

## DOCUMENTS

### *Broughton's Reconnaissance of the San Juan Islands in 1792*

An unpublished account of a reconnaissance of the San Juan island group by Lieut. W. R. Broughton, R.N., is now in the library of the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, London, S.W. 1. England, and has been supplied through the courtesy of Capt. E. Altham, R.N., and Mr. E. L. Hughes, Major Librarian.

Captain George Vancouver landed on Protection Island, now at the Northwest corner of Jefferson County, Washington, and made observations, May 17, 1792. He stated that in the northern quarter he could see an "Archipelago of islands of various sizes. On my return on board, I directed Mr. Broughton to use his endeavors in the *Chatham*, to acquire some information in that line." See Edmond S. Meany, *Vancouver's Discovery of Puget Sound*, pp. 113-4.

On page 137 Vancouver tells "About four in the afternoon, [of May 25th], agreeably to our expectations, the *Chatham* was seen from the mast head over the land, and about sun-set she arrived and anchored near us. Mr. Broughton informed me, that the part of the coast he had been directed to explore, consisted of an archipelago of islands lying before an extensive arm of the sea stretching in a variety of branches between the N.W. north, and N.N.E. Its extent in the first direction was the most capacious, and presented an unbounded horizon."

J. NEILSON BARRY.

This was the first attempt at a survey of the interesting San Juan Archipelago. One year earlier (1791) the Spanish expedition led by Lieutenant Francisco Eliza charted the southern shores and left the name "Isla y Archipelago de San Juan." This revealed the fact that there was a group of islands in that region. By May of 1792, Vancouver and his officers had not yet met the officers of the *Sutil* and *Mexicano* and would have had no opportunity of learning that any Spanish explorers had approached those islands. Later in that same year, after the discovery and exploration of Puget Sound, Vancouver named Cypress Island and spent enough time there for his small boat excursions to discover Deception Pass, Bellingham Bay and other geographic features. As Mr. Barry has shown, Vancouver recorded the result of Lieutenant Broughton's survey from the 18th to 25th of May.

With footnoots, an effort has been made to indicate by present names the route taken by Lieutenant Broughton in his journey through the islands.

EDITOR.

*Proceedings of His Majesty's Brig Chatham from the  
18th to 25th of May, 1792*

On Friday, the 18th May, 1792

At Noon took our departure from middle or 2nd Point bearing from us East  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile, with the wind at West we stood over close hauled for the North side of the Straits. At 4 having run 12 miles we weathered a small Island<sup>1</sup>—within half a mile to the East of it was a detach'd Sandy Spit extending some distance. An opening<sup>2</sup> appear'd to the North of a Point over which were some Peaked Hills—and another<sup>3</sup> bore of us N.W. for which (the Wind favouring us) we were able to fetch by  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 5. Some Rocky Islands lay off the entrance and the appearance of Broken Water or else a very strong Tide setting to windw'd. The Cutter went ahead to sound—and we followed her through a passage of a mile in width, carrying in—19, 13, & 12 fath<sup>ms</sup>. close to the larboard Rocky Island<sup>4</sup> as we entered. The Shore from the Starboard side of entrance to Peaked Hill Point<sup>5</sup> seem'd to be a continuation of Rocky Isles, several of them well cloath'd with wood. After stretching across the Sound<sup>6</sup> which was closed to the Westward, we bore up to the North side for Anchorage and opened a deep Arm of the Sea<sup>7</sup> in a N. N. E. direction and soon after another of greater breadth and extending to the N. W'ward. We steer'd over for the N.E. point<sup>8</sup> of this Arm against a Strong Ebb Tide rounding a Reef of Rocks apparently covered at highwater (no soundings) within them and the shore our Boat found 17 fath<sup>ms</sup>. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 8 we came too in 12 fath<sup>ms</sup>. on the Starboard shore having had overfalls from 18 to 10 f<sup>ms</sup>. rocky bottom. In the morning [19th] the Cutter went 6 miles up the N.E. Arm<sup>9</sup>—and return'd without seeing any apparent termination to it. After Breakfast, I dispatched two Boats under the direction of Mr. Johnstone (the Tide of Flood having made) up the

1 Smith Island.

2 Entrance to Rosario Strait.

3 Southern entrance to San Juan Channel.

4 Harbor Rock.

5 Point Colville terminating Watmough Head.

6 Griffin Bay.

7 Entrance to Upright Channel.

8 Southern point of Shaw Island.

9 Upright Channel.

N.W. Arm<sup>10</sup> to explore. The wind blowing down prevented the vessel's going so conveniently and I rather supposed it communicated with what we call the true N.W. passage. After their departure we weigh'd and run up the N.E. passage<sup>11</sup> (which from the boat not seeing any termination of, I conceived might lead us out to the supposed opening by Peaked Point) and our situation was not the most eligible from the foulness of the ground. After running 2 or 3 miles we anchored off a Sandy Spit between which and the opposite Rocky point form'd the Narrows<sup>12</sup> of this passage not  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile across. Our soundings were very irregular and at last we brought up in 22 fms. with a strong Ebb tide by the falling of the water on shore. Meridian observation gave the Lat. 48.35 N. Fine pleasant moderate Wea<sup>r</sup>.—the wind from the N.W. Quarter. We frequently hauled the Seine with very indifferent success. At 8 p.m. the Boats return'd and reported the passage which they followed up communicated with an extensive Opening<sup>13</sup> call'd by us the N.W. passage—and two Arms branched off from it in an N. by W.<sup>14</sup> & N. by E.<sup>15</sup> direction—vide Chart.

At day light in the morning of the 20th, Mr. Johnstone went to sketch the entrance we had first entered by from the Straits and the Tide slackening at 8 we weigh'd, towing to the N.E. ward without any wind. By Noon we came to an Anchor having received very little assistance from the Tide in 27 fms. at the mouth of an Inlet which led to the N.W.—another appeared to the S.E. and the third bore of us N.N.E. These different openings materially affected the Stream of the Tide—and though the rise and fall was considerable by the Shore—our progress was much impeded by their irregularity and we were necessitated to remain stationary for the day—after making another attempt in the Afternoon—No observation.

By Noon the Cutter returned. After dinner the two Boats were sent to explore the passages which presented themselves on each side of the one I meant to pursue. By dark they came back. The S.E. opening<sup>16</sup> Mr. Hanson went up 7 or 8 miles but saw no termination to it. The other opening<sup>17</sup> took a N.W. by W. direction about 4 miles when it branched off to the N.E. and S.W. About two miles up they found a Village—Canoes came off and traded

10 Northern portion of San Juan Channel.

11 Entrance to East Sound.

12 Probably Obstruction Passes.

13 Approaching Canal de Haro.

14 President Channel.

15 Spieden Channel.

16 Lopez Sound.

17 East Sound.

with them for Venison—A young Fawn they got alive—High water by the Shore at 7 hours—The Stream of Tide very inconsiderable.

The morning of the 21st was calm—at 8 we got under way, the Boats towing us towards a narrow passage (which I suppose might carry us out to the Straits). We had light breezes and cloudy weather from the N.E. quarter and by Noon we reached the 2nd Narrows having a strong tide in our favour to carry us through. Several canoes were on the beach and some paddling along shore to the Westward. Mr. Johnstone went ashore with the small boat to take the necessary Angles while we continued turning through the passage—having both boats ahead to assist us—the narrowest part was about 100fa<sup>ms</sup>. across—Our soundings regular from 7 to 15 fat<sup>ms</sup>. We now entered a spacious Sound<sup>18</sup> containing several Islands and openings in all directions—Vide Chart. The wind having left us, we were carried to the N.ward very rapidly by a strong Tide setting close along the Larboard shore. Unfortunately at this moment while the boats were pulling us off, they broke the Tow rope, and before we could derive any effect from another—our Head swung inshore and we drifted very gently alongside the Rocks. While the Hawser was coiling away in the Long Boat to haul off by—we floated off, the Eddy tide setting us back to the South<sup>a</sup>. The Boats soon towed us into the fair Tide. While alongside the rocks we had 22 fa<sup>ms</sup>.—without 30 fa<sup>ms</sup>.—The Lead got entangled and we lost it with 20 fa<sup>ms</sup>. of line. At 1 p.m. we anchored in 25 fa<sup>ms</sup>., there being no wind, and the Tide setting us fast towards the land. The afternoon continued calm. Mr. Johnstone went to explore the openings between the N. & E. and we tried hauling the Seine till sunset without getting any fish. The Cutter returned at dark having found the Eastern opening to lead into the Straits—to the N.E. were several Islands which apparently communicated in the same manner—and a third very extensive opening stretching to the N.W.ward<sup>19</sup>—Highwater by the Shore 6 hours.

The 22nd commenced variable weather. In the morning calm—at 8 we weigh'd and towed to the E.ward—The Tide setting us fast to the South shore of this opening (which afterwards proved to be an Island).<sup>20</sup> An indifferent observation gave the Lat. 48°40' N. The afternoon we had fresh breezes from the N.W. quarter with a strong Flood Tide against us at ½ past 2 making very little

<sup>18</sup> Rosario Strait.

<sup>19</sup> Approach to Georgia Strait.

<sup>20</sup> From this point he makes his way back, mentioning but not naming many islands. The final Vancouver chart shows only the outlines of Blakely, Cypress, Decatur and Lopez Islands.

progress and the small boat being absent, we came too in a fine Bay on the North shore within a small Island in 11 fms.—The Straits being entirely open with Sandy Island bearing S.5° W.—4 or 5 leagues—Several Islands with an inlet lay to the South of us, which Mr. Johnstone went to examine—But the rapidity of the Flood tide prevented his getting over. This Inlet I imagine was the same that was before partially explored by Mr. Hanson.

The Long Boat hauled the Seine with indifferent success and brought off a turn of water which lay very conveniently within the Beach. High water by the shore at ½ past 6. The Ebb made to the Eastward at 7, at which time it became squally with heavy rain from the S.E. Quarter and a great deal of thunder.

23rd.—Till 6 a.m. we had heavy rain when it clear'd up with the wind at S.S.E. the tide setting to the Eastward, we weigh'd at that time, and worked to windwards towards the Straits passing several islands on the N. side with an extensive Arm which opened in that direction. By 8 we had work'd the length of the Straits—and standing over to the N. shore, perceived a small opening which took a winding direction to the Northward. The Land from hence to the part now under examination of Captain Vancouver was a straight beach in an North direction—we passed to the N.E. of Sandy Island in working, but had no Sounding with 16 fms. By Noon we were off the entrance above mentioned and by Observation in the Lat. of 48.16 N. Sandy Island, bearing N. 25 W. 5 miles and middle or 1st point on the Starboard side of entrance S.E. 3 or 4—Off the nearest shore 2 miles. The Flood tide now made strong up this opening with which we worked up very fast. It formed in several places over Falls and constant riplings, appearing like shoal water. At 4 the wind shifted to a light air from the N.W.—and at 6 the Tide having done we came to an Anchor on the Larboard shore of this Arm in 9 fm off some remarkable White Cliffs forming an abrupt point at the entrance of a large Bay—the night was squally weather from the Southern Quarter.

24th.—At Day light we weigh'd with the last of the Flood and turn'd to windward till 8. Our tacks were not very advantageous and we anchored on the East shore near a projecting Sandy Spit in 9 fm. The mouth of the entrance from the Straits still open to us bearing N.W. about 7 leagues. A canoe spent the morning with us. At Noon the Tide making, we weigh'd and worked to windward having a fine turning breeze from the S.E. Quarter—after crossing a deep Bay, we opened another arm of the Sea extending

to the N.ward. By halfpast 6 we came too on the west shore in 19 fms. having increased our distance not more than 6 miles from the last Anchorage. The Tides did not run with the same rapidity we experienced yesterday which will account for our slow progress.

25th.—At 3 the next morning we again weigh'd with light breezes from the Southward and turn'd up the Arm at 8 we anchored off the East shore off a Sandy Spit, having from 3 to 25 fms. close in. The forenoon continued calm. An indifferent observation made the Lat. 47.46 N. At Noon again weigh'd with a light air from the N. and run up the Arm. At 6 saw the Discovery at an Anchor on the West Shore.

W. R. BROUGHTON.