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Presenter: Dr Jill Kerby

Captain Charles Sturt

Captain Charles Sturt (1795-1869)

Soldier and explorer, first to chart the River Murray

Charles Napier Sturt was born in Bengal, India, on 28th April 1795, the son of judge Thomas Napier Lennox Sturt. He was sent to England at the age of four for schooling and did not see his parents for another ten years. In September 1813 he obtained an ensigncy in the 39th Regiment through his aunt's influence, was promoted lieutenant in 1823 and captain in 1825. Subsequently, the regiment was posted to New South Wales, arriving in May 1827.

His appointment as Private and Military Secretary to Governor Darling was the turning point of his career. In 1828-29 he led an expedition to trace the Macquarie River beyond its marshes and discovered the Darling River, correctly deducing that the westward-flowing rivers were its tributaries.

In November 1829 Sturt set out to further explore the western rivers and to determine where the Darling flowed. He hoped that the rivers drained into a central sea. His subsequent discovery of the Murrumbidgee-Murray-Darling river system, and his journey down the Murray to Lake Alexandrina and back, established him as Australia's pre-eminent explorer. He described fertile river flats between the lower Murray and the Mount Lofty Ranges in his book *Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia* (1833), and he believed that this may have had some influence on the decision to colonize South Australia.



On 20th September 1834 Sturt married Charlotte Greene in England and retired from the army due to ill health incurred in his explorations. He surrendered his pension in return for a grant of 5,000 acres of land in New South Wales. In the following years he would be driven to seek financial security for his family. In 1838 Sturt overlanded stock to South Australia but his hopes of making a handsome profit were not realized. However, Governor George Gawler offered him the post of Surveyor-General. Sturt sold his New South Wales properties and established his home at 'The Grange' in Adelaide. Meanwhile the Colonization Commissioners in London appointed Edward Frome to the same post and consequently Sturt was made Assistant Commissioner of Lands on a reduced salary. In 1841 George Grey was appointed Governor, much to Sturt's displeasure as he believed he had been passed over for the younger man.

In June 1844 permission was given for him to lead an expedition to seek the north-south watershed that appeared to exist between South Australia and New South Wales. This was discovered, although it was not recognized as such, in a series of harrowing journeys. Sturt failed to find the inland sea he had sought for so long but did discover Cooper's Creek. Ultimately repelled by the dunes and gibbers of the deserts, he was forced to return to Adelaide due to scurvy and failing eyesight. He was sympathetic to the Aborigines he encountered in all of his expeditions, realizing that great changes to their way of life would result, an attitude he shared with his great friend and fellow explorer Edward Eyre.

After the publication of the account of his expedition, Sturt resumed the post of Colonial Treasurer, later becoming Colonial Secretary, but his temperament unsuited him for the hurly-burly of politics. In 1847 the Royal Geographical Society of London awarded him their Founder's Medal and in 1851 he retired and was granted a pension of £600 a year for life. He left South Australia in 1852 and spent the remainder of his life in Cheltenham, England, but continued to seek postings in Australia. Charles Sturt died on 16th June 1869, only shortly before his knighthood was gazetted. His widow Charlotte was allowed to bear the title of Lady Sturt.

Two State emblems, Sturt's desert pea (South Australia) and Sturt's desert rose (Northern Territory) honour his name. A fine statue of the explorer stands on the north-west corner of Victoria Square, and his former home, 'The Grange', is administered by the Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust.

Captain Charles Sturt 1795 -1860

April 1795	Born in Bengal Station India (eldest of eight sons in a family of thirteen)
1800	At the age of five, sent home to his mother's sisters in England to be educated, first privately then at Harrow from the age of 15 (did not see his parents for 10 years)
Sept 1813	Gazetted as an ensign in the 39 th , soon to become the Dorsetshire Regiment of Foot – posted under the protective care of an uncle, Cavendish Sturt, who had just been promoted as Lieutenant Colonel of the same regiment
1814-1827	Various army duties in Canada, Europe, Ireland
April 1823	Gazetted as Lieutenant
End 1823	Gazetted as Captain
Jan 1827	Escorts convict ship "The Mariner" from Cork
May 1827	Arrives Sydney with 155 surviving male convicts
June 1827	Appointed Private and Military Secretary to Governor Ralph Darling and Sturt's first (private) letter to him seeking to get away from routine work by special duty in exploration
Nov 1828	Leaves Sydney to explore the rivers of north-west New South Wales – Lachlan, Macquarie, Darling, Castlereagh (first expeditions)
April 1829	Returned to Sydney
Nov 1829	Leaves Sydney on second expedition to the Murrumbidgee and beyond, following by land until the whaleboat could be launched
Jan 1840	Sailed on the Hume River (which Sturt called the Murray) and eventually reached Lake Alexandrina, but disappointed to find no navigable outlet to the sea
Feb - May 1830-	Long upstream row, with exhaustion from poor diet and heavily depleted rations
1831	Eleven months duty on Norfolk Island
March 1832	Given leave on medical grounds and returns to England
June 1833	<i>Two Expeditions into the interior of Southern Australia</i> published in London
Feb 1834	Letter to Colonial Office, regarding relative merits of harbour site in South Australia
Sept 1834	Marries Charlotte (daughter of a family friend), and embarks on a ship for Sydney
Late 1834	Retires from army, pension of one hundred pounds, surrendered in return for a grant of 5,000 acres, intended as a reward for his services in exploration
April 1834	Overland journey from Sydney with stock to the new settlement in Adelaide
Oct 1838	Offered the post of Surveyor-General in South Australia (later relegated to Assistant Commission of Lands on a much lower salary)
Feb 1839	Sails with Charlotte and two young children from Sydney to Adelaide
Nov-Dec 1839	Mount Bryan Expedition, with Governor Grey, his 15-year-old daughter and her 15-year-old servant in the party. Young Englishman Henry Bryan disappears.
1840	Purchases land in the "Reedbeds" and builds his house called "Grange". Member Legislative Council
1836 - 1843	Three sons, one daughter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Napier George, born 1836 Sydney • Charles Sheppey. Born 1838 Sydney • Evelyn Gawler, born 1840 Adelaide • Charlotte Eyre, born 1843 at the "Grange" while Sturt was on his exploration to Central Australia
Jan 1843-Sept 1844	Correspondence to/from Lord Stanley, Colonial office, regarding proposed exploration of the Australian Continent
June 1844	At the age of 49 years, appointed to lead Central Australian expedition
August 1844	Departs with party of 17 - officers, bullock drivers, servants, two sailors – horses, bullocks, drays, boat, sheep as a walking supply of food – expedition in six stages (see map in Beale p 20)
Jan – July 1848	"Holed up" in Depot Glen for six months until rains fall in mid-July
Aug 1848	Poole, assistant to Sturt, dies suddenly and is buried at Depot Glen under a honeysuckle acacia
Jan 1849	Reaches home, having been ridden by scurvy and 17 months of an "epic of endurance"
May 1847	Awarded Gold Medal and made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in London

May 1847	Leave of absence on England, and 2 volume book <i>Narrative of and Expedition into Central Australia</i> published Jan 1849
Aug 1849	Retired on a life-pension of six hundred pounds a year, at the age of 54
March 1852	Left the colony for good
1853 onwards	Lived in Cheltenham England, seeking colonial governorships without success
Early 1869	Application for knighthood was approved
June 1869	Died before knighthood was gazetted, tub widow Charlotte allowed the same title



Headstone of the grave of Captain Charles Sturt in Cheltenham England

PUBLICATIONS LIST

1. **By Sturt himself** (listed in the order in which they were undertaken, not necessarily when they were published)

Sturt, Charles: *An expedition into the north-western Interior of New South Wales 1828.*

Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide 1983 rgsp 919.44042 S936

Sturt, Charles: *Two expeditions into the interior of Southern Australia during the years 1828, 1829, 1830 and 1831.*

Elder Smith and Co. London 1833 2 volumes rgsp 919.44042 S936

Sturt, Charles: *An account of a journey to South Australia, 1838*

Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide 1990 rgsp 919.42042 S936

Sturt, Charles: *The Mount Bryan expedition, 1839*

Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide 1982 (originally published 7 days after Sturt returned) rgsp 919.423042 S936c

Sturt, Charles: *Four Letters from Charles Sturt on a proposed exploration of the Australian continent, addressed to Lord Stanley during 1843 and 1844*

Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide 1988 rpsp 919.4042 S936

Sturt, Charles: *Sturt's daily journal of Sturt's 1844-45 expedition.*

Typescript copy of original now held by Crichel estate, Dorset. Manuscript

Sturt, Charles: *Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia, performed under the authority of Her Majesty's government, during the years 1844, 5 and 6*

T and W Bone, London 1849 rgsp 919.4042 S936

Sturt, Charles: *Journal of the Central Australian Expedition 1844 – 1845* (letters to his wife Charlotte)

Caliban books, London 1994. Edited and introduction by Jill Waterhouse

Includes Facsimile of Sturt's Narrative, volume 2 rga 919.4042 S936

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Brock, Daniel George: *Diary 1844-1846* (Manuscript)

Rare Book Room of the State Library ms39a

Brock, Daniel George, Peake-Jones Kenneth (editor): *To the Desert with Sturt: a diary of the 1844 Expedition.*

Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch) Adelaide 1975 rga 919.4042 B864

Davis, Richard: *The central Australian Expedition, 1844-1846: the journals of Charles Sturt, Edited by Richard C Davies*

Hakluyt Society, London 2002 rga 919.4042 S936

Frew, Robert: *Tender 19 July 1844 for two horses for the Central Australian Expedition under Charles Sturt with letter August 3 1844 from the Colonial Secretary accepting the tender*

Published August 1844 Australia MS 117c (Manuscript)

3. ABOUT STURT

Sturt, Beatrix (Mrs Napier George): *Life of Charles Sturt: sometime Captain of the 39th Regiment and Australian Explorer*

Elder Smith & Co, London 1899 rga 920 S936.S

Cumpston John Howard Lidgett: *Charles Sturt: His life and journeys of exploration*

Georgian House, Melbourne 1951 rga 920 S936C

Langley, Michael: *Sturt of the Murray: Father of Australian Exploration*

Hale, London 1969 rga 920 S936

Swan, Keith and Carnegie, Margaret: *In Step with Sturt*

Graphic Books, Armadale, Victoria 1979 rga 919.4042 S936 S

Beale, Edgar: *Sturt The Chipped Idol: A Study of Charles Sturt, Explorer*

Sydney University Press, Sydney 1979 rga 919.4042 S936 B

Stokes, Edward: *To the Inland Sea: Charles Sturt's expedition 1844-45*

Hutchinson of Australia, Melbourne 1986 rga 919.42042 S936 b

Lawresen, Elizabeth: *New light on Captain Sturt's northern exhibition 1844-46: with particular reference to the diary of Daniel Brock.*

Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch) 1967 pp56-67

4. OTHER – CELEBRATIONS, EXHIBITIONS etc

Losberg. David: *Charles Sturt; an annotated bibliography of the works held in the Library of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch) Inc relating to Charles Sturt*

RGSA (SA Branch). Adelaide 1991 rgpam 919.40432 S935.R

Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc/Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch): *Charles Sturt's Adelaide* (exhibition held in the York Gate Library in March 1964)

Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc, Adelaide 1966 rgpam 994.231 C477

Croker, Herbert: *The camp by the river; An account of Capt. Charles Sturt's voyage down the River Murray, 1830*

Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc, Adelaide 1979 rgpam 919.44 S936.C (model on display at the Museum)

Casson, Marjory R: *The Story of "Grange" the home of Capt. Charles Sturt*

Charles Sturt Memorial Museum Trust Inc, Adelaide 1990 (to be catalogued)

Makin, Jock and Macdonald, Bruce: *Salute to Sturt: background notes*

Mulgara Outback Eco-Experiences in association with the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (SA Branch)
Highbury, SA 1994 rgpam 919.4 S936

Bowyer, Peter: *"Reflections on a Salute to Sturt": a dinner at Depot Glen, 1 October 1994*

John McDouall Stuart Society, Adelaide 1994 rga 919.4 B788 b

5. AUSTRALIAN EXPLORATION

Calvert, Albert F: *The Exploration of Australia*

George Philip & Son, London 1895 rga 919.4 c167b

Colwell, James: *The Story of Australia. Past and present. In pen and picture. Volume 2 Exploring the Continent*

The SJ Clarke Publishing Company, Sydney, 1925 rga 994 c727b 1925

Price, Grenfell: *Founders and pioneers of South Australia: life studies of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Charles Sturt, George Fife Angas, Sir John Hindmarsh, William Light, George Gawler, David McLaren, Augustus Kavel and Francis Cadell.*

FW Preece & Sons, Adelaide, 1929 rgsp 920.0942 P945

6. MAPS and ARTWORK

Arrowsmith, John: *Map of Capt Sturt's route from Adelaide to the Centre of Australia. Constructed from the Original Documents and other official Documents.*

J Arrowsmith, London 1847 RC880 atc 1849 .

Framed oil painting of *Daniel Brock at James Poole's graveside*. Poole was a surveyor in Sturt's 1844-46 expedition to 'the centre'. He died at Depot Glen and was buried under a Grevillea tree in July, 1845. Artist unknown. PF 18.

7. MEMORIALS

See extract from RGSSA Memorials list, prepared by K Crilly in 1997, pp75-81. Sturt is/was "recognised" in many places, ranging from a plaque at the Bank of Adelaide King William street, to a Cairn and Tablet at Innamincka to his statue in Victoria Square.

