



Colonel William Light and the Survey 1836-1838¹

The reasons that led me to fix Adelaide where it is I do not expect to be generally understood or calmly judged of at present. My enemies, however, by disputing their validity in every particular, have done me the good service of fixing the whole of the responsibility upon me. I am perfectly willing to bear it; and I leave it to posterity, and not to them, to decide whether I am entitled to praise or to blame.

Thebarton Cottage, near Adelaide, 28th March, 1839.



(Colonel Light portrait in the collection of the Royal Geographical Society of S.A.)

The choice he made secured the welfare of the settlement. South Australia was settled on the Wakefield system, and was to be a self-supporting colony. It was the first scientific attempt that was made to settle people on the land in a distant dependency. To the success of that enterprise fertile land and plenty of it was an indispensable condition, but if Port Lincoln or Encounter Bay had been chosen as the capital there would have been no South Australia in the year of grace 1905. The early settlers would have drifted away to Melbourne, Sydney, or Hobart Town, or back to England in disgust, and the site of this great city and its suburbs would to-day in all probability be only an outlying pastoral district of Victoria or New South Wales. S.A. Register June 2nd 1905

LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS² by the Colonization Commissioners for South Australia to Colonel William Light, Surveyor- General for the Colony of South- Australia.

WHEREAS it has been judged expedient, before the departure of the first body of settlers under the command of His Excellency Governor Hindmarsh, to fit out an expedition to South Australia, for the purpose of effecting such a survey of the different harbours and the adjoining- land as may be necessary to the correct determination of the best site for the first town; and whereas the commissioners repose full confidence in your abilities and zeal for the performance of this duty, they

¹ The Royal Geographical Society's **Proceedings** Vol 11, 1908-1910 are the source of all the information in this document. Copies of this Journal may be viewed through the Society, phone 61 8 82077265, email library@rgssa.org.au. Copies can be obtained from the Society, reproduced as a facsimile; price is \$120 per copy.

² The information 'is a word for word and line for line reproduction' contained in *The Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch) Inc. Vol 11*

hereby appoint you to command and take charge of the expedition now preparing for the purpose of effecting these objects.

In the prosecution of this important service you will be guided generally by the instructions herein contained.

1. The expedition will consist of the *Cygnets*, of 239 tons. and the *Rapid*, of 162 tons. These two vessels will sail in company for mutual assistance and protection, but each will be fully equipped to act independently if necessary.
2. Each vessel will be supplied with one year's provisions, with proper surveying instruments, arms, ammunition, tents, clothing, utensils, tools, medicines, and necessaries of all kinds which are likely to be required. Each vessel will also be supplied with a boat fitted for surveying the various inlets, as well as a small portable boat, on a light carriage, for use in the land expeditions. You are to consider it an important duty to direct the provision of these supplies; to take care that every article is of the best quality, and that nothing important to the success of the enterprise or to the comfort and health of the party is omitted.
3. The expedition will be composed of the surveying staff already appointed, Captain Lipson, R.N., two surgeons, and 30 labourers; among whom should be at least three common carpenters, two smiths, four men accustomed to fell timber, and one shoemaker. The crews will also assist in any manner you may direct.
4. The selection of the labourers is left with yourself; and you are authorized to promise them rations (the same as in His Majesty's Navy) and 12/- per week wages, with such additional wages as may be necessary for the mechanics; an agreement to this effect being entered into for one year from the day of landing in South Australia. As much will depend upon the steadiness of these men, great pains should be taken to select none but such as are temperate, intelligent, and honest.
5. You will yourself go out in the *Rapid*, of which vessel you will take the immediate command. You will be accompanied by Messrs. Field, Pullen, and Hill, as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd officers, and by Messrs. Jacob and Symonds³ as assistant surveyors, and Mr. John Woodford as surgeon. Mr. Pullen will also act as sailing master on the voyage, and as an assistant surveyor after arrival in the colony.
6. In the *Cygnets* will be Mr Kingston, the deputy surveyor, in command under you of that division of the surveying party, Captain Lipson as harbourmaster, Messrs. Finniss, O'Brien, Neale, Hardy, and Cannan as assistant surveyors, Dr. Wright as surgeon, and Mr. Gilbert as storekeeper; there will also be a few passengers. The crew of the "*Cygnets*" is appointed by the owners, but the captain is bound to obey your instructions.

³ This may be the '*Simmonds*' referred to in the Nixon map.

7. It is important that among the surveyors and medical gentlemen composing the expedition there should be at least one who is a good judge of the qualities of Australian soils, another acquainted with the kinds of Australian timber most useful in building, and a competent botanist and mineralogist; also some one accustomed to intercourse with the natives, and possessing at least a general knowledge of their language. Should the present arrangement be defective in any of these particulars it will be an important part of your duty, if possible, to supply the deficiency.

8. The whole of the party composing or accompanying the surveying expedition will be placed under your command; and you are hereby authorized to appoint, suspend or reduce any one, on sufficient grounds, which must be submitted with as little delay as possible to the board.

9. The expedition must be ready to leave the port of London on the 17th March, or as soon after that day as possible.

10. On the passage you will take every convenient opportunity of drilling the surveying corps, together with any other persons who may be capable of bearing arms, in order to prepare them, in case of emergency, for the general defence and safety.

11. You will proceed first to Nepean Bay, in Kangaroo Island, which you will consider the place of rendezvous. You will land two or three gardeners who will accompany you, and who must be directed to bring a small piece of land into immediate cultivation, and to stock it with vegetables, for the after use of the colonists generally. You will also cause to be landed all provisions and other stores not required during the surveys. These stores you will place under the charge of Mr Gilbert the storekeeper; and you will leave a force, including the gardeners, proportionate to the danger of attack from runaway convicts, whalers, and other inhabitants of the island. It is highly desirable that the wives and families of the officers and men should remain at Kangaroo Island during the progress of the surveys, if arrangements can be made for their temporary accommodation and safety. To such as continue on board, you will allow ship room, without charge, but you will require them to purchase their rations. This arrangement must be extended to all females, without exception, and to all others not strictly belonging to the surveying corps. During the landing of the stores, &c., and while waiting, if necessary, for the arrival of the other vessel, the surveyors must be employed in surveying Nepean Bay and the adjoining country.

12. You will now proceed to make a careful examination of the coast in the central parts of the colony, excepting only places where the previous examinations by Captain Flinders and other navigators clearly show that no good harbour is to be found. Your attention will be particularly directed to Nepean Bay and Port Lincoln, but more especially to the line of coast extending from the Eastern part of Encounter Bay to the northern point of Gulf St. Vincent. The inlet in latitude 34 deg. 55 sec., and the harbour reported to have been discovered by Jones about latitude 34 deg., 40 sec., demand a careful examination. You will ascertain beyond all doubt whether or not there is any other outlet to Lake

Alexandrina than the one discovered by Captain Sturt, opening into Encounter Bay, the most certain mode of effecting which will probably be to skirt the lake itself.

13. Whenever you find a good harbour you will cause the neighbouring land for a considerable distance to be carefully examined, and if the spot is well suited for the site of even a secondary town, you will direct such a survey to be made as will enable the colonial commissioner, if he thinks proper, to include the district in the lands offered for selection by the holders of the first 437 land orders.

14. Having completed the surveys here indicated, and having carefully recorded all important circumstances, so that the different sites favourable for the erection of towns may be brought into exact comparison, you will proceed to determine which of the several sites shall be selected as that of the first town; a duty which you are hereby fully authorized and required to discharge. In entrusting you with the decision of this difficult question, the commissioners feel they cannot too much impress you with the importance of a duty, on the judicious performance of which the prosperity of the colony so greatly depends. They feel assured that you will enter upon the task with the most anxious desire to arrive at the best possible result; and believing- such a result will be most effectually secured by placing the whole responsibility of the decision in your hands, the commissioners purposely avoid all minute instructions for your guidance, and desire that you will consider yourself at liberty to deviate, even from the more general instructions given, if in the discharge of your duty new facts should arise which, in your opinion, Justify so strong a measure.

15. Although 'the commissioners leave the decision of this important question entirely in your hands, it is their desire that, should His Excellency the Governor arrive sufficiently early in the colony (and he is expected to be at Port Lincoln about two months after you reach Nepean Bay), you will confer with him on the subject, and pay due regard to his opinion and suggestions, without, however, yielding to any influence which could have the effect of divesting you in any way of the whole responsibility of the decision. The commissioners think they may also assist you by stating the grounds on which they conceive your decision ought to rest. The commissioners are of opinion that the best site for the first town will be that which combines in the highest degree the following advantages:—

1st. A commodious harbour, safe and accessible at all seasons of the year.

2nd. a considerable tract of fertile land immediately adjoining,

3rd. An abundant supply of fresh water.

4th. Facilities for internal communication.

5th. Facilities for communication with other ports.

6th Distance from the limits of the colony, as a means of avoiding interference from without in the principle of colonization.

7th. The neighbourhood of extensive sheepwalks.

The above are of primary importance, the following of secondary value:—

8th. A supply of building materials, as timber, stone, or brick, earth and lime.

9th. Facilities for drainage.

10th. Coal.

The commissioners are of opinion that although no site should be selected which does not possess a harbour safe and accessible at all seasons of the year, yet that it would be unwise for the sake of still superior advantages in the harbour to make any important sacrifice in the other essentials of a good site. As far as the imperfect information already possessed enables the commissioners to judge, the district between Gulf St. Vincent and the Murray or Lake Alexandrina (provided a good harbour can be found) appears to combine the requisite advantages in the highest degree. This district is sufficiently central. According to the report of Captain Sturt it contains an abundance of highly fertile land; it appears to be well supplied with water; it is conveniently situated for intercourse with Nepean Bay and Port Lincoln; and if a communication should be discovered between Gulf St. Vincent and Lake Alexandrina, the River Murray and its tributaries would afford the most important facilities for communication, not only with the interior of the new colony but also with that extensive portion of New South Wales, which, lying to the west of the Blue Mountains, is practically excluded from connexion with the eastern ports.

16. With a view to the successful completion of this important service, you will make yourself acquainted, as far as practicable, with the circumstances which have determined the sites of new towns in the United States of America, in Canada, &c., and more especially in the Australian colonies; and you will pay particular attention to those causes which, in the latter colonies, have led to an actual change, or to the desire for change, in the sites of certain towns after their first establishment.

17. When you have determined the site of the first town, you will proceed to lay it out in accordance with the *Regulations for the preliminary sales of colonial lands in the country*. You will make the streets of ample width, and arrange them with reference to the convenience of the inhabitants and the beauty and salubrity of the town; and you will make the necessary reserves for squares, public walks, and quays.

18. You will next proceed to survey, lay out and map the surrounding district, preparatory to the choice of rural lands; and you will carry these surveys to an extent which, in connexion with the surveys in the neighbourhood of other ports already provided for, will secure to the purchasers under the preliminary sales as far as practicable the first choice of land throughout the colony. In making this survey you will divide the lands into sections of 134 acres each, of a form convenient for occupation and fencing, with a

reserved road adjoining each section; and you will provide in the best manner you can for the after division into 80-acre sections of such of these lands as may not be selected by the holders of the first 437 land orders. In laying down the division lines, you will avail yourself, as far as practicable, of the natural boundaries, and you will provide for such a division of the lands into townships and counties as may hereafter be determined on by the Colonial government. You will take care that all principal stations are permanently marked, and that proper descriptions of such marks are duly recorded.

19. In all your surveys you will reserve as a public road all land on the coast within not less than 100 ft. of highwater mark, and you will also reserve a road, at least 66 ft. wide, along each side of every navigable river, and around every lake or other sheet of water whose surface is not included in the estimated area of the adjoining section or sections.

20. It is intended that the colonial commissioner shall arrive in the colony in time to superintend the choice of lands included in the preliminary sales, and you will after his arrival receive the instructions of the board as to after proceedings through that officer.

21. When a district is about to be surveyed, the colonial commissioner will report such Intention to the Governor in council, and will apply for instructions as to the direction and construction of the roads to be laid out. If the Governor should arrive before the colonial commissioner, you will yourself apply for such instructions to the Governor.

22. Throughout your proceedings you will exercise the utmost caution to prevent collision with the natives. With this view you will avoid unnecessary division of your party; and you will take care that each detachment is placed under the charge of an officer on whose intelligence, humanity, caution, temper, and courage you can fully rely. You will consider the wild animals as the property of the natives, of whom any which may be desired as food should be purchased. You will therefore discourage sporting, and in inhabited districts prevent it altogether. Not only the safety of your party, but the future security of the colonists generally, and the state of feeling which shall hereafter exist between them and the natives, will depend mainly on the attention paid to this instruction.

23. You are to keep an account of your proceedings in a journal⁴ to give a chart of your progress, with the soundings and other particulars, a description of the general face of the country and appearance of the shore; and a statement of the direction, velocity, breadth, and depth of the several rivers. You are also to require the medical and other scientific gentlemen of the expedition to note down the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of each part preserving specimens as far as their means will permit), the temperature of the air, and the direction of the wind at certain fixed hours of each day, the quantity of rain and other meteorological facts; and the description and apparent numbers of the different tribes you may meet.

⁴ Reprinted by the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia

24. As soon as the *Cygnets* can be spared you will discharge her, and report to the commissioners at the first opportunity In that manner the articles of agreement with the owners (of which you have a copy) shall have been observed. The *Rapid* must be retained until further instructions.

25. Finally, you will lay before the Governor, and will forward the commissioners with as little delay as possible, a full report of your proceedings, with copies of your own journal and that of the scientific gentlemen who will accompany you, and of all maps, charts, and other drawings, as well as a detailed description of each spot which you may consider favourable for the erection of a town, and a full statement of the reasons which may have influenced you in the selection of the site of the first town. Also, if you should be induced to deviate from the instructions herein contained, you will state your reasons for such deviations fully.

Given at London, this 9th day of March, 1836.

By order of the Board,

(signed) ROWLAND HILL, Secretary.

P.S. In an undertaking in which so much is at stake, it is desirable to guard against even remote dangers, as for instance, in the event of the separation of the two ships during the surveys, the possible loss of the stores of both. Under such circumstances the depot at Kangaroo Island would be a most important resource, Nepean Bay might be reached by means of the boats.

In determining what stores shall remain there, it is important keep this contingency in view; and if a boat can be left there, and a signal from the mainland established, as a fire upon some particular eminence, much would be done towards securing aid in the event of your boats being lost, or in case any of your party should wander from the main body.

If any accident should happen to the stores in Kangaroo Island, if they should be exhausted before the arrival of other supplies, application for aid must be made to the Governor of Van Diemen's Land, who will receive instructions from His Majesty's Government to grant it. As a further security, you will be provided with specie to the amount of £100, which you are hereby authorized to employ in the purchase of any stores which may be required. As in the progress of the surveys it will be necessary to send detached parties to distant stations, it will be important to agree upon signals of recall, of distress (arising from the attack of natives or other cause), &c. You will pay the wages of the labourers under your command by orders on the storekeeper, whenever it can be done conveniently. The storekeeper is supplied with specie to the amount of £100, and is instructed to honour such orders. Printed forms for the purpose will be prepared for your use.

Second P.S., 21 March, 1836.—You will also, in the same manner, make such payments as may be absolutely necessary to the officers of the expedition, in part liquidation of their claims as they arise; but

the discharge of these claims must be deferred as much as possible till the arrival of the colonial commissioner, who will carry out Instructions as to the mode of payment. Enclosed is a schedule of the officers' salaries and labourers' wages, with a statement of all advances which have been made. To these advances you will add any charges which may arise for extra baggage, and you will take care that the whole is liquidated as speedily as possible. With your report to the commissioners you will transmit an exact statement of the account with each member of the expedition. You will draw on the commissioners at 21 days' sight for the payment of the monies which may become due to the owners or masters of the *Cygnets*, in accordance with the agreement, a copy of which is enclosed.

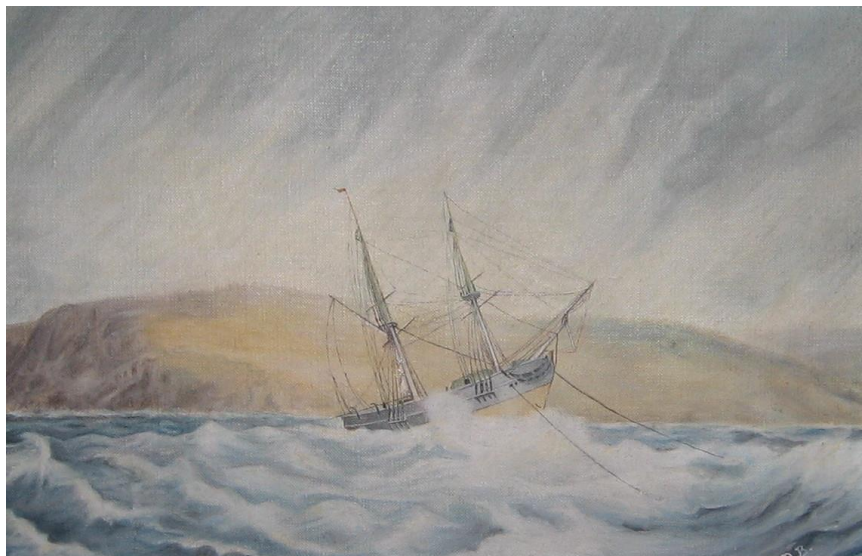
REPORT on the Departure of the Rapid.

The brig *Rapid*, of 162 tons, left the City Canal about noon on Sunday the 21st of May. She was purchased by the Colonization Commissioners for South Australia as a surveying vessel, and has been repaired and equipped in a manner which renders her exceedingly well adapted to the service.

The surveyor-general (Colonel Light), having served many years in the navy as well as in the army, has been placed in command of the vessel, with Messrs. Field, Pullen, and Hill as the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd officers. Mr. Pullen to act as assistant surveyor on arrival in the colony. The *Rapid* also carries out Mr. Jacob, one of the assistant surveyors, Mr. Claughton, one of the junior assistant surveyors, Mr. Woodford, surgeon, four steerage passengers (three surveyor's labourers, and one female), and a crew of 13 well-selected seamen. The terms on which the officers and men are engaged appear in the schedule of the salaries of the officers and the wages of the seamen and labourers, and a statement of the advances made to each.

The *Rapid* has on board a very complete set of surveying instruments, with provisions, clothing, and other stores for 12 months, as well as proper surgical instruments, medicines, &c.

The whole of these stores have been placed under the charge of Colonel Light, who has given his receipt for the same. (*Pictured, the Rapid at Rapid Bay – in the collection of the Royal Geographical Society of S.A.*)



Colonel Light has been furnished by Lord Glenelg with despatches to the Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, which will secure for the surveying party assistance in any case of difficulty. Colonel Light has also instructions from the commissioners for his guidance in directing the surveys and in determining the site of the first town as well as copies of the instructions to the officers on board the *Cygnets*. In these documents minute information will be found as to the plan of the expedition.

The *Rapid* was taken down the river by a steamtug, passing Gravesend about half-past 3 o'clock. It was the intention of Colonel Light to remain at the Nore till the morning tide, and then to proceed on his voyage, but the severity of the weather was such as to detain the vessel at the Nore till yesterday (Wednesday) morning. The pilot left the *Rapid* in the Downs at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, going down the Channel with a strong wind from the E.N.E.

The *Rapid* will proceed direct to Nepean Bay, where, as she is the quicker sailer she is expected to arrive about the same time as the *Cygnets*, notwithstanding the delay in her departure which has resulted from Colonel Light's illness. On reaching Nepean bay Colonel Light will take the command of the whole expedition.

5 May, 1836. (signed) ROWLAND HILL.

P.S.—An insurance has been effected on the *Rapid* and her stores as follows: —For the voyage — On the ship, £4,000 at three per cent; on the stores, £1,900 at three per cent. For 12 months during the surveys—On the ship, £3,000 at 10½ per cent., with a right to deduct 16/8 per cent. for every month not commenced.

REPORT on the departure of the *Cygnets*.

THE *Cygnets*, 239 tons, Capt. Rolls, sailed from Gravesend on Thursday, the 24th March, 1836, about noon. She was engaged by the colonization commissioners for South Australia of the owner, Mr. Thomas Ward, on the terms stated in the agreement, for the purpose of carrying out part of the surveying staff, with their labourers, and a few other persons, and for use in the colony during the progress of the surveys.

The *Cygnets* has on board 84 passengers, viz. 15 cabin and 69 steerage passengers. The cabin passengers are as follows:—Mr. G. S. Kingston, the deputy surveyor, in command, under Colonel Light (who goes out in the *Rapid*) of this division of the surveying party; Mr. F. B. Finniss, one of the assistant surveyors, second in command, and Mrs. Finniss; four other assistant surveyors, viz. Mr. Neale (with Mrs. Neale), and Messrs. Symonds, Hardy and Cannan; also Capt. Lipson, R.N., harbourmaster, and Mrs. Lipson, Dr.

Edward Wright, surgeon, and Mrs. Wright, Mr. Thomas Gilbert, the storekeeper, and Messrs. Morphett and Powys, emigrants, going out at their own cost.

The steerage passengers are as follows:—

8 Children, of the cabin passengers, receiving cabin accommodation but steerage fare, and charged as steerage passengers.

38 Adult male labourers and servants;

11 Ditto female - ditto - - ditto (viz. nine married and two single);

4 Children, between two years and 14 years of age; and

8 Infants, under two years of age.

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Of the labourers, one (Rogers) is the storekeeper's clerk, and 30 are engaged to assist the surveyors or as gardeners—(See schedule of labourers' wages and advances, also copies of the articles of agreement between the surveyor-general and the labourers).

The *Cygnets* carries out a complete set of surveying instruments, and a large stock of provisions, clothing, and other stores for the use of the surveyors (who will be allowed rations when in actual service), and for sale to the emigrants generally. A supply of food for one year after arrival in the colony was provided, but want of space rendered it necessary to omit about one-half of the bread and flour, as well as certain other stores enumerated in the "list of stores, &c., ordered for the *Cygnets*, but not shipped." (pictured *Light's dumpy level* in the collection of the Royal Geographical Society of S.A.)



The instruments, ordnance stores, stationery, &c., required for the land surveys have been put under the charge of Mr. Kingston, the nautical surveying instruments under that of Captain Lipson, the provisions, clothing, &c., and a complete set of surgical instruments under that of Mr. Gilbert, and the medical stores, with certain surgical instruments for immediate use, under that of Dr. Wright.

Inventories of these stores have been made, and the receipts obtained of the officers under whose charge they are respectively placed.

Mr. Kingston has despatches from Lord Glenelg to the Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land, which will obtain for the surveying party aid in case of need. Messrs. Kingston, Finniss, and Gilbert have also instructions from the commissioners for their own guidance, and the two former have copies of the instructions to each of the others, as well as copies of those for Colonel Light.

To these documents I would refer for more minute information as to the plan of the expedition.

Mr. Montefiore was so good as to accompany me in examining the arrangements made for the accommodation of the emigrants. Owing to the necessity for taking on board a very large stock of provisions, we found the space between decks was to a very objectionable extent occupied with goods, chiefly the passengers' luggage, but the captain promised to remove these goods as rapidly as room could be made for them, by taking to pieces the water and other casks as quickly as they should be emptied, and he assures us that the whole would disappear in a fortnight. On consideration there appeared no doubt it would be a much greater evil to unship any of the goods than to submit to a temporary inconvenience. The emigrants themselves, to nearly the whole of whom we spoke on the subject, were of this opinion, and they, without exception, expressed themselves exceedingly well satisfied with the arrangements made for their accommodation.

Mr. Brown, the commissioners' emigration agent, was on board actively employed in discharge of his duties; and Mr Mann the colonial advocate-general, was so good as to superintend the execution of the agreements between the surveyor-general and the labourers.

Each male adult passenger, except the officers, has entered into a written engagement to submit to the authority of the officer in command, a copy of which has been retained.

29 March, 1836. (signed) ROWLAND HILL, Secretary.

LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS by the Colonization Commissioners for South Australia to **F. B. Finniss**⁵ Esq., one of the Assistant Surveyors for South Australia.

HEREWITH you will receive a copy of the instructions to Colonel Light, the surveyor-general, and also of those to Mr. G. S. Kingston, the deputy-surveyor, with reference to the expedition now fitting out for the purpose of surveying certain parts of South Australia, and of determining the site of the first town.

⁵ *The initials are wrong. The first names of Mr. Finniss were "Boyle Travers"*

In case of the death of both Colonel Light and Mr. Kingston, or of the inability of both from any cause to take the command, you are hereby authorized and required to assume the command of the whole expedition, and to act on the instructions given to Mr. Kingston.

Given at London, this 9th day of March, 1836.

A meeting, which took place on the 10th February, 1837, where colonists after conferring with Colonel Light, took the following action.

To His Excellency the Governor, &c. &c.

May it please your Excellency,—We, the undersigned, being purchasers of the first sections of land in South Australia, or their representatives, pray that your Excellency will call a public meeting of the landholders for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of the site proposed for the situation of the capital of this colony.

And in doing so your memorialists would respectfully impress your Excellency that nothing approaching to a spirit of opposition actuate them, but they are most anxious at a question of such importance, and upon which so much of their prosperity depends, should be fully and fairly considered by those whose capital has called this colony into existence.

And your memorialists would further pray, that your Excellency, His Majesty's Representative in this Province, would be pleased to preside at this meeting in question.

And your memorialists will ever pray .

Glenelg Plains, 2nd February, 1837.

Edward Stephens, J.P.

John Hallett.

T. B. Strangways, J.P.

C. G. Everard⁶.

Bingham Hutchinson,

J.P. W. Ward.

A. F. Lindsay⁷.

Wm. Malcolm.

⁶ *This is Dr Everard, whose surgical kit from the Society's collection is on display at the S.A. Maritime Museum*

⁷ *Is this the Lindsay helping with the field observations possibly listed on the Nixon map?*

In compliance with the foregoing resolution a public meeting was called by the Colonial Secretary,[on board the Buffalo 7th February 1837]

The Colonial Commissioners - November 1837

The appointment of the subordinate officers for equipping the surveying expeditions, were commenced, yet on his [Colonel Light's] arrival the arrangements which had been made were submitted for his approval, and modified according to his wishes. The additional instruments and stores which he considered necessary were immediately supplied. To our request that he would report whether he considered his staff sufficiently strong he returned a written reply that the number of the surveying party was at present sufficient, but that, from the recommendations (which had been received) of Mr. Ormsby and Mr. Carrington he thought they would be valuable acquisitions when the inland surveying began to extend. This supernumerary strength was added to his staff for, although Mr. Carrington afterwards resigned, Mr Cloughton also recommended by Colonel Light, was appointed, and over the surveying corps, increased beyond the number Colonel Light considered sufficient by two assistants of his own selection, he was given all the authority which his responsible position required having power to appoint, to suspend, and to reduce if was therefore with surprise and disappointment that we received the communication by which we were officially informed that with a staff thus composed and an authority thus ample, a period of three years would be required for the completion of the preliminary surveys.

Under these unlooked-for and untoward circumstances we felt it to be our imperative duty to take prompt and effectual measures for accelerating the surveys, and enabling the settlers to obtain possession of their rural lands. From various quarters complaints and remonstrances were made. The directors of the South Australian Company addressed a letter to our board setting forth the serious losses which their shareholders were likely to suffer from the delay in the completion of the preliminary surveys, and suggesting, to save the lengthened period required for the survey with scientific accuracy, it should in the first instance, be of the "running kind," upon the understanding that after the location of the settlers a more accurate one should be made, and any errors on either side rectified.

In this emergency we again availed ourselves of Captain Dawson's valuable aid, requesting that he would reconsider his former report, with a reference to the knowledge of the nature of the country to be surveyed, which the arrival of Mr. Kingston had supplied, and that he would advise us as to the means which should be adopted for effecting, with sufficient accuracy for practical purposes, the survey of an extensive district in the shortest period.

COLONEL LIGHT. HIS RESIGNATION AS SURVEYOR-GENERAL.

Colonel Light announced his resignation in the following letter extracted from the Third Annual Report of the Colonization Commissioners:—

Adelaide, June 22nd, 1838.

Sir — I have this moment received your letter of yesterday, with the copies of Mr. Rowland Hill's letter to you, and the correspondence between that gentleman and Mr. Kingston.

I am allowed one week to consider whether I will undertake a running survey of 150 square miles, in addition to what may have been surveyed, on conditions laid down in the letters of Mr. Rowland Hill to Mr. Kingston of the 10th and 24th of January last.

In reply to your letter I beg to state that I do not require one week to consider this matter, but say at once that I will not do it, and that I despise and condemn the language used by Mr. Rowland Hill.

The subject of the correspondence, &c., &c., between him and Mr. Kingston I shall notice at leisure. In the meantime I must add that Mr. Hill's motive is too apparent to be misunderstood.

I am, &c., WM. LIGHT, Surveyor-General.

The Hon. Colonization Commissioners.

This was followed about a fortnight later by another letter refusing to hold office.

July 14th, 1838.

Sir—I have received your letter of the 2nd instant informing me that as I had declined giving you the required pledge for performing a running survey, it had become your painful duty, in obedience to the directions of the Colonization Commissioners, to acquaint me of your having addressed a letter to Mr. Kingston, informing him that the superintendence of the survey has devolved upon him.

I am ready at any time to give over the office, with the maps, instruments, &c., &c., to Mr. Kingston, and have ceased to act on the survey.

To the latter part of your letter, containing an extract from the despatch of Mr. Rowland Hill, before referred to viz: 'During the temporary suspension of Colonel Light's authority it is the wish of the Commissioners that he should be employed (with such necessary assistance as Mr. Kingston may be able to spare) in surveying land at Nepean Bay, and the secondary sites directed by the 13th article of the Instructions to Colonel Light dated 9th March, 1836, and in completing that examination of the coasts

and of Lake Alexandria, which is required by the same instructions. If this arrangement is adopted the Commissioners will be happy to continue to Colonel Light his full salary'.

I beg to reply that Mr. Rowland Hill may save the Commissioners the expense of my salary (£400 per annum), for I will not take office under such insulting conditions.

"I am, &c.,

(Signed) WM. LIGHT.



Interior of a clay bonded cemented rendered stone house at 188 Gilles Street, Adelaide, the property of Colonel Light, being assessed by Flinders University School of Archaeology 2008. The shingle roof was iron clad, shingles till extant, the ceilings lathe and reed plastered lime.

Colonel Light's Burial, contributions by E.H. Hallack, *Adelaide Register* 28th October 1892

Thursday, the 10th inst.—By his Excellency's command, Robert Gouger, Colonial Secretary; Charles Sturt, Assistant Commissioner." The arrangements for the funeral are as follows:—The immediate friends and acquaintances of the colonel will meet at Thebarton⁸ (where the colonel resided) at half past 11 o'clock, and accompany the body from thence on its way to Trinity Church until they reach the old Native Location, where his Excellency and the public officers, together with the general body of colonists, will join them, and the procession will then assume the following form:—

The Colonial Chaplain.

Mr. J. W. Nicholls		Lieutenant Mundy
Captain Litchfield		Mr. McPherson
Captain O'Halloran		Captain Berkeley
Mr. Field		Mr. Woodforde
Mr. Jacob	The Body	Mr. B. T. Finnis
Mr. Nixon		Mr. J. H. Fisher
Mr. E. Stephens		Mr. J. Brown
Mr. D. McLaren		Mr. J. Morphett
Mr. Gilbert		Mr. C. Mann
Mr. S. Stephens		Mr. Ormsby

⁸ *The Society has marked the site of Light's cottage with a plaque on the northern bank of the River Torrens at Hindmarsh, near the Brewery*

Mr. Wright

Mr. Duff

Servants of the Colonel's Household

Government Officers

The Council

His Honor the Judge

His Excellency the Governor

The Clergy

The Colonists

The paper also indicates that "the procession will then move on towards the church, where service will be performed by the Rev C. B. Howard, Colonial Chaplain. At the conclusion of the service the procession will proceed to Light Square, in the centre of which the remains of the Colonel are to be interred, an arrangement we highly approve of.

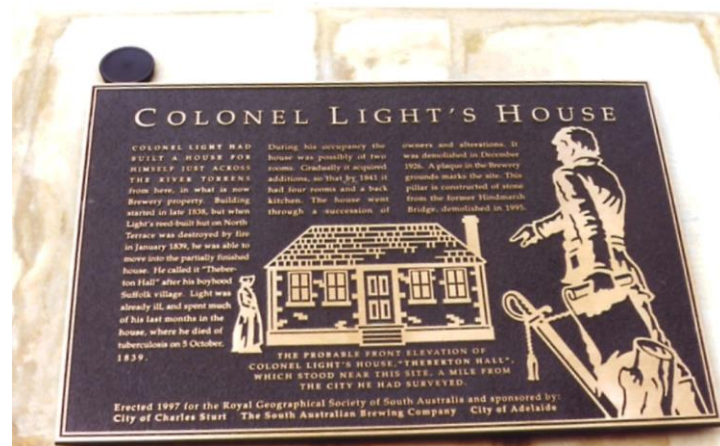
Government, Notice.- Colonial Secretary's Office, October 8, 1839. The interment of the late Colonel Light having been fixed to take place on Thursday next at 12 o'clock.



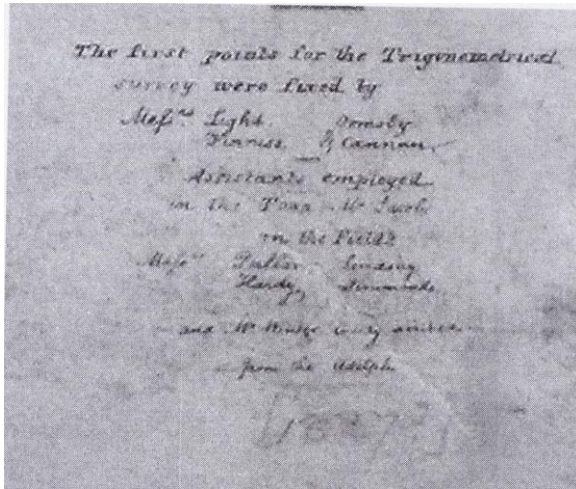
The 1927 plaque is located in the Brewery grounds, at Thebarton, the other, 1995 plaque is located next to the Brewery carpark, Hindmarsh.

Both plaques were funded through the Corporation of the City of Adelaide's interpretive monuments schemes, on the initiative of the Society and the Lord Mayors.

These plaques represent the site of Colonel Light's Cottage, "Thebarton". The Society has a brick and a roof shingle in its collection from that cottage.



The Nixon Map – Legend Notation



The hand written words in the bottom right hand corner under the Map scale read, date 1837? and as best the Society can make out :-

*The first points for the Trigonometrical
survey were fixed by
Messrs Light Ormsby
Finniss Cannan
Assistant employed
in the Town Mr Fisher
in the Field
Messrs Pullen *Lindsay
Hardy *Simmonds⁹
and Mr Winter lately¹⁰ arrived
from the Adelphi*

* These names/words are not clear.

Alison Dolling in her book *The History of Marion on the Sturt*, Peacock Publications 1981, alludes to the fact that the town of Marion was planned by Nixon. 'The earliest map of Marion (G.R.O. Plan No. 145 1856), the notations on which indicate that it was drawn using an earlier map'. Is there yet another record in the U.K.?

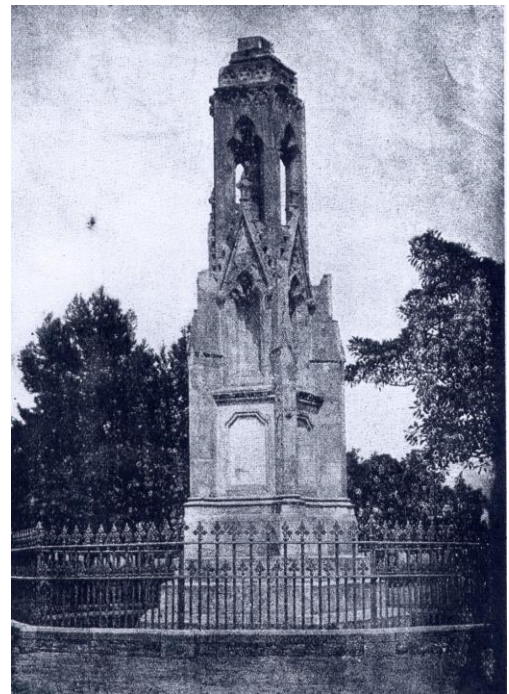
⁹ *The Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch) Inc*, Vol 11 pp 136 refers to a Mr Symonds (Sir Robert Gouger's description of camp 5th November 1837.)

¹⁰ The words lately arrived are those deduced by Archie Grenfell Price when he sighted the map in London in 1934

The Adelphi

*The South Australian Association's rooms by 1837 were located at 7 John Street, **Adelphi**, London UK, just North of Gray's Inn Fields, parallel to Gray's Inn Road*

The Monument to Colonel Light, pictured in Light Square, was erected in February 1843, and replaced with the current granite theodolite mounted Monument in June 1905.



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