



Darwin City Council

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Eye of the Explorer a history of Stuart and his expeditions

"...a man whose amazing persistence, indomitable courage, and unflinching common sense enabled him to succeed in a mighty task in which most others would have failed..." T.G. H. Strehlow, 1967

The Eye of the Explorer, a commissioned public art memorial to John McDouall Stuart was presented to the people of Darwin on the 190th birth date of Stuart. He was born on September 7, 1815 in Dysart, Scotland, which stands on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth, almost directly opposite Edinburgh. John was the youngest son of nine children born to William and Mary (nee McDouall) Stuart. The family residence today houses a museum in his honour.

Throughout his six expeditions through the harsh Australian outback he displayed the persistence and courage that characterised his final journey of 1861/ 1862 over almost 7,000 kms. It is these characteristics that provided the catalyst for the artist's creation the Eye of the Explorer.

John McDouall Stuart was engaged on Charles Sturt's expedition to the interior of Australia in 1844. This epic journey saw Sturt and his team reach a point closer to the centre of Australia than any other recorded by a European. It was Sturt's final expedition but for Stuart it provided valuable experience.

Subsequent transcontinental expeditions of Stuart and his parties opened up vast tracts of pasture land and his final epic journey of 1861/ 1862 created a viable route for the overland telegraph line which finally connected Australia with Asia and subsequently the rest of the world. Later the south to north highway and the train line were built along a route which closely followed that of Sturt's expedition, that we now know as the Stuart Highway.

The human experience can never be told as a simple single story, the experiences and journeys of John McDouall Stuart are a many layered experience of a man who undertook incredible journeys and demonstrated the most resolute character.

There is much published information available about Stuart, his party members, their expeditions and experiences. Just some of the references used in the development of the work include:

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The John McDouall Stuart Society Inc.
www.johnmcdouallstuart.org.au
49 Seaview Avenue, Middleton, S.A. 5213

Explorations in Australia

John McDouall Stuart
Edited from Stuart's Manuscript By William Hardman with drawings by George
Angas
Published 1865

Across the Centre

By Edward Stokes
Based on the South Australian Parliamentary Papers, virtually verbatim from
Stuart's actual field diaries
Published 1996

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