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## Preface

In the spring of 2006 the editors travelled to England in search of the original surveys, logs, field notebooks, journals and letter books of Captain George Henry Richards. We were eager to review these documents on behalf of our First Nation clients, hoping to find material that would add to existing ethno-historical information and provide support for land and resource claims. We were particularly interested in Richards' journal of the Vancouver Island surveys conducted between 1860 and 1862.

Our first stop was the Hydrographic Office (the UKHO) in Taunton, where archivist Guy Hannaford gave us ready access to all of the original charts and drawings of the Vancouver Island surveys. Twenty-first century satellite photography cannot render the misty seas and immense forested shores suggested in these delicately etched and colour-washed nautical drawings. The published version of these charts can be viewed at the British Columbia Archives in Victoria, but certain details of the original drawings have been omitted and our interest was in these omissions, particularly the barely visible rectangular boxes on the shore which represent the houses and villages of many First Nations on Vancouver Island.

At the UKHO we were directed to a cottage near Westbury, Wiltshire, where Captain Richards' manuscripts have pride of place in the private library of Donal Channer, the great-great-grandson of George Henry Richards. The collection came into the possession of the Channer family through Captain Richards' Victoria-born daughter, Rose, who married Arthur Channer. Donal Channer now has responsibility for its preservation.

At the Channer home, along with tea and hospitality, we were given permission to photograph all of Richards' Vancouver Island collection. In a colourful bound journal in excellent condition entitled *Vancouver Id<sup>d</sup> Survey H.M.S. "Plumper" 1860. Captain's Journal GHR*, the story of the numerous circumnavigations and surveys of Vancouver Island is recorded in full and vivid detail. Upon reading the journal and recognizing the contribution it would make to our knowledge of the early colonial period on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia, we requested and were given permission by Mr. Channer to publish the journal.

The journal is presented here in its entirety with as few editorial changes as possible. The text is liberally annotated and we have supplemented Richards' account with excerpts from the journals of John Thomas Ewing Gowlland, Richards' second master. Described by Richards as "a most competent surveyor and along with Master Browning, his best draughtsman," Gowlland wrote at least as many pages as Richards, providing additional detail and bringing a youthful, though less-tempered, perspective to his account. His attitude toward the aboriginal inhabitants is certainly not as respectful as Richards' and he exhibits a Victorian prejudice that may not be considered acceptable to the modern reader.

Richards' trusted officer and friend, Lieutenant Richard Charles Mayne, also kept a record of the Vancouver Island survey expedition until 1861 when he was promoted to his own command and left the West Coast to serve in New Zealand. Mayne's journal was incorporated into a book well-known to local historians, entitled *Four Years in British Columbia and Vancouver Island*. The original journal and typescript of Mayne's journal are available at the British Columbia Archives and his book is available online. While Mayne's *Four Years* has been mined extensively, historians of Vancouver Island have paid less attention to Gowlland's lengthy and detailed journal. Gowlland's journal is held by the Mitchell Library in Sydney, Aus-

tralia, and copies of the handwritten journals are available on microfilm at the British Columbia Archives and at the University of British Columbia Library. Together, the journals of Richards, Mayne and Gowlland give us a balanced and complete version of one of the most significant survey expeditions on Vancouver Island.

The publication of the *The Private Journal of Captain G.H. Richards: The Vancouver Island Survey (1860–1862)* is long overdue. It is intended to recognize Richards' official accomplishments as well as the personal qualities of balance, tolerance, integrity and perseverance that are his legacy to British Columbia.

— Linda Dorricott & Deidre Cullon  
Nanaimo, 2012

# Introduction

Anyone who has sailed the coastal waters of Vancouver Island is familiar with Pender Island, Mayne Island, Gowlland Harbour, Bull Passage, Browning Inlet, Blunden Harbour, Bedwell Harbour and Mount Moriarty. What they are less likely to know is that these geographical and nautical features have one thing in common: they are all named for the officers and seamen of the Royal Navy who served under Captain George Henry Richards between 1857 and 1862 on two naval survey ships, the H.M.S. *Plumper* and the H.M.S. *Hecate*.<sup>1</sup> In these few years they sounded, sailed and charted the entire coastline of Vancouver Island and much of the mainland coast of British Columbia, creating the baseline information for the nautical charts that we use today. Every ship that sails these treacherous waters and finds safe harbour owes a debt of gratitude to Captain Richards and his crew.

Much has been written about the men who mapped the lands and waters

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<sup>1</sup> Plumper Pass, Plumper Sound and Hecate Strait take their names from these two survey ships.

of what is now the province of British Columbia. Numerous books, articles and journals describe the lives and exploits of such men as Captain George Vancouver, Colonel Richard Clement Moody of the Royal Engineers, Colonial Surveyor Joseph Despard Pemberton, Robert Brown of the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition and George Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada. But little is known of Captain George Henry Richards and the role he played in the early development of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia.

Never the focus of any major published work, Richards and his significant contribution as a surveyor and chart maker have not been widely recognized. Andrew S. Cook provides the most comprehensive overview of Richards as a surveyor and chartmaker.<sup>2</sup> Historian Barry Gough situates him in the context of the naval history of the West Coast, describing his role in the British American boundary dispute and in law enforcement on the Fraser River and along the inside passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland.<sup>3</sup> Richards' ships and officers also make appearances in G.P.V. and Helen B. Akrigg's *British Columbia Chronicle, 1847–1871*.<sup>4</sup>

Captain John T. Walbran frequently refers to Captain Richards in his comprehensive *British Columbia Coast Names, 1592–1906*. Although Captain George Vancouver was responsible for naming the major land and water features of Vancouver Island, including many of the names given by

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<sup>2</sup> See Cook's *The Publication of British Admiralty Charts for British Columbia in the Nineteenth Century*. A comprehensive account of Richards' survey expedition can also be found in *Charting the Northwest Coast: 1857–1862*, an unpublished master's thesis by Richard William Wallace.

<sup>3</sup> See Gough's *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1810–1914 and Gunboat Frontier*.

<sup>4</sup> The Akriggs obtained a copy of Richards' journal and his letterbook to the Hydrographer in the early 1970s. Helen Akrigg also references the Channer Collection in her entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, stating that the collection "remains in private hands in England. The author was permitted to consult these papers but is not at liberty to disclose their location." There has been a certain amount of secrecy surrounding these documents and a reluctance on the part of researchers to share them. In fact, photocopies of the journal and letterbook are in the Akrigg Papers at the Archives of the University of British Columbia Library. A typescript of the journal prepared under the Akriggs' supervision is available at the Vancouver Maritime Museum. According to Donal Channer and Guy Hannaford, archivist at the UKHO, no copies have been deposited in British archives.

such Spanish explorers as Dionisio Alcalá Galiano, Cayetano Valdés and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, Richards, charting in much greater detail, provided the nomenclature for the majority of the smaller features: islets, small bays, inlets and harbours, points and rocks. He also adopted native names whenever possible, particularly on the west coast of the Island: among them are Quatsino, Klaskish, Kyuquot, and Ahousat (Sandilands 1983: 3).

From the time of his arrival on Vancouver Island in November 1857 to his departure for England in December 1862, Richards reported to three masters: his commanding officers, the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island and the Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty. His duty to each resulted in a large body of reports and correspondence.

His reporting letters to his superior officers, the commanders-in-chief of the Pacific Station, Rear Admiral Sir Robert Lambert Baynes (1857–60) and Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Maitland (1860–62) are mainly concerned with naval matters and questions of military security on the Fraser River and in Georgia, Johnstone and Queen Charlotte straits.

His correspondence with Governor James Douglas and his administrative assistant, Colonial Secretary William Young, illustrates the wider range of duties imposed on him by the colonial government and is a rich source of information on the early infrastructure of the two colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. Richards wrote lengthy reports and proposals on harbours, lighthouses and buoys and made recommendations for agricultural settlement lands and government reserves, including military and Indian Reserves. The colonial correspondence also provides early information on timber, minerals and other natural resources as well as details of overland expeditions made by his crew on the mainland and across Vancouver Island.

Richards' correspondence with Rear Admiral John Washington, hydrographer of the navy, provides the most complete record of Richards' sojourn on Vancouver Island. Then, as now, the Hydrographic Office was responsible for the production and publication of charts for the Royal Navy. The letterbook held in the Channer Collection is a fair copy of the correspondence from Richards to Washington from 1857–1862. Washington's instructions provide the framework for all of Richards' activities, and his reporting letters detail the progress of the survey and chart-making work.

Until now, these official sources have formed the basis of the information in the published record. The publication of the journal reveals the man behind the official reports and breathes life into a little-known period in the history of Vancouver Island.

#### AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

Born in 1819<sup>5</sup> to Captain George Spencer Richards in Antony, on the coast of Cornwall, George Henry Richards entered the navy at the age of thirteen. At fifteen he was appointed to his first surveying duty in the Pacific on the *Sulphur* under the command of Sir Henry Belcher. Richards' first visit to Nootka Sound on the *Sulphur* in 1837, and his encounter with Chief Maquinna, made a lasting impression on the young midshipman, exciting an interest and a respect for the aboriginal inhabitants of Vancouver Island that is displayed throughout the pages of his journal. It is fortunate that among his other accomplishments, Richards was a careful observer and, from an early age, a journal keeper. According to Donal Channer, Richards' earliest journal starts in August 1838 and runs to April 1840. In it "Richards describes a visit to San Francisco, his first command surveying in the pin-nace *Victoria* 'under my own pennant' and he ends by remarking that he is going to find more paper to make another book in which to 'write more nonsense for the amusement and edification of God Knows Who'" (Channer 2008, personal communication).

Richards' early career combined active military service as well as surveying duty and he distinguished himself in both services. He was a natural leader: brave and clearheaded in battle and conscientious and driven to excellence as a surveyor. The official biographies are full of references to his bravery, his zeal and his exemplary conduct. He saw active duty during the first Opium War with China in 1839, and as second lieutenant and assistant surveyor on the *Philomel*, he surveyed the Falkland Islands and the southeast coast of South America. In 1845 he was appointed to commander after leading his men in military action against the Republic of Buenos Aires.

Sir Edward Belcher, a captain known to be "exacting and difficult to

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<sup>5</sup> Although most official biographies give 1820 as Richards' year of birth, the editors have presumed that the baptismal date of February 27, 1819, in Akrigg's biographical note is more accurate (Akrigg, 2000).