

‘WESTERN PORT’ v. ‘WESTERNPORT’

It seems something of an enigma that the most easterly of the two major bays along Victoria’s south coast is named Western Port Bay.

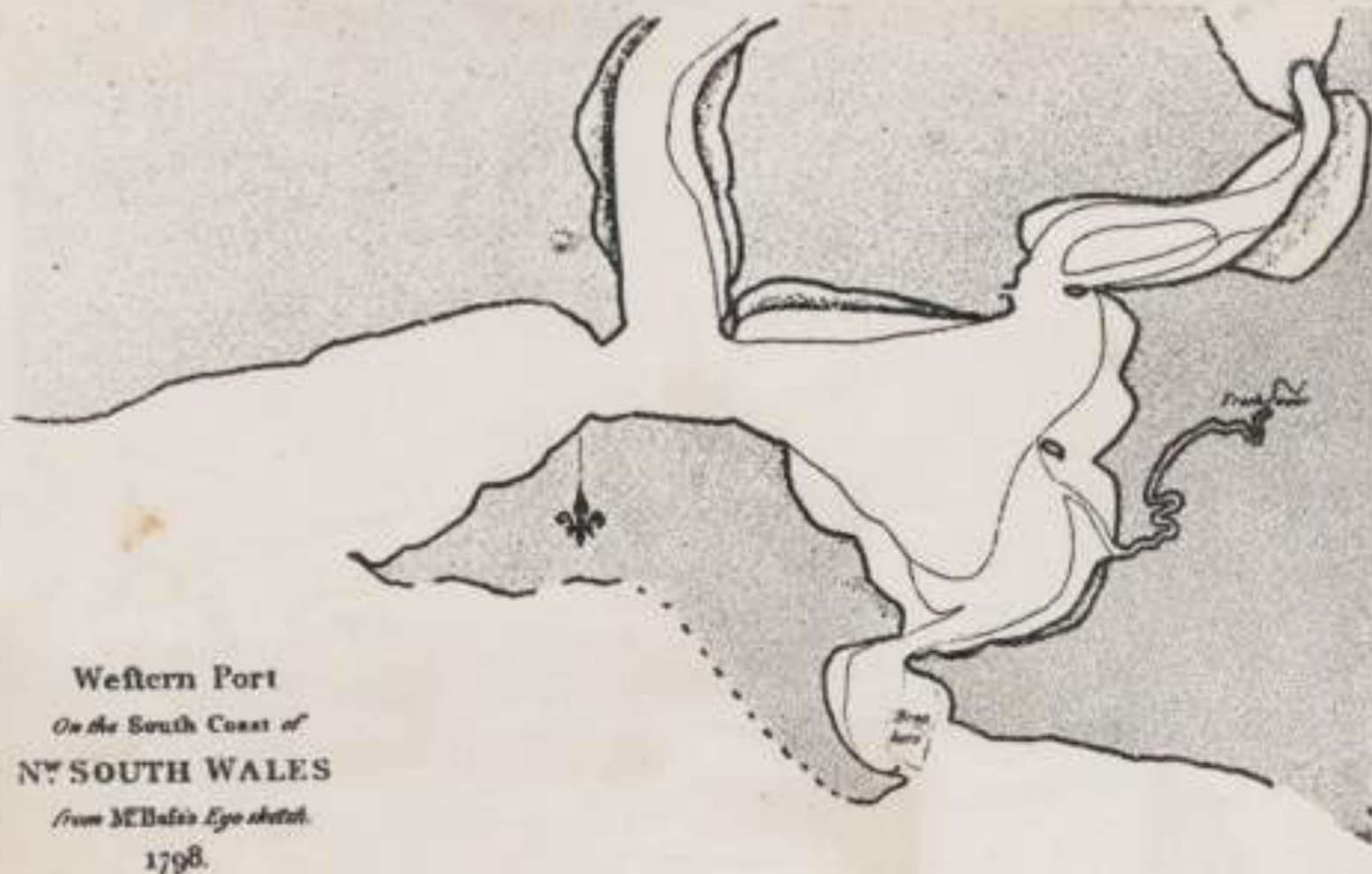
It was Englishman, George Bass who gave the name Western Port Bay to that particular body of water late in the year 1797. Exploring the coastline south of Port Jackson in a whale boat with a small volunteer crew of six, they were forced to turn westward after sighting Cape Howe when their boat developed a leak. Following the continent’s southern coastline, they came across and entered a wide, tidal bay where they stayed long enough to carry out repairs.

Bass named the bay ‘Western Port’ due to its relative position to other harbours already known; it was the most westerly charted harbour at that time. Bass was convinced that the body of water along which he had sailed was a strait separating Van Diemen’s Land from the mainland. The following year he and Matthew Flinders set out to prove his theory by sailing through the strait, which had been named after Bass, and circumnavigating Van Diemen’s Land.

The word has been spelt both as one word, ‘Westernport’ and as two words, “Western Port” with both forms once commonly used throughout the shire. Today the name is officially given as two words. This practice was adopted in 1985 and was initiated by the Hastings Historical Society, acting on the advice of the Victorian Place Names Committee.

The change to recording Western Port as two words was made in time for the 150th birthday of Victoria and the Shire’s 25th year. A letter was written to Mr Cain, the Victorian State Premier, advising Government departments to adopt the correct spelling when current supplies of maps, plans and other documents were depleted.

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Balnarring and District Historical Society



an **INVITATION**

To visit the **History Room**
in the **Balnarring Hall** on a Monday morning
10.00 a.m. to 12 noon.

What you will find: photos, maps, documents, books
and objects relating to our district's past.

Bring your questions.

Bring your stories.

Ph. 5983 5236

(Balnarring & District Historical Society)