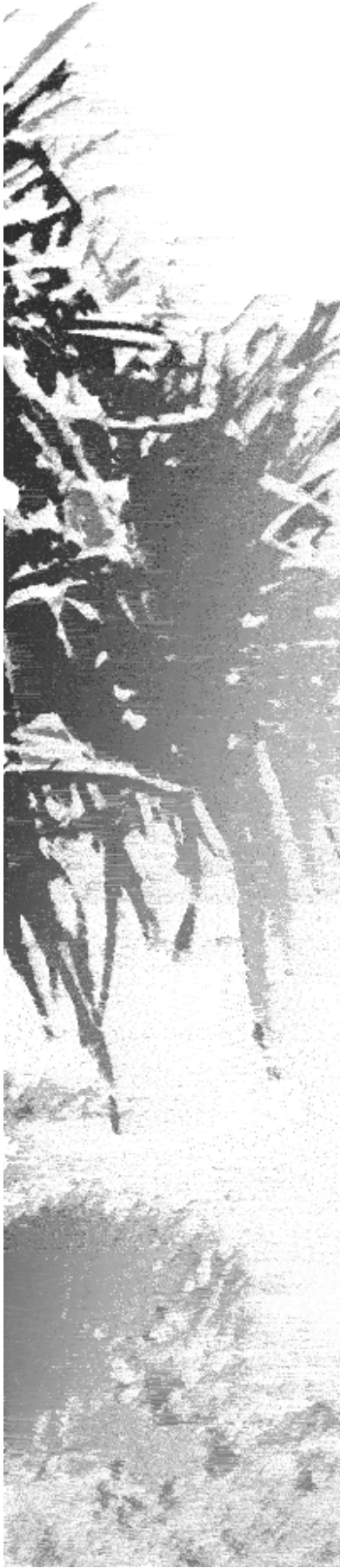




# Fingal





The Fingal Head Light was established in 1872, and warns ships of the Danger Reefs offshore. Captain Cook gave the name Mt Warning to the peak inland for the same purpose one hundred years earlier.

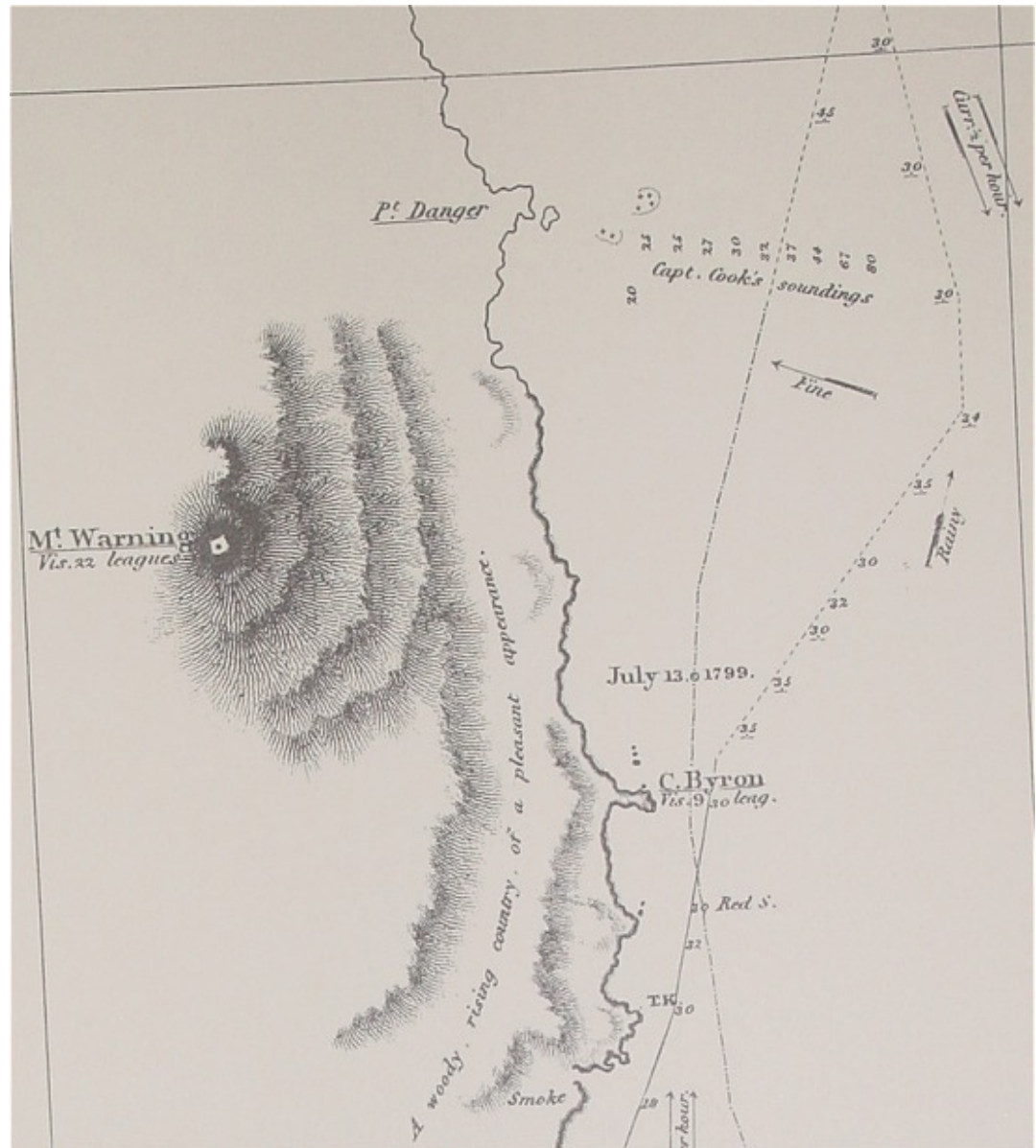
Matthew Flinders had a copy of Cooks' map when he sailed this way in the sloop Norfolk in 1799. Flinders map, right, shows Fingal Head, Cooks Island, and the reefs offshore that he stood to sea, to avoid.

The Tweed River was to remain uncharted until visited by John Oxley in 1823.

Offshore from Fingal Head is Cook's Island, an aquatic reserve. There are thirteen moorings (to protect the sea floor) at popular diving locations around the island

The island can be visited by kayak, but the shore break at Fingal will often mean a 2 metre surf to launch through. The sea kayaker may have to launch from 4 kilometres north, and cross the Tweed River entrance.

Sea conditions will often mean the visitor cannot land on the most sheltered NW tip of the island.



In 1823 John Fitzgerald Uniacke traveled with New South Wales Surveyor-General John Oxley, from Port Jackson (Sydney) up to Port Curtis (Gladstone Queensland), sailing in the government ship *HMC Mermaid*. The Mermaid was a cutter, with a single mast, built in Howrah, Calcutta, India in 1816, of teak, and was 18 meters long with a beam of 5.48 meters and 84 gross tons.

In 1825 Justice Barron Field edited *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales*, a collection of papers that included a narrative Uniacke had written on his travels.

John Uniacke made the following observations.

**Monday 27 October 1823: The wind being fair, we immediately got under way, and continued our course to the northward till Friday afternoon, when it shifted, and came on to blow so hard, that we determined to run in shore and look out for anchorage; this we found under the lee of a small island off Point Danger (so named by Captain Cook), about a mile from the land. While running down for this place, we perceived the mouth of a large river about a mile and a half to the northward**

It is now accepted that what we know as the Point Danger named by Captain Cook in 1770, was in fact Fingal Head, and the small island off Point danger, recounted by Uniacke, was Cook or Turtle Island, some 630 metres offshore from Fingal Head.

Readers may question the description of the Tweed River entering the sea 1.5 miles (2.4 km) north of Fingal, when it is 2.2 miles (3.5km), but the Tweed has only had its current river mouth since rock retaining walls were built in the 1890's (see *Upstreampaddle magazine Autumn 2008*).

John Uniacke continues his account

**Shortly afterwards, Mr. Stirling and I landed on the island with our guns. The rock which formed the base was evidently of volcanic origin: it was of a dark colour, full of small holes and extremely hard. The superincumbent rocks were basaltic, and those of a bluff headland, immediately opposite on the main, were inferior only in extent to the Giant's Causeway in the north of Ireland.**

**We were proceeding to the place where we landed, when we observed what appeared to be part of a wreck on the N.W. point of the island. It appeared to be the larboard quarter, with part of the stern and quarter-deck of a vessel of at least three hundred tons. The plank, which was of oak, was not yet totally destroyed. We could find nothing about the wreck by which we could determine what she had been. We however picked up a piece of slate with part of a name deeply scratched on it, and also part of a case of mathematical instruments.**

*Note: [Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales](#) is available for download as a Google Book.*



*model of His Majesty's Cutter Mermaid.  
photo courtesy: [Modellers Shipyard Blog](#)*

