WHEN THE FRENCH AND THE ENGLISH EXPLORED OUR BAY.
(Continuing last month's excerpt from "Saga of Moorabbin")

The visit of the Grimes expedition had come about following earlier discoveries of the bay. At the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century the discovery of two bays in the far south of New South Wales was - apart from rum trafficking - the major topic of conversation in a rather drunken and bewildered Sydney Town. One of the bays (Western Port), which had been narrowly missed by Captain James Cook, when, at 6 a.m. on 19th April, 1770, a storn drove "Endeavour" away from the headlands, now owed its discovery to another storm, which had driven yet another expedition into its very waters.

Captain Cook's first sighting of the Australian Mainland was along the ninety-mile beach of Gippsland, barely one hundred miles from Moorabbin. The presence of land was drawn to his attention by the excited calling of "land-ho" by his first lieutenant, Hicks. Had it not been for the fateful storm on that mid-autumn morning of 1770, the foundation of Australia might well have taken place along the shores of Port Phillip Bay instead of Sydney Cove.

Thus, by a strange contradiction of fate at the whim of inclement weather, George Bass, in a whaleboat provided by Governor Hunter, and manned by a crew of six, was caught in a storm and driven on to his discovery of Western Port. Having left Sydney towards the end of 1797 with six weeks' provisions, Bass had set out to travel further south than on earlier expeditions. He had already gone further than was intended when he atlength landed in Western Port.

Rations were running low, but Bass remained to carry out a survey of as much of the bay as was possible under such conditions. Finally, his dwindling food supplies forced him to move on without discovering the much larger bay on the other side of the Peninsula (which he had not recognised as a peninsula). After Bass returned to Sydney with news of his discovery, Western Port was to gain the attention of the New South Wales authorities; also that of a number of enthusiastic explorers.

Amongst these was Captain John Murray, who, after his first visit to Western Port, was sent back by Governor King to carry out further discoveries of the area in 1801. This time he sailed into Port Phillip Bay, named it Port King after the Governor who had sent him on his errand (King promptly changed it to that of the first Governor of the colony of New South Wales), and, after a stay lasting three weeks, returned to Sydney. Murray