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A N A R E R E S E A R C H N O T E S

First visitors to Heard Island

Max Downes

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to make available transcripts of reports by the first visitors to Heard Island. The sequence of voyages in the vicinity of the island between 1773 and 1858 is described. Discovery is attributed to Captain John J. Heard in the bark *Oriental* in 1853. This voyage not only broke the news of a new island, but also gave a position that initiated sealing at the Island in 1855. The majority of early visitors were sealers hunting sea-elephant for oil. The industry peaked in 1858 and continued sporadically for another 24 years.

Keywords:

Heard Island, Iles Kerguelen, elephant seal, sea-elephant, fur-seal, sealing, whaleships, sea-elephant oil, Matthew F. Maury, great circle sailing, composite sailing, Southern Indian Ocean.

Explanatory Note:

In order to explain contemporary useage, words with a specific meaning in the context of the day have been treated as quotations and defined at the first occurrence, but are un-marked in subsequent text e.g., distance at sea was usually expressed in "*miles*," i.e., nautical miles, with one nautical mile equivalent to approximately 1.15 imperial miles or 1.85 km. The depth of the sea figured largely in sealing operation at the island. It was expressed in "*fathoms*," with one fathom equivalent to 6 feet, approx. 1.8 m.

Place-names used in the nineteenth century have been treated as quotations and written in italics within quotation marks. Present-day place names are in regular text.

To provide relative perspective in the discussion of places at Heard Island, distances have been calculated by the Haversine Formula used in navigation. ^[1] (appendix A).

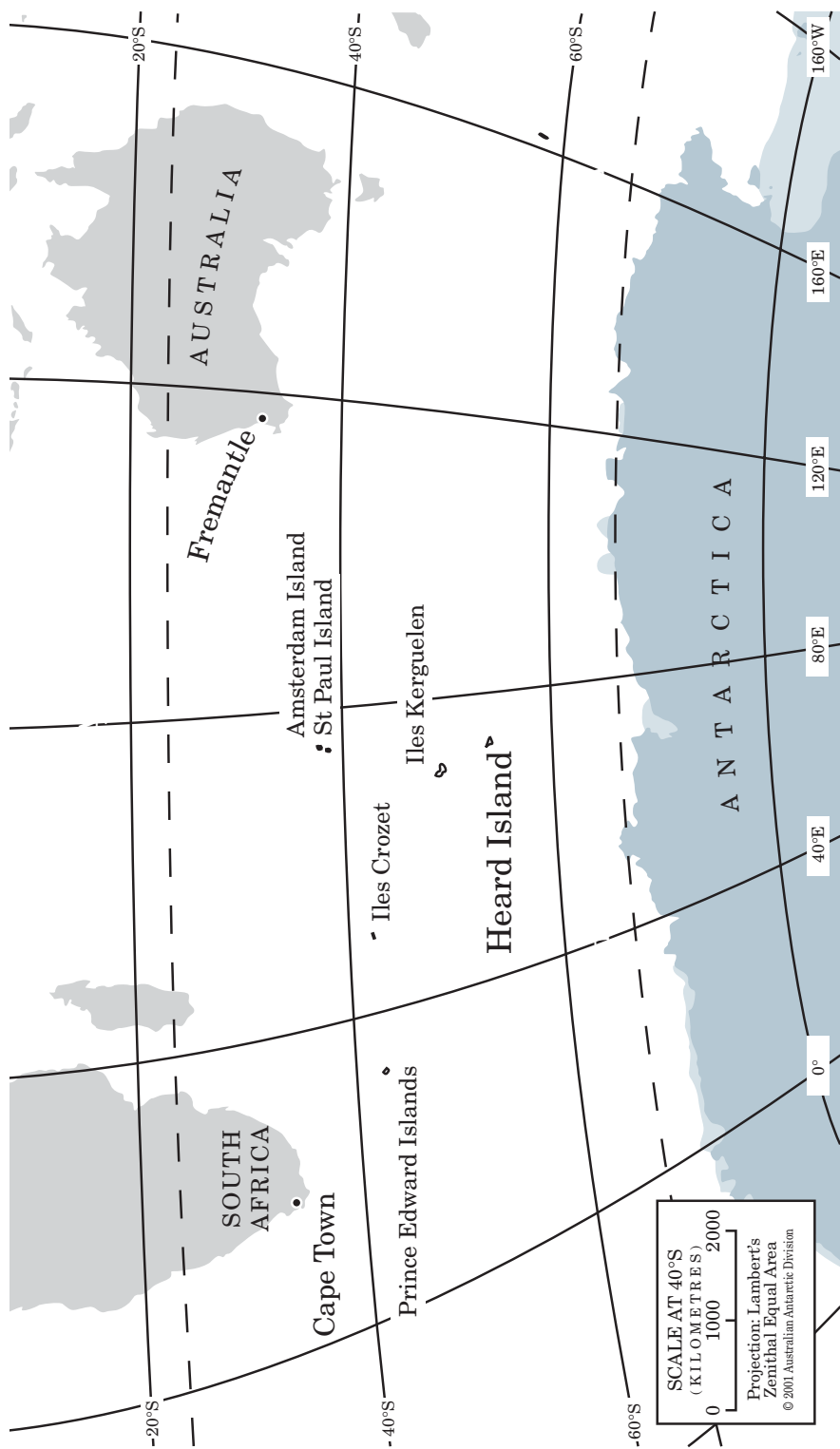


Figure 1. Location map showing position of Heard Island in Southern Ocean



Figure 2. The first known landing on Heard Island was made at Spit Bay by Captain Erasmus D. Rogers with a party of sealers from the ship *Corinthian* on 15 February 1855. (see section 4.1.1). This was the view in 1987 looking west across the “The Landing” to the sealers’ anchorage off “Fairchild’s Beach” [Skua Beach]. - Photo by the author. The cache of oil-casks at Oil Barrel Point, half buried in sand and pebbles, was the work of the crew of the bark *Trinity*, New London, master John L. Williams, wrecked here in 1880. - Downes (1989); (see section 5)

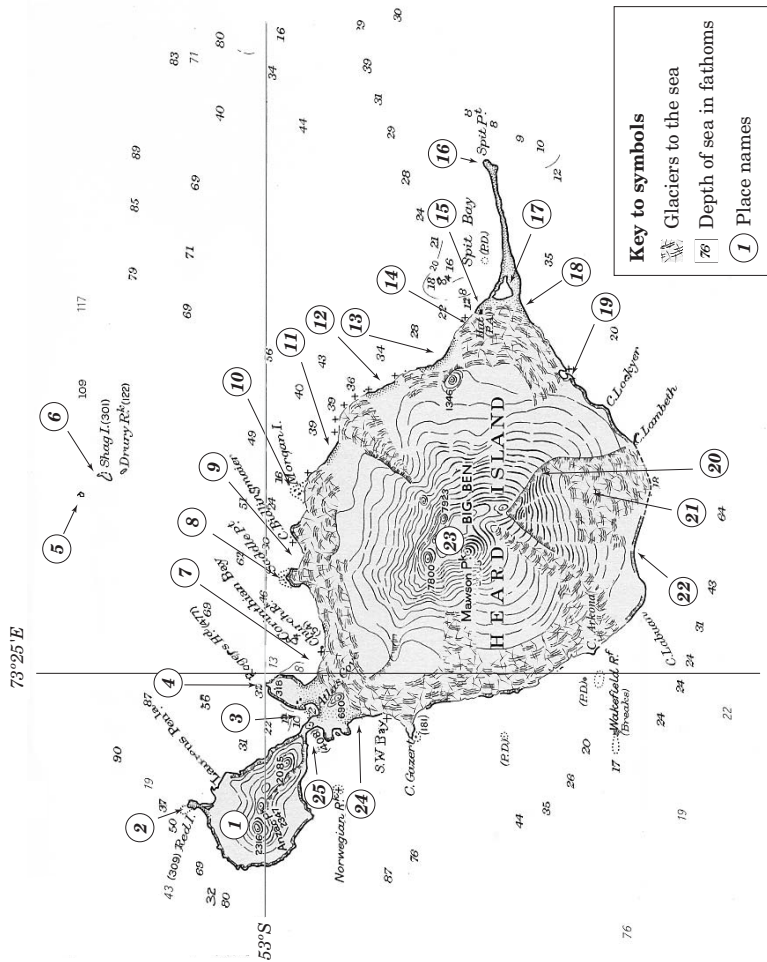
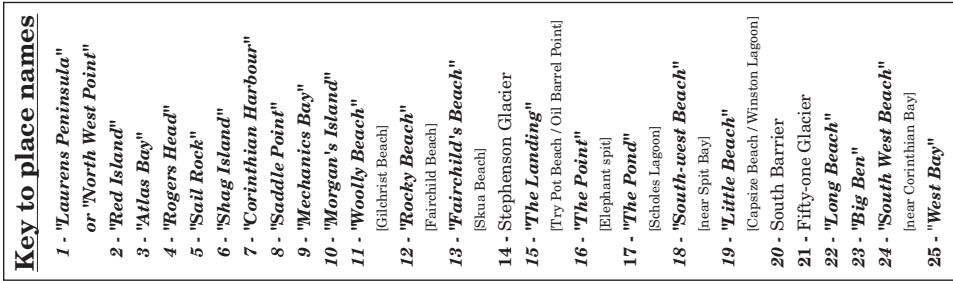


Figure 3. Place-names used at Heard Island during the 19th century. Names used by the sealers are shown in *italics*; present-day names are in smaller, roman, font. During the 19th century most of the Heard Island glaciers descended to the sea, ending in ice-cliffs as tall as ships' masts. Base map adapted from British Admiralty Chart 802 (1965).

1. Introduction

“Heard’s Island ... is in reality an ice island, with only enough of solid land visible at different points to prove that it is not an iceberg. ... Some of the points or headlands which are found along its eastern shore rise out of the sea in the form of perpendicular cliffs.

Captain Darwin Rogers ... was once at anchor near one of these cliffs for an entire month without obtaining a view of the summit. ... his ship on several occasions was felt to quiver from stem to stern in a very frightful manner, the cause of which, as he subsequently ascertained, was the falling of immense blocks of ice, from the cliffs into the sea.

Alternating with those huge bulwarks of ice, are some of the most beautiful beaches of black sand, where the surf perpetually rolls up fresh from the South pole.” - Lanman (1869).

The story of the discovery and early history of Heard Island (53°06' S. 73°32' E.) has been recounted many times since the existence of the island group was first documented almost 150 years ago. First was Petermann (1858), followed by Rosser & Imray (1867), Lanman (1869), Roberts (1950) and the most detailed Bertrand (1971). Other authors have mentioned numerous historical events in accounts of the elephant seal industry - Scammon (1874), Clarke (1887), Decker (1973), Richards & Winslow (1971), Richards (1981), Busch (1985), and Downes (1996). The accounts of scientific expeditions also included some history - Tizard *et al.* (1885), Drygalski (1907), Aubert de la Rüe (1930), and Law & Burstall (1953).

In recent years the sequence of events has become obscured, as commonly accepted assumptions were repeated, usually without reference to the first accounts published in little-known sources. The purpose of this paper is to assemble records from the nineteenth century, allowing a more definitive view of what was seen, by whom, and when.

A sequence of voyages in the period 1773 to 1858 is described (Table 1.). These include exploratory voyages in subantarctic waters, merchantships seeking quicker routes to Australia, and whaleships engaged in sealing at the Island.

With the development of composite great circle sailing, in the early 1850s a rush of merchantships passed close to the uncharted islands, and Heard Island was discovered by chance. Discovery of the main island in the group has been attributed to Captain John J. Heard in the bark *Oriental* in November 1853, and of the smaller western islands to Captain William McDonald of the ship *Samarang* in January 1854.

Within five years of the announcement of its discovery in 1853, more than 50 sealing voyages had been made to Heard Island directly as a result of this first publication of its position. The first known landing took place in 1855 from the ship *Corinthian*, commanded by Captain Erasmus D. Rogers. The first wintering party in 1856 was led by Henry Rogers, mate of the brig *Zoe*.

Table1. *First visitors to Heard and McDonald Islands or near-by waters, and the names given to the islands*

Vessel	Master	Year	Group	Heard Is.	McDonald Is.
Pre-discovery					
<i>HMS. Resolution</i>	Cook, J.	1773			
<i>HMS. Adventure</i>	Furneaux, T.	1773			
<i>Magnet</i>	Kemp, P.	1833			
<i>Charles Carroll</i>	Long, T.	1849			
Ships on composite courses					
<i>Oriental</i>	Heard, J.J.	1853		Heard Island	
<i>Samarang</i>	McDonald, W.	1854	MacDonald Islands.	Young's Island	Macdonald's Island
<i>Earl of Eglinton</i>	Hutton, J.S.	1854	Sands Group	Hutton Island	
<i>Herald of the Morning</i>	Atteridge, J.	1854		larger island.	smaller island
<i>Lincluden Castle</i>	Rees, D.	1854	Rees Is.	Dunn Island	Gray Island
The Sealing Fleet					
<i>Corinthian</i>	Rogers, E.D.	1855		Heard's Island	McDonald Island
<i>Anne</i>	Cameron, J.G.	1855		Young Island	MacDonald Island
<i>Atlas</i>	Brown, W.	1855		Hurd's Island	
<i>Mechanic</i>	Edwards, J.	1855		(Sealers' name)	
<i>Marcia</i>	Church, J.L.	1855			
<i>Laurens</i>	Smith, F.F.	1856			
<i>Alert</i>	Church, S.	1856			
<i>Zoe</i>	Rogers, J.H.	1856			
<i>Franklin</i>	Starr, J.	1856			
<i>Exile</i>	Butler, L.L.	1856			
Later visitors					
<i>La Rochelle</i>	Meyer, J.	1857	König Max-Inseln		Heard's Insel.
<i>Caribou</i>	Cubbins, D.	1858			

The historical record is an important part of the evidence bearing upon the ecology of the islands. Information on the first visitors is only the beginning. There is still much material from the nineteenth century to be examined, particularly three decades of sealers' and whalers' records. For this reason, detailed discussion of the technical implications of the accounts should be deferred until a more accurate picture is available of the technology practised at the islands.

For example, why the island was not found sooner is only briefly discussed because it hinges on little understood navigational and sailing techniques used by whalers and merchantmen in the nineteenth century. At their best, these mariners managed their ships using equipment and personal skills which were the result of centuries of evolution in sailing practice. Navigation close to dangerous shores without the benefit of instruments and charts is little known today. We cannot assess the achievements of another time without understanding the technology. (see also sections 2.3.4 and 5.4.)

2. Pre-discovery

It may be supposed that Heard Island would have been easily seen from passing ships. Mawson Peak rises to 9000 feet (2745m) and the dome of Big Ben is about two nautical miles wide at 7000 feet (2000m). Under ideal conditions Big Ben might have been seen up to 104 miles by the lookout at the masthead 50 feet above the deck. - Norie (1938):27, 161. The tip of Mawson Peak might have been visible for another 13 miles.

However, for any vessels more than fifty miles away, only features higher than 1300 feet would be visible above the horizon. The island's covering of ice and snow would disguise it as an iceberg. The stories of the first visitors make it clear that icebergs were common in the region. Moreover, the mountain was often hidden in dense cloud and fog, and signs of land were very much harder to distinguish than at other islands in the region. Unless the vessel passed closer than 50 miles, the chances of recognising land from a ship were low.

2.1. *HMS Resolution*, master James Cook, 13 February 1773

Captain Cook's experience on *HMS Resolution* during his second world voyage in 1773 was probably the first of many who passed by but did not see the islands. Several vessels had been searching for land in the southern Indian Ocean, and Kerguelen-Trémarec sighted Iles Kerguelen in February 1772. Cook learned by chance of the discovery from informants at the Cape of Good Hope in November 1772, but the position he was given was wrong. For three weeks in January and February 1773, Cook searched the area from 400 miles to 200 miles west of Iles Kerguelen without success, specially recording "*signs of land*" in his log - Beaglehole (1961):lxiii, 88-94. On 10 February at 49°53' S. 63°39' E., some 200 miles from Iles Kerguelen, Cook turned southeast toward Antarctica (see Figure 4.).

The closest approach to Heard Island was recorded on 13 February at 53°54' S. 72°34' E., whilst still keeping a lookout for Iles Kerguelen. If the reported position was accurate, the *Resolution* was almost equidistant from McDonald Island and Cape Labuan, Heard Island, both about 53 miles to the northeast. ^[2]

"We are now accompanied by a much greater number of penguins than at any time before, and of a different sort, being smaller, with reddish bills and brown heads [macaroni penguins?], the meeting with so many of these birds gave us still some hopes of meeting with land and various were the opinions [sic] of the officers of its situation. Some said we would find it to East others to the North, but it is remarkable that not one gave it as his opinion that any was to be found to the South which served to convince me that they had no inclination to proceed any farther that way." James Cook's Journal, 13 February 1773 - Beaglehole (1961):93.

Although the presence of penguins with reddish bills and brown heads may suggest Macaroni penguins and proximity to Heard Island, it was only one of many "signs of land" recorded in the search for the so-called "*Kerguelen's Land*." Many other indications of land—the

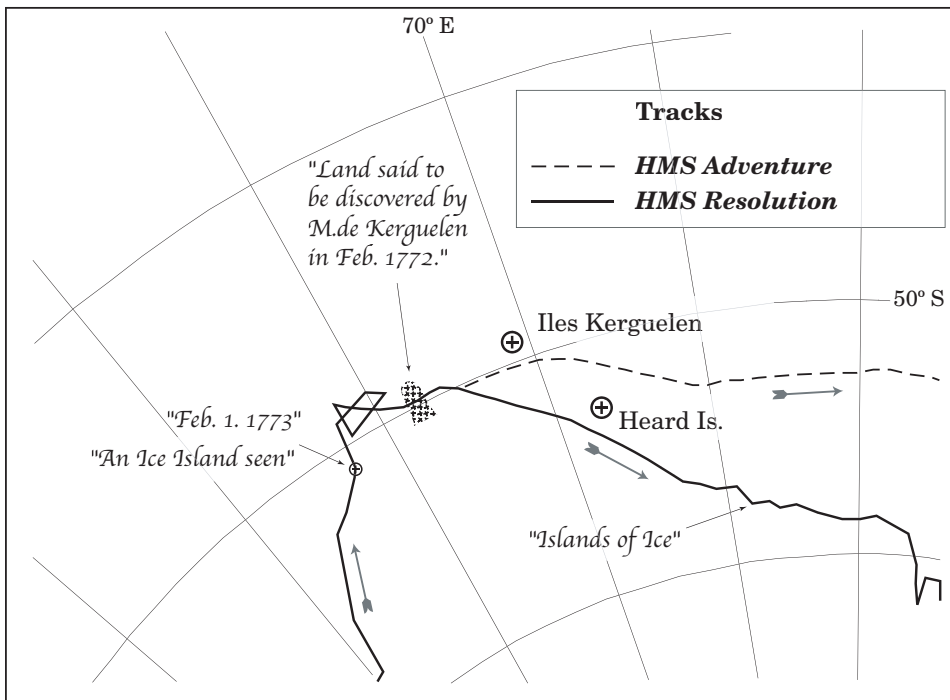


Figure 4. Cook's track in HMS Resolution January–February 1773, in search of the "Land said to be discovered by M. de Kerguelen in Feb. 1772." - Adapted from "A Chart of the Southern Hemisphere" in Cook (1777).

Cook passed more than 50 miles from Heard Island on 13 February 1773.

direction of the swell, various birds, including penguins, “divers,” “Port Egmont hens,” “egg-birds,” were recorded on eight of ten days in the passage from 57° E. to 73° E. For example, 400 miles west of Iles Kerguelen on 1 February 1773:

“... a large float of sea or rock weed, and about it several birds (divers). These are certainly signs of the vicinity of land, but whether it lay to the east or west, it was not possible for us to tell.”

On 16 February Cook reached the conclusion:

“... it is now impossible for us to look upon penguins to be certain signs of the vicinity of land or in short any other aquatich birds which frequent high latitudes.” Cook’s Journal, 16 February 1773 - Beaglehole (1961):95.

The accompanying vessel *HMS Adventure*, master Tobias Furneaux, lost contact with the *Resolution* on 10 February and bore away to the east between 52° and 53° S. This was the first vessel known to have passed between Iles Kerguelen and Heard Island and no signs of land were recorded - Beaglehole (1961).

Kirker (1970):15 speculated how the publication of Cook’s journal in 1777 initiated sealing in various places. In particular, Cook’s chart of his second voyage showed the location of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and sealing commenced in that region. But the supposed position of Iles Kerguelen on this chart was greatly in error and when Cook could not find land, sealers were not prompted to go there. It was not until after Cook’s third voyage, and the results were published in London in 1785 and America in the 1790s, that an accurate position for Iles Kerguelen was available, prompting sealing to begin on the “*Desolation Grounds*” in the 1790s - Kirker (1970):15. Iles Kerguelen was invariably called “*Desolation*” by whalers throughout the nineteenth century, echoing Cook’s name for the archipelago.

Essential information that might have prompted a search for Heard Island was not available from Cook’s second voyage, and the island was not visited by sealers until much later.

2.2. Snow Magnet, master Peter Kemp, 27 November 1833.

The discovery of Heard Island was summarised in the British Admiralty’s *Antarctic Pilot* between 1948 and the 1990s:

“Heard Island was first sighted by the British sealer Peter Kemp, master of the brig Magnet, on November 27th 1833, though it has been named after Captain Heard, of the American ship Oriental, who sighted the island in 1853, when on passage from Boston to Melbourne, but did not approach within 25 miles of it.” ^[3]

Similar statements have been made by many others on the assumption that Peter Kemp and not John Heard should be credited with the discovery. But what is the evidence that Kemp was the first to sight Heard Island? As will be shown, the available record does not confirm

what Kemp saw, or where he was. Moreover, Heard's log indicated the *Oriental* approached within 20 miles of Heard Island, and detail was recorded which clearly identified his discovery.

2.2.1. Background to Kemp's Voyage

The *Magnet*, 148 tons, was a snow (an early type of brig) on a sealing voyage for Daniel Bennett and Son, London oil merchants for at least forty years. ^[4] What is known of Kemp's life and the voyage of the *Magnet* in 1833 was detailed by Jones (1968). Peter Kemp was an experienced master who took soundings in mid-ocean, noted the colour of the sea (as an indicator of land), recorded the presence of fur-seals and elephant-seals, and was equipped with the new chronometers made by Arnold and Dent. This confirms that Kemp was on an exploratory as well as a commercial voyage: Kemp was a master mariner sent by the owners to look for new land. On such an errand, and with twenty years' experience in command of vessels in the South Seas Fishery, entries about land on his track cannot be lightly dismissed.

The voyage was prompted in part by Biscoe's discoveries in the Antarctic in 1831 for the rival firm of Enderby. Departing from London on 15 July 1833, Kemp made for Iles Kerguelen and sailed from that place on 26 November. The *Magnet* worked south, sighting the coast of Antarctica on 27 December. Kemp returned to Iles Kerguelen and remained elephanting for several months. He departed for the Cape of Good Hope on 24 March 1834. Kemp fell overboard on 21 April and was drowned. The *Magnet* reached Simons Bay, Cape of Good Hope on 16 May 1834.

2.2.2 Significance of the entry "Saw land"

The best description of the course of the *Magnet* past Heard Island is that by Jones (1968):235.

"Early in the morning of 26 November 1833, shortly before dawn, the Magnet left Royal Sound, Kerguelen, rounded Cape George and bore somewhat west of south for the Antarctic. For the first week, with favourable winds, Kemp made good progress at six and a half knots. On the morning of the 27th, when in lat. 52°30' S. long. 69°15' E., Kemp, according to his track chart, 'Saw Land', which is commonly assumed to be Heard Island, ..."

The only available source for Kemp's sighting is a chart preserved in the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (H678/4), drawn by John Purdy and published by R.H. Laurie. The title, which has not been noted previously, is:-

"A chart of The World on Mercator's Projection - with the tracks of the more distinguished modern navigators. ... etc. by John Purdy. Published August 14th. 1830, by R.H. Laurie, ... London. New Edition, Materially Improved 1832,3." ^[5]

The courses of John Biscoe in the brig *Tula* in 1831, and Peter Kemp in the snow *Magnet* in 1833 were plotted in manuscript (written by

hand) on this copy of the chart. A tracing was reproduced by Mawson (1935):527 and Price (1962):4. Both described the chart as dated 1833; but it was published in 1832; the date of receipt at the Hydrographic Office was 27 May 1833, and the date of the manuscript tracks are unknown. (see Figure 5.)

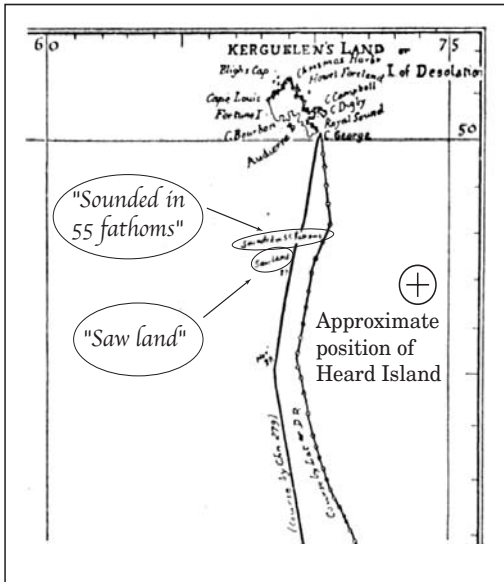


Figure 5. Portion of Kemp's track in the Magnet south from Iles Kerguelen in November 1833. - Adapted from the tracing in Mawson(1935).

It is not known to which island the annotation "Saw land" might refer. Two tracks were depicted. That to the west was the course by chronometer 279; to the east the course by dead reckoning. The annotation "Sounded in 55 fathoms" suggests proximity to land, but far from the plotted positions.

The entry "Saw land" on chart H678/4 might refer to several islands in the region. It is not known what was seen by Kemp or an unnamed member of his crew; or in which direction the sighting was made—toward Heard Island, the McDonald Islands, or any land in the vicinity. Why Kemp did not further investigate the sighting is without evidence and not considered here.

Given the express purpose of the voyage and Kemp's experience, it is unlikely the entry was caused by an illusion, an iceberg or cloud, even though these were known to have confused many sailors. The success of his voyage to the Antarctic coast suggests a greater level of competence than this. New land was marked on his track at another place - Kemp Land on the Antarctic coast. This discovery was confirmed by Mawson a hundred years later.

2.2.3 Provenance of the track

The origin of the handwritten track on Chart H678/4 has not been determined. It is unlikely to have been drawn by Kemp himself. The wording of another entry "Land seen by Capt. Kemp of 'Brig Magnet' Dec 26 & 27 1833" on the coast of Antarctica suggests a cartographer using information from Kemp's journal. The journal was said by Mawson (1935):528 to have been in the Royal Geographical Society, but subsequently lost. Jones (1968):238 states that the Messrs

Enderby gave “a copy of Biscoe’s chart to the Hydrographic Office, and Biscoe’s track was printed in some detail upon Laurie’s chart.” This suggests that Kemp’s track might have been added to Chart H678/4, either in the Hydrographic Office or before it was received in May 1833. A search of correspondence in the U.K. Hydrographic Office might shed light on this document.

The annotations on Kemp’s track indicating land south of Iles Kerguelen appear to have been dismissed by cartographers in the nineteenth century - not because the information was overlooked or unpublished, but because insufficient evidence was available. The information regarding Kemp’s voyage in Chart H678/4 was published on all major maps of discoveries in the region—without the annotation “*Land seen.*” For example, it was included on the “*Chart of the South Polar Sea*” (Chart 1240) published by the British Admiralty in June 1839.^[6] Jones(1968):240 pointed out the annotation was not shown on J.W. Norie’s 1846 edition of the “*Complete East India Pilot.*” As late as 1905, the cartographer J.G. Bartholomew plotted Kemp’s track between 68° and 69° E., some 150 miles west of Heard Island, without “*Land seen,*” for example, in his “*Chart of the South Polar Regions*” in Mill (1905): end-map.

2.2.4 Where was the *Magnet*?

Mawson (1935) and Jones (1968) have discussed errors in Kemp’s observations and possible positions for the *Magnet*. Mawson concluded that the corrected dead reckoning position of the *Magnet* on 27 November was 52°37’ S. 70°20’ E., about 103 miles from Heard Island and 78 miles from McDonald Island.^[7] Using current coordinates in the Haversine formula, the distances are 119 nautical miles from Mawson Peak and 86 miles from McDonald Island.^[8]

Jones placed the *Magnet* at 52°30’ S. 69°15’ E., and rejected the possibility that Kemp was near enough to see Heard Island.^[9] This position is about 159 miles from Mawson Peak and 125 miles from McDonald Island.^[10]

Alternative positions can be calculated for the *Magnet*, sufficiently close for Mawson Peak to have been seen on the very rare days of clear weather. However, as pointed out by Bertrand (1971), these unverifiable assumptions do not provide evidence of discovery. Whether the *Magnet* might have been close enough for Heard Island to have been seen is not relevant in the absence of information about what was seen.

2.2.5 Conclusion

What Kemp saw is not known. Moreover, it is not known where the *Magnet* was with respect to any of the land in the vicinity. The plotted positions of the *Magnet* on the 27 November 1833 are uncertain due to the probability that Kemp’s observations of position were in error. The other evidence from the chart, a sounding of 55 fathoms just before land was recorded, strongly suggests the *Magnet* may

have been close to an unknown island, and far from the positions plotted on the chart.

Contrary to the statement by Roberts (1950):580, there is no satisfactory evidence that Heard Island was first sighted by Peter Kemp.

Continued speculation about where the *Magnet* might have been, or what might be seen at various places, obscures the reality that this record lacks crucial evidence in support of a claim that Kemp was the first to see Heard Island.

2.3 Sealers and Whalemen

In the 1830s and 1840s many whaleships cruised the southern Indian Ocean, including the Desolation Grounds around Iles Kerguelen. It is necessary to clarify their activities.

The men hunting sea-elephants did not call themselves “*sealers*.” They were “*whalemen*,” as befits their training, even though they hunted sea-elephants, or fur-seals, or particular kinds of whale according to the opportunities of the season. On the other hand, writers outside the trade labelled them sealers in apparent distinction from whalemen. This convention is still followed in the literature today, though it does not accord with the usage of the time.

Hunting sea-elephants for oil was “*elephanting*” - hunting fur-seals for skins was “*sealing*.” The two activities were clearly distinguished. Sealing and elephanting required cruises to different places, different skills, and special out-fitting. Elephant oil might be supplemented with whale oil if opportunity presented — frequently bay-whaling at Iles Kerguelen during the winter, occasionally off-shore whaling if the elephant season was poor or the accompanying tender had been lost - Downes(1996):15.

The sailing behaviour on each type of voyage, (sealing, elephanting, bay-whaling, off-shore whaling and merchant voyages) differed in ways which affected discovery and exploitation of the islands. (see also section 2.3.4)

2.3.1 Ship *Charles Carroll*, master Thomas Long, 1849

Sea-elephants had been hunted on Iles Kerguelen since the 1790s. Sightings of Heard Island by whalemen before 1850 would seem possible, if not highly probable. But it is puzzling that no evidence has been found in the records to date, considering the commercial value of a new sealing ground. Only one claim of a sighting by a whaleship has come to light, that mentioned by Charles Lanman in a newspaper article written in 1869 long after Heard Island was well known:

“For many years the merchants of New London cherished the belief that there was land somewhere south of Kerguelen’s Island, for in no other

way could their captains account for the continuous supply of the sea elephant on its shores. As long ago as 1849 Captain Thomas Long, then of the Charles Carroll, reported to the owners of his ship that he had seen land from the mast-head while sailing south of Kerguelen's Land."-Lanman (1869).

Lanman had in his possession logbooks from the firms Perkins & Smith and E.V. Stoddard, New London owners of the *Charles Carroll*, *Corinthian*, *Zoe*, etc., whaleships that hunted sea-elephants at Heard Island and Iles Kerguelen. ^[11] Presumably these were the source of the above comment. The *Charles Carroll* ^[12] made four voyages to Iles Kerguelen, in 1844-45, 1845-47, July 1847 to March 1849, and 1859-62 - Decker (1971):136, etc.; Downes (1996):27.

Rumours about new sealing islands circulated in the trade at the time. It is difficult to believe, as Richards (1981):297 pointed out, that masters of vessels working for the same owners would not know about or would not have fully investigated the report by Thomas Long. It is probable that other masters searched for the land but did not find it without an accurate position.

Erasmus D. Rogers was mate on the *Charles Carroll* on Long's voyage in 1849. Six years later while working for the same owners, Rogers learned of Captain Heard's discovery. The position was available to him, he acted promptly and found the island with little difficulty. At the time in his logbook, and in his reminiscences, Rogers fully acknowledged that it was Captain Heard's information that prompted his search and he made no mention of any prior discovery. (see section 4.1)

It is not known what island might have been seen from the *Charles Carroll*, and it has not been confirmed that this vessel had any role in the discovery of Heard Island.

2.3.2 Was Heard Island visited by sealers before 1855?

Perhaps the island group was encountered before the 1850s, but the unlucky visitors did not survive to tell the tale. This possibility was very much in the mind of mariners who first recorded the islands. (see section 6.2)

It has been argued that Heard Island was known to fur-sealers but they kept the location secret in order to exploit the seal colonies. Shaughnessy *et al.* (1988):75 concluded that fur-sealers were on the Island before 1855, and that more fur-sealing took place than has been reported.

Commercial secrecy is not a credible explanation of why sealing at Heard Island was unrecorded prior to 1855. It may be understandable that a report was not given to the newspapers or to the maritime authorities at least for a season or two. There was a tradition of secrecy between masters and rival gangs on the beaches. But keeping a commercial operation out of the records was a virtual impossibility. Because of the backup required, most sealing during the nineteenth

century left traces in the historical record, such as ships' logs, shipping records, customs papers, business documents or rumours in the newspapers. Downes (1996):6-8 listed 104 known voyages to Heard Island during the nineteenth century, and 27 logbooks were located. All of these voyages occurred after 1853. Additional logbooks might reveal unsuccessful searches, a sighting, or possibly a landing, but to date no record has been found that confirms commercial sealing took place at Heard Island before 1855.

Because of difficult living conditions on the Island and the need for shelter, it is unlikely that fur-sealers could operate in such a place without leaving material traces on the ground. No earlier shanties or other relics were mentioned by the 1855 elephant-sealers. They claimed to be the first, and this was widely accepted in the literature of the day. Relics from the 1855-1880 period have persisted in this isolated locality for more than a century - Downes (1989). Conclusive evidence for prior sealing would be to find artifacts that can be dated before 1855.

2.3.3 Numbers of fur-seals at Heard Island in the Nineteenth Century

What is the evidence that fur-seals were in large numbers at Heard Island prior to 1850 - attracting fur-sealers who then decimated the population?

The reporter Charles Lanman wrote in a newspaper:

"At one point which they called the Seal Rookery, they [F. Smith and E.D. Rogers in 1856] slaughtered 500 of those animals, and, as was afterwards found, thereby exterminated the race in that locality." - Lanman (1869).

Roberts (1950):580 accepted that 500 fur-seals were killed in 1856, quoting Lanman as his source. On the other hand, Bertrand (1971):245, Colby (1936):19, and Richards (1981):301 considered that 500 sea-elephants were killed.

Rogers' journal of the operations at Heard Island in 1856 records the killing and skinning of 500 sea-elephants on 24 January, and the subsequent work of skinning and burying the blubber on South West beach before it was put in casks and transported to the whale-ships in Corinthian Bay - see section 5.1.

Lanman's reference to extermination of the race does not fit sea-elephants, his article describing large numbers on many beaches over subsequent seasons. On the other hand, it is a likely outcome for a small fur-seal colony. This is supported by an undated map in Bertrand (1971):234 showing a "Seal Rookery" [sic] on the west coast in the approximate position of South West Bay/West Bay, an area where Smith and Rogers operated in 1856. The map consists primarily of sealers' information, and the use of the term "seal" in this context is specific to fur-seals. Only one seal rookery was indicated; the numerous elephant seal harems on which the industry operated were not shown.

South West Bay may seem an unlikely location for a fur-seal colony. It is on the weather side of the Island, and since the 1960s most fur-seals have favoured the more sheltered northeastern side of Heard Island - Budd (2000):54. On the other hand, fur-seals have been reported from beaches on the western side, and the presence of a small colony somewhere on the extensive vegetated moraines in the area of South West Bay/West Bay indicated by the map cannot be ruled out.

The sealers at Heard Island were specially out-fitted to hunt sea-elephants. But 500 fur-seal skins would be a very significant addition to their cargo, and likely to be noted in logbooks and subsequent commercial records. The logbooks seen by Lanman have not been found. The only contemporary record available confirms that fur-seal skins were taken by Franklin Smith's party, but lists a much smaller number. On return to New London on the 9th May 1857, an entry in the Customs manifest for the bark *Laurens* reads:

"Taken at Herds Island, 3800 bbls elephant-oil; 50 bbls whale oil; 300 lbs whale bone; 80 seal skins. Consigned to Perkins & Smith. [Signed] Franklin Smith, master."

The manifests from the other vessels returning from the same voyage to Heard Island, the *Corinthian*, *Atlas*, *Franklin* and *Marcia* in June 1856, and the *Pioneer* and *Zoe* returning with the *Laurens* in May 1857, do not include any skins - U.S. National Archives (1990). The entry "80 Seal skins" in the manifest confirms Lanman's remark that fur-seals were taken in 1856, but doubt exists about the number. The number 500 in the newspaper might be a confused reference to the sea-elephants taken at South West Bay.

There is no evidence in the available record that large populations of fur-seals existed on Heard Island prior to the arrival of the elephant-sealers in 1855. Numbers remained low through the next 110 years, and seal-skins never appeared in the extensive commercial records over the thirty year sealing period. The fur-seal population increased notably between 1960 and 1990 - Budd (2000). Reports by the first visitors of numerous icebergs, lower air temperatures, and snow near sea-level in summer suggest much colder conditions in the 1850s than one hundred or more years later. This may be related to low number of fur-seals at Heard Island during the nineteenth century.

2.3.4 Why wasn't Heard Island found sooner?

Unless positive evidence is found for a sighting prior to 1853, it must be supposed that there were reasons for the delay in finding the island group. Other islands in the region had long been known. Possible reasons may include:

- (a) Location of the islands on the edge of the usual shipping routes. Few masters ventured as far south as 53° S. because of risk to the vessel.
- (b) Difficult sailing weather in the vicinity of Heard Island.

(c) Frequent fogs and cloud in the vicinity of the Island greatly restricted the distance over which signs of land could be recognised.

(d) The behaviour of whaleships engaged on the various types of voyage differed from each other and from merchantmen in a way that affected their chances of discovering the new islands. By the nature of their work, sealers and bay-whalers generally had a specific destination—a known island, or islands. Most sealing masters preferred to try their luck at known sealing localities, such as Iles Kerguelen, Iles Crozet and the Prince Edward Group. They did not roam aimlessly about the ocean. Off-shore whalers were more numerous and itinerate; they searched the oceans looking for whales, but their interest lay in avoiding islands, or any signs of land, if they could.

(e) Vague rumours about new islands to the south circulated among sealing masters. Only a very small minority of masters searched for new islands, and then only on good information, or in the course of a paying venture. Unless an accurate position was available, considerable time and money would be wasted checking rumours.

In summary, adjacent islands in the southern Indian Ocean had been visited for more than 50 years. The mountain on Heard Island should have been a highly conspicuous object. But the cloud cover and snow often obscured the signs of land which might otherwise have been recognised by the small number of passing vessels. Seas were more rugged, icebergs were common, and the weather too difficult and thick with fog for safe navigation in sailing ships, a fact well recognised by the *Challenger* Expedition in 1874 - Tizard *et al.* (1885):377-378.

3. Ships On Composite Courses

Evolution in sailing practices during the 1840s prompted the discovery of Heard Island. From 1851, there was greatly increased traffic between Europe or North America and Melbourne, Australia, because of a major gold-rush. Recommendations on composite sailing were coming to fruition, allowing a quicker route for ships sailing to the Antipodes. Alexander Findlay summed up developments in his directory for the Indian Ocean:

"In 1847 Mr Towson published his Great Circle Tables; in 1849 Captain Godfrey, in the Constance, made the celebrated voyage from England in 77 days, which placed the route to Australia on a totally different basis, by running down the easting on the parallel of 51° S. instead of between 30° and 35°. Acting on the principle thus demonstrated, Captain Forbes in the Marco Polo, Captain Boyce in the Eagle, and others, chose a higher parallel, that of 52°, with eminent success.

All ships soon followed in their track, and in 1853 and 1854 we have an account of the Heard group of islands from several ships, which sailed eastward on this composite course." - Findlay (1870):300-301.

3.1 Matthew Maury's Contribution

Matthew F. Maury, Superintendent of Depot of Charts and Instruments, which later became the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office, defined the practice of composite sailing in the 1850s:

"In 1847 Mr J.T. Towson of Liverpool computed a set of tables to facilitate the practice of great circle sailing, which are published by the Admiralty. By these tables Mr Towson has won the credit of having systematised and introduced regularity into the art and science of practical navigation.

This new branch ... is now known as 'composite sailing' - that is, when a navigator makes up his mind to 'run down his longitude' upon a certain parallel, the nearest way for him to get on that parallel is by arc of a great circle, which passing through the place of his ship, is tangent to that parallel. Likewise, in quitting the parallel called the 'vertex' [i.e., the highest latitude reached], the nearest way is again by arc of great circle, which passing through the place of his ship and his destination, is tangent to that parallel. Mr Towson's tables afford the navigator simple rules and methods for finding his courses and distance by such arcs.

The navigator who will not take the trouble to ... follow the great circle curves to or from the parallel or vertex, but prefers the rhumb-line course, will lose a few hours to more than a day's sail according to circumstances."
- Maury (1859):586.

Maury widely distributed "Abstract Logs," a pro-forma sea-log for ship-masters to record the winds and currents encountered on the voyage. By cooperating in a coordinated plan of observations and sending an abstract log to the National Observatory in Washington, the master received information on the findings.

By this direct and practical method Maury persuaded many masters to change the sailing route to Australia. He recommended an alternative to the time-honoured Cape of Good Hope route of "running down easting" between the 32° and 39° parallel.

"In recommending this new route which differs so widely from the favorite route of the Admiralty, ... it is not because it is an approach to the great circle route, nor is it because it is to do with the composite track, but because the winds, and the sea, and the distance, are all such as to make this route the quickest." - Maury (1859):589.

The new route made use of shorter sailing distances, but more importantly it utilized "the brave west winds." These were the strong westerly winds between 40° and 55° S., much further south than the "Calms of Capricorn" and the S.E. Trades. (An example of the maps Maury used to convince mariners has been used as background for Figure 6.)

Maury stressed that the most southerly parallel to be followed to the east would be determined by wind and ice conditions, the state of the ship, the weather that season, and the well-being of passengers and crew:

Table 2. Particulars of 72 vessels that sailed in the vicinity of Heard Island and Iles Kerguelen 1850-1855 and returned Abstract Logs. Maury (1859):597-598.

(a) Vessels passing south of Heard Island (below 53°13'S)

Vessel	Port	Departure	Latitude at meridians			Days from Cape St Roque to Melbourne
			60° E.	70° E.	80° E.	
<i>John</i>	Lizard Light	3 Nov 1850	54	54°30'	57	
<i>Oriental</i>	Boston	13 Aug 1853	54	53°30'	53°30'	72

(b) Vessels sailing between Kerguelen and Heard (49°50' to 52°57'S)

Vessel	Port	Departure	Latitude at meridians			Days from Cape St Roque to Melbourne
			60° E.	70° E.	80° E.	
<i>Ringleader</i>	Boston	18 Oct 1852	51	52	51	49
<i>Humboldt</i>	New York	24 Mar 1853	50°30'	51	51	57
<i>Great Britain</i>	Liverpool	9 Aug 1853	51	51	51	39
<i>Auckland</i>	Boston	16 Aug 1853	53	53	52°30'	64
<i>Gauntlet</i>	London	4 Sep 1853	52	50°30'	50	54
<i>Avondale</i>	Lizard Light	16 Dec 1853	52	52°30'	52	67
<i>Red Jacket</i>	Liverpool	4 May 1854	52	52	50	42
<i>Nightingale</i>	New York	20 May 1854	50°30'	51	51	44
<i>Marion</i>	Liverpool	27 Aug 1854	50°30'	50	48	48
<i>Beverly</i>	Boston	2 Mar 1855	49	48	48	58
<i>Whirlwind</i>	New York	28 Mar 1855	51°30'	51°30'	51	48
<i>Mandarin</i>	New York	21 Dec 1855	49	50	49°30'	47

(c) Vessels passing less than 100 miles north of Kerguelen (47° to 48°30'S)

Vessel	Port	Departure	Latitude at meridians			Days from Cape St Roque to Melbourne
			60° E.	70° E.	80° E.	
<i>Tarolinta</i>	New York	11 Jun 1853	47	47	47°30'	59
<i>Malay</i>	Boston	14 Oct 1853	47°30'	46	46	51
<i>Gertrude</i>	New York	14 Jul 1854	47	47	46	56
<i>Windward</i>	New York	29 Dec 1854	47	48°30'	49	59
<i>Gertrude</i>	New York	19 Oct 1855	47	48	47	52
<i>Australia</i>	New York	26 Jan 1856	47	47	47	61
<i>Royal Charter</i>	Liverpool	11 Feb 1856	48	47°30'	47	39
<i>James Baines</i>	Liverpool	8 Apr 1856	48°30'	49	47	46

"Having crossed the equator [between 25° and 32° W.], with sea room, and a good offing from the shores of Brazil [off Cape St Roque], the best course for all, whether European or American, is to crack on through the S.E. Trades with topmast studding sails set, or at any rate with a clean rap-full. ... cross 30° S. between 28° or 30° W., shaping their course until they get the winds steadily from the westward, more and more to the east, until they cross the prime meridian [0° E.] south of 50° S.

They should reach 55° S, at about 20° E. The best course, if ice conditions, etc. will allow, is onward to the southward of east, not going north of 55° S. before reaching 120° E. The highest latitude should be reached between 60° and 80° E. ...

The strong westerly winds ... are generally between 40° and 55° S., but always between 50° and 55° S. or even farther south, prevailing with great regularity and force. Moreover they are accompanied by that long rolling swell which will of itself help a vessel along many miles a day. ..." - Maury (1853):xii-xiv.

An immediate result was an increase in the number of vessels sailing in the vicinity of Heard Island in the 1850-55 period. Maury listed seventy two vessels that took the route to Australia south of 40° S. and which sent in their Abstract Logs (Table 2). This would be a small part of the total shipping that passed at the time. Two of the seventy two vessels tracked south of Heard Island - the *John*, from Lizard Light, 3 Nov 1850; and the *Oriental*, Capt. Heard, from Boston, 13 Aug 1853. Twelve vessels passed between Heard Island and Iles Kerguelen, (one in 1852; five in 1853; three in 1854; three in 1855). Eight vessels passed less than 100 miles north of Iles Kerguelen. The remaining fifty vessels tracked more than 100 miles north of Iles Kerguelen, between 40° and 47° S.

3.2 Bark *Oriental*, master John J. Heard, 25 November 1853.

The first sighting of Heard Island which can be validated was that by Captain John J. Heard on 25 November 1853, and the first public announcement appeared in the Melbourne *Argus* 24 December 1853:

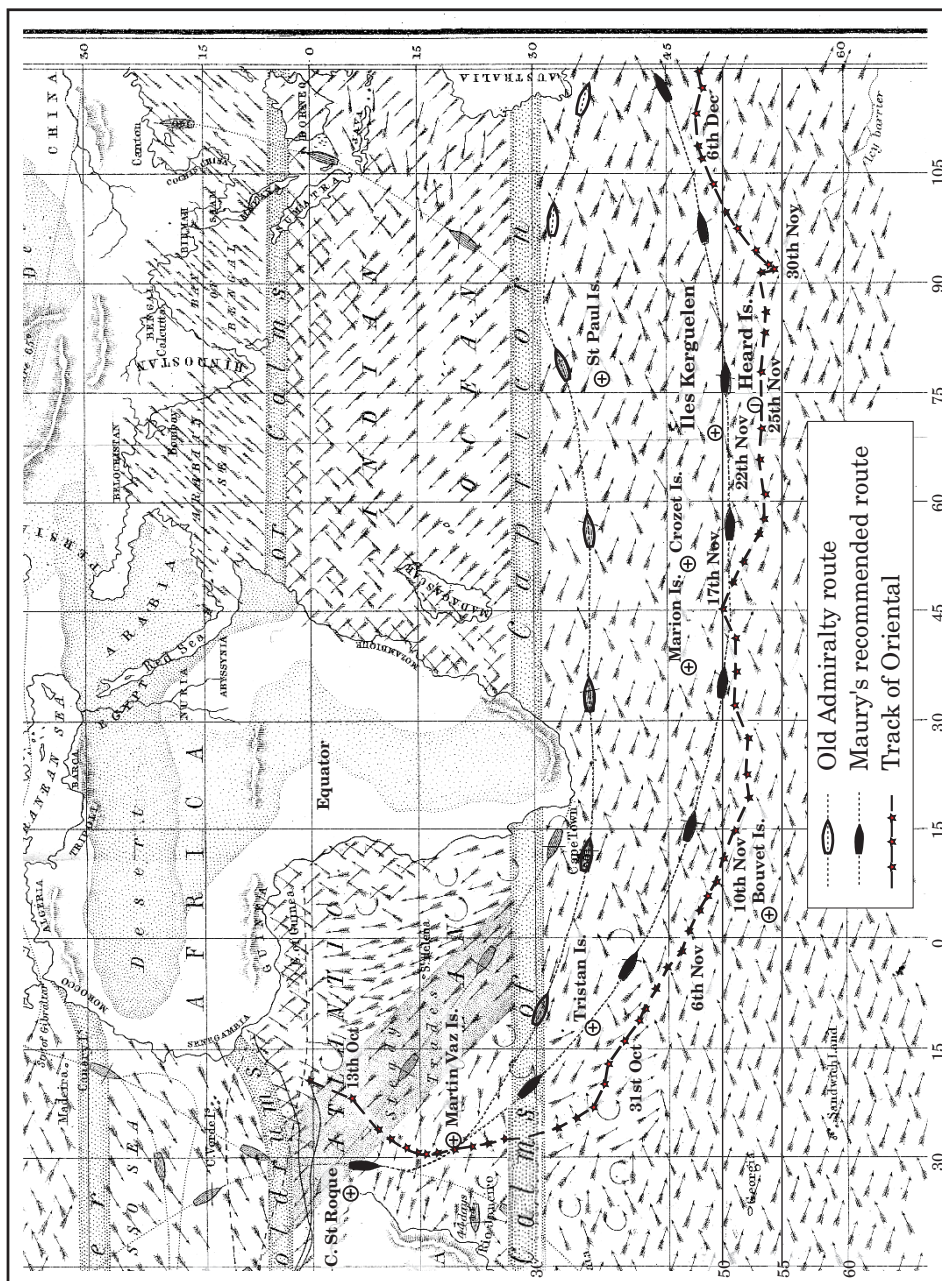
"Captain Heard of the Oriental, reports having seen, in lat. 53°26' long. 74°19' E, an island, 20 miles N, covered with snow, and not on the chart. He judged it to be 25 miles from east to west. The Oriental brings a general cargo, consigned to Messrs Kidgton, Harvey and Co., Melbourne, and consisting of lumber, staves, agricultural implements."

The Captain was accompanied by his newly-married wife, Fidelia, who wrote in her journal on 25 November 1853:

"At 10 o'clock the Captain was walking on deck and saw what he supposed to be an immense iceberg. ... but the atmosphere was hazy, and then a heavy snow squall came up which shut it out entirely from our view. ... Not long after the sun shone again, ... and the tops of the apparent icebergs covered with snow; the outline was very indistinct.

We were all the time nearing the object and on looking again the Captain pronounced it to be land. The Island is not laid down on the chart, neither is it in the Epitome, so we are perhaps the discoverers." ^[13]

Figure 6.
The track of the
Oriental,
compared with
Maury's
recommended
route and the old
"Admiralty
Route."
(For explanation
of symbols see
section 3.2)



The base map is
an example of the
chart "Winds and
Routes," used by
Matthew Maury
to persuade
mariners to use
the new route to
Australia. -
adapted from
Plate VIII in
Maury (1861).

The bark *Oriental* was a merchant vessel bound from Boston to Melbourne. Captain Heard was testing the composite great circle route recommended by Maury. The quest for a quicker passage took the *Oriental* to the 53° S. parallel and Captain Heard was the first, by a month, to claim discovery of the new island. The voyage of the *Oriental* has been described by Bertrand (1971).

In Figure 6, the track of the *Oriental* can be compared with the route recommended by Maury and the old “Admiralty route.” The track of the *Oriental* has been plotted from the daily observations of position listed in Maury (1855):763-768. The route recommended by Maury passes between Iles Kerguelen and Heard Island. The old “Admiralty route” to Australia followed a rhumb-line course from the Cape of Good Hope past St Paul Island between the 32° and 39° S. parallel. The small arrows indicate the direction of the prevailing winds.

The tracks of Cook, Kemp and Heard near Heard Island have been plotted in Figure 7 for comparison.

3.2.1 How close was the *Oriental* to Heard Island?

What was seen from the *Oriental* on the 25 November 1853, significance for priority of discovery, is clarified by entries in the following documents:

- (a) the Abstract Log prepared by Capt. Heard for Maury;
- (b) a journal of the voyage kept by Mrs Heard;
- (c) the letter from Capt. Heard on 4 Jan. 1854 notifying Lieut. M.F. Maury of the discovery; and
- d) Maury’s subsequent correspondence with the U.S. Government.

The ship’s log has not been located, and it is possible that the Abstract Log is the only document available. ^[14] An extract of the relevant entries follows:

“Bark Oriental Abstract from Boston towards Melbourne,

13 August 1853. ... got under weigh with the tow boat three passengers, my wife and two young men Henry Beal and Wm Kimball. Ships company and passengers making 20 all told. ... [sailing details omitted] ...

November 25, 1853, bark Oriental, Capt. John J. Heard, Boston to Melbourne.

8 PM	Barometer	29.10	Air temp.	34	-	Winds	NE
Midnight		29.10		32	-	Winds	NW
8 AM		29.10		37	Water temp.	34	-
Noon		29.5		38	-	-	-

Pleasant breezes and passing snow squalls, the latter part clear and the first clear weather that we have had for 20 days.

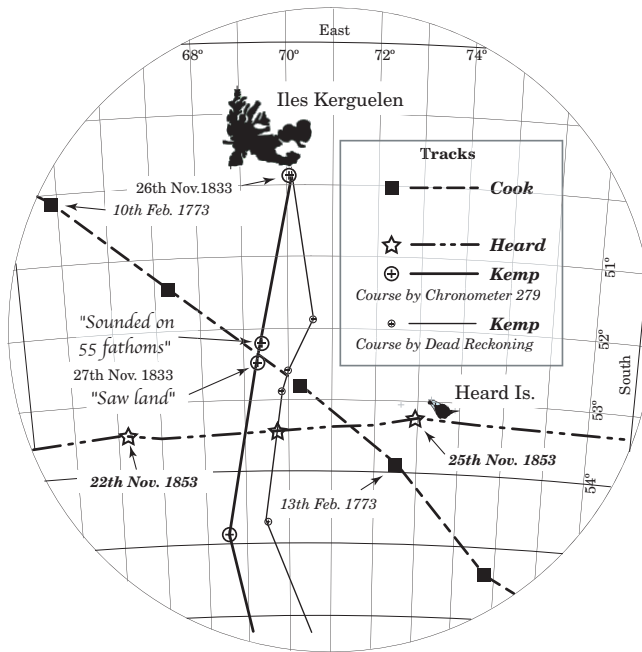


Figure 7. The tracks of Cook, Kemp and Heard in the vicinity of Heard Island and Iles Kerguelen plotted on a one degree grid.

According to their reported positions, Cook passed 53 miles from Heard Island, Kemp perhaps 140 miles, and Heard about 20 miles from the island

Two tracks are shown for Kemp. (see section 2)

At 8:30 am, made land; first took it for ice bergs and as no island is laid down on my charts, or in the *Epitome*. At 11:30 am the clouds and haze cleared round and over it, revealing it to be an island.

At noon the eastern end bore by compass NN East 20 miles, the west end bore by compass NbW dist about 20. by good observation I make the west end of island 74-15 East Lat 53-10 S. East end lat. 53-10 S. Long 74-40 E. Near the centre of the island a high peak 5000 feet.

Lat. observed 53°26' S. 74°19' E. 3 1/4 points. ... [short entry not deciphered] ...

Large quantity of birds about. 105 days out."

As the *Oriental* passed to the south of the island, Heard noted in his Abstract Log the distance from each end as 20 miles. The Antarctic Pilot maintained that the *Oriental* did not approach within 25 miles of the island - U.K. Hydrographic Office (1974):125.

The distance has been re-calculated using the Haversine Formula. Captain Heard's observations of longitude were about a degree too far east. Without knowing the exact error, his observed position cannot



Figure 8.

(left) Captain John Jay Heard (1809-1862) (left) and his son John, (photo about 1857). In the merchant marine for 32 years, Captain Heard had the reputation of being a careful, reliable sailor - Bertrand (1971):219.

(right) Fidelia Reed Heard (1823-1895) accompanied her husband on the voyage of the *Oriental* in 1853, four months after their marriage. Fidelia recorded in her journal the unexpected encounter with Heard Island and made the first known sketch (photo later in life).

Photos courtesy of Mrs Elizabeth Heard and David Heard Jr.

be compared with the position of the island as known today in order to calculate the distance. On the other hand, the distances between Heard's three calculated positions —the vessel at noon, the east end and the west end of the island, should be comparable with each other for determining how far Heard calculated he was from the island. Using these positions in the Haversine formula, the *Oriental* was 16.2 miles from the west end (probably the visible part of Laurens Peninsula), and 20.3 miles from the east end (probably Lambeth Bluff or the South Barrier; the low Spit further east was unlikely to have been visible as land). Mrs Heard recorded in her journal their opinion on the day that the island was 15 miles off.

3.2.2 Sailing conditions near Heard Island.

Fidelia Heard (Figure 8) described the practical difficulties of sailing in high latitudes in the vicinity of Heard Island - conditions which played a crucial part in its history:

"13 Aug. 1853. On board Barque Oriental. I had hoped that the vessel would be ready to sail on the 13th, my birthday, and altho' it was Friday the 12th by Civil Reckoning, by Nautical Reckoning the 13th began at 12 M. on Friday. So after all, according to ship' acct. I had my wish ...

14 Nov. 1853. ... We passed 4 large icebergs during the last 24 hours. They send a chill through us - we have seen 7, fortunately they are not very near us th' on each side of us. The deck is quite dry today, and I have had a nice walk, the sea is more calm. Yesterday and last night the sea was tremendous. It is frightful to look upon when the waves run so high - at one time yesterday it struck the ship and went 40 feet above the rail... The therm. stands at 34 now on deck - it has been as low as 28 at 4 o'clock one morning. We have had ice some inches thick on deck.

15 Nov. ... saw another iceberg yesterday afternoon.

16 Nov. Another thick hazy day and another tremendous sea... Our latitude is 51.15 south longitude 41.40 east.

19 Nov. Very thick fog, so we can get no observation, which we always regret, for it is a great satisfaction to know with certainty where we are.

20 Nov ... 100 days out. Daylight begins with us at 3 o'clock and lasts till 9 in the evening, tolerably long days.

21 Nov. This morning the sun shone out most charmingly, but it has been obscured almost ever since. William [passenger] is quite sick with very sore throat and dreadful chilblains. He neglected attending to them until they have become very bad. I dressed his feet this morning and the Capt has made him a pair of moccasins. His feet are too much swollen to wear his own shoes, neither can he get on a pair of the Captain's.

22 Nov. An old fashioned snowstorm, I hope it will not last a great while. Dreamed that no. 1 Bedford Place [home] was consumed by fire. William much better today. Weather very cold and cheerless, I shall be thankful when we get out of this gloomy latitude.

23 Nov. Same kind of weather that we've had for a month, but we have good breezes the last twenty-four hours, and that helps us mightily. Latitude 53.22 S Long 66.22 E. A long road to go yet.

24 Nov. Yesterday afternoon the sun made us quite a visit, it made everything look more cheerful. This morning it was out a short time, also at noon, but it does not stay long. The Captain had a watch on deck last night from 12 to 4 o'clock; the first time the mates have been unable to perform their duty. The second mate had a severe cold, and thought it best to cure it by taking it in season. Tomorrow will be Susie's sixteenth birthday.

25 Nov. The sun has been out quite bright nearly all the morning which has made us all feel quite elated, but the air is cold yet.

At 10 o'clock the Captain was walking on deck and saw what he supposed to be an immense iceberg. He came and called me and told me to put on my 'chicken fixings' (as he called them), dress up warm and come on deck to see it. I hastened to do so, but the atmosphere was hazy, and then a heavy snow squall came up which shut it out entirely from our view.

Not long after the sun shone again, and I went up again and with the glass, tried to get an outline of it to sketch its form. The sun seemed so dazzling on the water, and the tops of the apparent icebergs covered with snow the outline was very indistinct. We were all the time nearing the

object and on looking again the Captain pronounced it to be land.

The Island is not laid down on the chart, neither is it in the Epitome, so we are perhaps the discoverers, if so the Captain will have the privilege of endowing it with a name. I think it must be a twin to Desolation Island, for it is certainly a frigid looking place. I suppose it is 15 miles off and the Captain judges the height to be 5000 feet, and the length 25 miles.

We did not forget that this is Susie's birthday, and drank her health with many heartfelt wishes for her continued health and happiness." ^[15]

The danger from icebergs was considerable. While running down the easting above the 50° parallel, more than fourteen icebergs were reported in about three weeks, even though visibility was very poor. The first was recorded on 11 November at 52°26' S. 19°42' E, and the last on 2 December. Air temperatures were close to freezing most days, falling a little below at night. But it was primarily the bad weather—strong winds, frequent gales (causing damage to the bark), severe snow squalls, thick fogs, and sudden changes of weather - conditions that made navigation difficult and sailing hazardous in these latitudes. One day, both mates were off duty; on another, four of the ship's company of twenty were on the sick list, while others complained of chilblains, colds and weather-related ailments. These conditions were a serious danger in managing the vessel and were the reason why most shipping avoided this part of the Indian Ocean. The presence of so many icebergs, lower air temperatures, and snow on the deck and on the ground at sea-level in summer suggest that conditions were colder than they were a hundred and more years later.

3.2.3 Publication of the Discovery.

The *Oriental* anchored at Melbourne on 22 December 1853, ^[16] departed on 24 April 1854, and arrived in Boston on 26 January 1855. Two days after arrival in Melbourne, notice of the new island was published in the Melbourne *Argus* 24 December 1853. This small item, (reproduced at the beginning of this section), was brought to the attention of the whaling/sealing community by being copied verbatim by newspapers around the world. In the same issue, the *Argus* noted the death on the *Oriental* of nineteen-year-old Andrew Simonds, who fell from the m'zen-mast-head and broke his neck.

On 4 Jan 1854, Captain Heard informed Lieut. Maury of the discovery, by letter to the U.S. Naval Observatory. At the time, Maury was Superintendent of the Depot of Charts and Instruments, which later became the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office. Heard enclosed his Abstract Log, and the sketch of Heard Island made by Mrs Heard. The relevant extract reads:

"... Nov. 25th. discovered an island which I claim the privilege of naming Heard's Island, as I cannot find it on any chart that I have seen.

My observations on that day were the only reliable ones I had got for over 20 days. You will see the particulars of the Island in my Abstract Log, which I send you, also notices of several shoal places.

My passage from 11°00' E. to 100°00' was nearly all fog, and the winds irregular. I should not recommend any one coming down in the same season of the year." ^[17]

Maury informed the Secretary of the U.S. Navy of Heard's discovery in a letter dated 12 June 1854:-

"Capt. H. sent me a sketch of the island, which in the exercise of the rights which usage gives to discoverers, he claims for the United States, and calls Heard's Island. ...

There is a vast amount of shipping engaged in the Australian trade, and according to the best route, as indicated by the wind and current charts, this reported discovery lies in the fair way of outward bound vessels, both from this country & Europe to the ports of Australia. Doubt as to the existence or position of dangers in such a commercial thoroughfare as this is, should not be suffered to remain a day too long. Heard's Island may perhaps prove valuable to the sealing interests; it is not a probable place of resort for the guano fowls. I hope the department will find it convenient to have all doubts removed at an early day, as to its place and existence." ^[18]

Maury further publicised Heard's claim by sending copies of his letter to the Nautical Magazine, London. It was reprinted in Boston Journal June 1854, in Whalemens' Shipping List 27 June 1854, and in other newspapers around the world. The main place where the discovery was permanently recorded was in the next edition of M.F. Maury's *"Explanations and sailing directions to accompany the wind and current charts,"* 1855, which contained the passage:

"Another caution is necessary to navigators in this trade, that have a fancy on the outward passage, to run down their longitude between the parallels of 51° and 53°.

There is a group of newly discovered and not accurately determined islands in the way. They are between the parallels of 52°53'36" and 53°12' S., and the meridians of 72°35' and 74°40' E. They were first seen by Captain Heard, of the American barque Oriental, November 25, 1853.

On the 12th June 1854, the fact was duly reported by me to the government of the United States, and the importance of sending a vessel of the navy to look after them and fix their position was urged upon the Navy Department. Since their discovery by the Oriental, they have been seen and reported by four English vessels, viz: The Samarang, Captain M'Donald, January 3, 1854; the Earl of Eglinton, Captain Hutton, 1st December, 1854; the Lincluden Castle, Captain Rees, 4th December 1854; and the Herald of the Morning, Captain Attwaye, 3d. and 4th December 1854. Captain Heard reports a peak of the island he saw, to be 5,000 feet high." ^[19]

The United States authorities—the Navy Department and Department of State, took no action on Heard's claims. They did not agree to take possession of Heard Island, nor to consider a reward for the discovery of a new guano island or sealing ground. They did not act on Maury's suggestion to send a vessel to determine its correct position - Bertrand (1971):228-229.

Despite persistent letters from Captain and Mrs Heard over the following decades - to the U.S. Department of State, the Navy Department and the President, the decision to take no action remained unchanged. The only suggestion was that if Captain Heard wished to take possession of the Island himself and exploit the resources, some limited protection might be afforded him as discoverer of an unoccupied island. After 1860, and two years before his death, Captain Heard summed up his frustration:

"I have seen in the papers from 1855 to 1860 the arrival of 3,200,000 galls. of elephant and seal oil in the United States, which sold for \$1,920,000. Independent of the immense quantity of oil there are many thousand tons of guano on the Island. There is a good harbor with 20 fathoms water and no dangers, protected from all dangers except N.E.

My circumstances are such that I cannot work the Island myself. My wish is that the Federal Gov't, with the concurrence of Congress, should give me \$40- or \$50,000 for the Island and let the U.S. do as they like with it.

(signed) John J. Heard." ^[20]

3.3 Ship *Samarang*, master William McDonald, 4 January 1854.

Little more than five weeks after Captain Heard's sighting, Captain William McDonald in the ship *Samarang* ^[21] discovered McDonald Island. He also sighted Heard Island, (which he called "Young's Island," after the owner of the *Samarang*), Meyer Rock (calling it "Whitbourne Cap," after one of the officers), and Shag Island, (called "Smith's Island"). A letter from McDonald, including extract from his journal, was published in Sydney Morning Herald, 30 Jan. 1854:

"Captain Macdonald, of the Samarang, has kindly furnished us with the following important extracts from his private journal.

January 3. Wednesday. Heavy gales. with high seas which struck the stern, and stove in all the starboard, and started the port frame.

4th. Strong gales; sea increasing; and very much discoloured; great numbers of Cape pigeons flying about.

At 5 P.M. ice was reported a-head, which on nearing we found to be land, an island of three or four miles in circumference [McDonald Island], and a conspicuous rock standing off about a mile [Meyer Rock]. We passed within a mile of the rock, and could plainly see that it, and also the large one, was land of volcanic origin. It was blowing a tremendous gale from the N.W. (the ship running ten or eleven knots), and pooping, so that we could not take soundings, but from the appearance of the water I should say there was no more than from thirty to forty fathoms. The temperature of the water was 36° when nearest the island; after passing it, we found the water again got dark-coloured, and the sea going down.

At 8.30' I again remarked that the sea was very green, the swell increasing, and was not the least surprised when land was again reported, at 9 P.M., on the starboard bow [Heard Island]; it was then blowing a furious gale.

This island was about four times larger than the first, and I should say what we saw was about 1500 feet high, but it might be much more, as the top seemed to be enveloped in clouds or mist.

There was also a small island of about half a mile in extent, to the northward of the largest one, almost in shape like a gun-quoin [Shag Island]. Being fearful that there might be more, and the night setting in dark and thick, with a furious gale, as soon as we passed the largest island hove-to under a close-reefed main-topsail. I intended taking some soundings, but it blew so heavily that our men were fully employed furling sails until daylight, and then the water was dark again.

Knowing that no such islands have ever been reported in these parts, I claim the priority of discovery, and therefore name the western one Macdonald's Island [McDonald Island], and the high rock off it Whitburn's Cap [Meyer Rock]; the largest I name Young's Island [Heard Island], and the small one off it Smith's Island [Shag Island]. The first one appeared to be quite barren, and of volcanic origin; the largest one appeared more level and undulating on the top, although very high. They both seemed to be lower and more level on the eastern sides.

Had the weather been anything like moderate, I would have endeavoured to land, or else remain in the vicinity until daylight, and then landed and taken possession; but the weather was so fearfully bad, and not knowing what dangers might exist, I deemed it prudent to go on the tack which would reach us to the N.E.

I know there are many people who will say—'Why did you not endeavour to remain in the vicinity, and make assurance doubly sure by landing, or at least sounding.' To this I would answer—'We had more than enough to do in attending to the ship, but when I did heave-to we were only about six or seven miles past the last one, but the gale was so furious that the ship was driven far to leeward before morning.'

We christened them in champagne next day, when we ascertained their positions by very good observations and found them to be -

Macdonald's Isle, latitude 53.0' S. longitude 72.35' E.

Young's Island, 53.3' 73.34'

On passing the island, myself and one of the passengers saw something black, about thirty feet in circumference, in the hollow of the sea, for three seas, about a pistol-shot on the lee-beam, and which I have no doubt, was a rock under water; as it only showed in the hollow of the seas.

Midnight. - Blowing a perfect hurricane. A.M. - Blowing still as hard. Noon. - Dirty weather. Latitude 52.37' S. longitude 74.14' E."

This letter was copied in the *Argus*, Melbourne 4 Feb. 1854, and promptly answered by Capt. Heard, still in Melbourne on 7 Feb 1854, reiterating his previous account and claiming priority of discovery. McDonald's letter was repeated in the *Shipping Gazette*, 17 May 1854; the *Nautical Magazine* July 1854 and April 1855 with comments by the editor.

The brevity of the entry in McDonald's journal on the 3rd January the day before McDonald and Heard Islands were sighted—"Heavy gales with high seas which struck the stern, and stove in all the starboard, and started the port frame," illustrates how little of the sense of the occasion may be conveyed by a working journal or ship's log. Another account of this incident by Mrs Hugh Wyndham Sen., passenger on *S.S. Samarang*, brings into perspective the serious effects of gales, and the danger inherent in sailing near Heard Island:

"The Samarang, 580 tons, ... had a Scotsman as Captain, and his wife was on board too as a passenger, and 5 or 6 others in the chief cabin. The vessel was manned by British officers, and the crew were lascars, ...

The Captain took the vessel into higher latitudes than usual and discovered some uncharted islands. He took the latitude and longitude and when we got to Sydney reported them, and they were charted and called McDonald Islands after our Captain. ...

On Jan. 3rd 1854, after the four youngest children had gone to bed, the Captain and some of the passengers were playing cards at the cuddy table - one of the middies sent by the Chief Mate came to the skylight over the table and said to the Captain 'There's a cyclone blowing up, Sir'.

The Captain said 'Damn' and went on playing. In a few minutes the youngster came back and said 'The cyclone is on us, Sir'. The Captain jumped up, but before he could get on deck there was a fearful crash; the vessel heeled over on an angle of about 45 degrees; we could not stand, and the din was fearful of the falling masts and yards, and the stamp of the crew who rushed on the decks. The masts and yards of the sails were hanging over the port side, trailing in the water.

Some of the officers rushed into our cabins to see if the children were safe. They were washed out of their beds by the wave, and there was three feet of water in our cabins. We had a stern cabin and three others. The first got the full force of the cyclone and the large windows smashed up and afterwards had to be boarded up.

The sailors were soon busy cutting away masts, sails and rigging. When this was done, the ship righted itself and was a sorry sight. The three lower masts were all that was left, and next day we had a fine drying ground for blankets and clothing. Fortunately the wheel was not damaged, nor was the man at the wheel washed away. The passengers in the steerage were all right, for the hatches were on, and they had only portholes open, which let in very little water. ..." ^[22]

3.3.1 The McDonald Group

On 12 June 1854, the same day that Maury wrote to the U.S. Navy giving notice of Captain Heard's discovery, the U.K. Hydrographic Office received a claim by Captain William McDonald for the discovery of McDonald Island. He also reported sighting "*Whitburn Cap*" [Meyer Rock], "*Young's Island*" [Heard Island] and "*Smith's Island*" [Shag Island].

McDonald had sent his log to Capt. Denham of *HMS Herald*, and it was transcribed for the U.K. Hydrographic Office, where it is preserved

as Document L9815. ^[23] This version of the *Samarang's* log differed in small detail from McDonald's journal (reproduced above) concerning what was seen in the waters around Heard Island. As it was the information on which the cartographers acted, it is reproduced in end-note.

The British authorities accepted McDonald's claim, and apparently unaware of Heard's claim, named the group "*McDonald Islands*." The names McDonald Island and "*Young Island*" [Heard Island], appeared on British and other European charts for several years. The name "*Iles MacDonal*d" was used for the group on French charts, for example in the 1856 edition of charts of the southern oceans produced by the Dépôt-général de la Marine, Paris. ^[24]

Subsequently, as Captain Heard's claim of priority was recognised, the name for the main island was changed on British charts to Heard Island, and the group became known as the Heard and McDonald Islands.

3.4 Ship *Earl of Eglinton*, master James S. Hutton, 1 December 1854.

Captain James S. Hutton in the ship *Earl of Eglinton* ^[25] sighted the islands on 1 December 1854. He called them the "*Sands Group*," and named the larger "*Hutton Island*" [Heard Island]. His letter appeared in the *Nautical Magazine* April 1855.

After passing McDonald Islands and rounding Laurens Peninsula, the ship steered out some seven miles to a point north of Spit Bay where the sketch was made (Figure 9.) This appears to be a view of Heard Island with Mawson Peak on the left, the "*tableland*" of Big Ben in the centre, and Shag Island and Sail Rock on the right.

"Ship Earl of Eglinton, At Sea, 1st Dec 1854.

To the Secretary of Underwriters, Lloyds.

Sir,

I have the honour to acquaint you, for the information of underwriters, that on my voyage from Greenock, which port I left on 24th Sept. last, in the new ship Earl of Eglinton, of 1274 tons O.M., under my command, bound to Port Phillip, Australia, that

In Lat. 52°53'36" S. Long. 73°40' E., Variation, 42° W., ship steering S.E. southerly, at 2h. a.m. of the 1st Dec. a large tract of land was described right ahead.

All hands were immediately called, the studding-sails hauled in, and we steered under the N.W. point, till within four miles of the shore. [The ship rounded Laurens Peninsula] It did not appear to have a scrub or vestige of verdure on it, and was the habitation of numerous wildfowl which quite shaded us over head.

After steering out for about seven miles, the N.W. point bore N.W.1/4 W.; the extreme southern point, S.W.; the latter point seemed lost in the

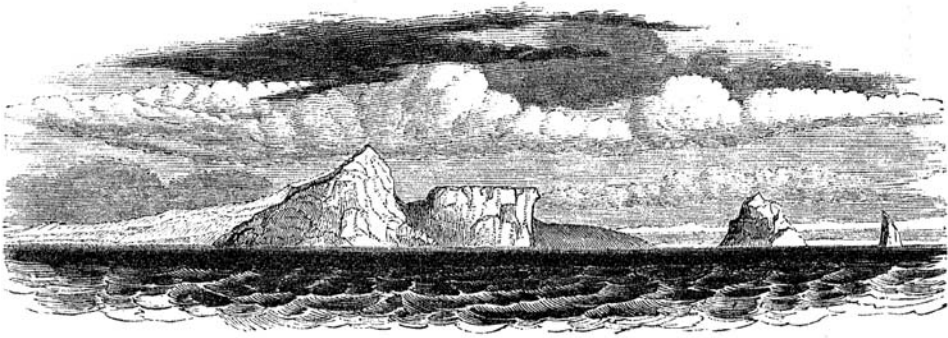


Figure 9. Sketch of Heard Island by James S. Hutton, master ship *Earl of Eglinton*, 1 Dec. 1854. - From Rosser & Imray (1867):501.

Hutton wrote: "A large conical mountain, resembling the Peak of Pico in the Western Isles, was on its south end, and a flat tableland, about the height and appearance of Table Mountain in the Cape Colony, and as seen from Table Bay." This suggests Mawson Peak and Big Ben as seen from north of Spit Bay, with Shag Island and Sail Rock on the right.

distance and capped with snow. In its N.W. and S.W. direction it appeared from fifteen to twenty miles. [The ship is northeast of Spit Bay]

A large conical mountain, resembling the Peak of Pico in the Western Isles, was on its south end, and a flat tableland, about the height and appearance of Table Mountain in the Cape Colony, and as seen from Table Bay. I enclose a sketch of it. [Figure 9.]

The position calculated from former and subsequent observations places the N.W. point in lat. 52°53' S. long. 73°50' E.

I may add that two small rocks lie off the west end, with a clear passage, as well as I could see, between the main land and the isle. [McDonald Islands?]

I intend forwarding remarks by the same conveyance to the Editor of the *Mercantile Marine Magazine* on composite sailing in high latitudes, wherein as in the present case 415 souls [the total of 415 included 52 crew], with a valuable cargo [1200 tons of merchandise], and the most expensive ship of her tonnage built in our country may be risked from contingencies not applicable on the common route, leaving others to judge, but having satisfied myself for after times. I also enclose a report of shipping signalized or spoken during this voyage.

I have etc., James S. Hutton.

P.S. - I have named the group Sands Group, and the large island Hutton Island." - Anon . (1855a).

In a letter dated 8 January 1855 published in the *Mercantile Marine Magazine* May 1855, Captain Hutton repeated his description of the encounter with Heard Island and described his use of composite circle sailing from the Atlantic Ocean to the entrance of Bass Strait, reaching a maximum latitude of 53° S. He remarked on the adverse weather in late November, for example, at 52°40' S. it snowed for ten days, and more than 30 icebergs were passed. When Laurens Peninsula was rounded on 1 December 1854, the shore was covered with snow - Anon (1855b).

An extract of the log of the *Earl of Eglinton* and the sketch by Hutton were reprinted in sailing directions for the Indian Ocean - Rosser & Imray (1867):500-501. This gives different positions, some of which may be misprints.

“Extract from the log of the Earl of Eglinton, Capt. J.S. Hutton.

Nov. 30th - Lat. 51°21' S. Long. 70°1' E., strong breeze from N.N.W. with snow.

Dec. 1st. - Lat. 53°01' S. Long. 75°30' E. [sic], strong breeze from W.N.W. with snow.

Steering S.E., southerly, at 2 A.M., on the 1st December, just as daylight was breaking, land was observed right ahead; all hands were called, and the studding-sails that were set on both sides hauled in, and we rounded close under the N.W. shore [Laurens Peninsula, Heard Island] after passing two rocks off the western point. [McDonald Islands?]

We hauled in within 3 to 4 miles of the shore, which was covered by snow, and from 50 to 80 feet high. No shrub or vestige of verdure was to be observed. That we were near the habitation of numerous ocean fowl was evident, since they quite shaded us overhead.

A large conical mount on the northern end resembled in height and appearance the Peak of Pico (Western Isles)—also a table land, in appearance like Table mount, in the Cape Colony, and as seen from Table bay. [Figure 9.] Although the weather was clear, we lost the extreme end in the distance, and a large quantity of snow lay on it.

In calculating the position from excellent sights on the previous noon, as well as the noon of that day, the N.W. end lies in Lat. 52°53' S., and Long. 73°50' E. The island appeared from 15 to 20 miles in a N.W. and S.E. direction; but as we lost the land in the distance, it may extend beyond that length.”

3.5 Ship *Herald of the Morning*, master John Atteridge, 3–4 December 1854.

On 3 and 4 December 1854, Captain Atteridge ^[26] in the *Herald of the Morning* ^[27] sighted the islands. A letter appeared in the *Illustrated London News* 31 March 1855, with two sketches, and in the *Nautical Magazine* April 1855:

“Royal Mail Steam Ship Argo, 15 March 1855.

To Capt. Halsted, &c. &c.

Sir, - I have the honour to inform you of the discovery of two islands in the Southern Indian Ocean by Capt Rees of the Lincluden Castle, and reported as seen by Captain Hutton of the ship Earl of Eglinton, also by Capt. John Attwaye [sic] of the ship Herald of the Morning, who states as follows:

‘On the 3rd inst. (December) I discovered an island and sounded in 73 fathoms, on black sand. A harbour about ten miles distant, good to view, but exposed to westerly winds. [Heard Island]

On the next day, the 4th, a small island distant from the larger one about ten miles, and a steep rock about a mile from it [McDonald Island and Meyer Rock]; the large island about forty miles and the small one about nine miles long.

I had good observations when close to, and sailing along two sides of the island. I give the middle of the large island lat. 53°10’ S. long. 74°36’ E. Longitudes deduced from chronometers, which leaving the Cape of Good Hope on 18th November were found to be correct.’

The name given by Captain Rees of the Lincluden Castle to the easternmost and largest island is Gray island [sic. Incorrect, should be Dunn Island = Heard Island], and the other Dunn Island [sic. Incorrect, should be Gray Island = McDonald Island], and position as follows:

Southeast end of Dunn Island [Heard Island] ... Lat. 53°12’ S. Long. 73°50’ E.

Northwest end of Dunn Island ... Lat. 53°2’ S. Long. 73°20’ E.

Gray Island [McDonald Island] ... Lat. 53° 2’ S. Long. 72°50’ E.

As these islands lie directly in the track of outward-bound ships which run their easting down in a high southern latitude, I consider it my duty to give you the earliest information of their existence. I am &c.,

G. Hyde, Commanding.” - Anon (1855a) & (1855b).

It is not possible to reconstruct the course of the *Herald of the Morning* as it passed “along two sides of the island.” This account appears to have been compiled from several sources. The names given by Captain Rees of the *Lincluden Castle* were misapplied. There were typographic errors in the copy from the *Nautical Magazine*; these have been corrected in the transcription above. The note in the *Illustrated London News*, 31 March 1855, was the same and included two sketches. (Figures 10 & 11.)

3.6 Ship *Lincluden Castle*, master David Rees, 4 December 1854.

On the 4 December 1854, Captain Rees in the *Lincluden Castle* ^[28] sighted Heard Island, which he called “*Dunn Island*” after the owner of his vessel, and McDonald Island, which he called “*Gray Island*” after the man who observed it. This letter appeared in the *Nautical Magazine* April 1855:

"Liverpool, 10 St James Street, March 20, 1855.

To the Editor of the Nautical Magazine.

Gentlemen, - By inserting in the Nautical Magazine the following extract from a letter received by me from Capt. Rees of the ship Lincluden Castle, dated Melbourne, 8 January 1855, you will perhaps confer a benefit on the numerous Captains now frequenting that port.

'On the 4th Dec 1854, at 8h. a.m., fine clear morning but very cold, ther. 28°, to my great astonishment we discovered something very like an island. On the chart there is no land marked near the place. It bore about S.b.W.; we were steering at the time S.E.; 43° variation. I hauled up immediately S.b.E.

At 10h. a.m. we passed within three miles of a rocky Island, apparently about four or five miles in circumference, and 400 to 500 feet high [McDonald Island]. Detached from the island about a mile to the westward, stood a high rock [Meyer Rock], in the shape of a sugar-loaf, higher than the island. I could see it plain from the poop eighteen miles distant. The position of the island [McDonald Island] by good observations is lat. 53°2' S. long 72°50' E. I named it Gray Island, after the man who first observed it.

When abreast of this island, high land was discovered to the S.E., covered with snow, the highest peak capped with clouds [Heard Island]. At noon we were within seven or eight miles of the N.W. point; from this point the land trended to the S.W. as far as I could see; the land high and bold. We sailed along the north side two hours and a half at the rate of ten knots, when the S.E. point bore S.W. 1 1/2 S. In passing along the north side, I saw an opening between two high hills, very like a fine harbour; there appeared a good bay outside, only open to N.W. winds. We passed two rocky islands about six or seven miles from the large one, apparently quite barren. [Shag Island, Sail Island]

The large island [Heard Island] presented a magnificent spectacle; the sun shone brilliantly on its snow covering, and its highest peak seemed lost in the clouds. I could see the high land plain at sundown fifty miles distant.

Lat. of N.W. end 53° 2'S. long. 73° 20'. [Heard Island]

Lat. of S.E. end, 53° 12' long. 73° 50'. I named this Dunn Island.

I am, &c., W. Rodgerson." - Anon (1855a).

In the same issue of the *Nautical Magazine*, in a note from Capt. G. Hyde written 15 March 1855, the positions of the islands were repeated, but Rees' names of "Gray" and "Dunn" Islands were transposed - Anon (1855a).. When repeated in the *Mercantile Marine Magazine* May 1855, Rees' names were corrected - Anon (1855b). As previously mentioned, sketches wrongly labelled "Grey's Island" [sic] and "Dunn's Island" were published in the *Illustrated London News*, 31 March 1855. (Figures 10 & 11.)

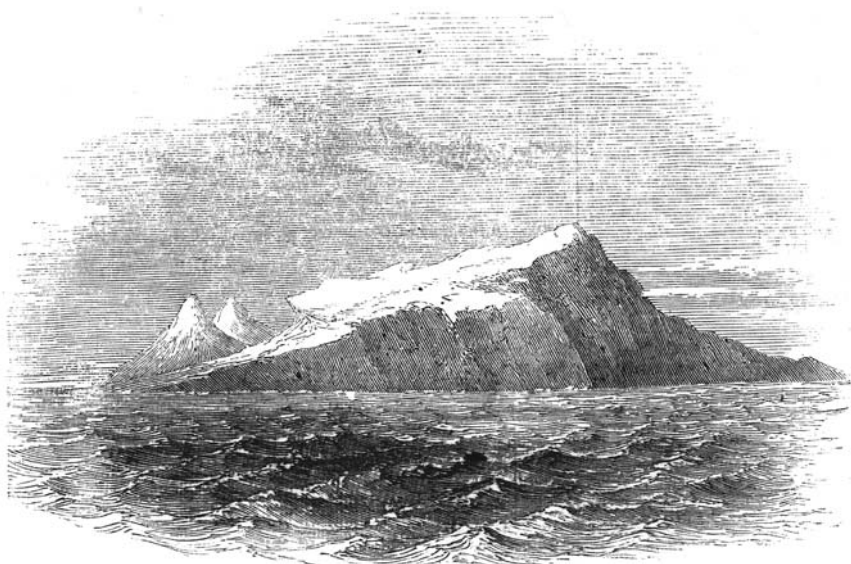


Figure 10. Sketch of Heard Island. From Illust. London News, 31 March 1855, courtesy Robert Headland, Scott Polar Research Institute. The author of this sketch is unknown. It was labelled “Grey’s Island” in error; McDonald Island was called “Gray Island” by D. Rees, ship Lincluden Castle, 4 Dec 1854. (see section 3.5)

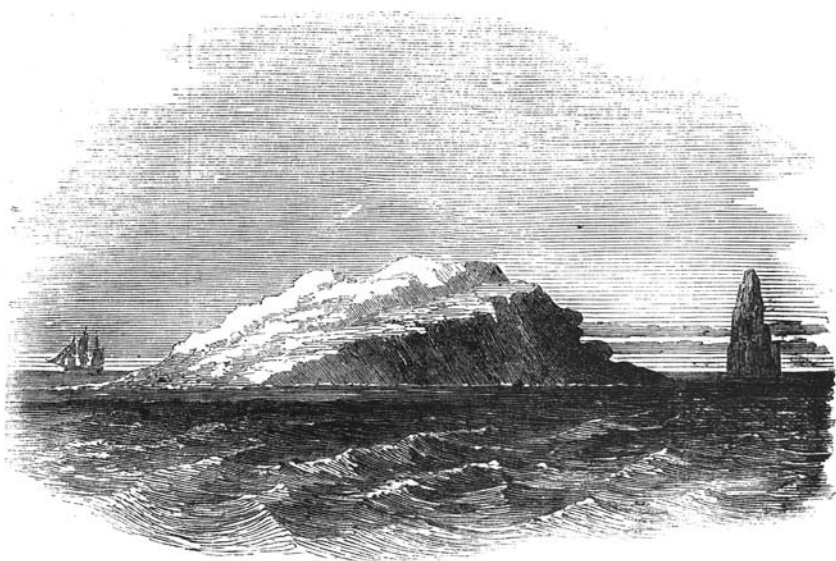


Figure 11. Sketch of McDonald Island and Meyer Rock. - From Illust. London News, 31 March 1855, courtesy Robert Headland, Scott Polar Research Institute. The author of this sketch is unknown. It was labelled “Dunn’s Island” in error; Heard Island was called “Dunn Island” by D. Rees, ship Lincluden Castle, 4 Dec 1854.

4. The Elephant Sealers

Difficult sailing conditions in the higher latitudes were a major reason for sealing masters avoiding going too far south of Iles Kerguelen—unless they had good prospects and a known position. In reality, only a small number of masters could manage vessels close in-shore under “*icy cliffs and iron-bound shores.*” An even smaller number could make a profitable voyage in such a dangerous place.

The main differences between elephanting at Heard Island and at Iles Kerguelen, Iles Crozet and the Prince Edward Islands were the higher frequency of strong gales, unpredictable squalls under the mountain, and no secure mooring for the vessels. Landing through the surf in whaleboats, working the beaches, rafting supplies ashore, or hauling blubber in casks on board, were decidedly more dangerous at Heard Island.

4.1 Ship *Corinthian*, master Erasmus D. Rogers, 1855.

Erasmus D. Rogers ^[29] (Figure 12), master of the ship *Corinthian* ^[30] (Figure 13), recorded the first known landing on Heard Island on 15 February 1855. The manuscript of his working journal is preserved in the Alexander Turnbull Library, New Zealand. ^[31]

Sealing/whaling logbooks, working journals, and ships’ logs were commercial documents, not personal diaries. They were written with the express purpose of showing the owner of the vessel that his capital and manpower were gainfully employed. Most entries were laconic and repetitive, reflecting the convention and purpose of the documents. The information to be entered by the logkeeper (usually the mate) was prescribed by the master, and was highly selected. Comments about life-style and the environment were not usually included. Unless the jargon and clipped style peculiar to logbooks is understood, the significance of many entries can be missed. Despite the limitations, it is possible to appreciate in the sealers’ logbooks the first encounters with the weather and work at Heard Island.

4.1.1 First Landing at Heard Island, 15-16 February 1855.

On the 21 Jan 1855 the bark *Hannah Brewer*, New London master Charles Smith, arrived at “*Pot Harbour,*” Iles Kerguelen, a very active depot at the time for American sealers working the Desolation Grounds. It brought the news that Capt. Heard on the *Oriental* had discovered a new island 260 miles south of Desolation - Richards (1981):295.

The *Corinthian* departed from Iles Kerguelen on 10 February 1855. Unusually, there were two entries in Rogers’ journal for that date. The first appears to be in Rogers’ usual handwriting and clipped style:-

“*Saturday Feb 10th 1855. At 9 am, started from Pott Harbour bound off shore to look for whales. Light wind from westward. The latter wind from SW to South and very moderate.*”

Figure 12.

Captain E.D. Rogers. master of ship Corinthian and leader of the first landing party at Heard Island in 1855. - Photo courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.



Erasmus Darwin Rogers (1817-1906), "Cap'n Da'win" to his whaling friends, first went to sea at age 10 years. He was 35 when he took command of the Corinthian for three elephanting voyages to the Desolation Islands between 1851 and 1858. - Colby (1990)

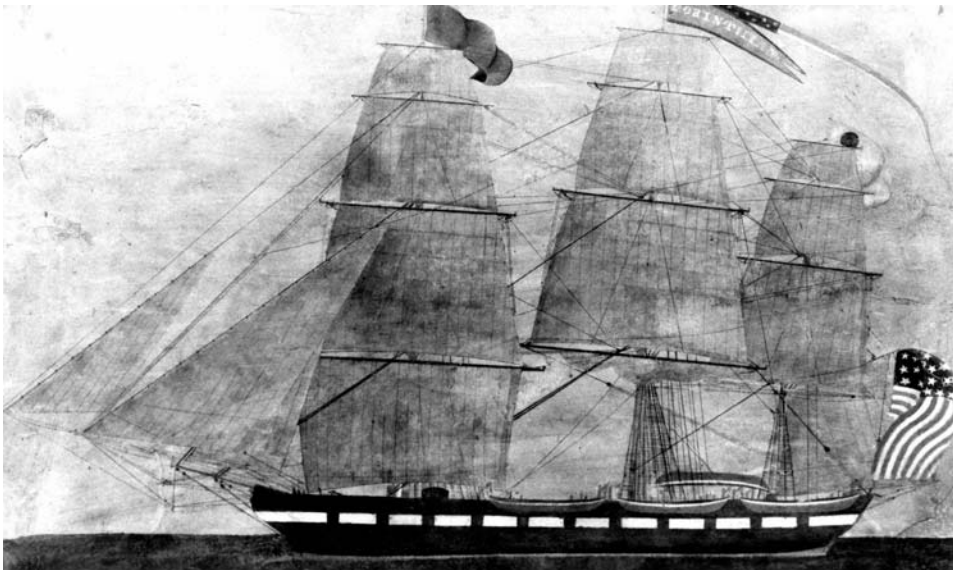


Figure 13. The ship Corinthian, New London. - Photo courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.

The Corinthian was a square-rigged, double-decked ship of 503 tons built as a packet at Baltimore in 1822. She was a fast sailer with a trimmer line and a more spacious cabin than ordinary whalers - Bertrand (1971):239. Purchased by Perkins and Smith in 1847, the Corinthian was completely overhauled for her next five voyages to Desolation and Heard Islands.

The second entry follows immediately in different writing which occurred occasionally through the journal. Perhaps the mate, Frederick Peabody, also made entries in the journal:-

“Saturday Feb 10th 1855. At 9 am started from Pot Harbour for off shore and to look for the land reported to the S & E of Desolation. Light breezes from W. At 12 M passed Cape Digby. Light airs from NW and very moderate the rest of the day and night.”

When interpreting entries in whaling logbooks it is necessary to bear in mind that several officers often participated in keeping the log.

After steering SSW in stormy weather 49°44' S. was recorded at noon on the 11th, 51°02' S. 71°39' E. on the 13th, and Heard Island was reached on 15 February. Two days were spent in the vicinity, with a landing at Spit Bay and a brief view of the land while passing along the north coast. Rogers wrote in his journal:

“Thursday Feb. 15th. Daylight raised land ahead bearing SSW dist. about twenty miles [Heard Island]. Made sail and stood in to land with the wind from W., run in to leeward within a mile and a half. Saw plenty of elephant on 3 different beaches, all within 3 miles on the east side of the Isl. [north beach of Elephant Spit, Skua Beach, Fairchild Beach]

Found no harb. to leeward. Landed with one boat and sounded of [off] the beach with another; found 5 fathoms water close in and good beaches to work, hard bottom. [This, the first known landing-place, was Try Pot Beach, later used extensively by the sealers and called “The Landing.” (Figure 14.)]

I should think it was about 40 miles from the E to West end and looks like two islands or a deep bay in on the N side, and looks as though there was harbours in the bay [Corinthian Bay]. There is a large rock of [off] NE from the Isl. about 10 miles [Shag Island]. It blows so heavy I could not work up to find a harbour as I would like to.

Should think the three beaches had 2,500 barrels of oil on them, mostly cows [Spit Bay, Skua Beach, Fairchild Beach].

The lat. 53.00 S. and long. 73.29 East point.

Friday Feb. 16th. Strong breezes from NNW and thick. At sunrise made sail and stood to the Northward. The latter hours strong gales...”

4.1.2 Second visit, 1–13 March 1855

Rogers returned to Desolation to prepare for elephanting at Heard Island. The *Corinthian* and three schooners *Atlas*, William Brown ^[32], *Mechanic*, John Edwards ^[33], and *Marcia*, James L. Church ^[34] sailed from “Pot Harbour” on 26 February 1855. Two other vessels, the schooners *Franklin* and *Exile*, were said by later writers to have accompanied the *Corinthian* to Heard Island in 1855 ^[35], but Rogers does not include these in his journal. With strong gales from the NW and the weather thick and stormy, on the passage to Heard Island, the *Corinthian* lost sight of the schooners the first night out. Steering SSW, on the 28th Feb. land was sighted which Rogers



Figure 14.. The site of the first landing on Heard Island - near Oil Barrel Point on the north beach at Spit Bay, pictured during the peak of elephanting in 1858. - Drawing by W.T. Peters, courtesy of New London County Historical Society. (c.f. Figure 2.)

thought was Shag Rock. The *Corinthian* hauled off shore, and next day they saw the McDonald Islands, which had not been seen on the previous visit.

The vessels moored in Corinthian Bay, spending an anxious 12 days testing mooring conditions and getting their first experience of Heard Island weather. The beaches at Corinthian Bay and Atlas Cove were worked by whaleboat and schooner. Saddle Point and Mechanics Bay were visited. Rogers wrote in his journal:

“Wednesday Feb 28. Strong breezes from NNW and thick. At 9 kept off [off] SE, at 10 saw the land close by took it to be Shag Rock. [first occurrence of name] Took in sail and hauled off shore. ... Wind to the northward through the night.

Thursday March 1. Saw the land to windward about 10 miles, found it to be an island not seen before from 2 to four miles long. [McDonald Island] Raised the Atlas. Saw the large island to leeward and run down to it [Heard Island]. I went on board the Atlas and sounded in two bites [bights] and found hard bottom [Corinthian Bay and Atlas Cove]. Could lay in one of them [Corinthian Bay] with the wind from any way but the eastward with anchors heavy enough, but I should think it blowed very heavy in this place. Run down to leeward [in a schooner] and looked behind another bluff land [Saddle Point and Mechanics Bay] but found no harbour and went to the ship. At 4 p.m. the schooner Atlas went in to anchor [Corinthian Bay]. Saw the Mechanic to wind about 5 miles.

Friday March 2. Wind from NNE and thick. Layed by under short sail off to Northward of the island. saw the land in the morning. The latter some rain.

Saturday March 3. First hours thick. At noon saw the land bearing SSW wind NW. Run in and anchored with the schrs. in the so called Atlas harbour on the N side of Corinthian Island. [First and only use of name “Corinthian Island,” (see letter from J.G.Cameron, section 4.2). In view of Rogers’ remarks on sounding in two bights, the “so-called Atlas harbour” was Corinthian Bay, not Atlas Cove of later maps, which was too dangerous for a ship to enter.]

The Mechanic came in about 3 pm. The Atlas had skinned about 30 bbls of blubber.

Sunday March 4. First hours fresh breezes from E and heavy rain. Laying at anchor and perfectly smooth. The latter hours wind from the northward.

Monday March 5. All hands went on shore and skinned about 150 bbls and took on board the Atlas. At dark the wind came in from the E and thickened up at 12. At night blows fresh and stormy snow rain.

Tuesday March 6. Fresh breezes from E to ESE and steady rain and snow. It appears to not make much sea. The Atlas and smack [Mechanic] lays very well but there is not as much water under the ship [Corinthian] as

I wish. ... Took the blubber out of the Atlas and took to the ship. At 5 pm hoisted in some of the blubber and left a part alongside overnight. Took the ship's big anchor up and dropt off shore further.

Wednesday March 7. Fresh breezes from WSW to SW. Part of the ship's crew on shore skinning and a part on board putting up the blubber in casks in the ship. Steady snow squalls through the day. The sch. gang on shore.

Thursday March 8. Strong gales from NW. Employed leaning blubber and stowing down.

Friday March 9. All hands employed on shore skinning and rafting blubber and taking to the Atlas at 4 pm came to ship for dinner at sundown the Atlas came in [from another beach, possibly Atlas Cove or Saddle Point] and rafted over 14 rafts of blubber and took to the ship. Calm, etc.

Saturday March 10. Strong gales from east. At 7 am took in the blubber. Raining and bad weather the middle hours wind died weather thick and raining and considerable sea heaving in upon the ship and schrs.

Sunday March 11. Wind from NW to NNW and a bad sea heaving in the bay the ship rolling heavy. The latter hours moderate but the sea keeps up.

Monday March 12. Very fair weather but nearly calm. Finished putting up blubber and stowed below. The latter hours took up the ship's anchors and hauled off one towline length from the beach, all ready for a start for Pott Harbour. Heavy seas heaving in."

More than 25 years later, Erasmus Rogers recalled his first visits to Heard Island:

"In November, 1853, I left New London in the ship Corinthian, bound on a whaling voyage, and while cruising from Desolation Island in January, 1854 [actually 1855], concluded to visit Heard's Island, that I learned had been recently discovered by Captain Heard in a Boston vessel.

As soon as we reached the island men were sent ashore and reported a great abundance of sea elephants, and in fact we could see great numbers of them lying on the beaches. We were the first men, so far as known, that ever landed at this desolate island. As the summer was fast drawing to a close we concluded to sail immediately to Desolation Island, and, with our tenders, the schooners Atlas and Mechanic, return to Heard's Island and secure some oil.

It is only about 300 miles from one island to the other, so that by the first of February [1st March, 1855] we had returned to the new land and anchored in a small bay we called Corinthian Harbor. The next morning we found our ship had dragged anchor and was almost aground. With much difficulty we got her into deeper water, and having made her as secure as possible with heavy riding anchors, sent ashore about 30 men to examine the place and kill the elephants. We remained at the island about a week, our men going ashore each morning and returning to the vessel at night. There were thousands of the animals upon the sandy beaches, so that there was little difficulty in getting all we wanted. After

securing about 500 barrels of the blubber we sailed for Desolation Island and tried it out.

As soon as possible we sent word of our good luck to our agents, Messers. Perkins and Smith at New London, Conn., and they purchased the ship Laurens, which was thoroughly equipped, and, under command of Capt. Frank Smith, sailed for this land in September 1855. The island was fully explored by Captain Smith and his men, all the headlands and bays named, and a rough map drawn. ...” ^[36]

4.1.3 Captain John Edwards, schooner *Mechanic*.

Occasionally, an insight can be gained into the personalities behind the logbooks. Just such an example occurred on the return of the vessels from Heard Island to Iles Kerguelen, as recorded in E.D. Rogers’ journal:

“Friday March 16 1855. Fine and pleasant. At daylight saw the land to the windward of Cape George [Iles Kerguelen] at light found the ship off the east point of Swains Bay. Kept off and run round to leeward for Pott Harbour. At sundown off Mt Carmel with a good breeze from NW. ... after dark anchored in Pott Harbour.

Found the Mechanic in the weigh and the Capt. so drunk he had to be put to bed. [John Edwards, master of the Mechanic, subordinate to E.D. Rogers.]

Saturday March 17. Fresh breezes from N to NNW and raining. Laying in Pott Harbour. At 8 am I went on board the Alert [master Simeon Church]. Soon after Mr Edwards came on board the Alert was boiling some elephant blubber that was taken by Capt Edwards at Table Bay which proved to be very black and poor oil. I told Capt Edwards the blubber had ought to have been soaked more and minced. He allowed he had no time to mince blubber. When I told him I had time enough to mince my blubber, and four thousand bbls more if I could get it, and that the blubber that the smack [the Mechanic] got another season would be minced and well soaked, when he Capt Edwards allowed I could take the smack and go in her my self, and he would go home in the Marcia.

I went in to dinner, Capt Edwards came in to Capt Church’s cabin and abused me most rascally, which Capt S. Church heard himself. He allowed I was a Sailors Man and rephiled [sic] them in all their rascality, probably because I had found some fault with him for using molasses and corn to make rum with, which six of his crew came and entered their complaint to me in his presence, which he him self did not contradict.

Sunday March 18. Calm in the fore part of day. All hands employed in mooring the ship, also unbending sails, breaking out sail room, and restowing.”

A postscript to this story reminds us of the context in which these men worked. Eighteen months after the above incident, when sailing from Desolation to Heard Island in October 1856, the *Mechanic* was struck by a violent storm which lasted four days - Bertrand (1971):246. Capt Edwards and four seamen were washed overboard by an enormous

wave. Two were picked up; but the master and two men drowned. With only three men and a boy on board, the schooner could not be managed and was driven eastward. There was no alternative but to make for Australia. They arrived at Portland, Victoria two months later, some 3000 miles from where they wanted to be.

4.2 Brigantine *Anne*, master John G. Cameron, April 1855

From 20 March to 30 May 1855, the schooner *Marcia*, master James L. Church (with the senior master Simeon Church of the bark *Alert* on board), went to the Cape of Good Hope for the purpose of reporting to the several owners in New London on the new sealing grounds at Heard Island. It appears that Simeon Church made arrangements at the Cape for supplies to be taken to Iles Kerguelen. On 28 April 1855, the brig *Anne*, Captain J.G. Cameron of Cape Town, arrived at “Pott Harbour,” Iles Kerguelen.^[37] Captain Cameron talked with the masters who had just returned from Heard Island. He reported by letter to the *Commercial Gazette*, Mauritius:

“The M'Donald Islands.

The following interesting communication has been addressed by Capt. Cameron of the Anne, to the Commercial Gazette of Mauritius:

Port Louis, 26 May 1855.

Sir, - Permit me through the columns of your paper to transmit a little information which may be useful to those shipmasters who may adopt the Great Circle Sailing principle, on their route to India or the Australian colonies, and oblige your obedient servant, John G. Cameron, Master, Anne.

When at Desolation, from 28th April to 4th May last, I was informed by Capt. Rogers, Church, and Brown, [E.D.Rogers, voyage of Corinthian 1853/56: Simeon Church, Alert 1853/56: James L. Church, Marcia 1853/56: Wm. Brown, Atlas 1855/56.] that a large island or continent had been discovered, bearing S.E., from Kerguelan [sic], about 300 miles. Upon minute inquiry found this was true.

Capt. Rogers having received some intimation from a Capt. Heard, the master of an American vessel called the Oriental, of Boston, proceeded as soon as the season would permit in the ship Corinthian, to the neighbourhood and found land, but whether a continent or island, he could not tell.

However, he returned to Kerguelan [sic] and procured four tenders, viz.: Atlas, Mechanic, Exile, and Franklin^[38], and again started for this new land. Arrived there with the Corinthian, Atlas, and Mechanic, in March, 1855, sending Capt. Brown, of the Atlas, on shore to look for a harbour.

Capt. R. at the same time sailed under easy canvas along the land, making his observations upon the coast. Finally they discovered a small creek in lat. according to Capt. Rogers (a good observer) 53°00' S. long. 72°31' E. [probably the creek near Oil Barrel Point] Capt. Church, of the Alert [Simeon Church], says it is in long. according to his chronometer, 73°00', and his chronometer is right, as I have tried it. [This detail was not recorded in Rogers' journal]

Rogers and two boats' crews procured in one day from four to five hundred barrels of sea elephant oil; and said on looking from a small promontory, he saw at once elephants and sea leopards enough to fill 100,000 barrels with oil. [Corinthian Bay and vicinity]

The Corinthian being the first vessel that anchored there, I think it ought to be called Corinthian Island, or land. On being asked by Capt. Rogers what he should call it, I suggested the above, as disliking the mention of Rogers Land.

Capt. Rogers sailed along the N.E. side of this island or continent, about thirty miles, and discovered one small harbour, where he anchored the Atlas and Corinthian [Corinthian Bay]; but it seems to be an unsafe harbour. He laid ten days, he says, in great danger with a S.E. gale blowing.

I have seen many islands about this land, the principle [sic] of which I give below, viz.:-

Macdonald Isle, lat. 53°00' S. long. 72°35' E. Young Island, lat. 53°4' S. long. 73°31' E. [These names were given by Wm. McDonald of the Samarang in 1855, obtained by Cameron from a newspaper report.]

A reef of rocks West by North, true bearings, forty to forty-two miles from the N.E. end of the land.

The mainland itself seems to be covered with ice and perpetual snow, and can only become a whaling station, as there is not a blade of grass to be seen during the height of summer.

From the vast amount of shipping engaged in the East India, China, and more especially the Australian trade, and according to the route by the Great Circle Sailing, Wind, and Current Charts, this land lies in the fair way; and not a day should be delayed after the summer season sets in to have this land properly surveyed.

As I have sufficient notes in my possession, I may again allude to this land, and will at all times be happy to give any information about it to those who may wish to visit the neighbourhood.

Your obedient servant, John G. Cameron, Master of the Anne, of Cape Town.

P.S. - During my haste I forgot to say that I observed in a paper, the name of which I forgot or never looked at, that a Capt. M'Donald, if I do not mistake, of the Samarang, discovered land on the 3rd January, 1854, about the same lat. and long. Be that as it may, land is there, and it should be the duty of hydrographers to have its position accurately laid down on our charts. J.G.C.

(J.G.C. will find these islands laid down on the Admiralty charts from the report of Capt. M'Donald, and some discussion concerning them in our March number, p.219. - Ed.)" ^[39]

Cameron's letter is important as a contemporary record of discussions with the sealing masters, providing details which supplement Rogers' journal. These are:

(a). Simeon Church involved a South African vessel, a potential competitor, in the preparations for working the new island. Simeon Church was absent from Iles Kerguelen while Cameron was there, so Church must have given detailed information to Cameron at Cape Town. There is little evidence of obsessive secrecy commonly attributed to sealers.

(b). The letter makes it clear that it was Simeon Church of the bark *Alert* (not James L. Church master of the *Marcia*), who measured the latitude and longitude at Spit Bay, but it is not clear if this was as a guest on the *Corinthian* during the first visit to Heard Island, or on his firm's vessel, the *Marcia*, during the second visit.

(c). Captain Heard was given the credit for initiating Rogers' visit. No mention is made of Rogers having previously known of the island (when he served on the *Charles Carroll* under Thomas Long in 1849).

(d). Cameron was at Iles Kerguelen 28 April–4th May 1855. He implied that the observations of latitude and longitude at Heard Island were his, and that he had seen the islands. Cameron might have made a visit to Heard and McDonald Islands between 4 May when he left Iles Kerguelen and 26 May when he was in Mauritius, but there is no evidence on this point.

5. The Sealing Fleet–Second Season (1855/56)

The rush to visit Heard Island to harvest the sea-elephants began in earnest in January 1856, peaked in 1857-59, and fell off rapidly after 1860. For example, seven vessels visited the Island during the 1855-56 elephanting season, compared with nine in the 1856-57 season, sixteen in 1857-58, nineteen in 1858-59, nine in 1859-60, and two in 1862-63 - Downes (1996):33.

There was little effective secrecy concerning the new sealing ground. Not only was the news of Heard's and McDonald's discoveries repeated in newspapers round the world, but Cameron's detailed report was frequently copied. It is apparent that owners and masters relied on superior knowledge of the Desolation Grounds and speed of preparation to give them the edge at this late stage of the very competitive oil trade.

Three New London owner-groups acted immediately—Perkins & Smith, E.V. Stoddard and Thomas Fitch II. Perkins and Smith already had four vessels at Iles Kerguelen in 1855—*Corinthian*, *Atlas*, *Mechanic*, and *Franklin*, whaling during the winter and elephanting from September until January 1856. These vessels sailed for Heard Island in January. Perkins & Smith purchased the 420 ton bark *Laurens* to assist with the large cargo expected.^[40] The *Laurens* was refitted for elephanting, and sailed for Heard Island on 17 September. She was commanded by one of the principal owners, Franklin F. Smith, and carried 48 men, a large number, most to be landed as shore gangs. E.V. Stoddard sent the bark *Alert*^[41] and the schooners *Exile*^[42]

and *Marcia* from Iles Kerguelen. Thomas Fitch II dispatched the brig *Zoe*,^[43] James H. Rogers, from New London in October 1855.

5.1 Elephanting at Heard Island, January-February 1856

On arrival at Heard Island Erasmus Rogers wrote in his journal:

“23 January 1856. At sunrise saw the land bearing SW. At 3 pm came to anchor in Corinthian Bay with the Mechanic, Marcia & Laurens. Wind N but blows in E by South and raining. [This is the first use of the name “Corinthian Bay”. See also Rogers’ choice of name in J.G. Cameron’s letter, section 4.2]

24 Jan. Went on shore, killed some 500 elephant and skinned them, and took to the beach and buried them.

25 Jan. Wind all ways and raining through the day.

26 Jan. Commences with light wind from the northward and raining the middle hour more pleasant the latter blows strong from NW. Skinned on the s w beach. [at South West Bay].

27 Jan. Strong gales from W to NW the middle and latter the same.

28 Jan. Light breezes from W to N and pleasant for this place. Took off a sch. load of blubber and came to anchor at 7 pm.

29 Jan. Fine and pleasant. Went on to South west Beach and put up 18 pipes of blubber and got to the sch. at sundown.

30 Jan. First hours strong breezes from W and unpleasant. Employed putting up blubber on board the Marcia the latter hours raining wind N.

31 Jan. Heavy gales from NW to W and bad weather. The Marcia and Mechanic both dragged two anchors.

1 Feb. Strong gales from NW and squally.

2 Feb. First hour light breeze from W to NE. went in to the Weather bay [Atlas Cove] and took off some blubber. Come on to blow from eastward and had to stay on shore all night with 30 men and stayed in Capt Smith’s house. His men and ours counted 74 men.

3 Feb. Strong gales from SW and snow. At 9 am got on board the sch. wind strong from WSW through the day.

4 Feb. Fine weather wind WSW Put 12 men on the beach and got across 25 casks from the S W Beach. [South West Bay] At night the wind hauled more to the N.

5 Feb. Light airs from N and raining. Put up 100 bbls of blubber on board the Marcia.

6 Feb. Fresh breezes from the NW and unpleasant. Got off 150 bbls of blubber and took round to the schs. Raining hard.

7 Feb. Fine weather wind W. Put up 35 casks of blubber on board the Marcia and Franklin.

8 Feb. Fine and pleasant. Skinned about 100 bbls of oil and got back to the Harbour at dusk. Light baffling wind.

9 Feb. Strong gales from NW and rough. Layed in Atlas Harbour. [Corinthian Bay].

10 Feb. Strong gales and rain.

11 Feb. More moderate. Put up 80 bbls of blubber filled 21 casks at dark calm and raining.

12 Feb. Strong gales from NW and rather unpleasant throughout the day. [new writing:] Got some altitudes in the Harbour. Made the lat 53.10 Long 73.07. [The annotation about altitudes in Corinthian Bay was written by a different hand, and is probably by the master E.D. Rogers.]

13 Feb. Fresh breezes from the westward the latter hours more moderate. Took off 100 and 50 bbls of blubber and took to the Harbour. At dusk the brig Zoe of New London came in to anchor. After taking off the blubber went to S W beach and killed 26 big bulls and skinned them. [South West Bay]

14 Feb. Put up 26 casks of blubber in the Franklin. Wind from the westward.

15 Feb. Strong breezes from NW and rather unpleasant.

16 Feb. Fresh breezes from NNW and rather unpleasant. Went on shore but did not do much.

17 Feb. Strong breeze from W to NW and squally. Got of a raft of blubber.

18 Feb. Strong gales from NW throughout the day. Chocked off the Franklin's hold.

19 Feb. Strong breezes from NW to NNW and unpleasant. Got ready for a start. Had 9 men ship from the Corinthian's crew on board the Laurens.

20 Feb. First hours strong gales from W the latter more moderate. At 4 pm got under weigh and started for Desolation. Strong breezes through the night."

Strong gales from the NW characterised the operations; there was no "snug harbor" at Heard Island. With the ship and schooners moored in Corinthian Bay, the shore gangs worked all the beaches within reach, including walking to South West Bay - the vessels and their whaleboats did not operate on the western side of the Island. The schooners went to Atlas Cove and used the whaleboats to land men and supplies and raft off blubber which they took to the ship in Corinthian Bay. With winds from the east, landing in the whaleboats on Corinthian Beach was dangerous, and on 2 February the men stayed overnight in Franklin Smith's newly constructed hut, probably located behind Wharf Point against the vegetated hummocks. Lanman in 1869 reported on the activities of Smith and Rogers:

"Franklin Smith made a number of voyages to Kerguelen's Land and ... was the first American who brought any oil from that remote region in 1837.

... With Captain Darwin Rogers as his right-hand man, he fully explored

[Heard Island], *named all its headlands and bays and other prominent features, made a map of it, and succeeded in filling all his vessels with oil.*" - Lanman (1869).

The map drawn by Franklin Smith has not been found - Bertrand (1971):245. The names given to the various features of the island were used by the sealers in logbooks and maps for three decades after 1855. Some were incorporated in the first official charts of Heard Island, drawn by the *Challenger* Expedition in 1874 - Downes (1996):7.

The *Corinthian* filled its hold in less than a month. Most of the vessels left for Desolation on 20 February. The *Corinthian* and *Marcia* had been at sea for three years, the *Atlas* and *Franklin* for six. These vessels went back to New London while the *Laurens* and *Mechanic* wintered at Desolation. The *Corinthian* was the first to return home after working Heard Island. She reached port at New London on 9 June 1856; the *Atlas* on 14 June, and the *Franklin* on 17 June. Rogers certainly wasted no time. The *Corinthian* sailed again on 9 July, was back at the Island after a passage of only 91 days, and moored in "*Corinthian Harbour*" on 9 October 1856, ready for the start of the 1856–57 season. (see also section 2.3.3)

5.2 The first wintering party, 1856

When the brig *Zoe*, master James H. Rogers, arrived on 13 Feb 1856 without a tender of its own, the crew was busy for about five weeks rafting oil left by another vessel. A wintering gang under the mate Henry Rogers moved ashore on 22 March, and the *Zoe* left for Cape Town, to return the following October. Charles Lanman described their experience:

"The gang consisted of 25 men, and after building their house, which was merely a square excavation in the ground, covered with boards and made air tight with moss and snow, they proceeded to business. Those who were expert with the lance did most of the killing; the coopers hammered away at their barrels. As occasions demanded, all hands participated in skinning the huge sea elephants, or cutting off the blubber in pieces of about 15 pounds each, and these on their backs or on rude sledges, in transporting it to the trying works, where it was turned into the precious oil. Not a day was permitted to pass without "bringing to bag" a little game, and the number of elephants killed ranged from 3 to as high a figure as 40.

According to the record, if one day out of thirty happened to be bright and pleasant, the men were thankful. The regularity with which rain followed snow, and the fogs were blown about by high winds, was monotonous beyond conception. And when night came, and the monotonous suppers were packed away, the stories which followed were monotonous.

As the tired men wrapped themselves in their blankets for the night, there was a monotony in their very dreams—but they were of home, of wives and children and friends far, far away, over the illimitable sea—and that was a monotony which they enjoyed.

When one of those men chanced to be wakeful at the hour of midnight, and went forth from the pent-up cabin to enjoy the fresh air or to commune alone with himself, how must the blackness of darkness and the wild wailing of the ocean, mingled with the screams of the penguins, or the moon and stars shining in their marvellous beauty on the tranquil deep, have filled him with awe! The great waves perhaps, like beasts of prey came careering out of the abyss of space. As they dashed and perished against the icy cliff, there would be an unearthly howl which the winds carried entirely across the island, only to be welcomed by an answering roar from the waves on the opposite shore.” - Lanman (1869)

5.3 Wreck of the schooner *Alfred*, December 1856

There were no wrecks during the 1855–56 elephanting season, but the schooner *Alfred* ^[44] of Fairhaven, Lucius L. Butler master, went ashore on the Spit in December 1856, a total loss. This was the first of some fourteen vessels wrecked on or near Heard Island in subsequent seasons. The following account is from the *Whalemen’s Shipping List* 19 May 1857:

“Loss of Schooner Alfred.

The whaling schooner Alfred of Fairhaven, Capt Butler, tender to the ship Samuel Robertson of Fairhaven, was lost on ENE of Hurd’s Island [sic] December 29th [1856] in a heavy gale.

The Captain states:

...was at anchor in ten fathoms of water [in Spit Bay]. Day commenced with moderate gales from the north. Endeavoured to get some casks on shore, but being too much wind and current, was obliged to haul them in.

At 7 pm wind increased to a gale; let go the anchor at 8 pm, lashed together 2 more anchors, one weighing 500 lbs, the other 400 lbs, and let them go at 10 pm.

Commenced dragging a little, the wind having hauled to NE. We dragged our anchors gradually and at times until 2 am when the wind being hauled to about north and blew tremendously. The schooner dragged very fast.

Shoaled our water from 10 to 5 fathoms, called all hands, got ready to slip, commenced cutting away main masts, but found we had not time so abandoned that.

At 2.30 am having dragged to 14 feet of water, still dragging very fast, slipped the cables, one chain having parted, found it impossible to go to sea, there being heavy breakers on our larboard beam, and the land on our larboard and astern, were obliged to run her on shore.

In five minutes after we slipped our cables were on shore. She ran well up the beach, got a line ashore, and all hands were landed in safety. Saved some provisions and materials for building a house.”

The *Alfred* went ashore on the north beach of the Spit abreast of the west end of Scholes Lagoon, estimated position: 53°7' S. 73°44' E. The ship’s company of nineteen men got ashore with some supplies and were subsequently rescued by other elephanting vessels.

With the full force of the gale from the north blowing onto the land, the schooner dragged with three anchors out, stern-first toward the Spit. In the four hours prior to 2 am the depth of water under the vessel decreased from ten fathoms to two and a half, or sixty feet to fourteen feet. Heavy breakers (surf and shallow water) were on the larboard beam (to the left of the vessel), the Spit to the left and astern.

To stop the anchors dragging an attempt was made to cut down the masts and reduce the force of the wind on the vessel. If the vessel was saved the masts could be rebuilt. But there was no time and the anchors were slipped. It would have been impossible to heave up the anchors; the enormous strain would have torn the windlass out of position. The pins were knocked out of the shackles on the cables (chains), and in five minutes the vessel ran well up the beach. When slipping a cable under normal circumstances, a buoy was attached to the chain allowing the anchor to be recovered - Fuller (1980):39.

5.4 The sealers' charts

It is apparent from the contemporary reports that many important features of the island were well known before 1860. But the information did not find its way into official charts until the voyage of *HMS Challenger* in 1874.

This raises the important consideration that mariners who successfully worked the islands for several decades did not rely on charts for navigation. There were no adequate charts of the islands throughout the sealing period. Precisely how the sealers navigated at the islands in such difficult seas remains a technical mystery, at least to this writer, and requires much more study.

Even in the 1870s, sealers at Iles Kerguelen did not use charts, going in and out of harbour by personal knowledge - Balfour (1874): (27 January). In 1874 officers from the *Challenger* Expedition questioned the masters encountered at Iles Kerguelen. Captain Joseph Fuller, schooner *Roswell King*, had 15 years' experience of successfully working the islands. When asked if he had a chart he replied: "*Not exactly, that is, I have not one drafted, but I have one in my head*" - Fuller (1980):41,42. Capt. Sisson of the *Charles Colgate* replied: "*Been knocking about here for the last 30 years.*" Had he a chart? "Yes"—and produced one of the world on Mercator's projection with Kerguelen as big as a fly - Balfour (1874) (17 January). The cartographers from the *Challenger* made special efforts to record the sealers' information and incorporated it in the first Admiralty chart of Heard Island issued in 1874 - Tizard *et al.* (1885):370, map-sheet 22.

The mapping of Heard Island on land and the inclusion of adequate information on maritime charts was not undertaken until almost 100 years later. The first accurate chart of the topography and coastline of Heard Island was published in 1949. ^[45] An account of sealers' place names on islands in the southern Indian Ocean is the subject of a subsequent paper.

6. Later Visitors

In the period under consideration only two other encounters with Heard Island by ships not engaged in sealing, have been found.— Captain Johann Meyer in the *La Rochelle* 1857 and Captain Cubbins in the *Caribou* 1858.

In view of the risks, especially at night and in bad weather, it is possible that other ships may have disappeared without trace. Captain Cubbins said:-

“... it made me shudder to think that 12 months before, I ran past the island at midnight in a heavy gale of wind, not more than four or five miles distant, ignorant of its existence. ... The attention of the owners and masters of ships ought to be called to the subject, as many vessels of which no tidings have been heard may have been wrecked on them.”
[see section 6.2]

The west coast of each island was so isolated that no relics were likely to have been found. Among the iron-bound shores, ice-cliffs and swift currents which characterised the islands there were few sheltered places where castaways could survive if their supplies were lost with the vessel. After the 1850s the dangers of sailing on the composite route south of Iles Kerguelen were sufficiently well known for ships sailing to Australia to take the much safer route north of Iles Kerguelen - see Table 2 and Hutton's letter in Anon (1855b).

6.1 Ship *La Rochelle*, master Johann Meyer, 10 January, 1857

The merchant ship *La Rochelle*, 670 tons, Johann Meyer master, sailed from Hamburg to Melbourne, passing between McDonald and Heard Islands in January 1857.

A passenger, George B. von Neumayer, Direktor der Deutschen Seewarte, published an extract of his journal (in German) in the Melbourne German language newspaper *Der Kosmopolit* 23 June 1857. He called the group “*König Max Inseln*”, the smaller island “*Heard's Insel*” [McDonald Island], and the passage between them “*La Rochelle Strasse*” - Neumayer (1867):243.

The extract from Neumayer's journal was reprinted in 1858 by the geographer Augustus Petermann who comprehensively reviewed information to that date - Petermann (1858):17-20.

Petermann listed place names on the basis of information in British Admiralty charts, calling the group “*Macdonald Inseln*”, the western island “*Heard I.*” [McDonald Island] and the largest island “*Young I.*” [Heard Island]. These names for each island were corrected in his subsequent atlas, but that is outside the scope of this paper.

Neumayer repeated his story in other newspapers and journals during 1857. ^[46] Part of his journal was translated into English in the *Mercantile Marine Magazine* in 1865 - Anon. (1965). This was reprinted by Rosser & Imray in sailing directions for the Indian Ocean:

"On the morning of January 10th, 1857, with a fresh breeze from N.E., the Rochelle was pursuing her voyage in the great Southern Ocean near the parallel of 53°S., at the rate of 11 knots an hour [sic]. The rain was almost incessant and the atmosphere very foggy, so that there was scarcely a hope of getting a good observation that day.

Towards mid-day however, the fog and mist partially cleared away, when, at no great distance from the ship, a sugar-loaf rock [Meyer Rock] was seen, and almost at the same instant a saddle-shaped island [McDonald Island]. At 0h. 15m. P.M., they bore N. by compass, distant from 2 to 2 1/2 miles. Shortly afterwards the look-out announced a second island to leeward [Heard Island], the summit of which stood out above the clouds surrounding its base. It bore S. by E., while the first island [McDonald Island] lay N.N.W. from us, whereupon the course was changed from S.E. to S.

At 1h. 6m. P.M., we had a clear sky, and an altitude of the sun was taken, for a reduction to the meridian; again, at 2h. 38m. P.M., we had another observation, and at 5h. 30m. a third. From these, combined with our courses and bearings, we determined the following positions:

	<i>Lat. S.</i>	<i>Long. E.</i>
<i>The Sugar-loaf rock</i>	<i>53°8'.4</i>	<i>72°23'.7</i>
<i>The North extremity of the larger island</i>	<i>53°13'</i>	<i>72°44'</i>
<i>The Peak near the north end</i>	<i>53°17'.5</i>	<i>72°56'</i>
<i>The South extremity</i>	<i>53°50'</i>	<i>73°6'.6</i>

The middle of the strait separating the two islands is in about Lat. 53°10' S. Long. 72°36' E. of Greenwich, and while in it we experienced a strong set (? tidal) to the S.S.W.-ward; there was also a difficulty in keeping clear of the floating ice, of which it was full. [cooler conditions than in 20th century]

As already observed, the first island [McDonald Island], as seen from a ship to the westward of it at the distance of 2 or 3 miles, appears saddle-shaped. But on steering south the two peaks open out more, leading us to think that a small arm of the sea separates them. The loftiest peak was found by observation to be 286 feet high, and the island about 4 1/2 miles in extent, N. by W. 1/2 W. and S. by E. 1/2 E.

As we sailed along the southern and greater island [Heard Island], we could distinguish at about 4 miles S.E.-ward of its northern extremity a peak higher than that just mentioned. The coast appeared to be steeper and more broken to the south, where it terminates in its loftiest height, 1000 feet [South Barrier?]. The entire length of the island was 36 miles (see Translator note below). At about a third of this distance from the northern end was a small bay, near which was a large islet [West Bay/South West Bay]. As evening drew on we were at its S.W. extremity, whence it stretched 20 miles to the eastward, which we had passed by 6 P.M., and at 8 P.M. the whole group had disappeared below the horizon.

The land wore a wintry and truly antarctic aspect; ice-clad mountains rose high into the clouds; and only here and there was the naked iron-bound coast visible, with isolated patches of green showing through the

snow, while in a few places the melting of the latter was productive of a waterfall tumbling from crag to crag. The only signs of life in these frozen regions were immense flocks of birds, among which were recognised the penguin and the albatross.

(Translator's note: Another account in the *Neue Münchener Zeitung* states, that the greater island is 10 German miles from N. to S., and about 12 German miles E. and W. (The German mile is about 4 1/2 miles English.). And the group lies between Lat. 53° 8' S. Long. 72° 24' E., and Lat. 53° 47' S. Long. 73° 40' E. of Greenwich. These islands were named the King Max on the supposition that they were a new discovery.)." - Rosser & Imray (1867):502-503.

6.2 Ship *Caribou*, master David Cubbins, 22 February 1858

The ship *Caribou* ^[47], master David Cubbins, was the first merchant vessel to attempt a landing at Heard Island. After encountering the island unexpectedly in February 1858, Cubbins sent a boat ashore. While waiting for its return, he was astonished to see vessels at anchor in Corinthian Bay. At least sixteen vessels visited the Island during the 1857–58 elephanting season between September and February - Downes (1996):34. The schooner *Oxford of Fairhaven* came out to meet him. The master who came on board (probably Leander Mayhew) was reluctant to talk—until after it was obvious that the *Caribou's* boat was going to survive and would return with information about the new island:

"Curious Discovery in the South Atlantic. [sic]

The following is a copy of a letter written by Captain Cubbins [sic] of the Caribou belonging to this port [Liverpool], to the Secretary of the Admiralty, relating to a cluster of islands not laid down in the charts, and which lie in the direct track to Australia. The attention of the owners and masters of ships ought to be called to the subject, as many vessels of which no tidings have been heard may have been wrecked on them.

Ship Caribou, Hobson's Bay, March 13, 1858.

I sailed from Liverpool on the 8th December 1858 [sic, i/e., 1857] bound to Port Phillip in Australia.

On February 22nd, wind westerly, brisk gale with snow squalls. At 10.33 am in a clear between the squalls, I fancied I saw land to the southward, took in studding sails, short-shortened sail, and stood towards it.

At 1.30 pm, hove to abreast the island in the centre bearing S.S.W. about 12 miles. [Heard Island] Lowered a life boat and sent her to the land. I afterwards stood in to about nine miles off shore and got no ground with 120 fathoms of line.

The island appeared to be in a S.E. and N.W. direction, about 25 miles, its southern extreme tending to the S.W., forming a deep bight on its western side which was entirely snow clad, and gave it the appearance of a great barrier of ice. The greater part of the whole island was covered with snow.

There was a remarkable group of high rocks lying off to the N.E. from the S.E. part of the island, apparently six or seven miles [Shag Island], and on the N.W. extreme an iceberg aground [Laurens Peninsula?]. The island was cloud capped but I think that its greatest elevation could not be less than 450 feet above the level of the sea. While hove to, awaiting our boat's return, I was astonished to see vessels at anchor in a bay, we having opened it through drifting to the S.E. [Corinthian Bay]. One of them got under way and we stood toward it. It proved to be the American schooner Oxford of Fairhaven. They put out a boat, and the master came on board. [Probably Leander Mayhew]

He told me that they called it Hurd's Island, and that it was discovered by them some eighteen months before. He seemed annoyed that my boat had landed, and advised me to go and leave her behind, saying that she would never return. But I told him I would never leave her while I had another boat to seek for her. I was very anxious for it was then sundown, and darkness coming on fast. But while speaking the lookout at the mast head reported the boat in sight. He then became more communicative, and told me they were after oil; that the shores of the island swarmed with elephants; and that they had sent to America from the island since the discovery 25,000 barrels of oil; the island was bold on the N.E. side, and no hidden danger; and the bay where they lay was a fine bay and natural harbour with good anchorage; no sunken dangers with 12 to 20 fathoms all over, and sheltered from all winds except a north-easterly, with a fine river of fresh water at the head of it.

He told me that there was another island west of Hurds, distance some 30 miles [McDonald Islands], and another E.S.E. 70 miles [unknown island?], both of which he had seen, but never landed on. My own officers who were in the boat confirmed his statement of the sea elephants, and the island being well watered. There were penguins and other birds in myriads, and on an island about a mile apart from the main appeared to be a great mound of guano [? Red Island].

While lying to, I went to look for my abstract, and it made me shudder to think that 12 months before, I ran past the island at midnight in a heavy gale of wind, not more than four or five miles distant, ignorant of its existence. My greatest wish on sending my boat to the island was to find out if there were any shipwrecked persons on it whom I might relieve.

I send enclosed with this, a sketch of the island, in the execution of which I was very much assisted by one of the passengers. It was entirely of volcanic origin, my six officers having found the surface ashes and stones, like the specimen enclosed. I make the northern extreme of the island in lat. 53 1 S. long. 73 7 E. by good chronometers.—from the Liverpool Daily Post.” - Whalemens's Shipping List 1 June 1858.

Two of the passengers on the *Caribou* accompanied the boat which landed at the island. The following letter, addressed to the *South Australian Advertiser*, was reprinted in the *Launceston Examiner*, 28 August 1858:

"Sir, - In your impression of Wednesday last, there appears a paragraph quoted from the Aust. & N.Z. Gaz., referring to the discovery of islands by Captain Cubbins, ship Caribou, you regret that no mention was made of their situation on the chart, without which, as you have already stated, as far as navigation goes, the information is useless.

I am pleased to be in a position to offer the omitted particulars, having myself, with an other passenger, Mr Alexander Williamson, of Geelong (neither mentioned in the Captain's report) accompanied the ship's officers in the life boat, at the express desire of Captain Cubbins, and landed on one of the islands.

The observation taken at noon on the date of the discovery showed latitude 53°10'S. longitude 73°10'.

I am Sir, your obedient servant, V. Lawrence."

6.3 Postscript

Elephanting vessels continued to visit Heard Island until 1880. No-one is known to have wintered on the Island between 1880 and 1948. There were brief summer visits by scientists, notably the British *HMS Challenger* Expedition in 1874, the Deutsche Südpolar-Expedition in 1902, the BANZAR Expedition in 1929, and Edgar and Andrée Aubert de la Rüe in 1929. Sporadic sealing was attempted during the 1920s. The Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition (ANARE) occupied a research station at Atlas Cove from 1947 to 1955. The Island remains today, as it was for the sealers, both dangerous and fascinating. Phillip Law wrote:

“Sailing into the anchorage at Atlas Roads, Heard Island, on the way back from Antarctica, I have on many occasions heard the hardened Mawson men, hanging over the rail and staring at the new scene, say: ‘God, what an awful place. I wouldn’t like to spend a year here!’

The ships’ officers and crew hate the place and I have not had a ship’s captain who has not been glad when he has been able to leave.

For myself and some of my old colleagues, ... Heard Island holds an attraction and a fascination unequalled by any other Antarctic region.”
- Law (1983):40.

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Appendix A.

The following distances have been calculated by the Haversine Formula used in navigation. ^[1]

a). Heard Island

Length - from NW end to SE end = 23 naut. miles. approx.

Breadth - Cape Bidlingmaier to Cape Labuan = 11.5 naut. miles. approx.

From Corinthian Bay by sea to Spit Bay = 14.5 naut. miles approx.

From Cape Bidlingmaier to Shag Rock = 6 naut. miles approx.

At 53° S., one degree of longitude = 36 naut. miles approx..

At 72° E., one degree of latitude = 60 naut. miles approx..

b). McDonald Islands

From McDonald Island to West Cape. = 24 naut. miles. approx.

From Meyer Rock to McDonald Island = 1.1 naut. miles. approx.

Length of McDonald Island = 1 naut. mile approx.

c). Iles Kerguelen

Royal Sound, Iles Kerguelen to Corinthian Bay, Heard Island = 244 naut. miles approx.

Extent of Kerguelen Archipelago = 70 x 75 naut. miles.

At 50° S., one degree of longitude = 39 naut. miles. approx.

At 70° E., one degree of latitude = 60 naut. miles.

List of figures

Figure 1. Location map showing position of Heard Island in Southern Ocean

Figure 2. The first known landing on Heard Island was made at Spit Bay by Captain Erasmus D. Rogers with a party of sealers from the ship *Corinthian* on 15 February 1855; (see section 4.1.1).

This was the view in 1987 looking west across the “*The Landing*” to the sealers’ anchorage off “*Fairchild’s Beach*” [Skua Beach]. - Photo by the author.

The cache of oil-casks at Oil Barrel Point, half buried in sand and pebbles, was the work of the crew of the bark *Trinity*, New London, master John L. Williams, wrecked here in 1880. - Downes (1989); (see section 5)

Figure 3. Place-names used at Heard Island during the 19th century. Names used by the sealers are shown in italics; present-day names are in smaller, roman, font. During the 19th century most of the Heard Island glaciers descended to the sea, ending in ice-cliffs as tall as ships’ masts. Base map adapted from British Admiralty Chart 802 (1965).

Figure 4. Cook’s track in *HMS Resolution* January–February 1773, in search of the “*Land said to be discovered by M. de Kerguelen in Feb. 1772.*” - Adapted from “*A Chart of the Southern Hemisphere*” in Cook (1777).

Cook passed more than 50 miles from Heard Island on 13 February 1773.

Figure 5. Portion of Kemp’s track in the *Magnet* south from Iles Kerguelen in November 1833. - Adapted from the tracing in Mawson(1935).

It is not known to which island the annotation “*Saw land*” might refer. Two tracks were depicted. That to the west was the course by chronometer 279; to the east the course by dead reckoning. The annotation “*Sounded in 55 fathoms*” suggests proximity to land, but far from the plotted positions.

Figure 6. The track of the *Oriental*, compared with Maury’s recommended route and the old “*Admiralty Route.*” (For explanation of symbols see section 3.2)

The base map is an example of the chart “*Winds and Routes,*” used by Matthew Maury to persuade mariners to use the new route to Australia. - adapted from Plate VIII in Maury (1861).

Figure 7. The tracks of *HMS Resolution*, *Magnet* and *Oriental* in the vicinity of Heard Island and Iles Kerguelen plotted on a one degree grid.

According to their reported positions, Cook passed 53 miles from Heard Island, Kemp perhaps 140 miles, and Heard about 20 miles from the Island

Two tracks are shown for Kemp. (see section 2)

Figure 8. (left) Captain John Jay. Heard (1809-1862) and his son John, (photo about 1857). In the merchant marine for 32 years, Captain Heard had the reputation of being a careful, reliable sailor - Bertrand (1971):219.

(right) Fidelia Reed Heard (1823-1895) accompanied her husband on the voyage of the *Oriental* in 1853, four months after their marriage. Fidelia recorded in her journal the un-expected encounter with Heard Island and made the first known sketch. (photo later in life)

Photos courtesy of Mrs Elizabeth Heard and David Heard Jr.

Figure 9. Sketch of Heard Island by James S. Hutton, master ship *Earl of Eglinton*, 1 Dec. 1854. - From Rosser & Imray (1867):501.

Hutton wrote: "A large conical mountain, resembling the Peak of Pico in the Western Isles, was on its south end, and a flat tableland, about the height and appearance of Table Mountain in the Cape Colony, and as seen from Table Bay."

This suggests Mawson Peak and Big Ben as seen from north of Spit Bay, with Shag Island and Sail Rock on the right. (see section 3.4)

Figure 10. Sketch of Heard Island. - From *Illust. London News*, 31 March 1855, courtesy Robert Headland, Scott Polar Research Institute.

The author of this sketch is unknown. It was labelled "Grey's Island" in error; (see text) McDonald Island was called "Gray Island" by Captain D. Rees, ship *Lincluden Castle*, 4 Dec 1854.

Figure 11. Sketch of McDonald Island and Meyer Rock. - From *Illust. London News*, 31 March 1855, courtesy Robert Headland, Scott Polar Research Institute.

The author of this sketch is unknown. It was labelled "Dunn's Island" in error; Heard Island was called "Dunn Island" by D. Rees, ship *Lincluden Castle*, 4 Dec 1854.

Figure 12. Captain E.D. Rogers. master of ship *Corinthian* and leader of the first landing party at Heard Island in 1855. - Photo courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.

Erasmus Darwin Rogers (1817-1906), "*Cap'n Da'win*" to his whaling friends, first went to sea at age 10 years. He was 35 when he took command of the *Corinthian* for three elephanting voyages to the Desolation Islands between 1851 and 1858. Colby (1990)

Figure 13. The ship *Corinthian*, New London. - Photo courtesy Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.

The *Corinthian* was a square-rigged, double-decked ship of 503 tons built as a packet at Baltimore in 1822. She was a fast sailer with a trimmer line and a more spacious cabin than ordinary whalers - Bertrand (1971):239. Purchased by Perkins and Smith in 1847, the *Corinthian* was completely overhauled for her next five voyages to Desolation and Heard Islands.

Figure 14. The site of the first landing on Heard Island - near Oil Barrel Point on the north beach at Spit Bay, pictured during the peak of elephanting in 1858. - Drawing by W.T. Peters, courtesy of New London County Historical Society. (c.f. Figure 2.)

End-notes

- [1] A.G. Gardner (1973) *Navigation* p:99; J.E.D. Williams (1992) - *From Sails to Satellites* p:49.
- [2] Opinions have varied as to how close Cook came to Heard Island.
The *Nautical Magazine* April 1855, stated that Cook was “*not within 60 miles.*” Beaglehole (1961):lxiii considered Heard Island was some 40 miles north-east of the *Resolution*, and McDonald Is. even closer. Re-calculating the distance by the Haversine formula suggests the *Resolution* was 53 nautical miles from both McDonald and Heard Islands.
- [3] U.K. Hydrographic Office (1974):125. ditto (1961):323.
- [4] The snow *Magnet*, London, 148 tons.
Length 72ft x breadth 22ft x depth 5ft 5in. Owner Daniel Bennett & Son, London. Small square-rigged vessel of 148 tons, two masts, standing bowsprit, square sterned, carvel built. Full description in Jones (1968):234.
- [5] Chart H678/4 in the U.K. Hydrographic Office, received 27 May 1833. - Letter to the author from U.K. Hydrographic Office, 10 July 2000.
- [6] There was confusion over the labelling of Kemp’s track, (it was erroneously marked “*Biscoe Oct. 1833*”, “*Kemp Land Biscoe decr. 1833*,” and “*Kemp 1834 Jan.*”), but the errors were corrected in later editions.
- [7] Mawson considered that Kemp saw land at 52°37’ S. 70°20’ E. He reasoned that although the more reliable chronometer indicated a more westerly longitude, the track according to dead reckoning was further to the east. He suggested that the *Magnet* may have drifted further east than the indicated positions because of the strong current in the area. In addition, he stated that Purdy’s chart positioned Kerguelen 20’ too far to the west, and the *Magnet*’s true position could have been further east.
- [8] Distances were re-calculated using the Haversine formula and positions given in Chart AUS 606 “*Heard Island*,” Hydrographic Dept., Australian Navy, 1949.
- [9] A.G.E. Jones wrote :
“ ... the peak of Heard Island, Big Ben, 9006 ft. high would have been visible only at a distance of just over 100 geographical miles [approx. 87 naut. miles]; that is to say, Kemp could only have seen it if he had been as far east as long. 70°18’ E. The course by chronometer 279 puts him in long. 69° E., 46-47 miles too far west to have seen Big Ben. ... The chart also shows his course by latitude and dead reckoning, but that does not call for consideration as it would have been less accurate.” - Jones (1968):240-243.

- [10] Distances have been re-calculated using the Haversine formula and positions given in Chart AUS 606 "*Heard Island*," Hydrographic Dept., Australian Navy, 1949.
- [11] The whaling historian A. Howard Clark used similar words in the 1880s, and it is probable that Lanman was the source of his information:
- "Heard's Island was discovered by Captain Heard or Herd, a Boston navigator; in 1853. Several years prior to that date, New London sealers, while cruising south of Desolation, reported that land could be seen from the mast-head, but none had gone near enough to be sure of a new land until Captain Heard's discovery."* - Clark (1887):419.
- [12] Ship *Charles Carroll*, New London, 411 tons.
- Registered: 27 May 1844, length 121ft, breadth 27ft., depth 13 ft, 2 decks, 3 masts, square stern, no galleries, man-bust figurehead. Built New York 1828.
- Re-registered 25 Aug 1845, 20 July 1847. T.L. Long, master. Owners: Elias Perkins, Franklin Smith, N.S. Perkins Jr, and 6 others. - U.S. National Archives (1990).
- [13] Journal of Mrs Fidelia Reed Heard on the voyage of the bark *Oriental*, 13 August 1853 – 26 Jan 1855, manuscript in Heard Family Papers in possession of David B. Heard, Waban, Mass., 1977.
- [14] Abstract Log of the *Oriental*, manuscript in Heard Family papers in possession of David B. Heard, Waban, Mass., 1977. Selections published previously:
- Extract of the Abstract Log, 13 Oct - 21 Dec 1853, published in Maury (1855):763-768.
 - A copy of the entry for 25 Nov 1853 was lodged with the American Geographical Society by Captain Sir Hubert Wilkins who received it from Joseph J. Heard, and published in Anon (1930).
- The ship's log for the *Oriental* has not been located. Bertrand (1971):221-223 refers to the "*Logbook of the bark Oriental*" which in 1971 was with David B. Heard, Waban, Mass., U.S.A. This is probably the Abstract Log. A "*Masters Journal*" for the *Oriental* was listed in the holdings of the Whaling and Marine Manuscript Archives (item D1565c), (now in the New Bedford Whaling Museum) - Fonda (1973) :7.
- [15] Journal of Mrs Fidelia Reed Heard ... op. cit.
- [16] Ship *Oriental*, 467 tons, master J.J. Heard, entered at Melbourne 23 Dec 1853, from Boston. - Public Record Office, Victoria (1974).
- [17] Letter, 4 Jan 1854, from J.J. Heard, Melbourne to M.F. Maury. Copy in Heard Family Papers in possession of David B. Heard. 22 Feb 1977. See also Bertrand (1971):230.

- [18] Letter, 12 June 1854, from M.F. Maury to Secretary of the U.S. Navy. In: Records of Hydrog. Office, U.S. National Archives. See also Append. B. in Bertrand (1971):231.
- [19] Maury (1855):862. Also letter, 22 May 1974, to the author from U.S. Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C., providing extract.
- [20] Copy of an undated letter (after 1860, no recipient), in Heard Family Papers, provided by David B. Heard, Waban, Mass., U.S.A. 1977.
- [21] Full-rigged ship *Samarang*, London, 481 register tons.
Built 1840, length 134.6 ft., breadth 29.4 ft., depth of hold 19.8 ft. Owner: W.O. Young. Sailed from London 12 October 1853 William McDonald, master. - Lloyds (1974).
- [22] Wyndham, H.L. (1853-54) "Account of a voyage to Australia by Mrs Hugh Wyndham, Sen., in S.S. *Samarang* in 1853-54." Manuscript in Mitchell Library, Sydney, ML ref. B1505. Extract of pp.24-25. McDonald Islands. - Provided by Mitchell Library, State Library of N.S.W. Sydney.
- [23] Document L9815 in U.K. Hydrographic Office. - Letter to author from U.K. Hyd. Office, 4 Apr 1974.

This document contains:

- a) sketch map showing position of island;
- b) copy of press cutting of letter by J.J. Heard to Melbourne *Argus*, 6 Feb 1854; (probably not received until later); and
- c) extract of log of the *Samarang*, W. McDonald, London to Sydney, 3 Jan 1854; submitted to Hyd.Office by Capt. H.W. Denham, *HMS Herald*, received 12 June 1854:

"Log of the Samarang from London towards Sydney January 1854.

... [table of courses and winds] ,,,

Extract of the log book submitted to me, H.M. Denham, Captain HMS Herald.

Remarks January 4th 1854. Blowing a strong gale, with a very heavy sea. 3 [pm] Gale moderating and sea going down. Set the treble reefed fore topsail and foresail, out 2d. reefs of main topsail. 4 [pm] P.S. at 17 ins. [Pumped ship] 4.30 [pm] The sea increased and became very heavy. Temperature of water 37°.

At 5 P.M. ice was reported ahead, but on passing it we found it to be a large island [McDonald Is.] of about 3 miles in circumference and a conspicuous rock standing out to the NE [Meyer Rock]. We passed within a mile of the rock, which lies with a mile of the other island or islands. The water was very much discoloured, and a very heavy ground swell, we were not able to try for soundings as the

ship was running 10 knots before a very heavy NW gale. At 6 pm the island bore abeam.

At 9 pm land was again seen on the starboard bow, and in approaching it, found it to be a large island four times larger than the first and about 1500 feet high. On passing both islands the water was very much discoloured, and the sea increased to a great height and continued running so heavy as long as the water was discoloured. We also observed a large number of Cape Pigeons and fish. I am sorry the state of the weather did not permit our landing, but as before mentioned it was blowing terrifically with very high sea.

Knowing that no such islands have ever been reported in this latitude, I claim the priority of discovery and therefore name the western island McDonald Isd. and the eastern one Young's Isld [Heard Is.]. The rock off the first island. Whitbourne Cap [Meyer Rock], - small Isd. on the east side of Young's Isd. Smith's Isd. [Shag Is.] We had an excellent view of the first island which was perfectly barren and of volcanic origin. The second one appeared more undulating than the first, but it being nearly dark, could not say positively whether it was barren or not. One thing certain that the water is very shallow in the vicinity of both islands. On the first island we could see the snow lying on the fissures of the rocks. The night coming on very thick and blowing a violent gale, and judging there might be more islands, hove to on the port tack, under close reefed main topsail and fore topmast staysail.

Wm. McDonald G. Whitbourne Chas Cawley R.W.

Latitude of McDonalds Is. 53°00' S. Longitude of do. 72°35' E.

Latitude of Youngs Is. 53°03' S. Longitude of do. 73° 34'E.

A very heavy sea during the night, and blowing a furious gale, pumped ship every four hours at 17 inches. Ends with strong gale and heavy sea, but clear weather."

- [24] I am grateful to Patrick Arnaud of the Station Marine D'Endoume, Marseille, France for bringing the following references to my attention:

"Iles Mac Donald" - Carte des Mers australes partie comprise entre les méridiens du Cap de Bonne Espérance et du Port du Roi Georges. Carte no. 955, 1842, (édition 1856). Dépôt-général de la Marine, Paris.

"Iles Macdonald" [no title:Mappemonde – Dressée Par M. Gressier ...] Carte no. 1427, 1852, (édition 1856). Dépôt-général de la Marine, Paris. See also Annales Hydrographiques (1856):168-169.

- [25] Full-rigged ship *Earl Of Eglinton*, Glasgow, 1.270 register tons.

Built 1864. Owner: J. Mitchell, sailed Clyde 24 Sept. 1854, arrived Melbourne 19 Dec. 1854, James Hutton Master. - Lloyds (1974).

- [26] The name of the master of the *Herald Of The Morning* is frequently quoted as “*Attwaye*.” However in each source:- Lloyds (1974), Jones (1986), and the Public Records Office of Victoria (1974), the name of the master is Atteridge or Attridge.
- [27] Full-rigged ship *Herald Of The Morning*, 1,459 register tons,
 Owner Fernie & Co. Sailed Liverpool 23 August 1854, master Attridge. [sic] Sailed Table Bay 18 November 1854. Arrived Melbourne 19 December 1854. - Lloyds (1974).
 Ship 1354 reg. tons, owner Daniel Brown, master John Atteridge, sailed Liverpool 23 Aug 1854, arrived Melbourne 19 Dec 1854, passengers and general cargo. - Jones (1986):185. Ship, 1354 tons, J. Attridge [sic], arrived Melbourne 20 Dec 1854, from Liverpool. - Public Record Office, Victoria. (1974).
- [28] Full-rigged ship, *Lincluden Castle*, Belfast, 955 register tons.
 Length 157.5 ft., breadth 31.7 ft., owner John Dunn. Sailed Liverpool 26 September 1854, master David Rees. Arrived Melbourne 19 December 1854. - Lloyds (1974)
 Ship, 1028/1800 tons, owner John Dunn, Belfast, master David Rees, sailed Liverpool 26 Sept 1854, arrived Melbourne 19 Dec 1854 with passengers and general cargo. - Jones (1986):185.
Lincluden Castle, 1028 tons, D. Rees, arrived Melbourne 20 Dec 1854 from Liverpool. - Public Record Office, Victoria (1974).
- [29] Seamen’s Register, New London: no. 73, 25 Sept 1840. “*Erasmus D. Rogers, 23 years, 5ft 9 and a half inches, light complexion, born Montville, (witness Ben Rogers. [brother])*” - U.S. National Archives (1990).
 Born 16 nov 1817; married Emmiline Bolles in 1847. Died January 1906. - Colby (1990):89-94.
- [30] Ship *Corinthian*, New London, 503 tons.
 Registered: 10 Nov 1853. Erasmus D. Rogers, master. Length 123 ft, breadth 30 ft, depth 15 ft. 2 decks, 3 masts, square stern, round tuck, no gallery, man bust head. Owners: Nathaniel S. Perkins jr, Elias Perkins, Franklin Smith together 26/32; Samuel C.Willets 4/32; Walter R.Jones 2/32. - U.S. National Archives (1990).
 Square-rigged, double-decked ship of 503 tons built in Baltimore in 1822 as a packet, the *Corinthian* had a trimmer line and a more spacious cabin than ordinary whalers. In 1847, the vessel was completely overhauled and newly “*topped*”. A fast sailer. - Decker (1973):239; Taylor (1929):95; Bertrand (1971):239.
 [Note: In this and the following foot-notes, ownership of whaling vessels is expressed in proportional shares, e.g. 1/32, etc.]

- [31] "Journal of the ship *Corinthian*, Nov 1853 June 1856, kept by E.D. Rogers," included with "Journal of the Voyage on board the *Charles Carroll* of New London, bound to Dessolution [sic] and from thence home, Captain Thomas Long Master, kept by Erasmus D. Rogers. 21 July 1847 - 12 April 1848" - Mss. in the Alexander Turnbull Library, State Library of New Zealand. The main events in Rogers' journal have been described by Richards & Winslow (1971), and Richards (1981).
- [32] Schooner *Atlas*, New London, 80 tons, Wm. Brown, master. Tender to ship *Corinthian*.
Registered: 30 Aug 1849, schooner, New London, 80 tons, Perkins & Smith, etc, owners. Length 67ft x breadth 21ft x depth 6ft, one deck, 2 masts, square stern, no gallery, no head. Built Sussex County, Delaware, 1833.
Re-registered: 30 July 1856. Owners: N. Shaw Perkins Jr 7.3/32; Franklin Smith 7.3/32; Elias Perkins 7.3/32; E.D. Rogers 4/32; all of N.L.; estate of W.R. Jones 2/32; Samuel Willets 4/32. - U.S. National Archives (1990).
- [33] Schooner *Mechanic*, New London, 69 tons, John Edwards master. Tender to ship *Corinthian*
Registered: 21 Oct 1853, New London,. Length 63ft x breadth 19ft x depth 8 ft. Square stern, no gallery, billet head. Built Stonington, 1846. Owners: Nath. S. Perkins jr, Elias Perkins, Franklin Smith, together 26/32; Samuel Willets 4/32; W.R. Jones 2/32. - U.S. National Archives (1990).
Rogers in his Journal calls the *Mechanic* "the smack."
- [34] Schooner *Marcia*, New London, 128 tons, James L. Church master. Tender to bark *Alert*.
Registered: 30 July 1853, Schooner New London, 128 tons, James L. Church, master.
Length 76ft x breadth 22ft x depth 8 ft. One deck, 2 masts, square stern, no gallery, billet head. Built Brook Haven 1839. Owners: E.V. Stoddard 3/16; T.W. Williams 2nd 1/5; T.W. Williams 1/12; C.A. Williams 1/12; H.P. Haven 1/12; F. Allyn 1/16; R. & L. Coit 1/16; F.L. Allen 1/16; R.H. Chapell 1/24; A.G. Douglass 1/24; H. Smith 1/24; M. Grinnell & R. Mintum 1/5. - U.S. National Archives (1990).
- [35] See letter from John G. Cameron in section 4.2.
- [36] Letter from E.D. Rogers to A.H. Clark. Reprinted in Clark (1887):419-420, and Bertrand (1971):242.
- [37] E.D. Rogers' Journal, 28 Apr. 1855.
Capt. J. G. Cameron, master of the schooner *Anne*, Cape Town, was later at Prince Edward and Crozet Islands. The *Anne* or *Annie*, under Capt. Shields, worked Heard Island during 1858. Jones (1986):180,184,185. Downes (1996):27.

- [38] In E.D. Rogers' journal, the *Exile* and *Franklin* were not listed as accompanying the *Corinthian* to Heard Island.
- [39] - *Nautical Magazine* 24:674-675. December 1855. The reference by the Editor to the March issue is the discussion in Anon (1855a)

Cameron's letter, dated 26 May 1855, was first published in the *Commercial Gazette* (Mauritius), date unknown. It was reprinted in *Hobart Town Courier* 6 Sept 1855, *Launceston Examiner* 8 September 1855, *Naut. Mag.* December 1855, *Annales Hydrographiques* (Paris) 1856, pp.178-180 [under the name J.G. Gameron of the Tames], and O'May (1978):120-121. [abridged].

- [40] Bark *Laurens*, New London, 420 tons.

Registered: 14 Sept 1855, Franklin Smith master. Length 121ft x breadth 27 x depth 13 ft; 2 decks, 3 masts, square stern, no gallery, billet head. Built Kennebunk, Maine 1837. From New York.

Owners: N.S. Perkins jr 7/32; Franklin Smith 15/32; Elias Perkins 7/32; T.W.Perkins 1/32; E.D.Rogers 2/32. - U.S. National Archives (1990).

- [41] Bark *Alert*, New London, 398 tons.

Registered: 5 Oct 1853. Simeon Church, master. Change of rig to bark. Length 113 ft., breadth 28ft., depth 14ft. 2 decks, 3 masts, square stern, no galleries, billet head. Built at Boston 1828. Owners: Enoch V. Stoddard 9/48; Thomas W. Williams 2nd 6/48; Frederick L. Allen 3/48; Francis Allyn 3/48; Robert Coit & Leonard Coit 3/48; Thomas W. Williams 4/48; Henry P. Haven 4/48; C.A. Williams 4/48; Richard H. Chapell 2/48; all of N.L.; Moses H. Grinnell & Robert B. Mintum of N.Y. 6/48; Henry Smith, Groton, 2/48; Albert G.Douglass of Waterford 2/48. - U.S. National Archives (1990).

- [42] Schooner *Exile*, New London, 88 tons, Tender to bark *Alert*.

Registered: 17 Aug 1852, L.L. Butler master. Length 70 ft., breadth 21 ft., depth 7 ft. one deck, 2 masts, square stern, no gallery, no figurehead. Built Dorchester County, Maryland, 1834. Owners: Enoch V. Stoddard 7/32; H.P. Haven 4/32; T.W. Williams 3/32; Jos Smith 4/32; Jas Morgan 2/32; R. Coit 1/32; L. Coit 1/32; T. Potter 1/32; P.D. Irish 1/32; Sam Willets 4/32. - U.S. National Archives (1990). The *Exile* was reported at Heard Island during the 1856/57 season. - *Whalemen's Shipping List* 16 Feb 1857.

- [43] Brig *Zoe*, New London, 196 tons.

Registered: 17 July 1855, James H. Rogers master. 1 deck, 2 masts, length 90ft, breadth 24ft, depth 10ft. Built Baltimore 1847. Owners: Thomas Fitch 2nd 8/16; H.P. Haven 2/16; F.W. Fitch 2/16; E.V. Stoddard 1/16; C.A. Williams 1/16; R.H. Chapell 1/16; James H. Rogers 1/16. - U.S. National Archives (1990).

[44] Schooner *Alfred*, Fairhaven, 90 (?) tons.

Built: as a sloop, Chatham 1835; rebuilt at New London, altered to a schooner.

Enrolment no 40, N.L., 12 May 1845. Length 65 ft, breadth 22ft, depth 7ft.: one deck, 1 mast, scroll head.

Re-registered: 16 aug 1856, Schooner, Fairhaven, Lucius L. Butler master, I.F. Terry, etc., owners. 19 in ship's company. Sailed from Fairhaven, 16 August 1856, tender to ship Samuel Robertson, Daniel S. Babcock.- Letter to author, New Bedford Public Library, 10 July 1974. - US National Archives (1990), - *Whalemen's Shipping List* 26 August 1856.

[45] Chart AUS 606 "*Heard Island*" published by Hydrographic Dept., Australian Navy, 1949.

[46] Articles in the newspapers *Allg. Augsb. Ztg.* and *Neuen Münchener Zeitung* in 1857, reprinted in Petermann (1858):20.

[47] Full-rigged ship *Caribou* of Liverpool, 1,207 register tons, length 192 ft., breadth 33.1 ft, owned by Lawrence & Co. Sailed Liverpool Dec 8 1857, master Major. Arrived Melbourne 10 March 1858, master Cubbins. - Lloyds (1974).

Caribou, D. Cubbins, at Melbourne 12 March 1858. - Public Record Office, Victoria (1974).