16 December 2002
Regional touring exhibition honouring Matthew Flinders comes to Darwin

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The world’s first regional touring exhibition dedicated to the explorer, Matthew Flinders, will open at the Northern Territory Library on 24 December.

The exhibition, "Matthew Flinders: the Ultimate Voyage", marks the bicentenary of his circumnavigation of Australia in 1801-3 and presents stunning 18th century treasures and illustrated displays.

The Minister for Local Government, John Ah Kit, has congratulated the Northern Territory Library and Information Service on negotiating the exhibition for Darwin.

"The exhibition includes original items relating to Flinders life and his adventures which also included exploring coastal New South Wales, and charting Tasmania and the Bass Strait in addition to his circumnavigation," Mr Ah Kit said.

"The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory will join the NTLIS to support this exhibition and will provide display materials relating to Flinders’ expedition to the north-east Arnhem Land coast, which took place about this time of the year."

That circumnavigation in the leaking and rotting HMS Investigator resulted not only in the naming of Australia but hundreds of other places such as the Great Australian Bight and Kangaroo Island.

The Matthew Flinders Exhibition has been organised by the State Library of New South Wales. That Library’s Chief Executive, Dagmar Schmidmaier, said the landmark exhibition showcased wonderful material related to Flinders and his significant voyages of discovery often overlooked in Australia’s history.

"In just 23 years, from 1791 to 1814 Flinders not only carried out his Australian discoveries but was shipwrecked, imprisoned at Mauritius, experimented with the effects of magnetism on ships and wrote a legendary book on Australian exploration.

"What’s most extraordinary is that he did all this before his early death at the age of 40," Ms Schmidmaier said.

The items on display as part of the travelling exhibition include correspondence between Flinders and other great men of the time, black and white engravings by landscape artist William Westall and spoons used by naval officers on the H S Investigator.

The free exhibition will remain open at the NT Library until 16 January 2003