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Meetings:

All future meetings of the Society have been cancelled until further notice.

We hope that you are all keeping well. We will keep you advised of society issues, by email, as time progresses.

WAGGA WAGGA CITY COUNCIL 150 YEARS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Wagga Wagga City Council is celebrating the achievements made in 150 years with a selection of photographs in the Civic Centre Arcade. It has also added three very interesting short films to its website: *Then and Now*, *Fun in the Sun* and *Moments in History* (which includes the Queen's Visit in 1954). The movies include rarely seen footage from the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, Charles Sturt University and PRIME Television.

Charles Sturt University Regional Archives have closed temporarily but staff are working remotely and will try to respond and answer all enquiries. They have advised that where practical they will operate a 'digitisation on demand' service allowing archival material to be digitised and emailed to the recipient. When this is not possible they may make alternative arrangements. To contact the Regional Archives or Art Collection during this period of closure, please email: archive@csu.edu.au or phone 02 6933 4590 and leave a message.

Wagga Family History Library has also closed. Leanne Diessel has offered to do small research for members if required.

WWDHS Patron: Michael McCormack, Deputy Prime Minister
and Federal Member for Riverina

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Committee and General Meetings have been cancelled until further notice because of the Coronavirus.

Annual Subscriptions: Single: \$20, Couple: \$30.
Corporate: \$50. Due by 1 July each year.

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXCURSION TO THE BROOM FACTORY, TUMUT MARCH 2020



*Geoff Haddon, tour organizer and vice-president
preparing for take-off from the broom factory*

Above: Geoff Burch, president of the society, watching broom-maker, Robert Richards

Below: Peter Morris, Di Lovett, Michelle Dunn and Merv Weekes watching Geoff Wortes finish making the broom



**A BIG
THANK YOU
TO HERTZ FOR
PROVIDING
THE BUS

AND A BIG
THANK YOU TO
OUR DRIVER,
JOHN DIESSEL**

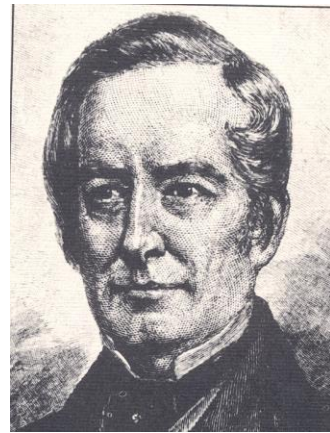
CHARLES STURT'S EXPEDITION 1829-1830

By Sherry Morris

Charles Sturt has been described as 'the Father of Australian Exploration' and as 'one of the greatest explorers in Australian history'. He was lauded for discovering the Murrumbidgee River in his expeditions of 1828 and 1829-1830 and for solving 'the mystery of the inland rivers'. He was also praised for finding an extensive area of land for future development in New South Wales and South Australia. He and his men were the first white explorers to travel over the site of North Wagga Wagga.

Charles Sturt

Although already thirty-four years of age, this tall thin man, with bright blue eyes and prominent nose had had an undistinguished career before his arrival in the colony of New South Wales. Born in Bengal, where his father was a judge employed by the East India Company, he had been only four years old when he had been sent back to England to live with relatives. Unfortunately, his impoverished parents could not afford to send him to university, so he had joined the army as Ensign in the 39th Regiment of Foot in 1813. He had seen service in Quebec and France. He had then spent seven years on garrison duty in Ireland. He had been promoted to Captaincy in December 1825.



Transferred to New South Wales with the 39th Regiment, he arrived in Sydney on the convict ship *Mariner* on 3 May 1827. He was annoyed at his transfer to this small penal colony but he was determined to make the best of the situation and achieve some fame or fortune. Not long after his arrival, he was appointed military secretary to Governor Darling. He met many of the explorers including John Oxley, Hamilton Hume and Alan Cunningham. Their discussions about the possibility of an inland sea aroused his curiosity and whetted his appetite for adventure. He offered his services as a leader of an expedition to the interior to investigate the proposed existence of an inland sea.

First Expedition

In his first expedition, Sturt left Sydney to determine the fate of the Macquarie River on 16 November 1828. He was accompanied by the experienced colonial-born explorer, Hamilton Hume, who had crossed the Murrumbidgee River and reached the south coast of Australia with William Hovell in 1824. The other members of the party included his long-time personal servant from the 39th Regiment, John Harris, two other soldiers, Hopkinson and Fraser, and about six convicts including Joseph Clayton, a carpenter. This expedition found the Darling River which flowed south westwards, parallel to the watershed, towards the coastline. According to Sturt, it was very wide and appeared to be '*the chief drain for carrying off the waters falling westerly from the eastern coast.*'

Second Expedition

In his second expedition, Charles Sturt was commissioned by Governor Darling to explore the course of the Murrumbidgee River to see whether it joined the Darling River and if possible trace the inland rivers to see whether they emptied into the sea on the southern coast of Australia. This time, since Hamilton Hume was busy with the harvest, he took George Macleay, the red-headed son of the Colonial Secretary, Alexander Macleay. He again took the three soldiers, Harris, Hopkinson and Fraser and he took nine convicts (Robert Harris, Michael Shaw, William Littlewood, Thomas Hall, Henry Moreton, Peter Whelan, John McNamee, Joseph Clayton and William Mulholland). The party left Sydney on 3 November 1829, travelling by bullock dray and horse. Included in the equipment was a whaleboat about 25 feet long (7.6 metres) which was carried in sections to be assembled at the river when required.

Initially the party travelled through country which had already been settled, past the farms of Redall, Hume and Broughton and past several stations. At Yass Plains, Henry O'Brien of *Douro*, one of the first to establish a station in that area, furnished the party with provisions and directed Sturt to *Jugiong* station. At Jugiong, Dr Harris introduced him to an Aboriginal boy who agreed to guide him. After camping on the north side of the Murrumbidgee River opposite its junction with the Tumut River, they passed Ben Warby's station, *Darbalara*. At Warby's suggestion, they crossed the river (at the future site of old Gundagai) via a rope ferry to the south bank. After another sixteen kilometres down the stream, they crossed to the north bank again (just east of Adelong Creek). They passed Stuckey's huts at 'Willie Plomie' and crossed Sandy Creek near the place the Wiradjuri called Pondebadgery (later Wantabadgery).

They arrived at Pondebadgery on 3 December 1829. According to Sturt, the Murrumbidgee River presented '*a still, deep sheet of water to the view, over which the casuarina bends with all the grace of the willow, or the birch, but with more sombre foliage*'. To the west, he said, '*a high line of flooded-gum trees*' extended from the river to the base of the hills. The flats near the River were described as '*clear and fertile*' and the hills as '*grassy and lightly timbered*.' The party stayed two nights at Pondebadgery to repair a broken dray.

Continuing along the north bank of the river, while passing over the future site of North Wagga Wagga, the party observed red kangaroos and a few wild turkeys and noted that Box and other common Eucalypti were the main trees. On 6 December 1829, they camped west this site close to the southern end of the Malebo Range. Although it was '*of no great height*', Sturt described the view from the Range as '*extensive*' and remarked on a '*solitary double hill*' and '*a remarkable Mountain (Kengal)*' to the southwest (presumably Galore Hill and The Rock). In this area he noticed banksia as well as the usual box, casuarina and flooded gum trees.

On 1 December, the explorers had been joined by two Wiradjuri men who were given the English names of Jemmy and Peter. According to Sturt, these men were of '*infinite service*' to them particularly since their knowledge of the best routes meant that the party managed to avoid some very steep hills. They had also assisted in the killing of a fine red kangaroo and one of them greatly amused the explorers when he set fire to a dead tree and smoked out a half-singed half-roasted possum. Before their departure, Sturt rewarded Jemmy and Peter with tomahawks and other gifts; and the two Wiradjuri men introduced him to '*an extremely facetious and good-humoured old*

man' who volunteered to act as their new guide. After that the explorers were handed on from one group of Aboriginals to another along the river, each group guiding them through its own territory. The tact and diplomacy of Sturt and the good humour of Macleay, as well as the assistance of their Aboriginal guides, enabled them to pass peaceably through Wiradjuri country even when the local Aboriginals were numerous and aggressive. On 13 December, twenty-seven had joined them and after another four days there were about sixty Aboriginals in the camp. Sturt described them as '*a quiet and diffident people*' He treated them sympathetically although with some condescension.

By Christmas, the party was investigating the Lachlan swamps. Because of the bogging of the drays in '*rotten and yielding*' soil and the lack of feed for the bullocks, Sturt decided to proceed on the whaleboat which had been carried on the dray. It was assembled by the carpenter, Joseph Clayton, who also made a small skiff from a felled tree. Sturt, Macleay, the three soldiers, Harris, Fraser and Hopkinson, and three of the convicts, MacNamee, Mulholland and Clayton, left to sail down the Murrumbidgee from a site west of Maude on 7 January 1830. The remainder of the party, left in charge of Robert Harris, was ordered to remain one week (in case of a boat accident or the premature return of Sturt's party) and then return with drays and cattle to Pondibadgery to await the main party.

After travelling twenty-four kilometres, the party came to a tributary which Sturt identified as the Lachlan River. After a while, the Murrumbidgee River increased in width and depth until it was about sixty metres wide and from four to six metres deep. The banks towered high above them, obscuring their view of the country around them. Then the river contracted in width and its rapidity increased to an alarming extent. On 14 January, they were suddenly launched into a 'noble' river which was almost 107 metres wide with such a force that they nearly collided with the opposite bank. Although Hamilton Hume had previously named it the Hume River in honour of his father, Sturt decided to call it the Murray River after Sir George Murray who was then Secretary of State for the Colonies. He directed the Union Jack to be hoisted and they all stood up in the boat and gave three cheers.

The party continued to see numerous indigenous people sometimes fully armed with spears and shields and painted with '*fierce and grotesque*' colours. On 19 January Sturt approached a group of about 150 Aboriginals on the opposite bank holding an olive branch in token of amity. He managed a 'long pantomimic dialogue' with them and persuaded them to lay aside their spears. Several of them joined them round the campfire. Macleay's good humour in particular made a good impression on the locals, who believed he was a reincarnation of one of their legendary heroes (who also had red hair). Four of the them accompanied them in the whaleboat the following day, including a particularly large and powerful man.

A few days later, the boat struck a shoal and at the same time they noticed a new river (the Darling River) coming in from the north. Suddenly they were surrounded by about 600 painted and armed hostile Aboriginals. As the boat approached the sandbank where many of them had gathered, Sturt was prepared to shoot the nearest Aboriginal. Fortunately, four Aboriginals appeared. Their leader (the large and powerful man who had earlier accompanied them in the whaleboat) raced along the bank and from a considerable height threw himself into the water and struggled across

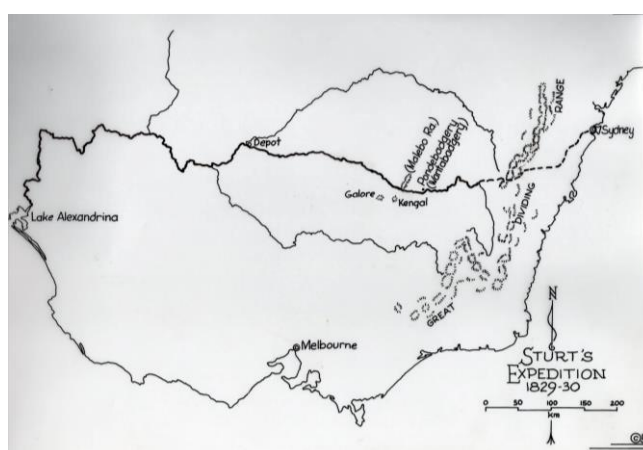
the channel to the sandbank. After much remonstrating, the hostile Aboriginals threw aside their weapons and became quite friendly and peaceful, to Sturt's immense relief.

The explorers rowed further up the stream, accompanied by the Aboriginals, but halted when they came across Aboriginal fishing nets. Sturt confirmed that the new river was the Darling River and he was confident that he had solved the problem of the rivers. So up went the Union Jack again and there were more British cheers to the great astonishment of their Aboriginal companions.

Returning to the Murray River, they resumed their journey on 24 January after burning the skiff so that their progress would not be impeded. They rowed past the Murray's junction with the Darling River and on 9 February 1830 arrived at a lake, north of Encounter Bay, which Sturt named Alexandrina after the English Princess Alexandrina (who took the name, Queen Victoria, when she ascended the throne). Sturt found that this lake emptied into the sea via a channel called the Murray Mouth, South East of Goolwa.

On 12 February 1830, having confirmed that the waters of the Murray-Darling system flowed into the sea, the party commenced their return. Although they had to row against the current, their provisions were almost gone and the heat was distressing, they reached the Murrumbidgee River on 16 March and a week later reached their depot where they were disappointed to find that the remainder of their party were not there to meet them. They rowed on for another seventeen days but then Sturt abandoned the whaleboat and sent Hopkinson and Mulholland ahead to obtain relief while the remainder camped. These two men travelled 144 kilometres on foot in three days and then returned with the drays and ample provisions on 18 April. After two days' rest they all journeyed on to Pontabdgery, reaching there on 28 April, Yass Plains on 14 May and Sydney on 25 May after an absence of seven months.¹

*Sturt's Expedition
1829-30*

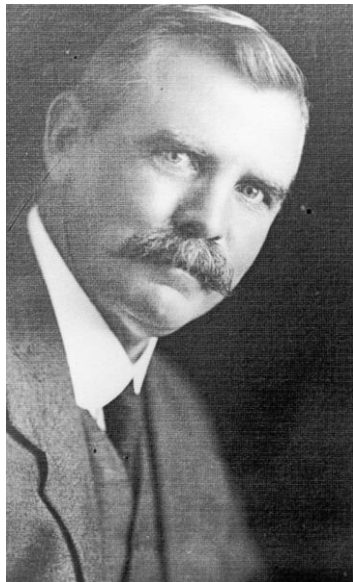


Because Charles Sturt and his party were the first British explorers to pass through Wagga Wagga, the expedition has been commemorated in Wagga Wagga on many occasions. A monument was erected in Little Gurwood Street in Wagga Wagga in 1929 on the centenary of his visit while a re-enactment of the expedition was held in 1951. In addition, Charles Sturt University, Charles Sturt University Child Care Centre, Sturt Street, Sturt School, Sturt Mall and Sturt Suites and Apartments, all in Wagga Wagga, have been named after him.

Sturt Memorials

In 1929, Wagga Wagga was one of several towns which decided to commemorate Charles Sturt's expedition down the Murrumbidgee River and perpetuate his memory.

Wagga Wagga's Mayor, E. E. Collins, had called a Public Meeting in November 1929 to make arrangements for Wagga Wagga's celebrations. A Sturt Centenary Committee was formed and it was decided to erect a pillar at a cost of £60. Subscriptions were solicited from the public to meet the cost. There was some discussion about the site of the pillar, many considering that it should be erected on the north of the river somewhere along the route taken by Charles Sturt. Others were worried that it would not be seen there and should be in the main streets of Wagga Wagga. Eventually it was decided to erect it at the river end of what was then called 'Little Gurwood Street'.



Mayor of Wagga Wagga, Edward Easter Collins, and Mayoress, Emma Collins

By 23 November 1929, the *Daily Advertiser* reported that the obelisk had been erected in Little Gurwood Street by council staff under the supervision of the Wagga Municipal Council engineer, H. J. Chaston, and the designer of the obelisk, D. Morrow. The bronze tablet with the inscription was later placed on the obelisk.

On 5 December, the monument was officially unveiled. The surroundings were liberally decorated with flags and bunting. Flags also decorated the platform, which had been erected for the speakers and a huge Union Jack was suspended from the high pole upon which Amplion loud-speakers had been fixed in readiness for the Wagga Wireless Distributors service. The national flag covered the tablet on the monument and a platform had been erected. Over 2000 children were present and were marshalled to their places by First Wagga Troop Boy Scouts, as many as possible being placed in the shade.

On the platform were the Mayor and Mayoress, Alderman Edward Easter Collins and his wife, Emma; Deputy Mayor, Edwin Fenn Lusher, and his wife, Jean; Mrs Donald Macrae of North Wagga, a great grand-niece of Captain Sturt; Aldermen Richard Giltinan, Charles Clegg and Ernest Shoemark; the Town Clerk, Robert Emblen; D. Morrow who designed the memorial; Walter S. Hardy, Scout Commissioner; and Frederick W. Alldis, J. J. Hall, J. H. Anderson; and Reverends S. J. West, J. B. Galloway and N. H. Parr. Apologies had been sent by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Dudley de Chair, Members of the District, Parker Moloney and Matt Kilpatrick, Alderman W. F. Wenk, President of Royal Historical Society of Australia, K. R. Cramp and District Inspector of Schools, Mr Harrison.

The proceedings began at 3.30 p.m. when 1500 children conducted by J. Franklin Thomas sang *Advance Australia Fair*. An address was given by Deputy Mayor, Alderman E. F. Lusher. The Mayor, Alderman E. E. Collins, talked about the growth of Wagga Wagga during the previous 100 years and unveiled the cairn. W. S. Hardy talked about Sturt's journeys. At the conclusion of the speeches the children led the singing of *Awake, Awake Australia* and the Wagga Brass Band played the national anthem with the crowd '*singing most heartily*'.

The *Daily Advertiser* reported that although the memorial was '*in a somewhat out of the way place*' it was '*conspicuous amidst its surroundings and at night can be made still more so by means of flood lights similar to those used for illuminating the war memorial arch.*' That night, 5 December, the Wagga Municipal Council accepted a suggestion that Little Gurwood Street should be renamed Sturt Street.²



Left: The Sturt Memorial in Sturt Street (formerly known as Little Gurwood Street) about 1930. Right: Charles Sturt.



The crowd attending the unveiling of the Sturt Memorial in 1929

Re-enactment of Sturt's Expedition in 1951

In 1950-1951, an official re-enactment of Sturt's expedition down the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers was held as part of Australia's 1951 Commonwealth Jubilee Celebration, commemorating fifty years of Federation. It was watched by thousands of Wagga Wagga citizens. A cast of men, many of them military men, were dressed in period costume consisting of coloured breeches, striped shirts and cabbage tree hats. They included Grant Taylor impersonating Charles Sturt, Rodney Sturt Taylor as George McLeay, Captain J. C. Laughlin (as Private Fraser), Lieutenants I. C. Gilmour (Private Harris), R. E. Wells (Private Hopkinson), R. W. Pugh (Clayton), B. C. Ford (Mulholland) and P. Trost (McNamee). The re-enactment was filmed by the Film Division of the Department of the Interior for the Australian National Film Board. In addition, regular broadcasts were made by the ABC on the expedition's progress.

The whaleboat arriving in Wagga Wagga on a truck, 2 January 1951



The party re-enacting Sturt's journey arrived in Wagga Wagga on 2 January 1951 with a whaleboat on a truck. At the Farmers Home Hotel, the whaleboat was transferred by a mobile crane from the truck to a large hay wagon, the possession of M. Giltrap of North Wagga.

At the intersection of Baylis and Edward streets, the party was met by a band of 'Aborigines' impersonated by members of Wagga Apex, Lifesavers and Rovers, including Messrs Joe Anderson, Bruce Anderson, Bryce Osmond, Henry Gissing Junior, Eric Dunn, Geoff Fitzpatrick, Malcolm Richmond, Noel Barnes, Eric Carpenter, Daryl Haberecht and Gilbert Thomas. The whaleboat was preceded by a band of horsemen who were members of the Wagga Gymkhana and Sports Club. They were all dressed in the costume of the period. Thousands lined both sides of Baylis Street and cheered enthusiastically.

On arrival at the Town Hall, Captain Sturt and his party were introduced to the Mayor, Alderman H. E. Gissing (pictured right), by an A.B.C. announcer, P. McGregor. Captain Sturt introduced his men individually to the Mayor and presented him with a commemorative scroll which contained a greeting from the Governor of New South Wales, Lieutenant-General Sir John Northcott. In his reply, the Mayor said he had great pleasure in accepting the scroll. On behalf of the citizens of Wagga Wagga and the Shires of Kyeamba and Mitchell he wished to convey greetings to the centres yet to be visited by the expedition and he wished the members of the expedition 'bon voyage.'



Alderman Gissing then introduced the great grandson of the explorer, Anthony Sturt, who was travelling with the expedition and on behalf of the citizens of Wagga Wagga presented him with a boomerang which had been made by Alderman G. E. Holmes as a memento of his visit to Wagga Wagga. Thanking the Mayor for the gift, Sturt said in reply that he had heard that Wagga Wagga was the Queen City of the rich Riverina. He added that the little he had seen of Wagga Wagga fully bore that out. Members of the Sturt re-enactment expedition then gave three cheers for Wagga Wagga and the Wagga citizens retaliated with three cheers for the expedition. *Advance Australia Fair* and the National Anthem, played by the Wagga Citizens' Band, concluded the ceremonies. After members of the expedition had lunch, they adjourned to Sturt Street to view the Sturt memorial obelisk.³

The whole party then moved on to Narrandera where they were involved in a similar procession and were entertained to dinner at the Royal Mail Hotel in the evening. On 14 January, it entered the Murray River. Despite numerous obstacles, snags and intense heat, the boat accompanied by two Army 'ducks' arrived at Boundary Bend several hours later. Local residents attired in period costumes were waiting on the banks of the Murray to greet the party as it swept to an impressive halt at the official stopping place. The crew planned to row the 1000 miles to the sea. The party then visited Hay, Maude (where the whaleboat entered the water), Balranald, Euston, Red Cliffs, Mildura, Wentworth and Renmark. The expedition ended at Goolwa.



The men re-enacting Sturt's journey 1829-1830, some in the whaleboat and others on horses, all dressed in period costume, at the Wagga Wagga's Council Chambers



The men in the whaleboat on the hay cart



Left: Great grandson of the explorer, Anthony Sturt. Right: Two of the participants dressed in the costumes worn in Sturt's era, breeches, striped shirts and hats.

‘Inland with Sturt’

The film of the re-enactment, ‘Inland With Sturt’, had to be reduced to a twenty-minute documentary as the producer encountered great difficulties in making such a film in the five weeks allotted for its production. According to *The ABC Weekly*:

There was no question of half an hour to set up the camera for a shot; it was shoot now or the boat was gone. At the same time a close watch had to be kept for houses in the background, telephone poles, high tension wires and so on.

The countryside and the rivers had to be photographed as they appeared in their virgin state, a hundred and twenty odd years ago, and that was anything but easy. The time factor in the exploration was another problem which production could not allow for, or even hint at.

So, in the film, producer and director had to be content with focusing chiefly on the atmosphere and physical effort. There was time for little else. Most of the way, commentary takes the place of dialogue, so that many features of the journey could not be dramatized except in isolated instance, as when the party encounters time to dwell on them and these are the very things that would have lifted the film to a more engrossing level.

In addition, the men were very tired because of the great physical effort the journey demanded. A lot of the production had to be shot ‘on the run’ and opportunities for reshooting were rare. They only had a few local Aborigines to portray the ‘vast concourse of aborigines’ which the party met on the journey.

However, the ABC Weekly was adamant that some good effects had been achieved through clever selection of the landscape backgrounds, to capture the initial virginity and loneliness of the country Sturt and his men rowed or sailed past.

It argued that the commentary delivered by Grant Tylor had historical appeal as it took in some of Sturt's own comments on the voyage. Malcolm Williamson's score furnished the musical background.⁴

Rod Taylor who acted as George McLeay (and pictured right) went on to become a very popular movie star.



The re-enactment of the Sturt expedition. The whaleboat after its transfer to the hay cart. Grant Taylor, the actor playing the role of Charles Sturt is at the front of the boat.

In 1979, the expedition was again celebrated to commemorate the 150th anniversary. Unfortunately, both the 1951 re-enactment and the 1979 celebration perpetuated an error about the expedition, that is, that Sturt launched a whaleboat in the Murrumbidgee River at Yass or Gundagai and then sailed or rowed down the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers to Lake Alexandrina. Sturt's party actually travelled by dray and on horseback all the way along the Murrumbidgee River until beyond the present town of Maude, almost to the junction with the Lachlan River, before the party was divided and the whaleboat launched.

In 1997, Wagga Wagga City Council decided to give Charles Sturt more recognition within the city of Wagga Wagga. In June the monument in Sturt Street (formerly Little Gurwood Street) was moved to the Wagga Wagga Beach alongside the picnic area in front of the Canoe Club building. Interpretation signs were erected by Tourism Wagga Wagga.

The Charles Sturt monument after its removal from Sturt Street to the Wagga Wagga beach. The interpretation signs can be seen in the background



Despite all the accolades, Sturt did not ‘discover’ the Murrumbidgee River. For over 40,000 years before he travelled down the Murrumbidgee River, it had been used by the Wiradjuri nation as a source of food and water. In fact, the name ‘Wiradjuri’ means ‘people of the three rivers’ (that is, the Murrumbidgee, Macquarie and Lachlan rivers). The Wiradjuri was the largest of the sixty language groups or ‘nations’ in what became known as Australia. However, Sturt and his exploring party were probably the first British or European men to have travelled down the Murrumbidgee River.

Sturt’s expedition did not open up the Murrumbidgee area to settlement as has been claimed. The Upper Murrumbidgee area was already settled and squatters were moving into the Lower Murrumbidgee. Neither did his expedition lead to the settlement in South Australia. Sturt and his men encountered numerous Aboriginals along the route.

He did, however, make a significant contribution to solving the riddle of the inland rivers, proving the theory that the Murray-Darling system entered the sea. He and Macleay had also formed a good relationship with the indigenous people. In his book written about his expeditions in 1833, Sturt provided detailed and accurate descriptions of the Aboriginals and their habits and of the vegetation they had encountered on the expedition

¹ Charles Sturt, *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia*, London, 1833, pp.28-46; Edgar Beale, *Sturt, the Chipped Idol*, Sydney, 1979; Angela and Mike Bremers, *Murray-Darling Journeys*, Vivid Publishing, Fremantle, Western Australia, pp.7-12; and Keith Swan and Margaret Carnegie, *In Step with Sturt*, Graphic Books, Armadale, Victoria.

² *Daily Advertiser*, 23 November 1929, 6 December 1929.

³ *Daily Advertiser*, 28 December 1950, 2, 3, 15, 17 January 1951.

⁴ *The ABC Weekly*, Volume 13, Number 31, 4 August 1951.