explored the area, which they named Port Hacking, then sailed south in the open sea to the Illawarra area now known as Wollongong and Shellharbour.



George Bass



Matthew Flinders

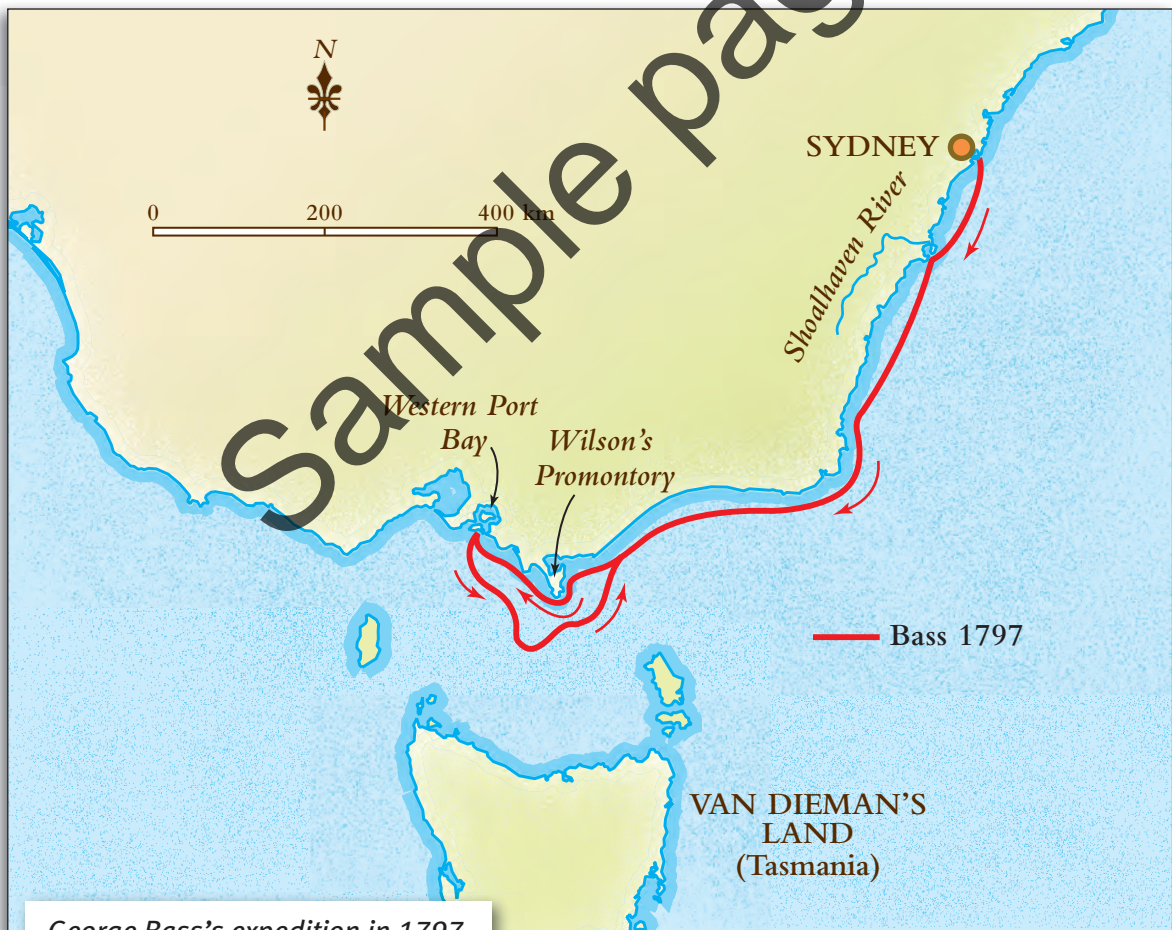


George Bass and Matthew Flinders battle a storm on board *Tom Thumb*.

In 1797, Bass set off with a crew of six volunteer sailors in a **whaleboat** that was 8.5 metres long. They took six weeks' supply of food with them. Bass wanted to test the theory that there was a **strait** of water between Van Diemen's Land (now called Tasmania) and the mainland. On his journey, he sighted and named the Shoalhaven River and Wilson's Promontory, the most southerly point on the mainland. He continued south to Western Port Bay.

After exploring this area for several days, Bass began the return trip to Sydney because he was running out of supplies. On arriving in Sydney, he reported that he thought a strait existed between Westernport and Van Diemen's Land but he didn't have proof.

The following year, Bass and Flinders set off in a 25-tonne ship, *Norfolk*, and proved that Bass's theory was correct when they **circumnavigated** the island of Van Diemen's Land.



George Bass's expedition in 1797