

Basic Detail Report



00039818

Title

Flinders' King checkmate

Date

2002

Primary Maker

Elizabeth Gertsakis

Medium

Wood

Dimensions

290 x 100 mm

Name

Sculpture

History

Matthew Flinders was the first European to circumnavigate Australia and prove that New Holland and New South Wales were one continent. He was also the first to consistently use the term 'Australia'. His charts were so accurate that many were in use well into the 20th century. Flinders was born in the Lincolnshire village of Donington where he was expected to follow in his father's and grandfather's steps and become a surgeon. Instead the lure of the sea and adventure took hold. Through the

patronage of Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley he entered the Royal Navy. His seemingly natural talent for navigation earned him the respect of many including William Bligh - Flinders accompanied him on his second (successful) breadfruit expedition. Successful voyages and discoveries in the fledgling colony of New South Wales (on two occasions with George Bass) further honed Flinders's skills as a leader and navigator. With Bass he confirmed that Van Diemens Land was indeed separate from New South Wales. With the backing of the notable and highly respected Sir Joseph Banks, Flinders was appointed to take command of an expedition to "New Holland for the purpose of making a complete examination and survey" of the southern coast, the north-west coast, the Gulf of Carpentaria and parts westward, Torres Strait and if time permitted "the whole of the remainder of the north, the west and the north-west". He was also to establish if there was an inland sea. (At that time there was a suggestion that Australia was indeed two halves - New Holland to the west and New South Wales to the east - separated by a large sea). From 1801-

1803 he did his utmost to carry out the orders of the Admiralty - with one ship, HMS INVESTIGATOR. The ship was finally condemned as unseaworthy and Flinders set sail for England with his charts and specimens (for Sir Joseph) in the PORPOISE and CATO. Disaster struck in the form of total shipwreck on the Great Barrier Reef. Flinders took a party of sailors with him and rowed back to Sydney for help - an amazing feat of endurance and navigation. He again set sail this time in the CUMBERLAND - picked up some of his crew and made sure the others were safely rescued (all survived his absence) and set sail again for England with his waterlogged charts. The specimens had been destroyed. Calling in at Mauritius for repairs to his tiny ship, he could not have picked a worse time. England was again at war with France, and Flinders along with his ship and crew were detained by General de Caen. The latter took exception to Flinders and made life extremely difficult for him - he was imprisoned there from 1803 until 1810 although no formal charges were ever laid against him and the General was told by the Minister of the Navy on at least two occasions over the years to release him. Flinders was granted permission to live with a French family on the island, having promised not to attempt escape. Finally, Flinders was released in 1810 and returned home - to a wife he had married in 1801 and spent only a few short months with before his voyage to Australia. After a brief recuperation, Flinders threw himself into the production of his three volumes of Voyage to Terra Australis. It was finally published in 1814 but Flinders died - some say on the very day it was released. His relationship with Ann began as a friendship. She and Matthew were part of a circle of friends of young men and women in Lincolnshire. Their friendship grew slowly into love but Flinders's passion for discovery, exploration and navigation was, for a time, stronger. In 1801 when he knew he was to command the Investigator on a three-year voyage to the other side of the world, he told Ann that there could be no chance of marrying her. This devastated Ann. As the weeks passed Matthew had a complete change of mind and begged Ann to rush to London so they could be married. She was unable to. Matthew had a few days leave owing so hurried to Lincolnshire where he and Ann were married by Ann's stepfather. Apart from her mother and stepsister, no-one else knew - and this caused a rift between Flinders and his family. Taking Ann back to London with him, they had a few months together before his orders to sail came through. Matthew had arranged to take Ann with him to New South Wales where she would be 'left' with friends in Sydney while he completed his work. Unfortunately he neglected to seek permission from the Lords of the Admiralty and when they found out he was given an ultimatum - Ann or the Navy. The latter won. For the next nine years their relationship was carried out by letter. What was supposed to be three years of separation turned into an eternity for them both when he was imprisoned on Mauritius. These four pieces by Elizabeth Gertsakis are a modern interpretation of the relationship between Matthew and his wife Ann. Ann Chappelle was born in Hull, Yorkshire in 1772 to Anne Mallison and John Chappelle, a sea captain who died in 1776. She was described as being slight and graceful with a pale complexion and hair that was raven black, long and curly. Ann and Matthew were part of a circle of friends in Lincolnshire. Their friendship grew slowly into love but Matthew's passion for discovery, exploration and navigation was, for a time, stronger. Eventually they married in April 1801 - and were separated from July 1801 until Matthew's return in October 1810. Their daughter Anne was born in April 1812. Ann outlived Matthew by 38 years. Matthew wanted to take Ann to New South Wales with him but was advised to 'leave Mrs Flinders with her Relations'. He wanted to make his name and fortune so he could retire and live in comfort with his wife. He encouraged her to keep busy during his absence - with music, reading, painting, and studying French, astronomy and geography. They wrote copious letters to

each other and Gertsakis has used this to artistically represent their love for each other over the vast distance between England and Australia.