

## Lesson 2 resource

### Applications for leadership of the Expedition

Note: The application letters in this resource have been transcribed from the originals held in the State Library of Victoria collection. Original spellings and punctuation, as well as original layouts, have been retained.

#### 1: John Wood Beilby

Cranbourne, February 27<sup>th</sup> 1860

The Hon. Secretary

Royal Society

Melbourne

Sir,

I beg to tender my Services as leader of the contemplated Exploring Expedition, conditionally that reasonable time was allowed to arrange my affairs for a long absence and uncertain return.

I have been an early pioneer of new country for uses in Victoria & South Australia. In 1849 I traversed the Malay desert north+west of Lake Hindmarsh; my personal journal of one trip through it was published in the port Phillip Gazette of or about Nov 1849 by perusal of which my qualifications may be ascertained. I am conversant with the habits of the Aborigines, and have espoused their cause in the early days, when conflicts were frequent with the outside pastoral occupants of uses in the interior (See my letters upon the subject of the amelioration of their condition printed in the Herald of November and December 1847 under the signatures of "Philanthropist" and "Philo-aborigines.") I am familiar with many natural indications of proximity to water and with water bearing plants + roots found in the desert, and lastly am accustomed to the control of a travelling part so far as has related to moving large herds of stock from one district to another. If appointed I would pledge myself to action exertion and zeal in furthering the objects of the Expedition and early demonstrate that I should not follow the Herschell Babbage idea of dilly dallying for months together on the outskirts of the occupied stations merely to forward long-winded reports, but economise outlay by at once pushing outwards and securing some at least of the objects in view.

Pending the result of this application I would respectfully suggest that as brackish and salt juices of various plants\* abound in some localities of the inland deserts, experiments might be useful for ascertaining how to neutralize or precipitate the disagreeable or unwholesome constituents, so as to render such supplies of service to the expedition during periods of destitution of fresh water.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your most obed Servant

Wood Beilby

\*Such as *mesembryanthemura equilaterata* &c

## 2: Thomas Belt

Melbourne, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1860

To the Exploration Committee  
of Victoria

Gentlemen,

I beg to offer my services as a leader in the proposed exploration of the interior. I have for several years taken a great interest in the subject and prepared myself in various ways for the duties of such a command. In December, 1857 I forwarded to the Exploration Committee of the Philosophical Institute an offer to attempt the traverse of the Australian continent from the River Albert in the Gulf of Carpentaria to the settlements on the Southern coast.

Further study of the subject has confirmed me in the opinion that the exploration of the interior may be best accomplished by making a series of transverse journeys across the continent from the Northern coast – and I beg respectfully to forward herewith a statement of my review on the subject –

In respect to my ability to describe the natural phenomena met with during the journey I may state that I am thoroughly conversant with geology and meteorology. In 1857 I read before the Philosophical Institute of Victoria a paper on the “Origin of Whirlwinds” which, although it was not selected by the council of the Institute for publication, met with the decided approval of the Astronomer Royal of England, and was through him published in the Philosophical Magazine, a copy of which I enclose.

In conclusion I would respectfully remind your Committee that geographical knowledge has been extended much more by individual effort than by large and costly expeditions.

I am, Gentlemen,  
Your most obedient servant  
Thomas Belt

### 3: Robert Burke

Castlemaine,  
7th February 1860

Dr McAdam, MLA  
My dear Dr,

*My friend and brother officer Mr Robt O'Hara Burke, Supt. of Police in charge of this district is most anxious to obtain command of the Explorn. Party. Sir Wm. Stawell is acquainted with Mr. Burke and I believe will give him his vote and interest.*

*Mr Burke is an honorable man, was for many years Captn. in a Dragoon Regt. In Austria where he distinguished himself – subsequently held a commission in the Irish constabulary and is now a Supt. in our own Police.*

*Mr Burke speaks and writes French, German and Italian. He is a most active man and very strong – most temperate in his habits – and is kind and gentle in his manners – but possessing a strong will – ambitious – and had been accustomed to command from boyhood. Mr Burke is prepared to give up his present appointment to succeed to that of yours.*

*In conclusion, I am confident from my knowledge of Mr Burke that there is not another gentleman in this Colony possessing so many of the qualifications necessary to the success of the undertaking in question as my friend Burke.*

*I remain, my dear Dr, yours truly,  
P N Smithe.*

#### 4: Thomas Burr

*Barker Street  
Castlemaine*

*To the Director  
Of Preliminaries  
Projected Exploring Expedition  
Victoria*

*Sir,*

*I do myself the honor to state that I have become aware with the circumstance of a projected Expedition to the interior of New Holland, the starting point to be in fair Victoria:- and also that there appears to be some difficulty to obtain a person to take charge of the Expedition.*

*Under the circumstances I am induced to offer my services.*

*With regard to qualifications I am prepared to take the entire management of all these branches of a scientific nature that are required to make an expedition of the kind valuable:- namely geology, mineralogy, botany, astronomical – and magnetic observations, sketching and drawing of all the kinds that are necessary to give an accurate retrospect of the Country passed over.*

*For the fact, as to presenting the necessary qualifications I may refer to these learned gentlemen in the margin.*

*To wether I may state that the whole of my time since the year 1839 has been expended in these Colonies. The physical geography and development of the returns of which having been my study.*

*In the year 1841 I wrote an essay on the Physical Geography of the country accompanied with a Plan shewing my ideas as to the character of the interior: at the request of Sir George Grey, then Governor of South Australia. Copies of them were transmitted through the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the Royal Geographical Society of London, and there, originated the idea of a subsequent expedition into the interior by Capt. Charles Sturt. I may state that Captain Sturt made a course more to the West than that suggested by me:- and, it was believe by Dr John Broome, who accompanied him, that this step was productive of injurious consequences – and much delay to the expedition.*

*I have the honor to be  
Sir,  
Your most obedient servant,*

*Thomas Burr*

(A list of names was written on the side of this letter, including Sir George Grey, Charles Sturt, William Branwhite Clarke, and three army colonels.)

## 5: John Frizzell

Williamstown  
January 20<sup>th</sup> 1860

Macadam Esquire M.D.

Sir,

*It is with very good pleasure I at length perceive that earnest steps are being taken for the purpose of forwarding that Grand project – the complete exploration of the vast interior of this Country, it is an object worthy of the most serious consideration, and deserving of the utmost care and attention in laying out and devising the best and surest plans, lest at some future period, there might be reason to say that the matters connected with the filling up of the party have been entered into inadvisably or inconsiderately. The Exploration of the vast interior of this Country has long been a favourite topic of my own, for at least 12 or 15 years. I have from time to time as opportunity offered itself ever advocated its necessity – and now that the time has apparently come, when men of mind and substance have taken the matter in hand it may be reasonably expected, the results will be satisfactory.*

*It is not for me Sir, now at this stage of the proceedings to make any remarks or offer any suggestions – but as the matter is one of the utmost importance to the Country and to those individually concerned, I trust you will forgive me if I consider it my duty to make a few observations on the subject.*

*I perceive by the Chief Secretary's answer to your question in the news, in reference to the purchase of six "Camels", that the late government have sent for 24 Camels for the Exploration, and the Most Honble the Chief Secretary appears to throw a doubt upon the question as to whether the Camels are really desirable or not. I believe Camels are not only desirable, but absolutely necessary. And that the number specified are quite little enough for the Expedition, to which also I hew should be attached, a few good horses fit for draught and saddle, together with 2 Boats, and leather bags to carry water. Dr and Mr Butlin, what I am most desirous is to state my ideas as to the place from which the party should start, and the route they (as near as circumstances would permit) should take.*

*The exploring parties which have already been in existence and which have generally ended in disappointment, hardships, or death, to those concerned in them, unfortunately may be traced in a great many instances to a badly organised party – to their inacquaintance with a bush life – to an improper or deficient outfit, and the last, not least, to their beginning at the wrong end, or starting point, and consequently bound to travel in the wrong direction. When Captain Sturt took the field, - ie in 1844 for the purpose of discovery of the "Terra Incognita" of Central Australia, he started from Adelaide, advanced nearly 200 miles beyond the "Stony Desert" where, having made his arrangements to return back to Adelaide he could not afford to proceed farther, and as the ponds and pools were likely to get dried up, he spent his strength and the strength of his party returning to Adelaide when had proper arrangements been made at the setting out, the strength waste, and the suffering endured, would have taken the party (other circumstances being the same) across the continent to the rivers on the Gulph of Carpentaria, it has been the system hitherto adopted by most of our Australian Explorers – to start from Civilization, and proceed to barrenness, deserts and perhaps destruction – with the North "Sirocco" blowing in their face, aid much endurance, and under circumstances sufficient to appal the stoutest heart with hope extinguished, and the prospect of returning back, spent + wayworn sufficient to damp the spirit of the most ardent explorer, Yes, when we look over the travels of our Australian Explorers, we must acknowledge that it was generally in their efforts to retrace their steps homewards that they experienced the Greatest Difficulties, nor is it at all impossible that the unfortunate but indefatigable "Leichardt" met with his death had his face turned, and his energies directed to the Civilisation he left behind him, dispirited, disappointed, and without hope, arising no doubt form bad and inconsiderate arrangements at the outset.*

*And now, Sir, you will permit me to state for the consideration of the Committee of Management in this matter, the plans which I believe would be best studies to the object in view inasmuch as I conceive adopting them*

there would be less inconvenience, and uncertainty, and less risk of life with a very great degree of certainty as to the prosperous result.

As the “Camels” are now in all probability purchased for the expedition, I would have them with keepers (who should be natives or “Coolies” accustomed to manage or drive them) landed, not in Melbourne – but on the North Shore of Australia say at Port Essington – or at the mouth of the Albert River mentioned by Stokes with the positive instructions to remain there until called upon, I would then “Ship” the Exploring party with the necessary provisions, implements, Boats, &c, &c, and dispatch them, to the appointed rendezvous., I would follow up the river to its source, and there establish a permanent Depot, and when all would be in readiness I would start on the exploration direct South – as I consider that the merely travelling South would not be a judicious arrangement, nor could it be directly considered an exploration of the Country. I would establish Camps or Depots in proper situation where water and Grass would be available and there make a testing place for any of the party who might be in a weak or sickly condition. From thence I would send out parties of three or four with horses, in an Easterly and Westerly direction with proper instruction to Explore say 150 miles in each direction and report upon the same, limiting them as to time out – each horse (or camel) to carry a sufficiency of water for a certain number of days – thus we might be able to explore, on the right and left, from East to West for a distance of 300 or 400 miles taking care on making a fresh start Southward to bring and collect those of the party who might chance to be out. We would thus by care and attention to the requirements of the party be enabled to keep up their Bodily and Mental “Stamina” so that when it would be imperative to cross a waste like “Sturt’s Desert” the party would be equal to the effort and enter it in the strength of body and vigour of mind, with the “Northerly Sirocco” blowing not in their faces as with former explorers starting from the South, but in the backs of the party and assisting them forward, and what would still further stimulate their efforts, would be the consideration that every day would bring them nearer to the Abodes of Civilization, their homes, and the Cities of the South, this idea would stimulate them to go forward over the “Sahara Australis” – if such they would meet with – invigorated minds to the performance of their duties. Thus managed the party would be in no haste to reach the end of their journey, but would make a thorough exploration of the interior within their reach keeping steadily in view the object of their first setting out, as well as the health of and energies of their bodily and mental faculties. I should therefore most respectfully impress upon the authorities in this matter, the necessity, the absolute necessity, for the prosperity of the undertaking, to at once take steps in order that the Camels may be landed on the North Australian Shores near the mouth of the “Victoria” or the “Albert” that the Explorers may travel from North to South, and if you do so I would have no hesitation in offering to take the management of the party, and by God, help bring it to a successful issue.

It may be objected that it is now too late to alter previous arrangements – and that the sending the party to the North of Australia to start Southwards would involve an extra expence – to the first objective I would answer that where the prosperity of the undertaking is involved, as well as the safety, and the lives of the individuals concerned it is well worth while to have previous arrangements altered even were it more difficult than what it can possibly be – to the second I would say that the Camels would not cost more to have them landed on the North coast say Port Essington or the “Albert”, nor so much – as having them landed at Melbourne, nor would it cost more to take the party by sea to the North, than it would to bring them from the North to Melbourne, and which in the one case must be necessarily done – my argument is that it would be much cheaper to make arrangements to start from the North as it would consume less time to the vessel and for other reasons; at all event I believe it would be the best and finest starting point, and if so, it is that which should be adopted.

Trusting you will forgive the freedom I have taken in this matter.

I have the honor  
To be  
Sir  
Your most obedient Servant  
John Frizzell

I shall write to you again on the probable route – you are at liberty to make the best use of this letter. JF

## 6: Archibald J Garriock

*Imperial Chambers  
Melbourne, 10 Feby 1860*

*John Macadam Esq M.D.  
Secretary  
Exploration Committee*

*Sir,*

*I beg to solicit information respecting the particular duties you require the applicants for the leadership of the Exploring party to be able to perform, also whether the committee require any other volunteers, and the remuneration for same.*

*Two or three gentlemen, young, hardy, energetic, and well accustomed to bush travelling in Australia &c would enter with spirit into the expedition should your committee be in a position to hold out sufficient inducement in the way of remuneration for the privations they must necessarily have to undergo.*

*I have the honor to be*

*Sir*

*Your obedient servant*

*Arch J Garriock*

## 7: Captain John Anthony Layard

147 Collins St East  
February 21<sup>st</sup> 1860

Sir,

*An advertisement having appeared from you in the columns of the daily paper wherein the attention of gentlemen desirous of attaining the leadership of the Expedition to the interior is drawn – I have the honor to offer myself as a candidate for that office, feeling sure that I have sufficient energy, strength and determination which I consider indispensable in a leader to justify me in making this application.*

*Having been a considerable traveller, particularly in the East, I flatter myself I am sufficiently inured to the heat of a tropical sun to be able to endure the parching winds and heat of the Desert of which Captain Sturt speaks in his publication.*

*The Route I would propose is, to make a junction with Sturt's extreme survey in lat. 24° South long. 138° East and Gregory's in lat. 20°20' South by long. 127°30' East which would in all human probability be completed (provided the party leave this by the end of March) about September – from that point I would suggest that the Expedition push on their researches in a Southerly direction till a junction is effected with Sturt's survey in Southern Australia which would occupy a period of about three months, bringing the expedition to a close about the end of the year. A survey of this Triangle through the Interior having been completed, joining Sturt's to Gregory's extremes and Gregory's to Stuart's, I would recommend that all operations cease till April the following year when the party may again be placed under orders to proceed to Mount Gould in Western Australia lat 26°20' south long 117°27' East and from thence to endeavour to effect a junction again with any point of the previous survey.*

*The distance might effectually be travelled by the end of four years.*

*I beg most respectfully to say that I am prepared to enter fully into all particulars connected with the undertaking to the Exploration Committee when called upon to do so.*

*I have the honor to be  
Sir  
Your most obed. Servant  
J. Layard*

*(Includes four referees)*

## 8: Patrick Main

Bacchus Marsh Feb 27<sup>th</sup> 1860

To the Hon Secretary of the  
Exploration Committee  
Melbourne

*Sir I do myself the honor of tendering my humble services as Leader on the intended exploratory Expedition into the Interior of New Holland. I regret that I was not sooner aware of the advertisement or I should have took no time in communicating with you on the subject. But as I presume an opportunity will be afforded of explaining the measures each aspirant may propose or adopt I shall merely for the present record my application and enter fully into details should your Committee think fit to fornow my pretensions. The subject is not new to me as I have always taken a great interest in it and shall continue to do and indeed I shall feel proud to find that your selection may take on some gentlemen of superior Talent, experience and more devoted to the sweep of the enterprise than your humble claimant. But as I have gained an experience during 23 years travelling in Victoria, "which I have explored I believe more widely yet more minutely than any other person,, the last eight of which I have spent principally in prospecting on every gold field in the Colony yet opened, and many others not Publicly known. I trust your Committee will not think me presumtious in tendering my services.*

*In have occasionally contributed my mite to the cause of Science and have with pride received favourable recognition from some of the most eminent Professors of the day in London as well as from Gentlemen presiding over the scientific Establishment in Victoria.*

*I have a full knowledge of the management of similar Expeditions in these Colonies and studied and calculated by comparison with all the great Travelers of New Holland Africa and Asia. I have a thorough knowledge of mechanics and sufficient nautical skills to build a Boat or vessel and work or navigate her under pressing circumstances should such need arise, I have a full knowledge of the management of stocks of all kinds and can lay down a chart of the Expedition mathematically. I have every confidence in my ability to bring the expedition to a satisfactory Conclusion and can give reference upon any point of interrogation which may tend to inspire the Committee with that degree of confidence I so fully possess should none better offer their services.*

*I have the honor to be Most Respectfully Patrick Main*

## 9: Samuel Parry

*Harkers Chambers, Pall Mall  
Sandhurst, Feb 29<sup>th</sup> 1860*

*To John Macadam, M. D. Esq.  
Hon. Sect. to the Exploring Expedition*

*Sir,*

*I offer myself as leader of the intended Exploring Expedition. Accompanying this application are copies of some Testimonials, the which, in case of its rejection, I request may be returned to me. I object in such case, to their being published.*

*I was employed about 19 months in making a trigonometrical survey of the mountainous country to the North of Mount Remarkable.*

*Though some of that country may be occupied, yet my operations necessitated a continuous and most arduous traversing of the country by routes never before attempted. I passed two summers in that great labour and desisted not during months that have been considered as objectionable for such work. During that time Mr Babbage was near Port Augusta I wrote to the Surveyor General, stating my opinion that the wrong route had been chosen (Mr Stuart took the same but in winter) & that a passage across Lake Torrens might be found in its North West corner. I had permission to explore that part —: at the same time a dispatch was sent to me shewing the Lake where I had indicated had a fordable crossing, and I therefore kept Northwards: yet, acting on my assertion a passage was found there as I had foreseen & has been since made use of.*

*You want a man competent to command others and of scientific knowledge to indicate with precision the Country traversed. I have those qualities.*

*I have been a great traveller & that may account for my desire again for novelty and adventure.*

*I have the honor, to be,  
Sir,  
Your most obedient  
Servant  
Sam Parry*

*In reference to Testimonials. I returned to South Australia and the Surveyor General being absent, the Commissioner of Crown Lands permitted me to resign — the Assistant Surveyor General supplied my place & is trigging the new country discovered by Stuart &c*

SP

## 10: Gustav Ferdinand v. Tempsky

Big Hill P.O. Bendigo  
February 11 1860

To  
The Honourable Secretary of the Royal Society  
Dr Mac Adam MLC

Sir

*I have the honour to come forward as an applicant for the leadership of the Victorian Exploration Party. I must state that I am urged to do it firstly by the advice of friends who know me & the work that has to be done; secondly I am encouraged to this step by the apparent dearth of applicants.*

*Thirteen years of all species of travel, on foot, on horseback, with wagons, in canoes, at sea or on rivers – have given me a general experience that can be applied to almost any country or clime.*

*I possess besides a year & a half's experience of Australian Bushlife – I live in the bush & know pretty much the peculiarities to be observed in travel through the various species of scrubland, plainland or open bushland.*

*I find that my experience of travel in some parts of Mexico has taught me almost, through perfect similarity, all that this country can teach me.*

*If anyone else with more colonial experience should offer himself for the leadership I would be contented with a subordinate position.*

*I would accept of the leadership only with the proviso of having an efficient surveyor and geologist as assistant.*

*I have acquired also the knowledge of commanding men and keeping them in good order, through frequent military occupation – I have drilled and fought Indians, Black, White & Redskins.*

*In the accompanying dissertation on the leadership in general I give my sincere conviction as to what I consider conducive to a general success.*

*I have the honour to be  
Sir  
Your most obedient humble  
Servant  
G. F. v. Tempsky*

(This letter was accompanied by a six-page document entitled 'Leadership of the Victorian Exploration Expedition'.)

## 11: Peter Egerton Warburton

Note: Peter Warburton did not send a letter to the Committee, as he thought it was an undignified way to select a person for such an important position. He was still considered for the position, based on the recommendation of some of the committee members.

Peter Egerton Warburton was the son of a minister. He was born in Cheshire, England, in 1813. He joined the navy when he was only 12 and served as midshipman in the *Windsor Castle*. He attended the Royal Indian Military College before joining the 13th Native Infantry Battalion in Bombay, where he served until 1853. He left the army as a Major, then moved to Adelaide where he became commissioner of police and a justice of the peace. His involvement with exploration included a trip to the area of Lake Gairdner and the Gawler Ranges in 1857, and a trip north in 1858 when he was sent by the government to recall and replace an exploration party led by Benjamin Babbage. Warburton found a way through Lake Eyre and South Lake Torrens, which were dry lake beds that had stumped earlier explorers. He discovered groups of freshwater springs, new grazing land, and a range of mountains that he named after Sir Samuel Davenport.

**Source:** Deasey, Denison, Peter Egerton Warburton (1813–89) *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online Edition* accessed 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2010:  
<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060376b.htm>

## 12: William Welch

*High Street  
Prabran  
14 Feb 1860*

*To  
John Macadam Esq  
M.D. MLC &c  
Hon. Sec. Exploration Committee*

*Sir*

*I have the honor to tender my services as Leader of the Victorian Exploration Expedition. At any time the Committee may please to appoint, I shall be happy to attend their summons, to pass examination as to competency –*

*Your mo. obedient  
Wm Welch*

## Lesson 4 resource

### The reputation of Robert O’Hara Burke

He was a careless daredevil sort of Irishman with a very ordinary physique. He wore a long beard, over which he dribbled his saliva. When he was off duty he often wore a slouching sombrero-like hat, and as he did not wear braces his breeches hung in rolls about his heels, and he looked altogether untidy... It was said of him as a good joke but true nevertheless, that when he was returning from Yackandandah to Beechworth he lost his way, although the track was well beaten and frequented, and did not arrive at his destination for many hours after he was due.

Falconer Larkworthy, Castlemaine bank manager

He could not tell north from south in broad daylight, and the Southern Cross as a guide was a never ending puzzle to him.

*Mount Alexander Mail*

We may add here that a brother of Mr Burke’s, an officer in the Royal Engineers, made himself very conspicuous for his gallantry at the beginning of the Crimean War... Such is the man, his qualifications, and his antecedents. That these are such will induce public confidence in Mr Burke there cannot we think be any doubt.

*The Herald*

He was tall, well made with dark brown hair; his broad chest was decorated with a magnificent beard; he had fine intelligent eyes and a splendidly formed head...A gentleman in the prime of his life...a perfect centaur as to horsemanship...from an ancient and honourable family and accustomed to command.

*The Herald*

When we first met Mr Burke we called him “Brian Boru” (a legendary Irish hero); there was such a daring reckless look about him which was enhanced by a giant scar across his face, caused by a sabre cut in a duel when he was in the Austrian service; he had withal a very attractive manner.

Mary Stawell, wife of the Chief Justice of Victoria

Burke did not possess a dress suit or even a white shirt ... brave and forthright ... was soldier-like and had much vigorous commonsense...a well-bred gentleman and quite at home among people of the best class ... a wild and eccentric daredevil ... Kind and generous to a fault, but let anything happen out of the common routine and he was confused, then excited, till finally he would lose all control of his better judgement. Then again, when he had made his mind up to do a thing, he never considered the consequences. He had thorough discipline and no one dared presume to contradict him.

Anonymous newspaper comments.

Mr Burke is an honorable man, was for many years Captain in a Dragoon Regiment in Austria where he distinguished himself – subsequently held a commission in the Irish constabulary and is now a Superintendent in our own Police. Mr Burke speaks and writes French, German and Italian. He is a most active man and very strong – most temperate in his habits – and is kind and gentle in his manners – but possessing a strong will – ambitious – and had been accustomed to command from boyhood.

PN Smithe, Police Commissioner

5 feet nine high, of muscular build, slow in movement, and had a vague air like a man who has no occupation and no interest in the busy world that hummed around him. His nose aquiline and well shaped, his complexion was florid, his hair blue black, and his eyes large and almost marine blue. He was eccentric and this was so noticeable that many believed him to be a trifle insane. He never wore uniform and wandered about alone a great deal. He maintained discipline but had only a small knowledge of Police business and was willing to be advised by his subordinates so long as he was not plagued by the vexation of adjusting petty details. Mr. Burke had a habit of listlessly wandering about alone on foot. He would buy fruit and take home and I have seen him carrying a water melon under his arm or he would give these purchases to a policeman to carry. He forbade the police to salute him or to notice him in public. Like all his rank at that time he was a magistrate but I only once knew him to exercise that office ... Miners and others often complained to him as they heard he was the poor man's friend ...

William Henry Manwaring

I have carefully examined all that could be gleaned from the newspaper reports relative to the leadership. And I have been unable to gather that the committee themselves had a proper understanding of the desired qualifications ... it is right to expect ... some familiarity with the natural sciences ... to some degree a draughtsman ... to be able to determine his position with tolerable accuracy ... The physical element so earnestly lauded ... is not sufficient ... there ought to also be a more than usual mental caliber ... Mr Burke may have harbored the thought that a flight on a camel across the ranges and deserts of the country is the thing sought, and deems himself especially qualified for such a scamper ... his experience as a commander over soldiers or police will not be of such avail ...

Scienta

[Our correspondent appears to be wholly unacquainted with the way such matters as the nomination of Mr Burke are managed. It is an affair of cliquery altogether...]

*The Age*, June 26 1860

## Lesson 6 resource

### Planning the expedition route

The following newspaper extracts are transcribed from original documents in the State Library of Victoria collection.

In your journal of the 18th inst. you state it has been determined by the Managing Committee that the expedition start from Hobson's Bay, and commence the land journey from "Blunder Bay, King's Sound, Dampier's Land, or wherever a good landing-place may be discovered." Sir, if the proposition is attempted to be carried out the immediate failure in toto of the expedition is certain. The idea is plain and simple madness and ignorance. What is the present position of the exploration party? After great expense and much care, some little time since camels were safely introduced into this colony. It must here be recollected that these animals were landed with every possible care, and by a vessel alongside a jetty. They have been duly and doubtless properly taken care of here. If Mr. Landells understands camels, he well knows that, to make them efficient and useful, they must ere they commence their long and severe journey be in a healthy, strong state – not suffering from the effects of shipboard; that they must by degrees be seasoned to their work; and, above all, not bruised nor suffering from any bodily accident ... Let it be remembered, the ship will not land the camels at a jetty, but in ships' boats, or a flat perhaps. If this be effected safely, which is not to be expected, then the animals, at the best, are unfit to commence their journey ... If Mr. Inspector Burke does not wish the total destruction of the enterprize on its commencement, he ought at once to object to so mad a scheme. If the expedition is to succeed, as it now ought, let it start from the Royal Park.

*The Argus*, 20 July 1860

Let any of our readers look over a good map of this continent on which are marked out the routes of the various explorers and he will observe that the ground to be traversed by MR BURKE and his party is that unknown central tract lying between STURT'S further point and the north-western coast. The first intention was that the expedition should strike out into STURT'S Desert from the east and emerge upon the coast at the most practicable point. Then somebody started the idea of sending the party round to the north-west coast by water, and fixing the starting point at some of the practicable harbours in the region. A glance at the map will show that if the later plan were followed, the exact locality for the purpose would be that which bears the rather ominous name of Blunder Bay.\*

*The Herald*, July 23 1860

\*Blunder Bay is on the coast of the Northern Territory, right on the border of Western Australia.

Blunder Bay! Was there ever a more appropriate or significant designation? All the planning and projecting, altering and amending, turning back and stumbling forward, of our Victorian savants with respect to the intended Exploring Expedition have only lead them ... to Blunder Bay.

*The Age*, 23 July 1860

In answer to questions from Dr. Embling who contended that Cooper's Creek was not, but that Port Augusta was, the proper point from which the exploring expedition should start, and that the north-west coast, and not the Gulf of Carpentaria, was the point which the expedition should endeavour to reach, Mr. NICHOLSON stated ... that it was not the intention of the Government to set aside or interfere with the decision of the Royal Society as to the route of the expedition. Mr. Embling was a member of the Royal Society, and he thought he had taken an unfair advantage of the House in bringing the question before it in the manner in which he had brought it. If he desired to have the route changed, he should place a distinct resolution on the table.

*The Argus*, 2 August 1860

**Some other possible routes considered were:**

- to be dropped on the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria and proceed south
- to be met on the Gulf coast by a ship and transfer back to Melbourne by sea
- to ferry up the Murray by steamer (Burke declined this offer, as he did not want to rely on a South Australian.)

## Lesson 13 resource

### Treatment of camels

The following letter to the *Argus* newspaper about the treatment of camels is transcribed from an original document in the State Library of Victoria collection.

#### TREATMENT OF CAMELS.

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir,-Herewith I beg to enclose an extract of the opinion of Sir Charles Napier, the hero of Scinde, on the treatment, &c., of camels.

I have thought that this extract might be useful and interesting at the present moment, in reference to the exploration expedition about to start.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

St. Kilda, July 10.            C. B.

“They can’t bear cold or rain, and on wet slippery ground dislocate their hips.

“I have spoken very seriously to the commanders of corps about the ill-treatment of the camels. These poor patient creatures are cruelly loaded, and when they sink under the weight are beaten, and their nostrils torn to pieces by pulling and working to make them rise, which they only do for a while, and then fall to die. Three days ago 15 died on the road under cruel treatment; no one denies the fact. The Government order, reinforced by mine, limits a camel’s load to 330lb., and this is the maximum under which an inferior camel can work. Yet I have seized and weighed the loads of many camels on the march which have passed 800lb. A camel is as different from a horse as in his appearance and anatomy. He never recovers being knocked up, but grows weaker and weaker till he dies. Rest recovers a horse-it will not restore a camel. If he does not die outright, he remains a poor, weak object, piteous to behold.

“The camel, also, gets the mange, which kills him if not early attended to; no rest or food will relieve his sufferings; and I am told they absolutely tear their own flesh with their teeth. His strength seems a sort of fixed capital, which every exertion diminishes. Their strong legs bear a great weight, and their hardy nature bears up long with little food or water, from the powers of the second stomach. If fairly loaded, he does his work right well, but only in the desert can he rival the horse or mule; he requires strict nursing, and is altogether an inferior animal.

“In the desert the camel has no rival; his great splay feet never sink in the sand, the heat never worries him, he defies thirst beyond all other beasts, and eats all that is to be had: nor does he require a great deal. All he asks is not to be overloaded, and nature has pointed this out so clearly to him and us, that this beast, who shows no sign of pain or complaint when whipped, makes most piteous moanings and growlings when too much is being put upon him. They are his remonstrances, which the two-legged beasts will not listen to, and the poor camels are killed by brutes.”

*The Argus*, Wednesday 11 July 1860

## Lesson 15 resource

### Letters from Ludwig Becker to John Macadam

The following letters are transcribed from original documents in the State Library of Victoria collection.

*Terrick-Terrick  
Aug 31 1860.*

*Dear Doctor Macadam,*

*I am sorry that the things required for collecting and preserving objects of natural history, and which I have named in a list never came to hand. Mr Dixon told me the list was not to be found, although I handed it over to him. I really do not know what to do, perhaps I might get a few things at Swan Hill. If it should be possible, send to that place:*

*several dozen nests of pill boxes,  
two traps for catching animals for collecting & for food,  
spirits of wine, about a gallon,  
camphor,  
a few small glass bottles with hermetically fitting stoppers,  
arsenical soap,  
an ounce of Acid nitr. & acid sulph, for testing.*

*My time is principally taken up with attending Camels, Camp work, and other services required while on the March. As yet we had only two resting days, when I had time to make three Sketches: crossing an ancient crater near Dr. Baynton's, crossing the Terrick plain S3 (in water colour) and the Terrick-Terrick Hills during a Fata Morgana (colored).*

*The first part of my journal I shall have the honour to send you from Swan Hill. Have you got my things, (Presented to the Roy. Society), all in safety? In great haste these lines are written; Still I have time to ask you the favour to send my respects to all the friends I left behind without having personally shaken hands with them, (Which I did in my mind during the last meeting of the R.S. where my discovery of native Zink were confirmed).*

*Vale,  
Yours truly,*

*Ludwig Becker.*

22nd January 1860.  
Darling Depôt  
Jan 22. 1861.

*The Hon Secretary, Royal Society, Melbourne, Victoria.  
Dr. J. Macadam M.L.A. Sir,*

*I send you a copy of my journal together with seven sketches representing: two kinds of lizards, one pigeon, one moth, three natives, watermarks of the Darling and a sketch of the route of Lyons & McPherson. I also enclose meteorological observations I made from Nov 6 1860 till an 13. 1861." The specimens I collected will be forwarded to Melb. by the first opportunity. The particulars of Lyons & McPhersons trip you will learn front Dr. Becklers report. I only furnish you with the route. I believe Lake Bulla to be the Cooper, and as Mr. Burke did not stop there or left words or signs on that place to guide men following him; I believe he went right on and did not much trouble himself with forming a depôt on that river.-*

*We shall leave in a few days our camp for the Cooper, taking with us as much provisions as the animals can carry. I think we will form there a depôt, which likely must be fortified-awaiting further orders. I hope to be able to explore part of the country around that Portion of the Cooper, and I hope also we shall succeed in keeping communication with Minindie during the wet & cool season.*

*I am extremely sorry not having received even a single line from you, especially, in regard to the few things so much wanted by an observer in nat. history. I never received the two small books having reference to Goulds work on birds. I fear I shall leave for the Interior with only an outfit consisting of a few colors & sketch-books, and two small geological hammers.*

*I have the honor to remain most respectfully,  
Yours obediently,*

*Ludwig Becker.*

## Lesson 16 resource

### William John Wills' final journal entries, 1861

These extracts are transcribed from Wills' original journal in the State Library of Victoria collection.

#### Wednesday, 12 June

King out collecting nardoo. Mr. Burke and I at home, pounding and cleaning. I still feel myself, if anything, weaker in the legs, although the nardoo appears to be more thoroughly digested.

#### Friday, 14 June

Night alternately clear and cloudy, cir.-cum. and cum.-st. moving northwards; no wind, beautifully mild for the time of year; in the morning some heavy clouds on the horizon. King out for nardoo; brought in a good supply. Mr. Burke and I at home, pounding and cleaning seed. I feel weaker than ever, and both Mr. B. and King are beginning to feel very unsteady in the legs.

#### Thursday, 20 June

Night and morning very cold, sky clear. I am completely reduced by the effects of the cold and starvation. King gone out for nardoo. Mr Burke at home pounding seed; he finds himself getting very weak in the legs. King holds out by far the best; the food seems to agree with him pretty well. Finding the sun come out pretty warm towards noon, I took a sponging all over, but it seemed to do little good beyond the cleaning effects, for my weakness is so great that I could not do it with proper expedition. I cannot understand this nardoo at all; it certainly will not agree with me in any form. We are now reduced to it alone, and we manage to get from four to five pounds per day between us. The stools it causes are enormous, and seem greatly to exceed the quantity of bread consumed, and is very slightly altered in appearance from what it was when eaten.

#### Friday, 26 June [sic]

Clear cold night, slight breeze from the E., day beautifully warm and pleasant. Mr. Burke suffers greatly from the cold, and is getting extremely weak; he and King start tomorrow up the creek, to look for the blacks – it is the only chance we have of being saved from starvation. I am weaker than ever although I have a good appetite, and relish the nardoo much, but it seems to give us no nutriment, and the birds here are so shy as not to be got at. Even if we got a good supply of fish, I doubt whether we could do much work on them and the nardoo alone. Nothing now but the greatest good luck can now save any of us; and as for myself, I may live four or five days if the weather continues warm. My pulse are at forty-eight, and very weak, and my legs and arms are nearly skin and bone. I can only look out, like Mr Micawber, 'for something to turn up'; but starvation on nardoo is by no means very unpleasant, but for the weakness one feels, and the utter inability to move oneself, for as far as appetite is concerned, it gives me the greatest satisfaction. Certainly, fat and sugar would be more to one's taste, in fact, those seem to me to be the great stand by for one in this extraordinary continent; not that I mean to depreciate the farinacious food, but the want of sugar and fat in all substances obtainable here is so great that they become almost valueless to us as articles of food, without the addition of something else.

## Lesson 17 resource

### Ludwig Becker: 1861 report about the sand cliffs

This extract is transcribed from Becker's original reports, held in the State Library of Victoria collection.

#### Friday Oct. 12.

At daybreak the Gong awoke us and at 7½ I left the camp on horseback in company with Mr Burke and the packhorses, a great relieve to me, as I had walked for so long a time and so long a distance with obstinate camels. We reached after 15 miles ride 'Cuthro', this is a fine camping place where we and the horses had a short spell; marching from there 10 miles further on we camped for the night at a 'Darling bend'. The country we had passed through today was of the prevailing Darling formation: sandhills and dry mud-plains. We came over some undulated country with a sandhill to our right, about 80 feet high and Mr Burke kindly gave the permission to ride on the top of it to see what lay before us: I found the panorama from that hill ocean-like, only in N.E. some elevations reached over the dead level of the country and broke the line of the dark colored horizon. The hill was undermined by numberless holes, some very large, probably made by Wombats, the others belong to Wallaby's. The surface of the summit of the hill is strewn with large masses of limestone concretions, looking like so many fossil bones. –We soon arrived at a spot where the road went round a remarkable place called 'the Mallee Sand Cliffs'. The sandhills approach here the Darling so much, that its high-water in certain seasons, reached the foot of those hills washing away the loose material. Deprived of their foundation the overlying masses come down and are also carried away by these periodical floods, leaving behind, after their subsidence, a level sandy plain bordered by cliffs from 20 to 60 feet high. For years no fresh flood disturbs the product of the last one; but now the action of the atmosphere takes place. The rain-water coming from the plateau above, rushes, down those sand-walls, producing cracks, fissures, crevices etc; small bills, cones, spurs of hillocks and miniature promontories; exposing to the eye the different layers of sand separated by thin strata of calcareous matter, until a picture is created such as I attempted to copy. –It will be seen that the foot of the 'cliffs' is composed of a brownish-red sand, which color changes, higher up, gradually to yellow, when it becomes nearly white at the top of the cliff. These different layers of sand all horizontal are very distinct: the separating sheets of calcareous matter are less affected by the rain water, they being harder, it renders the eye to count and measure correctly those deposits of sand of which we at present do not know to what geological period they belong, as, so far as I know, no fossils were found in that formation. The first impression of the scene upon me was a very striking one—I did not know what to make of it. It looked to me as if it were a sort of a model for an alpine formation the pines on the bottom of the cliffs still more reminding one on some scenery in Switzerland; –then again it was to me as if I were in the Gallery of an enormously large play-house and looking down upon the stage and at the painted back ground illustrating some scene out of 'William Tell' or of 'Linda di Chamoun'. As it is, however, these sandcliffs are entirely the result of natural forces, and human hands had no play in it: no sand pits, no excavations are to be seen.