



*Royal Geographical Society  
of South Australia*

# The Royal Geographical Society of South Australia's remarkable trove of geographical treasures

*Presentation for GeoNight 2024*

**<https://rgssa.org.au/heritage/treasures>**



*Royal Geographical Society  
of South Australia (RGSSA)*

The RGSSA is a voluntary, not-for profit organisation for advancing geographical science and promoting public awareness and enjoyment of Geography and related topics.

As well as presenting a dynamic series of lectures and events, and publishing a range of materials, the Society is custodian of a library of over 250,000 volumes which is one of the most significant collections of rare geographical books and manuscripts in Australia.

This presentation introduces you to a few of the RGSSA's many treasures.

*Note: The information presented has been prepared by volunteers of the RGSSA and is subject to revision as more research on the treasures is undertaken.*



## *The Birds of Australia* by John Gould

This set of volumes is recognised as one of the great natural history publications of all time.

It was published between 1840 and 1848 with 681 hand-coloured lithographic plates and is an original edition.

[Read more ...](#)



# Views in Australia or New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land *by* Joseph Lycett, 1825



THE SUGAR LOAF MOUNTAIN,

*Near New Castle  
New South Wales.*

London, Published, 1825, by J. Sower, 23, St. Dunstons Church Yard.



R A B Y.

Joseph Lycett was an artist who was transported to Australia in 1811 for forgery.

His fifty aquatint engravings of landscape views are considered to be Australia's finest of the time and Lycett to be the outstanding artist of his period in Australia.

[Read more ...](#)



# Space exploration poster & fragment of Stuart's tree which travelled into space

A framed collage of NASA's 1996 Space Shuttle Endeavour mission and a fragment of wood from a tree blazed by renown explorer John McDouall Stuart that was taken on the Endeavour voyage by Dr. Andrew Thomas (Australia's only astronaut) as one of his personal mementos.



[Read more ...](#)



These items are unique and together represent a connection of exploration of both land and space by South Australians.



# Peron's account of Baudin's voyage with maps by Freycinet



This treasure consists of three volumes written by Francois Peron and a collection of magnificent maps by Louis de Freycinet, recording the journey of exploration to the "south seas" under Capt. Nicholas Baudin between 1800 and 1804, which included the south coast of Australia.

Among the maps is the first published map of the whole of the coastline of Australia.

It was during this voyage that Baudin's and Mathew Flinders' paths crossed at Encounter Bay, South Australia in May 1802.

[Read more ...](#)



# A Voyage to Terra Australis 1814, by Matthew Flinders

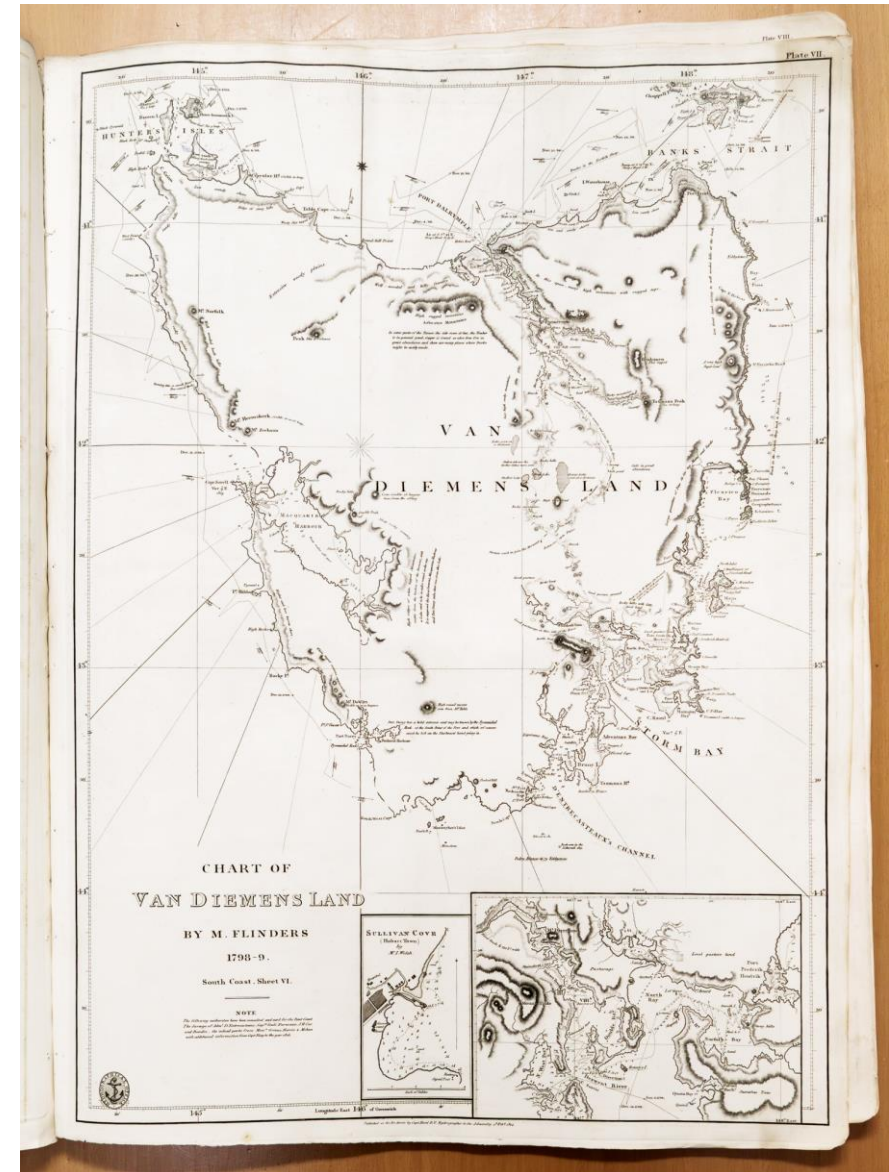
*"A voyage to Terra Australis; undertaken for the purpose of completing the discovery of that vast country, and prosecuted in the years 1801, 1802, and 1803 in His Majesty's ship the Investigator, and subsequently in the armed vessel Porpoise and Cumberland, schooner.*

*With an account of the shipwreck of the Porpoise, arrival of the Cumberland at Mauritius, and imprisonment of the commander during six years and a half in that island."*

*By Matthew Flinders (1774-1814), commander of the Investigator.*

Flinders was the first to circumnavigate Australia and chart its entire coastline.

[Read more ...](#)



# *Journal of a voyage to New South Wales* in 1788 by John White

John White's journal was published in 1790 and represents one of the earliest and most important first-hand accounts of Australian colonial history.

It includes many colour plates of a wide variety of animals, insects, fish and plants.

[Read more ...](#)

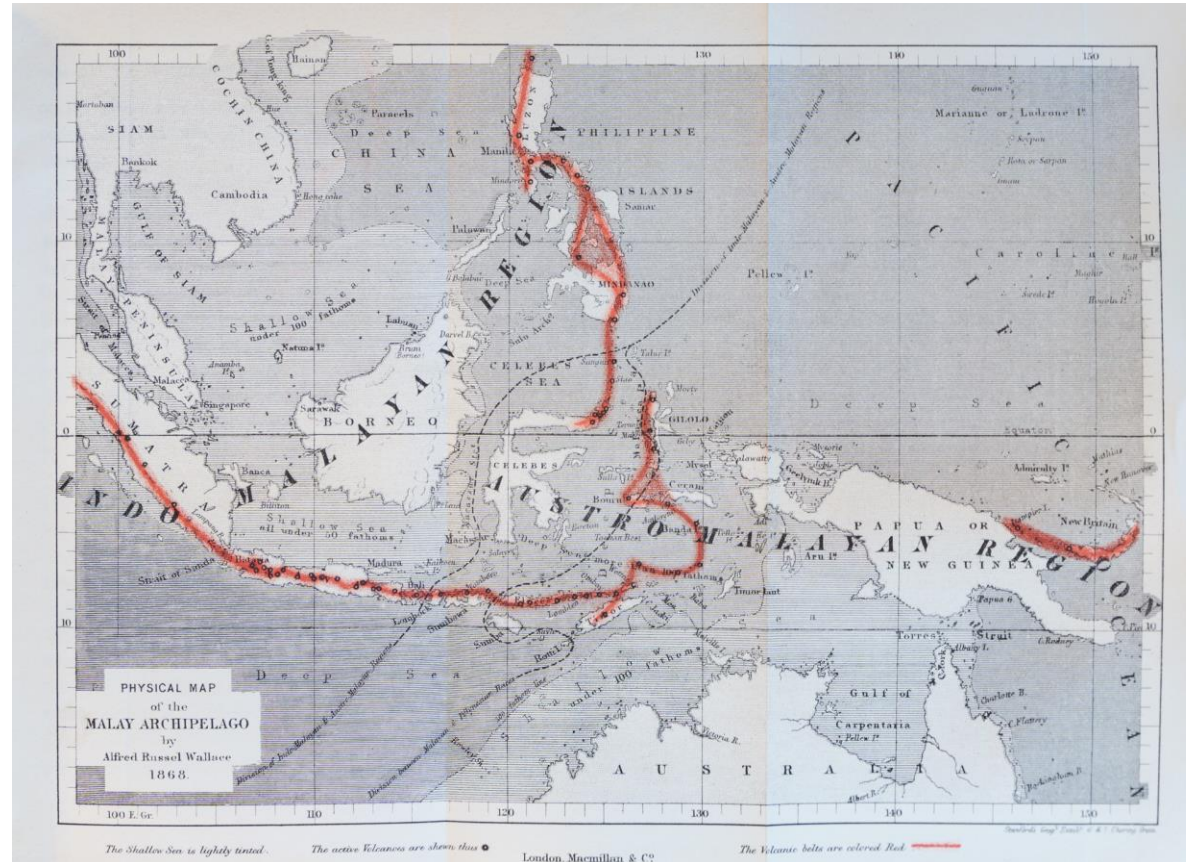




# *The Malay Archipelago, 1869 and The geographical distribution of animals, 1876* by Alfred Russel Wallace

Alfred Russell Wallace developed theories of evolution and survival of the fittest at about the same time as Charles Darwin.

Wallace also developed the "Wallace Line" running north south between Borneo and the Celebes that recognised the clear separation of Asiatic and Australian animals.



[Read more ...](#)





# Catalogue of specimens of cloth collected during the voyages of Captain Cook, 1768-1779

This small book produced by Alexander Shaw in 1787 contains 38 samples of tapa cloth collected on the three voyages of Captain Cook to the South Pacific 1768-1779.

It is a rare example of items known to have been on Cook's ships. The book also contains anecdotes of early encounters with Indigenous peoples.

[Read more ...](#)

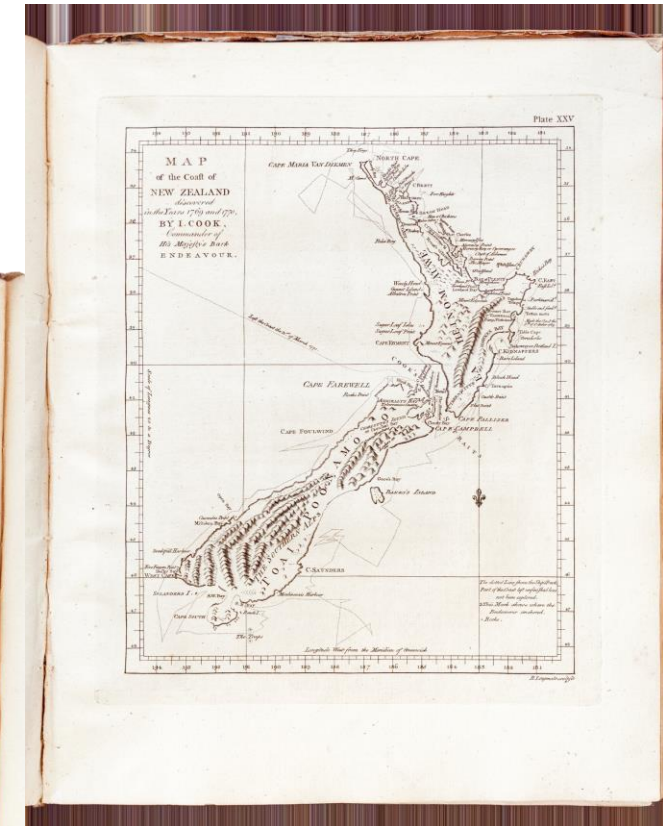




# *A Journal of a voyage to the South Seas in HMS Endeavour, 1773* by Sydney Parkinson

Parkinson was Sir Joseph Banks' "draughtsman" on James Cook's expedition to Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia 1768 - 1771.

This journal is based on the notes he made during the voyage and was published by his brother Stanfield after Sydney's death on the voyage home. The illustrations are engravings made from Parkinson's original sketches.



[Read more ...](#)





# *Mammals of Australia* by John Gould

John Gould is usually thought of as the "bird man" but following his trip to Australia between May 1838 and August 1839, he published *Mammals of Australia* in three volumes with 182 beautifully hand-coloured lithographic plates.

[Read more ...](#)

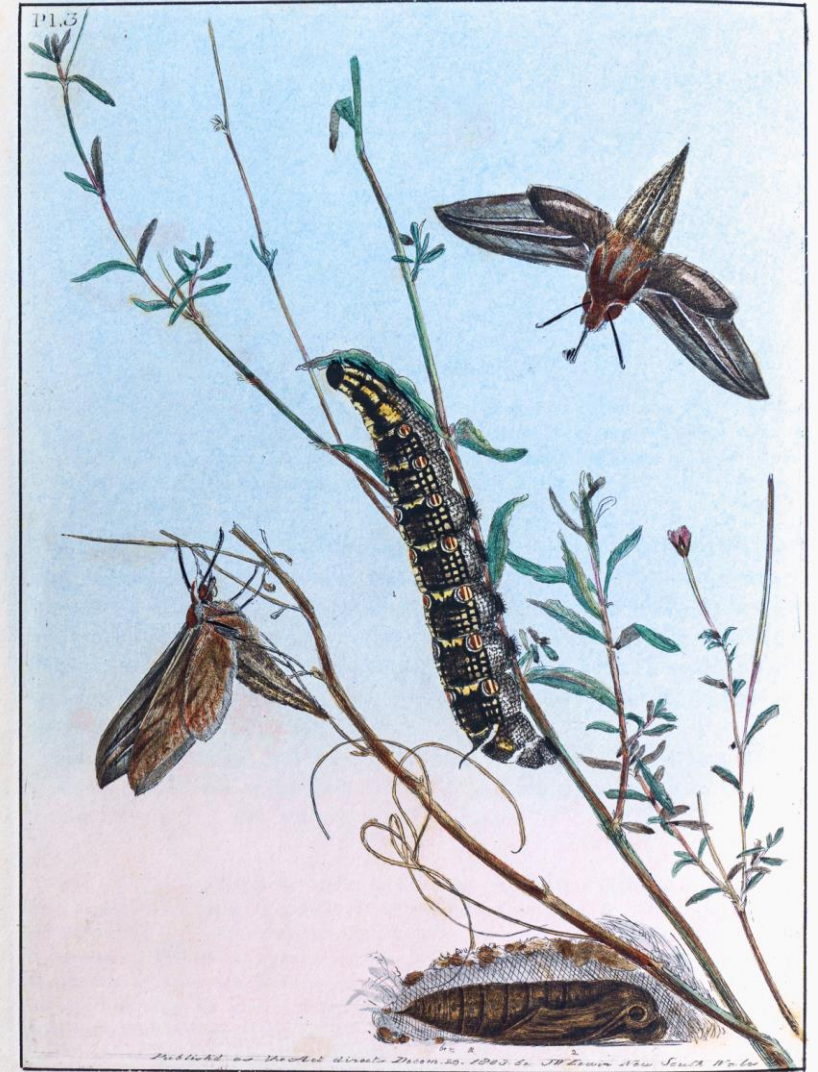


# *Natural History of Lepidopterous Insects of NSW,* 1805 by John Lewin



This book by John Lewin (1770-1819) was the first natural history book illustrated with plates produced in Australia and is extremely rare.

[Read more ...](#)



# *The Forest Flora of South Australia*



Created by a team of 4 people, these were the first high quality prints of local botanical specimens published in the province of South Australia.

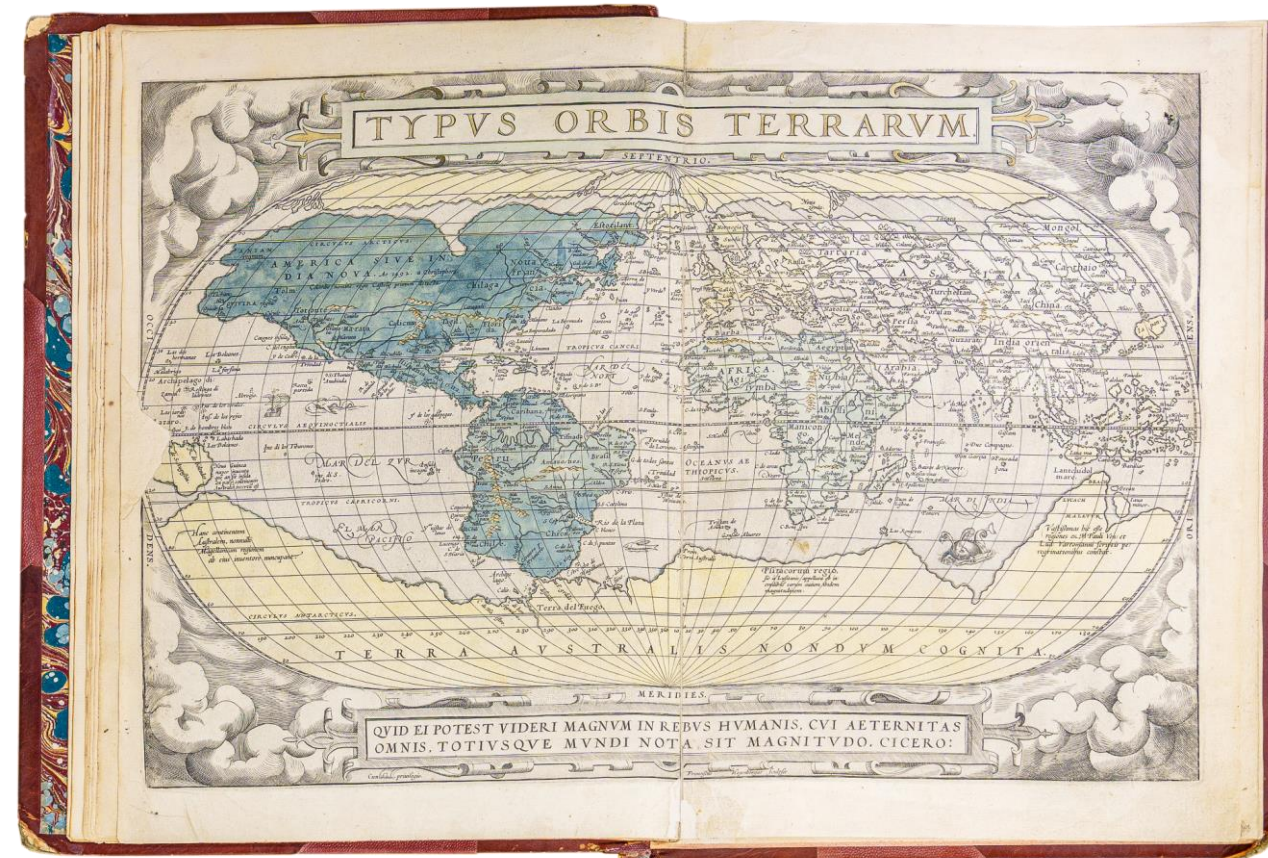
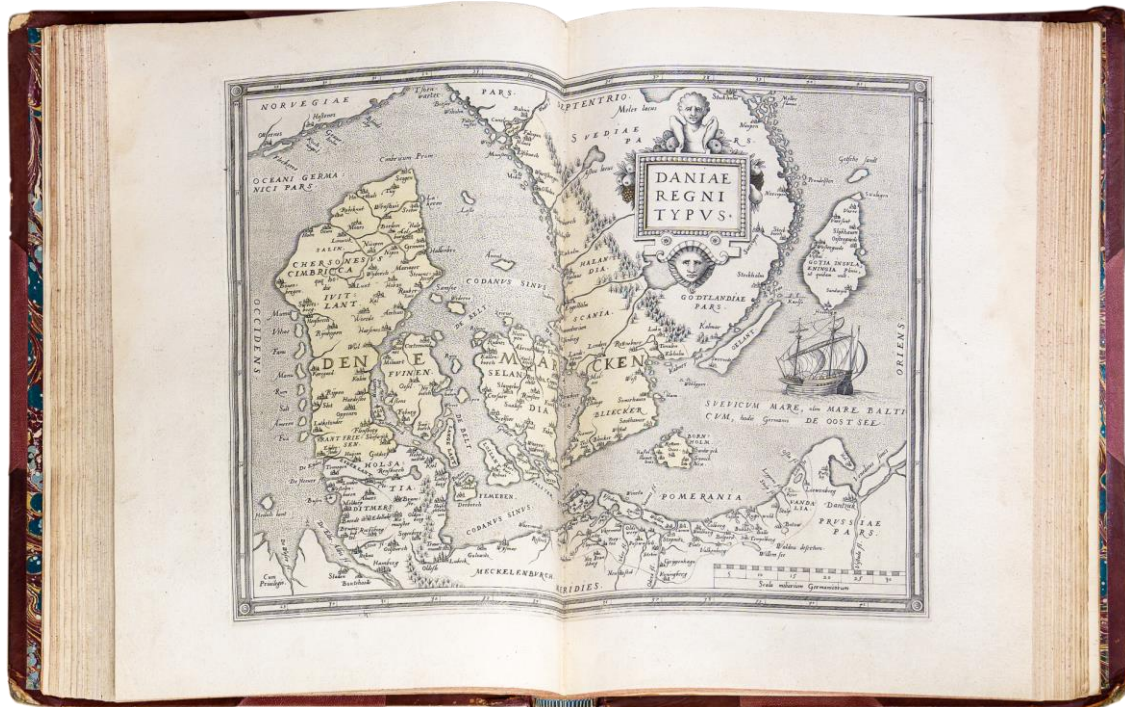
They were issued in nine parts, each of five plates, between 1883 and 1890.

[Read more ...](#)



# Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (Atlas of the Whole World) by Abraham Ortelius, 1571

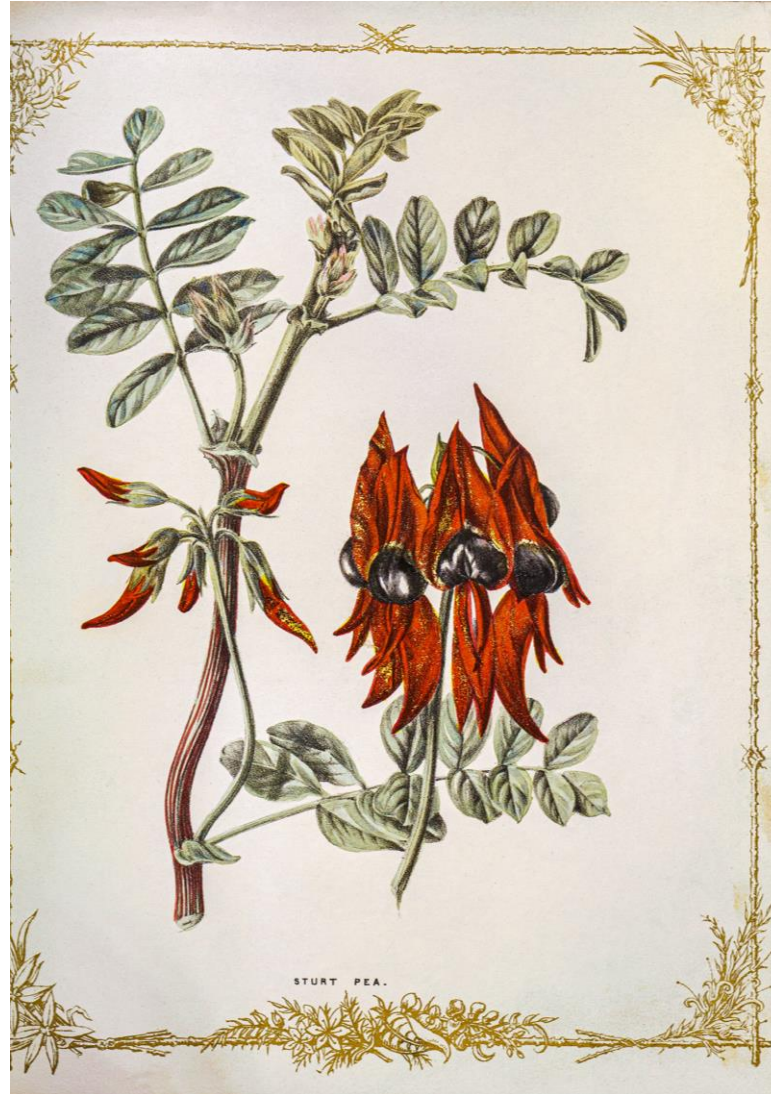
This was a landmark in cartography and is known as the first modern atlas containing a comprehensive collection of the best available maps of the time.



First published in Latin in 1570, this edition is one of 275 printed in 1571 in Dutch, Ortelius's own language.

[Read more ...](#)





# *Wildflowers of South Australia*

by Fanny de Mole  
1861

Fanny de Mole wrote  
and illustrated the first  
book on wildflowers in  
South Australia

There were an estimated  
100 copies made of the  
original edition.

[Read more ...](#)



# *Natural history, general and particular Illustrated*, 1785 by Comte de Buffon, Georges Louis Leclerc

Buffon was a French naturalist, mathematician, cosmologist and encyclopaedist. Some of his thoughts on the world of natural history evolution pre-dated those of Charles Darwin by 100 years. Buffon was the greatest naturalist of his time.

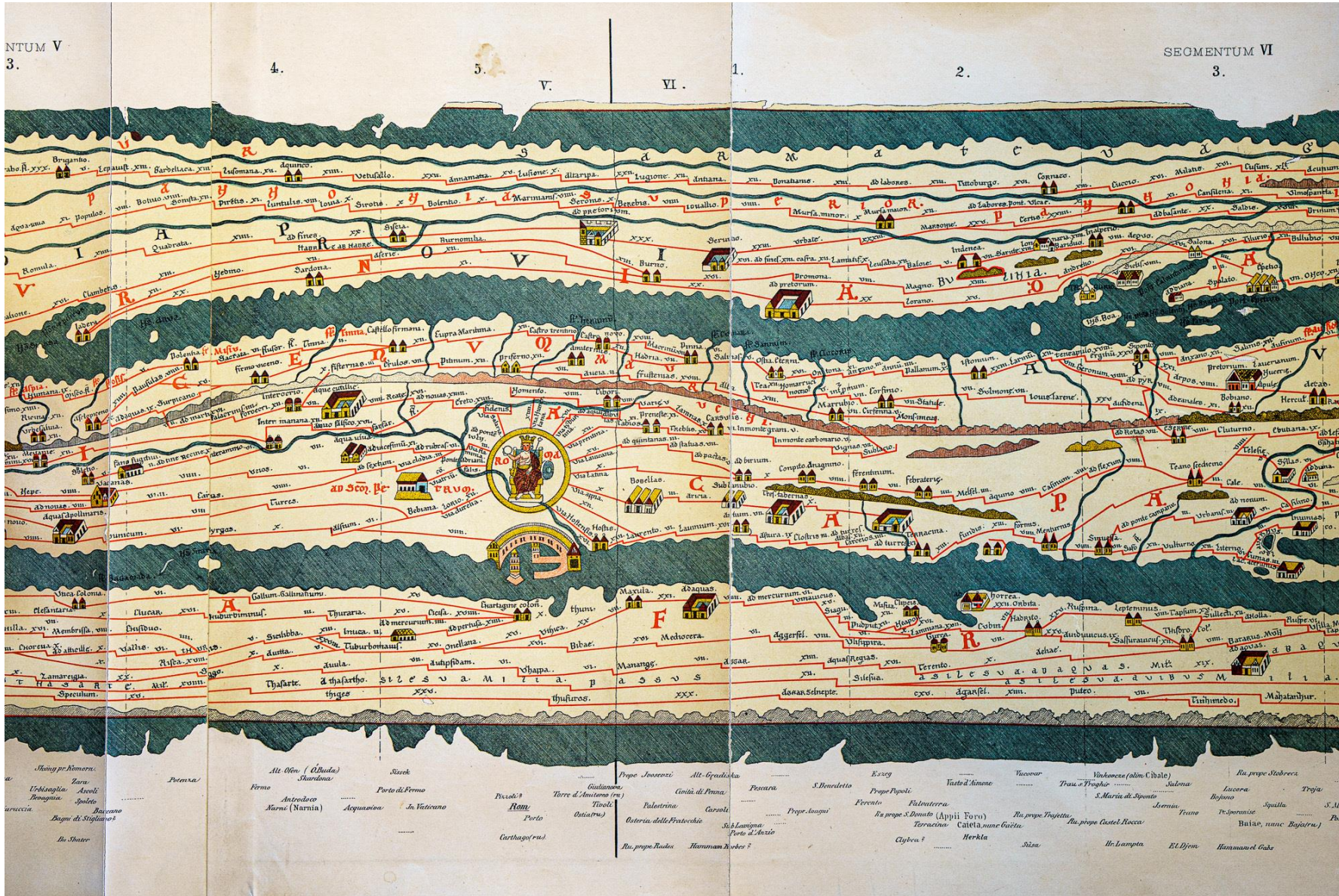
The RGSSA set of nine volumes, is thought to be the only one held in an Australian library.

[Read more ...](#)





# Peutinger Table



Maps of routes for specific purposes — military or trade — were produced by the Romans.

This example is a 19th century print of a map dating back to the first century, revised, corrected, and added to for the next 900 years.

It has no overall orientation and no consistent scale.

A 19th century copy of a strip map printed in 1598.

[Read more ...](#)



# Map of Adelaide 1838

by Henry Nixon

This very early map of Adelaide was drawn by Lieut. Henry Nixon who was a member of Colonel Light's survey party.

It shows interesting detail of Adelaide in its very early days.

[Read more ...](#)





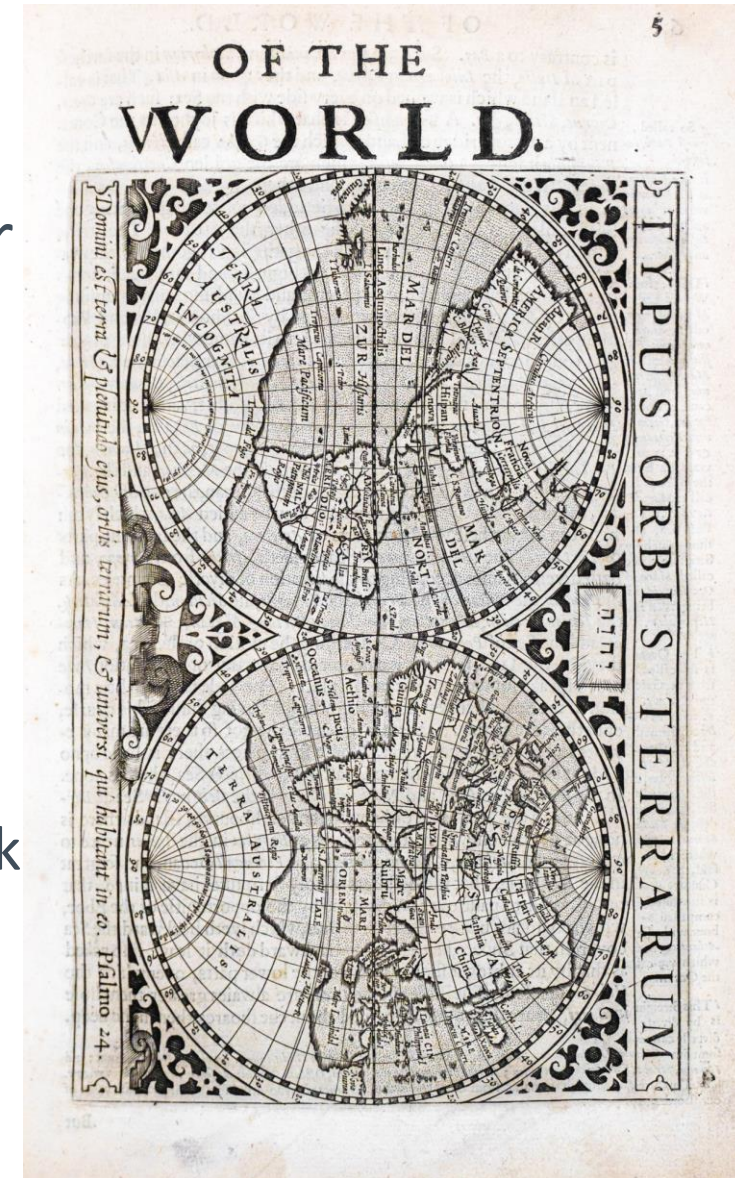
# Historia Mundi: or Mercator's Atlas – in English, published London, 1635

Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594) was a Flemish geographer, engraver and mathematician renowned for his production of maps, globes and scientific instruments.



His Atlas, first published (posthumously) in 1595, represents the first appearance of the word 'Atlas' to reference a book of maps.

[Read more ...](#)







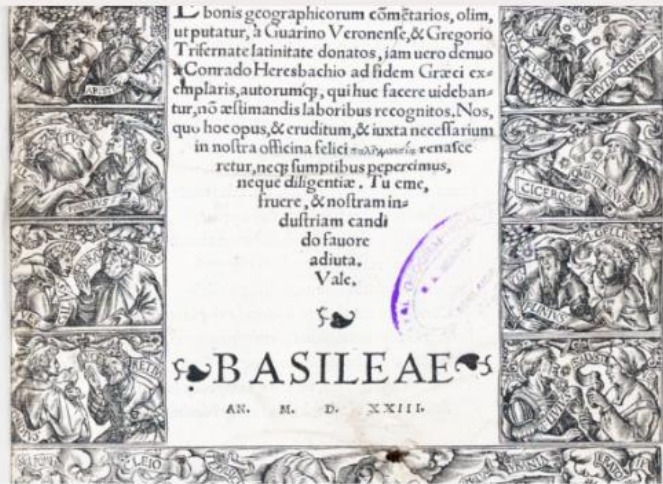
*Royal Geographical Society  
of South Australia (RGSSA)*

The preceding slides have provided an introduction to the large and diverse collection of treasures held by the RGSSA.

The following slides give a further indication of the breadth of the collection.

*The Society is grateful to many contributors for assistance with this project.*

**<https://rgssa.org.au/heritage/treasures>**



## Translation of Strabo's Geographica 1523

This is a translation of Strabo's Geographica or Geography, originally published in 7BC, and is by Valentinus Curio according to a new translation from the Greek original done by Conrado Heresbachio, 1523. It is one of the oldest books in the RGSSA library and gives a valuable picture of how the world was perceived at that time.

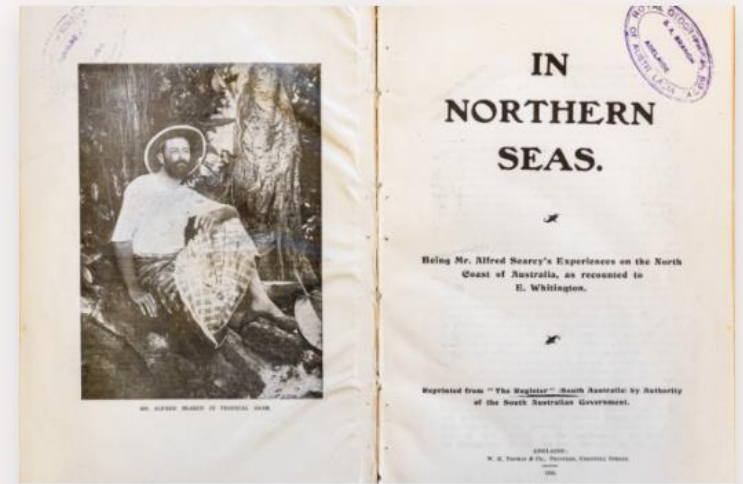
*STRABO TRANSLATION, 1523 Valentinus Curio lectori. En tibi lector stvdiose Strabonis geographicorum cōmetarios, olim ut putatur, à Guarino Veronense, & Gregorio Trisemate latinate donates, iam uero*



## A first edition of Sebastian Munster's 'Cosmographia Universalis' 1544

This was the earliest German language description of the world. It contains a wealth of pictorial detail illustrating towns, animals and human beings as well as the more usual geographical information. It is one of the oldest books in the RGSSA library.

[READ MORE →](#)



## Mr. Alfred Searcy's Experiences on North coast of Australia

An important cultural report and details of everyday life in Port Darwin (the 'Singapore of Australia') pre and post European settlement. It includes a history of the trepang (sea cucumber) trade and transport network and the social interaction between the local Aboriginal, Malay and Macassar peoples.

[READ MORE →](#)





## Charles Butler's *The Feminine Monarchie, or the Historie of Bees*, 1634

This is the first work on the science of beekeeping in the English language. Written by Charles Butler, who is known as the Father of English beekeeping, the text brought into the public consciousness the idea that a bee colony is presided over by a queen.

[READ MORE →](#)



## William Cuninghame's *Cosmological Glasse* 1558

*The Cosmological Glasse, conteinyng the pleasant Principles of Cosmographie, Geographie, Hydrographie or Navigation, 1558.* This very old and important book is said to be the first written on the subject of surveying and is one of the oldest items in the RGSSA collection. It contains many beautiful woodcuts including an aerial view of Norwich.

[READ MORE →](#)



## The Zincali by George Borrow

This manuscript is in book form and consists of drafts for '*The Zincali*' or *An Account of the Gypsies of Spain* published in 1841 and also notes by the author George Borrow.

Image from *The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Zincali*

[READ MORE →](#)





## Mammals of Australia by John Gould, 1845 -1863

John Gould is usually thought of as the "bird man", but following his trip to Australia between May 1838 and August 1839, he published *Mammals of Australia* in three volumes with 182 beautifully hand coloured lithographic plates.

[READ MORE →](#)



## Mappemonde by Nicholas Desliens of Dieppe, 1566

This map was drawn with south at the top which was not uncommon until the use of the magnetic compasses became widespread. An excellent hand drawn copy from 1884 of one of the world's oldest maps.

[READ MORE →](#)



## David Roberts' hand coloured lithographs of the Holy Land - Royal Subscription Edition

123 Royal Subscription Edition RSE folio lithographic hand coloured prints of The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, and Arabia, From Drawings "made on the Spot" by David Roberts R A 1796-1864

[READ MORE →](#)





## Ptolemy atlas 1480 - Ptolemy, Claudio, AD 100- AD 168 Geographia di Francesco Berlinghieri 1480

The oldest book in the Society's Library is Ptolemy's *Geographia di Francesco Berlinghieri*, a folio volume published in Florence, Italy, by Nicolo Todescho Berlinghieri, ca 1480. This volume contains the calculations and art works of Claudius Ptolemy, 100– c.170 AD. This folio volume with 31 maps engraved on copper and is considered a monument of typography and the engraver's art.

[READ MORE →](#)



## Colom, Arnold, Zee Atlas - Amsterdam 1658

This rare atlas, mostly of charts, includes one of the earliest published maps showing part of the south coast of Australia. These charts are exceptionally beautiful with ornate cartouches and vivid colouring.

[READ MORE →](#)



## Sample of the original rail line from Goolwa to Port Elliot Railway

The rail sample from the Goolwa to Port Elliot section, opened in May 1854, is a first in Australia for several reasons: first laid with iron rails; first Government funded railway; first to use the 5'3" gauge in South Australia. The bugle is unique in that it belonged to the tram driver, as the line only used animal power, so there was no steam whistle.

[READ MORE →](#)





## South Australia, wall map, created by the Department of Lands 1923

This 1923 map, a one-off creation, is approximately 3 metres wide by 3.5 metres tall, and has the signature of the Surveyor General, Theo (Theodore) E. Day, who was appointed in 1921. The map is a good example of the cartographer's art around the 1920s. It includes the routes of 28 explorers from Charles Sturt 1823 to Frank Rees George 1904 as well as Surveyed Lands, Pastoral Leases, Artesian basins and Goyder's Line of rainfall etc.

[READ MORE →](#)



## McKinlay's Whisky Flask

Known as the "knight-errant of explorers", and standing 193cm (6 feet, 4 inches) tall, Scotsman John McKinlay (1819-72) was an adventurer and pastoralist. He led the South Australian Burke Relief Expedition and was the second European man to cross the continent from south to north.

[READ MORE →](#)



## Sir Joseph Banks -Handwritten journals of a voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador, and a visit to Lisbon

These two volumes were handwritten by the young, and later distinguished botanist, Joseph Banks on his first "expedition" between April and November 1766. The first records his journey to Newfoundland and Labrador on HMS *Niger*. This was his first visit to a foreign country and his first experience of ocean sailing. The second records his stay of six weeks in Lisbon on the way home.

[READ MORE →](#)



SECT. XVI.

How to make Silver and Golden Rain, and how to use them.

You must provide store of Goose-Quills, which you must cut off so far as they are hollow; the Composition to fill them is, two Ounces of Coal-dust, and one Pound of Powder well mixed; having filled many of these Quills, you shall place them in the same place as I told you to put the Powder and Stars, putting a little Pistol-Powder to blow them out, as you did the Stars, and fill the top of the case as full of them as you can, with the open end downwards; so soon as the Rocket is spent, there will appear a Golden Shower, or Rain; or with the Composition for White Stars filled in the Quills, will make a shower of Silver Rain.

SECT. XVII.

How to make Fire-Lances.

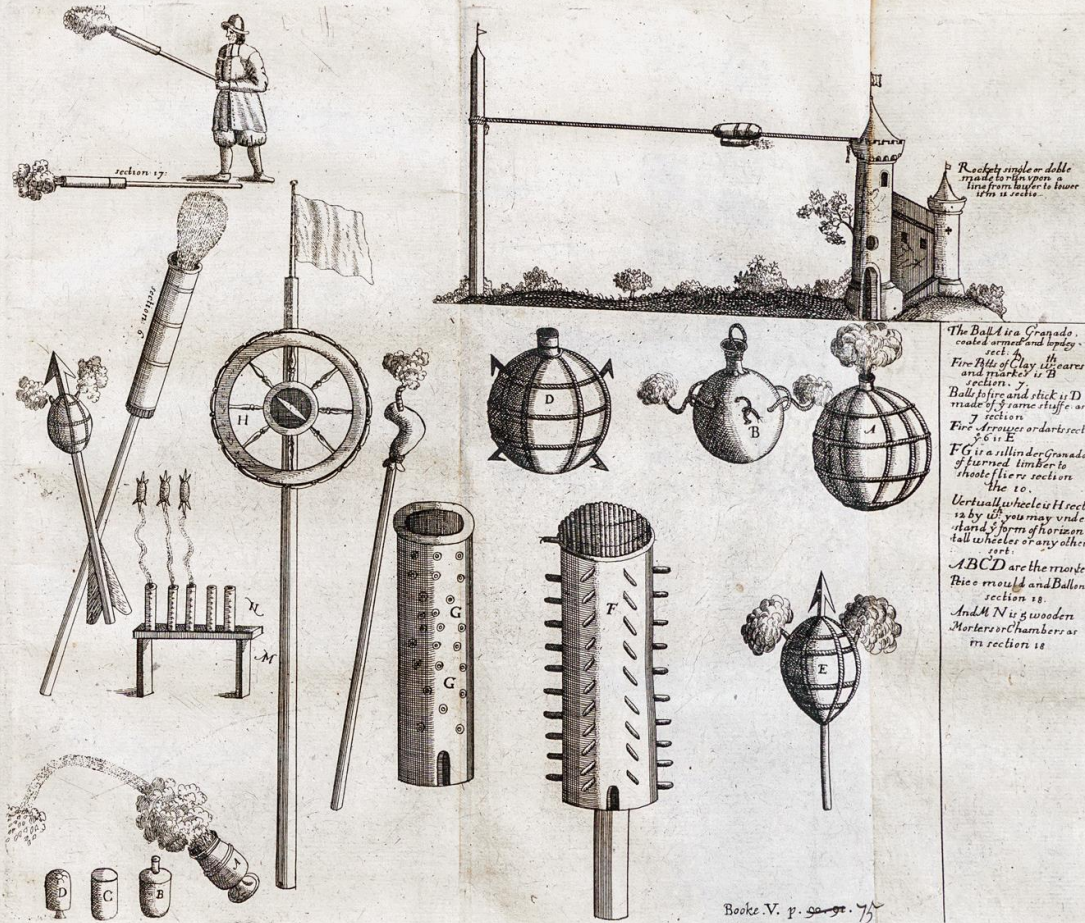
Make them thus; first, you must make Cartrages, or Cases just like the Cases for Rockets, only those for a need may be made with Pastboard, and glued, as they are formed round, but the former is better; let them be filled with the dry Composition for Stars as in Section 13. Prime them with wet Gun-Powder, the lower end of the Case is stopp'd with a piece of Wood, to the end they may be nailed and fixed when and where they shall be used, the Wood being about three Fingers breadth out of the Case or Carriage, or as long as you will.

SECT. XVIII.

The manner how to make Balloons for the Mortar-Piece.

You must have a Form or Rouler twice the length of the Diameter, and of the bigness, as you will have the inside of your Balloon, and upon that Form put so many Pastboards as you shall think sufficient for strength, then paste or glue them well together, and choak him at the end with a firing, leaving a small hole for a Fore-fire, which must be made just like a Rocket, but no holes in it as the Rocket hath, and of such length as is fit: Now to fill the Balloons, place all your Serpents within it together, with Stars, Rockets, and Crackers, leave very little room within the Case, or Carriage; and being filled, put in as much Powder-dust as you can, that it may run every where through the Chinks between the Serpents, Rockets, and Stars, that they may all fire, and that the said Powder-dust may break the Balloon; these things thus done, choak up the other end close, and charge it in the Mortar, as we have taught you to do the Canvas Granado in the fourth Section, and you may shoot it when you please, and you will make most excellent delight to the Spectators, and credit to your self; for this is part of the way of Mr. Matibue's Fire-Works, which were the best that ever I practis'd.

SECT.



The Ball A is a Granado, coated armed and loaded, sect. 6.  
 Fire Balls of Clay B are and marked B, sect. 7.  
 Balls of fire and stick C, D made of the same stuff, as sect. 7.  
 Fire Arrows or darts, sect. 8.  
 F G is a cylinder Granado of furrowed timber, to shoot fire, sect. 10.  
 Vertually wheel C H sect. 12 by which you may vnderstand the form of the mortar, tall wheel, or any other sort.  
 A B C D are the mortar Piece mortars and Ballons, section 18.  
 And N is a wooden Mortar or Chamber, as in section 18.

Booke V. p. 73

The Mariners' Magazine - by Captain Samuel Sturmy (1633-1669)

[Read more ...](#)





David Roberts' hand-coloured lithographs of the Holy Land  
*Royal Subscription Edition*

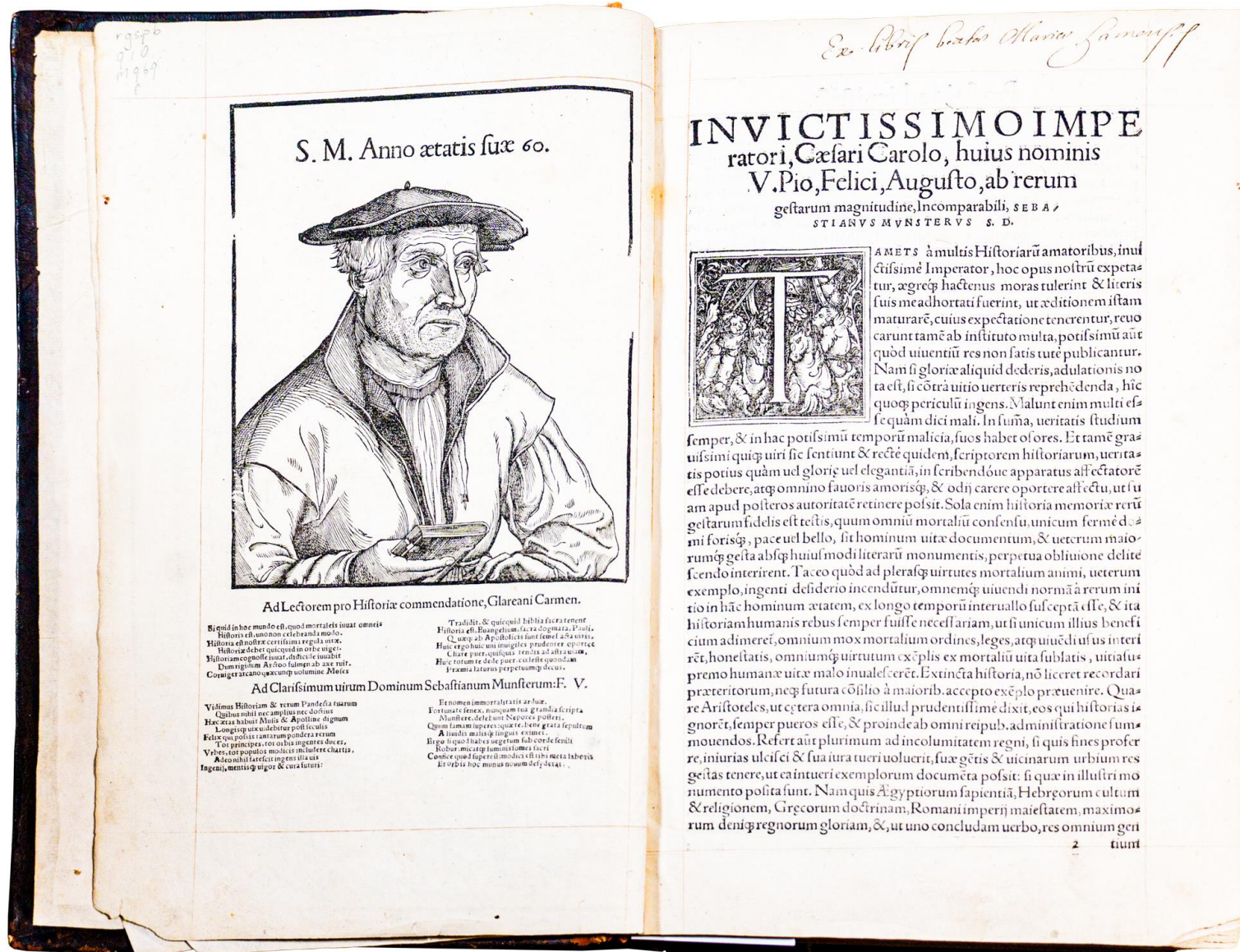
[Read more ...](#)



A first edition of  
Sebastian  
Munster's

*Cosmographia  
Universalis'*  
1544

[Read more ...](#)



S. M. Anno ætatis suæ 60.



Ad Lectorem pro Historia commendatione, Glareani Camen.

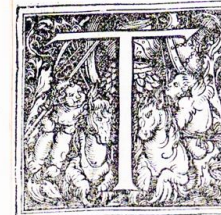
Si quid in hoc mundo est, quod mortalibus inuit omnibus  
Historia est amonon e de vana mudo.  
Historia est modice certissima regala vna.  
Historia debet quicquid in orbis unger.  
Historiam cognoscere inuit obsequit.  
Demergit in Aucto sumam ab axe nunt.  
Corriget arcano, quæcumq; volumine Mures.

Ad Clarissimum virum Dominum Sebastianum Munsterum: F. V.  
Vidimus Historiam & rerum Pandecta tuarum  
Cibus nihil nec amplius nec doctus  
Hæc exa habuit Ouis & Apolline dignum  
Longiq; uix uidebitur post te, cuius  
Fides quo potius uerum pondera rerum  
Tot principes, tot oibus ingentes duces,  
Vires, tot populos molibus misere chartis,  
Alenobis fatelic ingens illa uis  
Fagani, mentisq; vigor & cura totius

Tradidit, & quicquid libris sacra tenent  
Historia est, hanc quæcumq; sacra dogmata, P. uel.  
C. uoxq; ab Apolline sunt semel ab a uita.  
Hinc uigilans, uniuersis profectore eptore  
Clare puer, quicquid sentis ad astra uiam.  
Hæc totum de de puer, uolite quoniam  
Et exa uolunt perpetuum decu.

Et non in immortalitate arbor.  
Et uicque tunc, nunquam tua grandia scripta  
Munster, delectant Nepotes, posteri,  
Quam iam in ingere, quat e. hinc grata sepulchrum  
A iustis multisq; linguis extant.  
Hic quoque habet uerum hab corde sentit  
Hæc, mure, ac tam in totis sacra  
Conice quoque hinc il modici est tibi meta habebis  
Et uis hinc, monas tuorum deq; detat.

INVICTISSIMO IMPERATORI, Cæsari Carolo, huius nominis V. Pio, Felici, Augusto, ab rerum gestarum magnitudine, Incomparabili, SEBASTIANVS MUNSTERVS S. D.



TAMETS à multis Historiarū amatoribus, inuictissimè Imperator, hoc opus nostrū expectatur, ægreq; hæcenus moras tulerint & licetis suis meadhortati fuerint, ut aditionem istam maturarē, cuius expectatione tenerentur, reuocarunt tamē ab insituto multa, potissimū autē quod uiuentiū res non satis tūc publicantur. Nam si gloriæ aliquid dederis, adulationis nota est, si cōtrā uitio uertis reprehēdenda, hic quoq; periculū ingens. Malunt enim multi esse quàm dici mali. In summa, ueritatis studium

semper, & in hac potissimū temporū malicia, suos habet o fores. Et tamē grauisissimi quicq; uiri sic sentiunt & rectē quidem, scriptorem historiarum, ueritatis potius quàm uel gloriæ uel elegantia, in scribendū apparatus affectatorē esse debere, atq; omnino fauoris amorisq; & odij carere oportere affectu, ut si am apud posteros autoritatē retinere possit. Sola enim historia memoria rerū gestarum fidelis est testis, quum omnium mortalium consensu, unicum ferme dēmi forisq; pace uel bello, sit hominum uita documentum, & ueterum maiorumq; gesta absq; huiusmodi literarū monumentis, perpetua obliuione delitefcendo interirent. Taceo quod ad pleraq; uirtutes mortalium animi, ueterum exemplo, ingenti desiderio incenditur, omnemq; uiuendi normā à rerum inuitio in hæc hominum ætatem, ex longo temporū intervallo susceptā esse, & ita historiam humanis rebus semper fuisse necessariam, ut si unicum illius beneficium adimeret, omnium mox mortalium ordines, leges, atq; uiuēdi usus intererēt, honestatis, omniumq; uirtutum exēplis ex mortali uita sublati, uita sumo humano uita malo inualeferēt. Extincta historia, nō liceret recordari præteritorum, neq; futura cōsilio à maiorib; accepto exēplo præuenire. Quare Aristoteles, ut cetera omnia, sic illud prudentissime dixit, eos qui historias ignorerēt, semper pueros esse, & proinde ab omni reipub; administratione summo uendos. Refert aut plurimum ad incolumitatem regni, si quis fines proferre, iniurias ulcisci & sua iura tueri uoluerit, suæ gētis & uicinarum urbium res gestas tenere, ut ea intueri exemplorum documēta possit: si quæ in illius monumentis posita sunt. Nam quis Agyptiorum sapientiā, Hebræorum cultum & religionem, Græcorum doctrinam, Romanū imperij maiestatem, maximorum deniq; regnorum gloriam, & ut uno concludam uerbo, res omnium genitum