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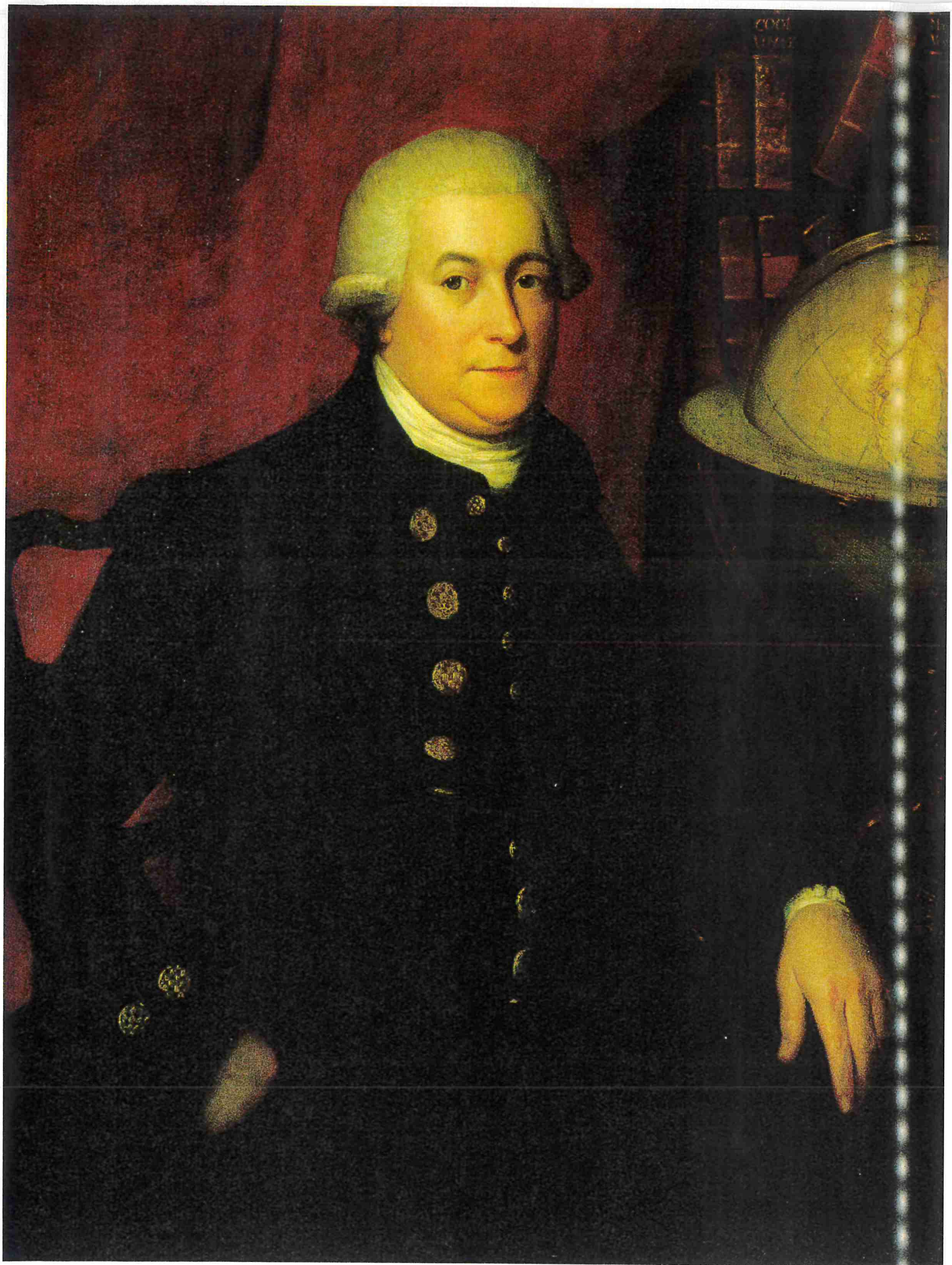
'ACQUIRING A MORE COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE'

George Vancouver in the North Pacific

JAMES COOK's chart of north-west America, made in the early summer of 1778 while he was hurrying north to begin his search for the North-West Passage in Alaska, was sketchy and inadequate. Pressed for time in foggy conditions, he had largely kept well offshore and his chart could do little more than indicate the general trends of the coast. While Cook showed that a navigable passage could not exist over the top of the American continent, it was theoretically possible after his voyage that one could still be found along the British Columbian coast. Thirteen years later, in 1791, the Admiralty ordered his old midshipman, George Vancouver, to finish the job and acquire for Britain 'a more complete knowledge' of this extraordinarily convoluted coastline which, with Cook's discovery of the rich trade in sea-otter furs, now had great commercial potential. Vancouver's finished chart reveals the size of the task that faced him: it took him three full seasons to chart an area that Cook had sailed along in four weeks, with most of the surveying having to be done from small open boats, often in appalling weather and with the political responsibility of resolving the Nootka Sound crisis with the Spanish authorities (described in this book's introduction) hanging over him. His survey stretched from California to Anchorage in Alaska; and while it may have lacked the visionary sweep of Cook's great voyages, it was carried out with a determination, with skill and with an obsessive attention to detail that proved conclusively that no passage existed through the continent. It resulted in a set of charts so accurate that many were still being used a hundred years later.

in 1778, Cook only showed impossibility of path over America but since he kept mostly offshore of PNW in foggy conditions, it was theoretically possible for route to still exist along British Columbian coast

1791: Cook's old midshipman George Vancouver ordered to finish survey of PNW - would take 3 seasons to do it, in small open boats in appalling weather - but resulting maps extraordinarily detailed, still used



PREVIOUS PAGES GEORGE VANCOUVER (1757–98); oil painting by an unknown artist.

The identification of Vancouver here has been disputed.

OPPOSITE TOP Admiralty plan of Vancouver's *Discovery* as bought from Randall and Brent, Deptford. The major alterations needed to turn the merchant ship into a sloop for exploration are shown in green.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The *Discovery* being fitted out at Deptford, c.1789.

This wash drawing by a so-far unidentified artist was acquired by the National Maritime Museum in 2005, and, other than the Admiralty plan, is the only known original image of the ship as an exploration vessel.

GEORGE VANCOUVER

George Vancouver was born in King's Lynn, Norfolk, in 1757, the son of the deputy collector of customs, and at the age of 14 he was entered on the *Resolution's* books as an able seaman for Cook's second voyage. He was really one of the ship's 'young gentlemen', trainee officers destined for commissions once they had served the required period at sea and passed the relevant exams. He did his job well, if unspectacularly, a fellow young gentleman describing him as 'a Quiet inoffensive Young man'. In later life Vancouver claimed to have sailed nearer the South Pole than anyone else on this voyage, for when Cook decided that at 71°10' south he had pushed as far south as was humanly possible Vancouver scrambled out on to the bowsprit, waved his hat over his head and shouted '*ne plus ultra*' – no further (has any man ever been). The only source of this story is Vancouver himself and if true it has a certain irony, for, as one of his officers later remarked, he 'was never known to put a favourable construction on the follies of youth'. However, he was a capable officer and for Cook's third voyage he was appointed midshipman in Captain Clerke's *Discovery*. *Claimed later to have reached out arm + hat on bowsprit at*

Two weeks after Cook's ships returned to Britain in 1780, Vancouver passed his lieutenant's examination and was appointed to a sloop under orders for the West Indies. With the exception of a 16-month period on half-pay, he spent the next seven years in the Caribbean, rising to be first lieutenant of the 50-gun *Europa* and recommending himself to the commander-in-chief of the West Indies Station, Commodore Sir Alan Gardner, by surveying Jamaica's Kingston Harbour. The survey was completed with the assistance of the *Europa's* master, Joseph Whidbey, and the charts themselves were drawn by Joseph Baker, one of the midshipmen, beginning a professional association between the three men that would flower on the north-west coast of America.

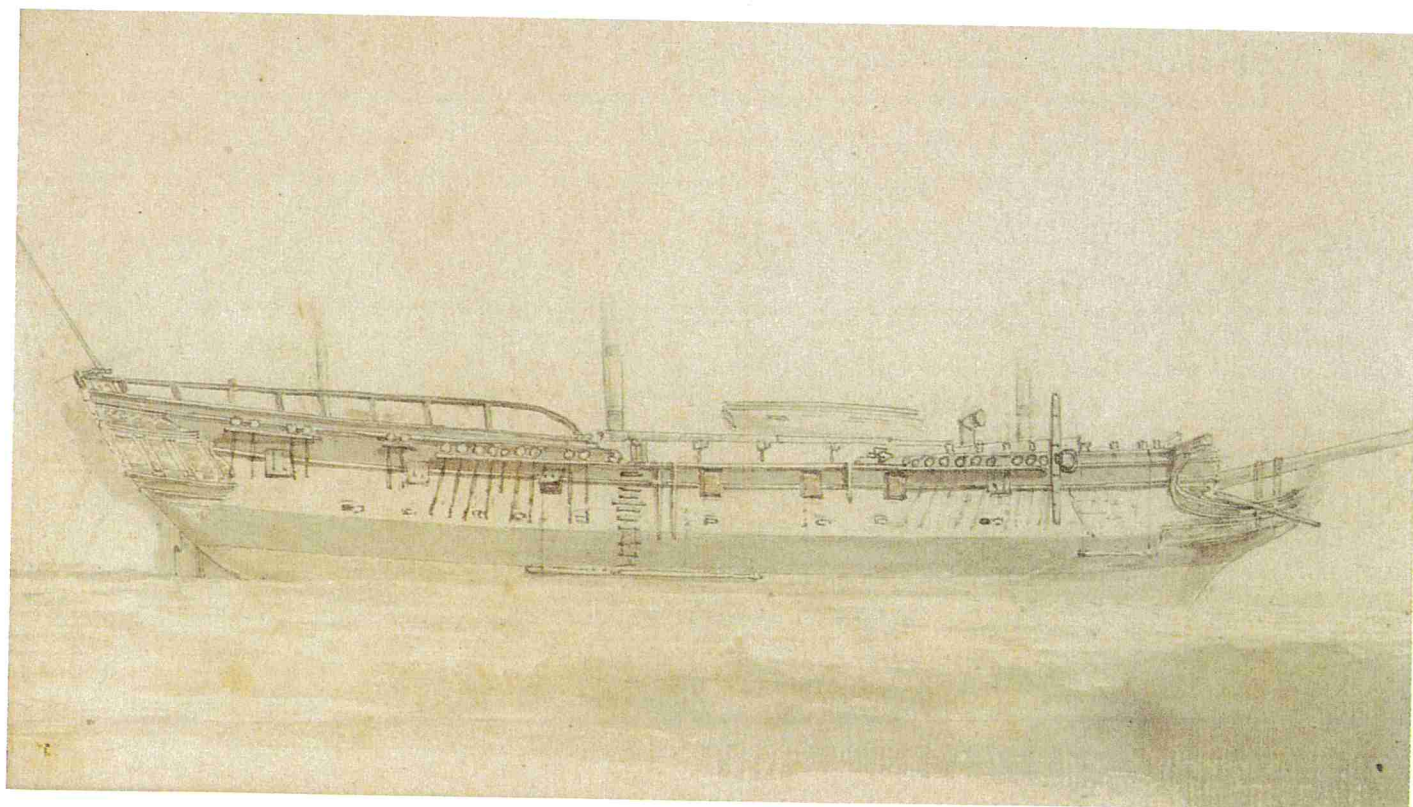
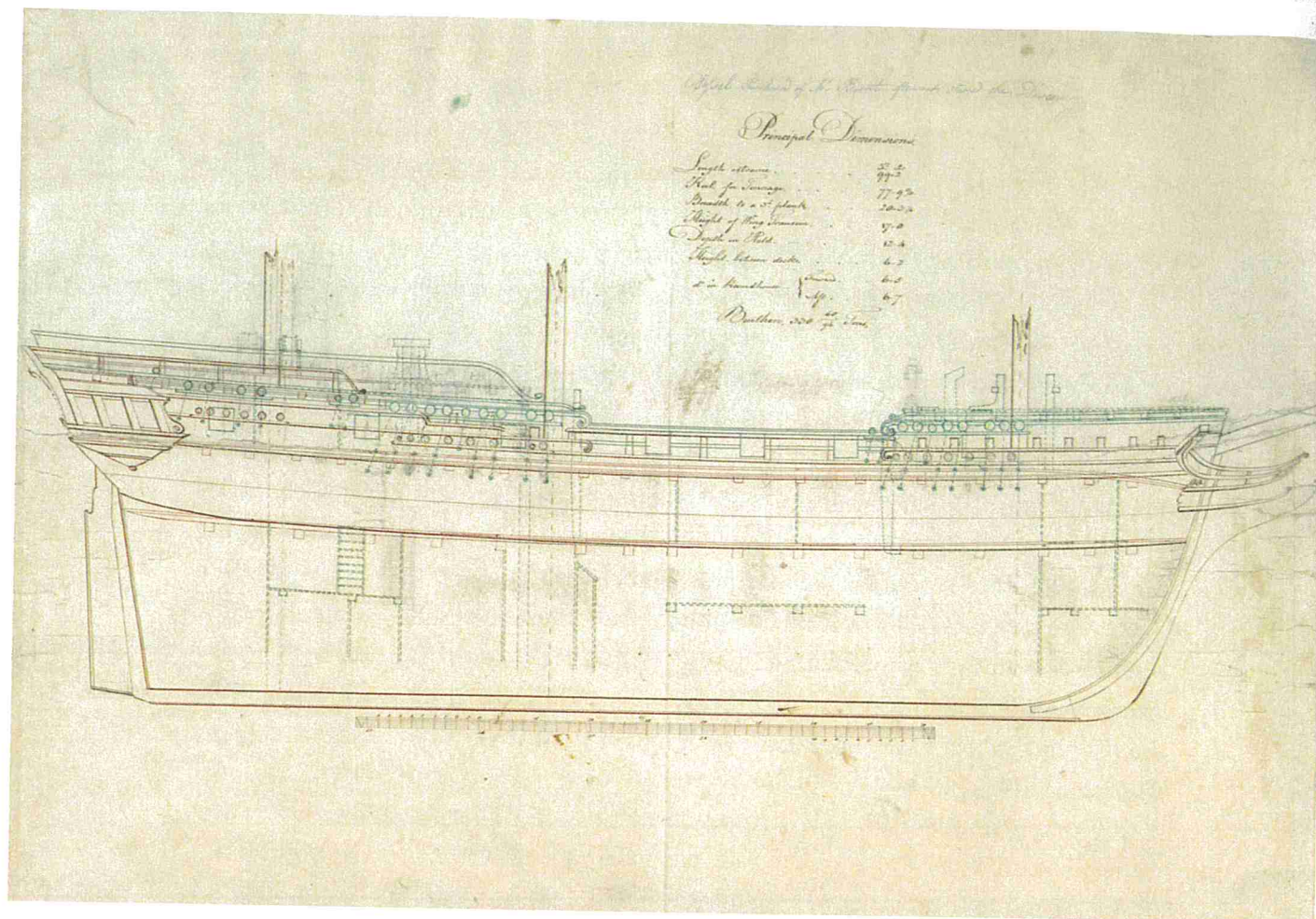
Vancouver sent on Cook's 2nd voyage as an able seaman at 14 yrs old, but was really a young gentleman & stood for a commission. He was midshipman for 3rd voyage on Clark's ship.

described as "a Quiet inoffensive young man"

southernmost point of 2nd voyage, no one went further than me!

spend time in West Indies, charts

Jamaica's Kingston Harbour



THE DISCOVERY

The ship selected for Vancouver's expedition was named after Cook's *Discovery*, the smaller vessel of his last voyage (1776-80). She was a merchantman converted for exploration and had been lying for more than a year in the river Thames under the command of another of Cook's old officers, Henry Roberts, waiting for orders to survey the Southern Whale Fisheries, a large area encompassing the southern Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Vancouver received an appointment as the *Discovery*'s first lieutenant in 1789, almost certainly through the influence of Gardner, who had just become one of the Lords of the Admiralty. During the Spanish Armament of 1790 - Britain's military response to the Nootka Sound Crisis - the fleet was put on a war footing. The *Discovery*'s crew was redistributed and the planned survey voyage suspended. Once a political solution was agreed with Spain, however, the ship was given new orders which combined taking formal possession of the disputed land at Nootka Sound with conducting a survey of the north-west coast on which, under the terms of the new agreement, Britain now had the right to trade. For reasons that are no longer clear, Roberts was relieved of his command and Vancouver appointed in his place.

BANKS AND VANCOUVER

Sir Joseph Banks had been closely involved in planning Roberts's voyage but there was immediate friction between Banks and Vancouver. Banks had persuaded the Admiralty to build a 12ft x 8ft 'plant cabin' on the quarterdeck to house the collection of live plants he hoped would be brought back, and he personally supervised its installation at Deptford; but Vancouver loathed the large, heavy structure that intruded on the limited deck space and made the ship difficult to handle. Banks had also appointed a Scottish naval surgeon named Archibald Menzies to make 'an investigation of the whole of Natural History of the Countries you are to visit; as well as an enquiry into the present state and comparative degree of civilization of the inhabitants you meet with'. Menzies was an excellent choice for he was a talented naturalist who already knew the area, having just returned from James Colnett's fur-trading voyage to the North Pacific; but he was unambiguously Banks's man. He was appointed to Vancouver's ship as a supernumerary botanist, not as a naval surgeon, and this position placed him outside the ship's formal chain of command, giving him a privileged and protected status that Vancouver was clearly uneasy about - as well as a salary of £150 a year which, an irritated Vancouver later pointed out to the Admiralty, was double his own pay. For his own part, Banks was used to being treated with deference by naval officers and was annoyed by Vancouver's 'arrogance':

Vancouver's ship also named *Discovery*, which ship

- partly motivated by British desire to take greater control of disputed Nootka Sound from Spain

immediate friction w/ Banks, who has part of deck converted to plant greenhouse & appointed Archibald Menzies as supernumerary botanist + thus outside formal chain of Vancouver's command & w/ salary twice that of Vancouver (£150 p/yr)

- Banks used to deference of naval officers + 'irritated' by Vancouver's 'arrogance'

How Captain Vancouver will behave to you [Menzies] is more than I can guess, unless I was to judge by his conduct toward me – which was such as I am not used to receive from one in his station... As it would be highly imprudent in him to throw any obstacle in the way of your duty, I trust he will have too much good sense to obstruct it.

great bank
justice

Banks advised Menzies to make a note when he felt Vancouver was being obstructive, which he dutifully did. Vancouver had a much freer hand in selecting his officers, however. Joseph Whidbey was appointed the *Discovery*'s sailing master, another shipmate from the *Europa*, Peter Puget, became his second lieutenant, while his third was Joseph Baker. The first lieutenant, Zachary Mudge, had also served briefly on the *Europa*, although he almost certainly got the job through his connections to the powerful Pitt family. The *Discovery* was to be accompanied by the brig *Chatham*, commanded by Lieutenant William Broughton. A storeship, the *Daedalus*, commanded by Richard Hergest, another of Cook's old officers and one of Vancouver's ex-messmates on the old *Discovery*, was to sail to the Pacific separately and rendezvous with them at either Hawaii or Nootka Sound.

Peter Puget
is 2nd
lieutenant
Joseph
Whidbey
is sailing
master
(all leave
family
toonym)

consort
brig
Chatham

There were a number of well-born young men among Vancouver's midshipmen. Thomas Pitt was the 16-year-old son of Lord Camelford and first cousin to both the prime minister, William Pitt, and his elder brother, the First Lord of the Admiralty, John Pitt, Earl of Chatham; Charles Stuart, also 16, was the son of the Marquis of Bute; Thomas Manby, who left a delightful record of the voyage written as a series of letters, was related to the Norfolk family of Lord Townshend, while Spelman Swaine was connected to the Earl of Hardwicke. In addition, Robert Barrie, Henry Humphreys and John Stewart were nephews of admirals. The proportion of well-connected midshipmen on this humble exploration ship was unusually high. This may say something about the growing status of exploration after the Cook voyages, but it was certainly a reflection of the lack of opportunities for young naval officers in peacetime: a long voyage would give them the sea time necessary to gain promotion and with it increased pay and potential prize money.

DISCOVERY'S DEPARTURE

The *Discovery* and the *Chatham* left Plymouth on the unpropitious date of 1 April 1791, entering the Pacific via Cape Town, southern Australia and New Zealand. On the way south there was an incident at Tenerife in which Vancouver was accidentally pushed into the harbour while trying to stop a brawl between drunken members of his crew and a Spanish shore patrol. Menzies described it in detail to Banks and was of the opinion that 'the quarrel originated with our people'. It was probably started by Midshipman Pitt who, in a rare moment of good sense,

leaves Plymouth on April 1, 1791, heads east of
Cape Town to Aust. & NZ



OPPOSITE William Broughton (1762-1821), by an unidentified artist.

Commander of the *Chatham* on Vancouver's voyage, Broughton is painted here in later life as a captain.



BELOW 'K3', Larcum Kendall's third version of John Harrison's marine timekeeper, H4.

This chronometer had been issued, with 'K1', to Captain Cook for his third voyage, and to George Vancouver in 1791. Its last voyage was with Matthew Flinders on his 1801-03 circumnavigation of Australia.

at Tenerife, V. accidentally pushed into harbor & he tried to stop but would not.

promptly escaped by jumping into the sea. Vancouver never informed the Admiralty of this embarrassing incident, which was unfortunate as Banks made sure it became widely known.

+ a small short pattern doesn't repeat the same work is evident, but Banks got it pulled out

At the beginning of November 1791, the two ships reached Dusky Bay, New Zealand, a harbour favoured by Cook, who had already surveyed the bay, producing a chart that Thomas Manby thought had a 'degree of accuracy and exactness' that would for ever 'stand a monument of his unremitting diligence and a conspicuous testimony of his unwearied assiduity'. But Cook had left two small

Changes the branches of Dusky Bay for Cook's "No Body knows what" to "Some Body knows what" then on to Tahiti

branches at the head of Dusky Bay unexplored, noting on the chart 'No Body Knows What'; Vancouver surveyed them and in great good humour changed the name to 'Some Body Knows What'. The two ships then set off across the Pacific for Tahiti where, wrote Manby in a mood of eager anticipation, 'the men are benevolent and friendly; the women generous and beautiful'. They arrived on 29 December 1791. In fact, the *Chatham* had arrived a few days earlier; it was already becoming a bit of a joke - an irritating one to the crew of the *Discovery* - that when the two ships sailed together the *Chatham's* slow sailing held them up, but as soon as they sailed separately the *Chatham* would always beat the senior ship.

After the mutiny on the *Bounty* in 1789, it would be many years before Royal Navy captains would enter Polynesia without being at least aware of the potentially destabilising charms of the islanders. Vancouver, therefore, issued strict orders to manage trade with the Tahitians and keep the crew and the young gentlemen on board unless they were required to go ashore on duty. His orders tried to control contact rather than stop it, but they were nonetheless deeply resented: George Hewitt, the surgeon's mate, suggested acidly that when Vancouver had last been in Tahiti in 1777 he had been 'a Young Man, but that not being now the case the Ladies were not so attractive' to him. Midshipman Pitt was beaten for trying to exchange a

Quote of suspicion made on Vancouver's prohibition

after *Bounty* mutiny, strict rules against too much comply contact w/ Tahitians as a whole - deeply resented orders

trade piece of iron barrel hoop for sex - not a good career move since
 Warrant officers usually exempt from corporal punishment, Pitt had a
 power / titled life

QUOTE of
 Midshipman
 Stuart

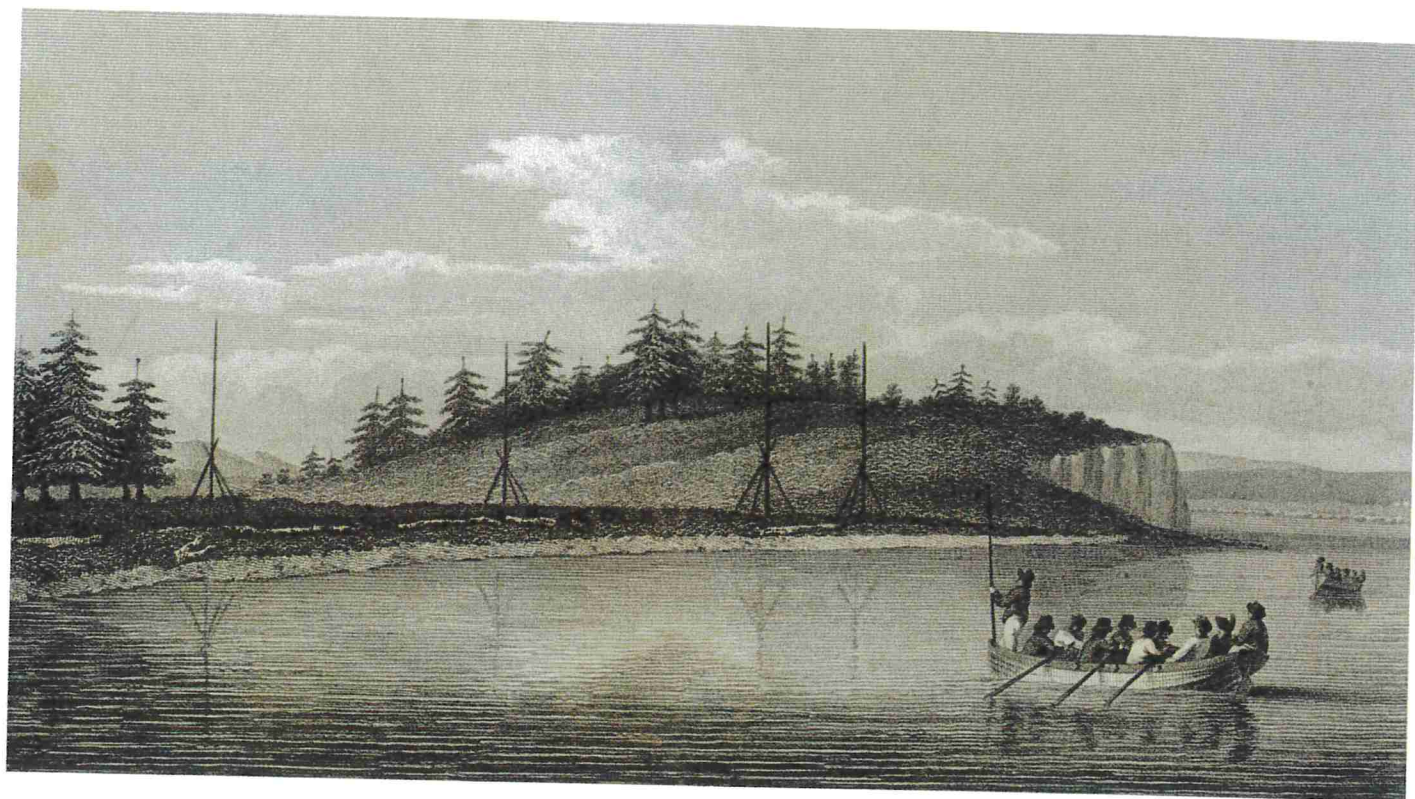
make 3 visits
 to Hawaii,
 aware of
 dangers since
 withered Cook's
 death
 need to make
 Hawaii safer
 for Euro. ships
 by actively
 good relations
 Ch. C. B.
 Kamehameha

Vancouver
 also reacted
 strongly
 to
 theft +
 could go too
 far

piece of iron barrel hoop for sex, guilty in Vancouver's eyes of disobedience, illegal trade and the misuse of ship's equipment. Beating such a well-connected young man was not a good career move for Vancouver and neither did it receive universal approbation on the ship, since warrant officers were normally exempt from it. Pitt had a dangerously unstable personality, but he was also a powerful character who would have considerable influence once he inherited his father's title (which he did in 1793, during the voyage, though he found out only later) and he clearly had a following on the *Discovery*, particularly among the midshipmen. Shortly after they had left Tahiti, a drunken Midshipman Stuart pulled a razor from his pocket, brandished it in front of his captain and proclaimed, 'If, Sir, you ever flog me, I will not survive the disgrace: I have this ready to cut my throat with.' The issue, to these well-born young men, was one of 'honour' and it was destined to become a recurrent theme on Vancouver's quarterdeck.

Vancouver's relations with the rulers of Tahiti and the Hawaiian Islands were, by contrast, generally assured and astute. In Hawaii, where his ships would return to winter in 1792-93 and 1793-94, he took pains to be friendly and diplomatic, even though as a witness of Cook's death he was understandably cautious. Over the course of his three visits to the islands it became clear that Vancouver saw their strategic importance to the development of trade in the North Pacific more clearly than most. Hawaii had gained a deserved reputation as a dangerous place for lightly armed and lightly manned merchant ships and, although it was nowhere in his orders, Vancouver understood part of his mission as being to make the islands safer for European shipping. Establishing a good working relationship with Kamehameha and Kahekili, the two pre-eminent and warring rulers of the island group, was the starting point for this strategy, which, it later emerged, formed part of Vancouver's larger ambition to annex Hawaii. Later in the voyage he took formal possession of a part of the North American coast, in what is now Oregon, also without orders, which suggests that from the first he saw his voyage as a counterpart to the settlement of New South Wales and as part of an active British development of the whole Pacific region.

Vancouver's behaviour could be unpredictable, however. Furious about the theft of some linen in Tahiti, he put a noose round the neck of a Tahitian he knew was merely an accomplice and, according to the ever-critical George Hewitt, 'in a Passion snatched hold of the Halter himself and drew it so tight as nearly to deprive the Man of Life...' In Maui (one of the Hawaiian Islands) the following winter a few ribbons were stolen and Vancouver 'threatened the chiefs with such menacing threats' that the chief of the island leapt out of a window and into his canoe. Vancouver was intolerant of theft, a trait later interpreted by his detractors as an obsession with property which supposedly revealed that, while he may have been an officer, he was certainly no 'gentleman'.



FOUR REMARKABLE SUPPORTED POLES IN PORT TOWNSEND, GULPH OF GEORGIA, by Midshipman John Sykes but 'improved' by the artist, William Alexander, for the posthumous publication of Vancouver's *A Voyage of Discovery* (1798). Some 65 drawings survived from the voyage, mainly

by midshipmen Sykes and Humphreys, some of which were later engraved for Vancouver's book. This engraving shows the high poles found in several Native American villages, and which puzzled Vancouver's men. The poles were actually used to suspend nets to trap birds.

SURVEYS AND OBSERVATIONS

Vancouver was to start his survey in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, named after a Greek pilot in the service of Spain who was supposed to have sailed up the Californian coast in the 1590s and into a large inlet, the entrance to which was marked by 'a great Hedland or Island, with an exceedingly high Pinnacle or spired Rocke, like a pillar thereupon'. De Fuca claimed to have followed its course for some 20 days before reaching the Atlantic and 'discovering' the North-West Passage. Cook passed by in 1778: 'It is in the very latitude we were now in where geographers have placed the pretended Strait of Juan de Fuca, but we saw nothing like it, nor is there the least probability that iver any such thing exhisted.'

But a strait there was, and one that was indeed marked by a pinnacle of rock, today called Fuca Pillar. Vancouver's ships entered cautiously in 'very thick rainy weather' in April 1792, sailing along the south coast of the strait, which he called the 'Continental Shore'. His plan was simplicity itself: he would keep this shore on his

but there was a strait & it was marked by a pinnacle of rock today called Fuca Pillar

starts survey in Strait of Juan de Fuca (note quasi by the way the name of de Fuca)

Cook quote dubt'g it existed

- V. sailed on south shore of strait in April 1792, entered it

right hand knowing that whatever its twists, turns and blind alleys, he would either feel his way into the North-West Passage or find himself back in the open ocean. The next morning dawned with 'clear and pleasant weather', wrote Vancouver, although Manby's prose was more poetic:

Never was contrast greater, in this days sailing than with that we had long been accustomed too. It had more the aspect of enchantment than reality, with silent admiration each discerned the beauties of Nature, and nought was heard on board but expressions of delight murmured from every tongue. Imperceptibly our Bark skimmed over the glassy surface of the deep, about three Miles an hour, a gentle breeze swelled the lofty Canvass whilst all was calm below.

The idyll was cruelly dashed for Manby when he joined his captain in a search for an anchorage, landed and 'killed a remarkable animal about the size of a cat, of a brown color, with a large, white, bushy tail that spread over his back. After firing I approached him and was saluted by a discharge from him the most nauseous and fetid my sense of smelling ever experienced.' Archibald Menzies was keen to take it on board for examination and tied the body to the bow of the cutter, but the smell 'was so intolerable' that it was thrown in the water. The skunk's revenge could never be entirely eradicated from Manby's clothes despite numerous soakings in boiling water, and a chastened midshipman vowed never to disturb another 'on any consideration'.

The two ships anchored in a large bay, which Vancouver named Port Discovery, where three of the ships' boats were victualled for a week and where the survey began. As they started, the weather changed and the gentle breeze that had so enraptured Manby gave way to gales and fog. Obedient to Vancouver's plan to follow the continental shore, over the next few weeks the boats began to trace the coast south into Puget Sound, following every waterway until it either returned them to their starting point or ceased to be navigable. They employed an enhanced version of the 'running survey' that had been used to such good effect by Cook, landing frequently to establish their positions by astronomical observation and measuring base lines on the beach to ensure that their triangulations were accurate. Vancouver soon 'became thoroughly convinced that our boats alone could enable us to acquire correct or satisfactory information regarding this broken country', although he admitted with masterly understatement that 'the execution of such a service in open boats would necessarily be extremely laborious'. Menzies's description of one night during the first survey was typical of many: his boat was battling against a strong ebb tide 'and the night was so very dark & foggy with excessive rain' that they gave up the hope of finding the prearranged rendezvous and pulled ashore to pitch their tents and kindle a fire, but 'the latter was found a very difficult task it being so dark & every thing so wet, it was midnight before we

Manby quotes beauty of scenery everywhere along Strait

Manby goes ashore with a skunk (QUOTE), smells so intolerable board of vessel & throws overboard & Manby's clothes continue to stink despite boiling them

- topography so broken up that only possible to make accurate survey in small boat extremely tedious task propelled by oars

weather after wet & miserable & unable to start fire on shore

could get under any kind of shelter & then every thing about us was completely drenched & in this situation the greatest part of the Boats Crews passed the night without any covering to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather'. The survey would henceforth be carried out almost exclusively in the boats, rowed mile after aching mile, with the surveyors completing their observations in sections that were then, on their return to the ships, added to the master chart being drawn up by Joseph Baker. The *Discovery* and the *Chatham* would then weigh anchor, move further up the coast, anchor again, and the boats would set out once more.

As the survey progressed over the next three seasons, Vancouver would sight, plot and name hundreds of headlands, bays, mountains and islands. Some names complimented old shipmates such as the astronomer William Wales, who taught Vancouver the principles of navigation and surveying on Cook's second voyage and who was remembered in Wales Point. Others honoured royalty or Admiralty officials – King George Sound and Cape Chatham, for example – or influential people – Port Townshend, named, as Thomas Manby put it, 'in honor of the noble marquis, my sincere and long known friend'. Countless names were descriptive: Desolation Sound is now considered a beauty spot but Vancouver thought it 'a gloomy place' and one that 'afforded not a single prospect that was pleasing to the eye'. A crewman died after eating bad mussels at Poison Cove, and New Dungeness was so called because Vancouver thought it bore a strong resemblance to Dungeness in Kent. He finished his survey three long years later at Port Conclusion.

Over next 3 seasons,
V. maps & names hundreds of
headlands, bays, mts, islands

Port Townshend
after a
marquis
Puges Sound,
Mt Rainier

ENCOUNTERS WITH LOCAL PEOPLES

Vancouver's charts inscribed a specifically British nomenclature on the landscape, reflecting and reinforcing Britain's emerging ambitions in the area, but obscuring a story of contact with Native Americans. The constant, if brief, encounters with the many different peoples living along the coast were a significant side-effect of Vancouver's decision to survey from small boats. In the first survey from Port Discovery alone they passed through the territories of five different clans, and would eventually come into contact with all of the six major language groups on the north-west coast: Wakashan, Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit, Eyak-Athapaskan and, far to the north, a dialect of the Alutiiq language spoken by the Chugach people. The study of people was hampered by the lack of a professional artist like Hodges or Webber, and although Vancouver's officers made competent sketches of places and incidents, they were surveyors and their drawings were primarily topographical, with human figures almost entirely absent. Some of the published engravings did include people, but they were the later additions of the home artist, William Alexander, who had been hired to improve the sketches for publi-

Small boat
excursions
increased
frequency of
contact w/
natives -
increased
interaction
w/ all 6 x
major
language
groups in
PNW coast

drawings lack good images of natives coz
no professional artist on board as in Cook's
voyages



↑ amazing map, gives
real sense of how isolated
these NW coast
had been - good that Cook
didn't also
survey it

people added later to the ethnography in London,
so have no ethnographic value

cation, and they have no ethnographic value. Menzies had official responsibility for ethnography and he steadily accumulated a representative range of artefacts, while the descriptions of peoples left by him, Vancouver and some other officers remain valuable source material for scholars to this day. But although not an unsympathetic observer, and admittedly hampered by the briefness of the meetings, Menzies was never really as curious about human beings, their origins and cultures as J.R. Forster had been on Cook's second voyage, and his ethnography does not compare to that of his predecessor.

MENZIES'S BOTANICAL COLLECTIONS

Menzies began his botanical collections in Port Discovery with the first specimens of the oriental strawberry tree, the arbutus, which bears his name, *Arbutus menziesii*. This, he wrote, 'grows to a small tree & was at this time a peculiar ornament to the Forest by its large clusters of whitish flowers & ever green leaves, but its peculiar smooth bark of a reddish brown colour will at all times attract the Notice of the most superficial observer'. Here, too, he collected the *Rhododendron macrophyllum*, later adopted as the state of Washington's flower. Menzies's most famous introduction to the gardens of Europe was the monkey-puzzle tree, *Araucaria araucana*, which he obtained not in North America but from nuts collected in Chile on the way home. They were planted at Kew and one of the resulting trees, which was known as 'Sir Joseph Banks's Pine', was sketched in the 1830s and is thought to have survived until the end of the nineteenth century.

Menzies put his live specimens in Vancouver's hated 'plant cabin', but keeping them alive was a constant struggle. As he complained to Banks, 'I have not yet been able to get plants to succeed ... in the Frame on the Quarter Deck - for if it is uncovered in rainy weather to admit air, the dripping from the rigging impregnated with Tar & Turpentine hurts the foliage & soil - and if the Side lights are opened Goats - Dogs - Cats - Pigeons - Poultry &c. &c. are ever creeping in & destroying the plants.' He lost an entire collection almost overnight in the cold Alaskan spring, and many more in a sudden squall when homeward bound in the Atlantic.

The survey seemed an endless task at times and tempers became frayed. Menzies and Vancouver clashed over the plant frame and were soon communicating only in writing on the subject. The capable Manby got a brutal dressing down from Vancouver for losing touch with the lead boat one night: 'His salutation I can never forget,' wrote the deeply offended midshipman, 'and his language I will

OPPOSITE A chart showing the area around Vancouver Island surveyed in 1792, with the tracks of the *Discovery* and the *Chatham*.

Menzies
collects
natural
specimens

but Banks's
greenhouse
doesn't
help it
helping
+ then
dies

↓
Jens. as
Banks.
Menzies

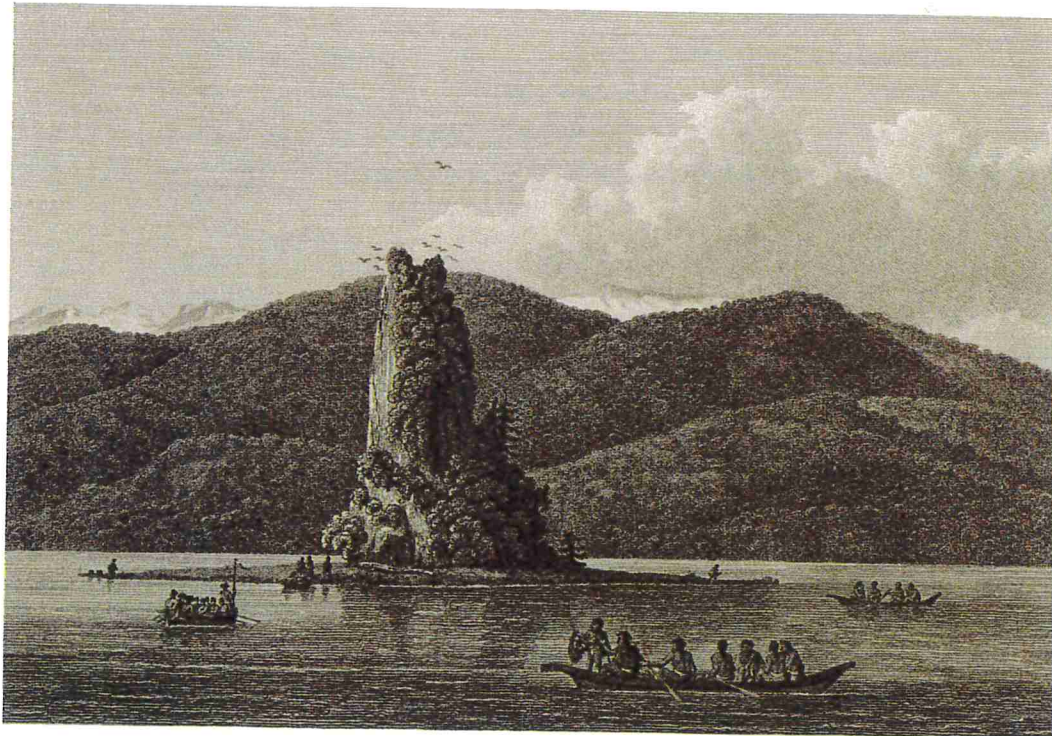
+
V. to point
of only
communication
in writing

never forgive unless he withdraws his words by a satisfactory apology.' Vancouver may have been quick-tempered and abusive but he still recognised talent and steadily promoted Manby during the voyage, appointing him sailing master of the *Chatham* – 'a situation I should have refused in England,' Manby said, but one that he welcomed in America 'as it cleared me from a man I had just reason to be displeased with'. Despite his promotions, Manby was true to his word and never did forgive Vancouver. Neither did Midshipman Pitt, who was punished twice more in the first surveying season, being beaten for breaking the glass of the binnacle in a piece of horseplay and put in irons for falling asleep on watch. Vancouver was equally hard with his crew, on one occasion making them tack the ship all day – an exhausting procedure – when he felt that they had been too slow on the first tack.

main sketch
charted
shores
between
future
Seattle
&
Vancouver

ENCOUNTERS WITH SPANISH SURVEYORS

And so the first summer progressed, the two ships painstakingly charting the continental shore between the future sites of Seattle and Vancouver. It was near the latter that they met two small Spanish survey vessels, the *Sutil* and the *Mexicana*, offshoots of the Malaspina expedition. They were able to tell Vancouver that Juan



EXPLORING AN ISLAND; engraving by B.T. Pouncey after William Alexander (from a sketch by John Sykes) from Vancouver's *A Voyage of Discovery*.

Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra was already waiting in Nootka Sound, as agreed by the Spanish and British governments, for the final resolution of the 'incident'. Meanwhile, Vancouver and the commanders of the *Sutil* and the *Mexicana* agreed to pool the results of their surveys, Vancouver honourably recording Spanish names on his charts where they had been the first to survey a coast. Most of the Spanish names, however, were excised and Vancouver's names restored when the charts were prepared for publication back in Britain.

The four ships eventually separated and the *Discovery* and the *Chatham* wriggled through a long and narrow passage which, after a hundred miles, opened out into the broad waters of Queen Charlotte Sound to the north of Vancouver Island. The maze of shoals they found here was far more dangerous than the narrows, and the *Discovery* soon ran aground on a falling tide. Vancouver quickly lightened the ship and ordered the topmasts and yards to be brought down so their weight would not drag the ship over. However, despite these precautions, Manby recorded that 'after lying upright for half an hour a terrible crash ensued which brought the ship on her broadside'. In bad conditions the *Discovery* could have been lost, but fortunately it was calm and the ship floated off with the rising tide some hours later. They had no sooner got off and rerigged than the *Chatham* ran aground and an exasperated Vancouver eventually had to send the boats ahead to find a safe passage.

It was now getting towards the end of August and Vancouver turned his ships towards Nootka Sound to begin negotiations with Bodega y Quadra and rendezvous with the storeship, *Daedalus*, which was waiting for them, but with sad news: Vancouver's old friend Richard Hergest and the young astronomer William Gooch, whose appointment had arrived too late for him to sail on the *Discovery*, had been killed in a brief and confused affray on one of the Hawaiian Islands.

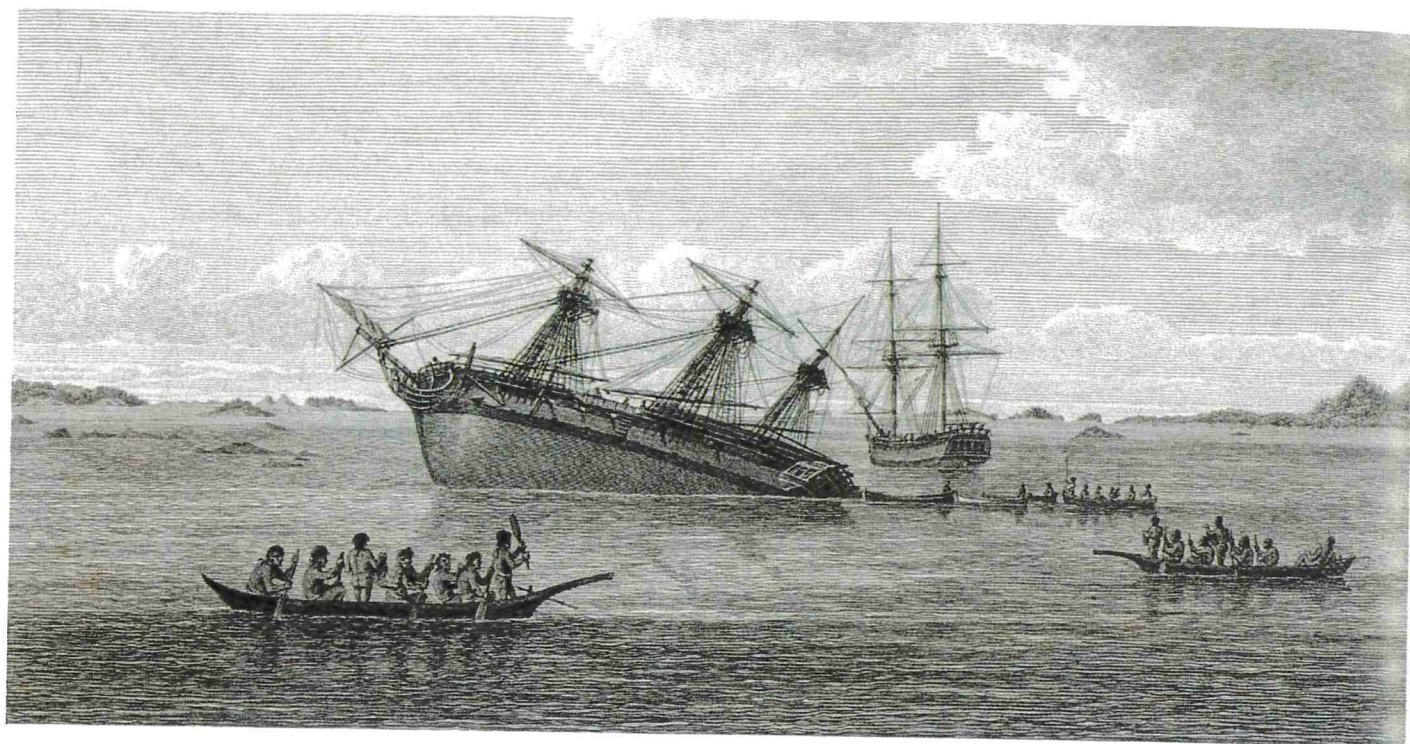
Vancouver's negotiations with Bodega y Quadra were amicable – a mark of their mutual respect was their naming of Quadra and Vancouver Island, which only later became Vancouver Island – but they could not reach agreement on the restitution of British property in the Sound and a frustrated Vancouver wrote to the Admiralty for further instructions (which were never given to him). He then headed south to Monterey, where official reports, charts and specimens were sent back to Britain, while others took the opportunity to send letters home. Manby was one such, writing:

We are my good fellow spinning about the Globe like a Worligig, seldom in a place, and as seldom like true Seamen contented with our situation. Good health continues in our little squadron, though I am sorry to add not that good fellowship which ought to subsist with adventurers traversing these distant seas, owing to the conduct of our Commander in Chief who is grown Haughty Proud Mean and Insolent, which has kept himself and his Officers in a continual state of wrangling...

Manby
Spanish
officially
in Nootka
Sound,
pool survey
results +
+ V. retain
Span. names
when they
surveyed it
text, later
replaced by
British names
by Admiralty
↓
"the text"
Vancouver
officially
"Quadra and
Vancouver
Island"

Manby writes,
home about

"haughty proud mean
+ insolent" Vancouver



THE *DISCOVERY* ON THE ROCKS IN QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S SOUND (detail); engraving by B.T. Pouncey after William Alexander (from a sketch by Zachary Mudge) from Vancouver's *A Voyage of Discovery*.

down to Monterey
+ then on to Hawaii,
where local
chiefs
cooperate w/
captured
executions off
Waikiki Beach
of 2 Hawaiians

Leaving Monterey, they sailed for the Hawaiian Islands to overwinter. While there Vancouver made strenuous efforts to bring the killers of Hergest and Gooch to justice and, with the help of the Hawaiian rulers, tried and executed three men off Oahu's Waikiki beach. Hewitt, inevitably, criticised the procedure, suggesting that there was no evidence that any of the men had been involved in the killing, but his sentiments do not appear to have been shared by the rest of the crew; even Manby approved. The Hawaiian chiefs, vying for political control among themselves, cooperated because their powerful visitor was a useful ally.

RETURN TO NOOTKA SOUND

Vancouver returned to Nootka Sound in the spring, beginning the survey where they had finished the previous autumn, and the ships gradually worked their way north along an even more intricate coastline. Vancouver had been a sick man before the voyage even started, probably having contracted some form of glandular disease during his time in the West Indies, and by the second surveying season his health was worsening and he was unable to take personal command of as many of the survey trips as before. However, he had made sure during the winter that the boats' crews now had covers to protect them from the incessant rain, bags for dry

return to
Nootka Sound
next spring
to resume
survey

but V. increasingly
ill from disease
contracted
in West Indies
(can lead as
many surveys
as before)

increasing clashes w/ aggressive local
Indians, Tlingits stab sailor & steal, so V. opens
fire and kills below.

clothes, and lockers in which to store provisions. The weather was appalling and the local people, the Nuu-chah-nulth, he wrote, seemed 'more daring and insolent' than those in the area around Vancouver Island. They were now in the territory of the Tlingit, and that August Vancouver recorded 'an unprovoked assault on our boats' during which several of the attackers were killed. His boat had landed to fix the outline of the shore, and although four or five Tlingit canoes also landed close by, Vancouver was unconcerned as they appeared 'peaceably inclined' and eager to trade at first. Then the Tlingit began stealing objects and seemed increasingly 'inclined to be turbulent'. 'Our situation,' Vancouver wrote, 'was now become very critical and alarming'; one of the crew was stabbed in the thigh and he abandoned his policy of avoiding bloodshed and opened fire, killing between six and twelve people – the British estimates varied widely – before being able to pull away to the safety of his accompanying boats.

6-12
Tlingits
jumping
boat trip
surrender
shore

Vancouver was unsure whether in landing he had unwittingly committed an offence, or whether the attack had been in revenge for 'injuries they have sustained from other civilized visitors', by which he meant fur traders, or whether the situation had escalated when 'they conceived the valuable articles we possessed'. Any of these theories could have been valid. Encounters between First Nations people and British, neither of whom understood the other's taboos, cultures or languages, were always complex and potentially fraught affairs, especially as Vancouver's boats were conducting their surveys close inshore and landing often. The British frequently complained of theft but helped themselves freely to wood, water, game and green-stuff, little comprehending that these things had owners and needed to be paid for; and Menzies's interest in burial sites and bones involved trespassing on sacred ground. The violence in what Vancouver referred to as 'Traitor's Cove' was one of the very few occasions on which blood was spilt, which, bearing in mind the tensions inherent in the meetings, shows remarkable forbearance on both sides. The majority of meetings were peaceful and trading often brisk – too brisk, according to Thomas Manby, who, in a letter to a friend, accused his captain of using government trade goods to buy sea-otter furs on his own account, so 'pursuing business and a Trade ... unbecoming the Character of an officer in his Honorable and exalted station'.

hard to know
cause of
affray.
V. to deduct
wood & green
w/o pay
owners (or
been ungrateful
ownership)
Menzies
trespassed on
burial site
etc.
could be
merely for
trader
conduct

At some point during this season Midshipman Pitt transgressed for the last time and an unknown member of the crew left a fragmentary record of his illegal trade and punishment:

the Capt. missing some sheets of copper c[oul]d not learn who had taken them he therefore tied up the Boatswain ... during the flogging the Boatswain feeling the pain said Oh Mr. Pitt how can you see me thus used. Capt. V. perceiving that Mr. Pitt had taken the copper ordered the boatswain to be released and Mr. P. to take as many lashes as the boatswain had recd.

discipline ...
Vancouver had several troublemakers
sent back to England on British ship at Hawaii

V. had sent
Hawaiian
chiefs to
Celestia
to find
likely a more
complex
calculus in
their part than
V. could perceive

also a confirmation
"Cook's River"
is a fact
"Cook's Inlet"
is a fact
I say, it is
spelled
in one way
explains it
he will write
Kauai, too

by Aug. 1794
concluded,
charted
more
than
5,000
miles of
coastline
by
himself
at least

Vancouver had had enough of Pitt and when the ship returned to Hawaii the following winter he sent him and a couple of other troublemakers back home on the *Daedalus*. During the winter of 1793-94 Vancouver had a diplomatic victory on Hawaii when 'the principal chiefs of the island ... unanimously ceded the said island of Owyhee to His Britannic Majesty, and acknowledged themselves to be subjects of Great Britain'. Vancouver overstated his case as Kamehameha was putting only Hawaii under the protection of Britain, and had his own purposes for doing so, but it was a skilful piece of diplomacy nonetheless, and one that would have secured an important strategic base for Britain had the fur trade developed. Curiously, Vancouver never informed the Admiralty and the first the British government appears to have heard of the cession of Hawaii was when Vancouver's journal was published in 1798, by which time he was dead.

The following spring the ships returned to North America and this time Vancouver sailed straight to Cook's River, the northern extremity of the survey. Sixteen years earlier, it had seemed to Cook's officers to hold promise of being the North-West Passage they sought, but Cook cut short the survey, writing tetchily in his journal that they had all wasted enough time on a 'trifling point of geography'. Vancouver briskly established that no navigable 'river' existed and changed the name to Cook(s) Inlet, noting in his journal that 'had the great and first discoverer of it, whose name it bears, dedicated one more day to its further examination, he would have spared the theoretical navigators, who have followed him in their closets, the task of ingeniously ascribing to this arm of the ocean a channel, through which a north-west passage ... might ultimately be discovered'. It would have saved Vancouver much trouble as well, but this remains unsaid in a rare criticism of the captain he normally revered.

The two ships steadily worked south, finishing at the end of August 1794 at 56° north, Port Conclusion, where the north-going survey had ended the previous year. When the boats finally returned to the *Discovery* and the *Chatham* after their last extended survey, Vancouver proudly wrote:

the hearty congratulations that were mutually exchanged by three cheers, proclaimed not only the pleasure that was felt in the accomplishment of this laborious service, but the zeal with which it had been carried into execution, and ... laudable pride ... in having been instrumental to the attainment of so grand an object.

There was also a strong sense of relief: Midshipman Barrie probably spoke for many when he said that he would never go through another such voyage 'if a Post Captain's commission was to be my reward'. It had been a hard, troubled but successful expedition. The boats had charted more than 5,000 miles of heavily indented and dangerous coastline 'with,' Vancouver said, 'a degree of minuteness far exceeding the letter of [his] commission'. He had lost but six men and only one

of them to disease. Although himself a very sick man and with nagging concerns that he had never managed to resolve the Nootka Sound problem, he was clearly looking forward to a happy return and the recognition he felt he deserved. It was not to be, however, for the waters in London were to prove far more treacherous than those of America.

VANCOUVER'S DECLINE

In the intervening years Sir Joseph Banks had been busy maliciously planting the shipboard gossip sent back by Menzies along with his regular packages of seeds. Banks got more useable information when he heard that the simmering feud over the plant frame had erupted one last and violent time on the way home and that Vancouver had placed the naturalist under arrest and had demanded a court martial as soon as they landed. The affair was smoothed over when Menzies apologised to Vancouver, who then dropped the charges. Banks, however, continued his campaign, encouraging Menzies to publish an account of the voyage before Vancouver's official narrative came out, but, Menzies being 'but a slow hand with the pen', the book never materialised.

More damaging to Vancouver was the return of Midshipman Pitt, now Lord Camelford. His hatred of Vancouver had festered during his journey home in the *Daedalus*, and when both men returned to Britain Pitt pursued his victim remorselessly, challenging him to a duel and once actually trying to thrash him in public. The political caricaturist James Gillray published a print of *The Caneing in Conduit Street* which shows a heroic Pitt raising his stick to a fat and cowardly Vancouver hiding behind his brother and standing in front of 'The South Sea Fur Warehouse' advertising 'Fine Black Otter Skins' – a reference to his trading activities. On Vancouver's back is a feather cloak bearing a label reading 'The Present from the King of Owyhee to George III forgot to be delivered', referring to another scurrilous story. The savage cartoon showed the extent to which many of the less savoury events on the voyage had become common currency in London, where the stories of a hard, vindictive and bullying captain in the Pacific seemed all too familiar after the trial of the *Bounty* mutineers.

It is hard to say what effect the 'Camelford Affair' and Banks's lobbying actually had on Vancouver professionally, but while the Admiralty accorded him the honour of promoting all those he recommended – and he was generous in his recommendations – he was certainly beset with a number of official irritations, obstructions and delays. These were to an extent the normal workings of a bureaucracy, experienced before and since by many returning commanders, but in a letter to Lord Chatham Vancouver complained that since his return he felt 'as it were

on return to
London, Banks
learned
B. affected
Pitt, only
man +
Menzies +
Slack
V. + make
life
miserable

Pitt return
gets his
title
challenges
V. to duel
a case for
of ill-will
for trading
privately

V. placed
Menzies with
and +
threatened
court martial
in the Pacific
plant (at)
Menzies
apologised

forgotten to give to King
 George as
 present
 from
 King of
 Hawaii



insulated, from all connections with persons of consequence' who would normally have been willing to help resolve the issues. Vancouver was up against the Establishment, but it must have been particularly distressing to him when his oldest and most trusted colleague, Joseph Whidbey, was recruited by Banks to support the criticism of his style of command. Conspiracy theorists will note that Banks later proposed Whidbey as a Fellow of the Royal Society.

In the few years left to him Vancouver worked on writing his account of the voyage. That he was able to do so at all bearing in mind his failing health and other problems bears testimony in no small way to the powers of determination and concentration that made him such a good, if demanding, surveyor. Vancouver died in May 1798. For the last few months he did not have the strength to write, so his brother John completed the last pages of *A Voyage of Discovery*, which was published posthumously later that year. It was reviewed favourably in the *Naval Chronicle* as a 'naval classic', although Midshipman Barrie probably reflected the response of more general readers when he complained to his mother that 'I think it is one of the most tedious books I ever read'. In the Hakluyt edition of *A Voyage of Discovery* (1986), the editor, W. Kaye Lamb, wisely left the last word of his comprehensive introduction to one of Vancouver's harshest critics, Archibald Menzies, who said in his eightieth year: 'those books that Vancouver wrote - strange that he could put so much of himself into the printed page. He was a great Captain.'

that for
 life he
 reviewed
 of writing account
 voyage
 Ch. Lamb
 published
 Sathre
 criticism
 led by
 Barrie
 P. H.
 Whidbey

OPPOSITE THE CANEING IN CONDUIT STREET; coloured etching by James Gillray, 1796.

This satirical cartoon shows the infamous incident when Vancouver's erratic ex-midshipman, Thomas Pitt (by then 2nd Baron Camelford), tried to give his old captain a public thrashing. In 1804 Pitt insulted another naval officer and former friend, leading to a pistol duel in which he was mortally wounded, aged just 29.

BELOW Vancouver's old ship, the *Discovery* (detail), as a prison hulk on the Thames at Woolwich; watercolour by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, c.1830.

The ship had been converted into a bomb vessel after Vancouver's voyage and became a prison hulk in 1808. It was finally broken up in 1834.

