

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

AREA AND BOUNDARIES.

THE state of Western Australia, as its name implies, occupies the western portion of the Australian continent, and is by far the largest of the states, containing within its confines an area of no less than 975,920 square miles. On its eastern boundary it is separated from South Australia by the 129th meridian; the Indian Ocean washes its northern and western shores; and the southern boundary is formed by the Great Southern Ocean. The greatest length of the territory, from Cape Londonderry on the north to Peak Head on the south, is 1,480 miles, and the greatest breadth, from Steep Point on the west to the meridian on the east, is about 1,000 miles.

COASTAL FEATURES.

With the exception of that portion to the northward of the 18th parallel, the coast line of Western Australia is singularly regular and unbroken, so that the total estimated length, 5,200 miles, is small when compared with the area of the state. On the southern coast, a long unbroken rampart of limestone cliffs stretches from Eucla, on the eastern boundary, round the western horn of the Great Australian Bight to Cape Arid. No river or creek pierces these frowning precipices, nor is there refuge of any kind for the storm-beaten vessel. Westward from Cape Arid, Esperance Bay and Doubtful Island Bay afford safe anchorage, but they are difficult of access during the prevalence of certain winds. King George's Sound is one of the most important inlets on the south coast. The entrance is between two bluff headlands, named respectively Cape Vancouver and Bald Head, and the harbour, which extends inland for some 10 miles, is well sheltered from all but south-westerly gales. An inner sheet of water, called Oyster Bay, is connected by a narrow channel with the Sound. Three miles southward another break in the shore line of the Sound leads into Princess Royal Harbour, on the northern shore of which the town of Albany is located—once an important place of call for the mail steamers. Situated as it is, the Sound is an important strategic naval position, and this fact has been recognised by the authorities, who have taken steps to fortify it. The country round the shores of the Sound is celebrated for the variety and profusion of the

wild flowers flourishing there, amongst which the sweet-scented boronia is especially remarkable. From King George's Sound round to Cape Leeuwin the coast is fringed by rugged granitic masses, and is broken by several small streams flowing into the sea. Cape Leeuwin is situated in the south-western corner of the continent, where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet, and is a prominent landmark for vessels voyaging to Australia. On calm, bright days the view from the lighthouse on the point, 700 feet above the sea, discloses enchanting vistas of Hamelin Bay, the mouth of the Blackwood River, and numerous islets and reefs flashing gaily in the sunlight; but when the wind blows strongly from the west, the Lioness quivers as the thunderous waves dash at her feet, while the swirling spray is borne by the blasts for a long distance inland. Passing the Leeuwin, and sailing northwards, the next important point is Cape Naturaliste, at the entrance to Geographe Bay, on the shores of which stands the town of Busselton, the outlet of a thriving timber and dairying district. Leaving Cape Bouvard, 40 miles to the south of Perth, the low, scrub-covered Garden Island, sheltering Cockburn Sound, comes into view. Near by is Rottnest Island, on which the Governor's marine residence is situated, and the site also of a native prison. Between the two islands, vessels from the south approach the port of Fremantle on the Swan River. Two hundred miles further up the coast is the port of Geraldton, off which lie the dangerous Houtman's Abrolhos, the scene of many a wreck when the Dutch vessels in times gone by were wont to visit this portion of the continent. The Abrolhos have for ages been the resort of countless numbers of sea fowl, and rich deposits of guano are obtained on several of the islands in the group. Shark's Bay is an extensive inlet in latitude 26°, Dirk Hartog Island lying to the westward. Valuable deposits of pearlshell have been obtained from the shallow banks in this bay. Steep Point, on the west, is the most westerly point of the continent. North of this bay is situated Exmouth Gulf, a capacious inlet, with North-west Cape at its outer extremity. From the Leeuwin up to this point, the shore-line has had a north-westerly sweep, but from this onward the general trend is to the north-east. Cossack Harbour is the port of the magnificent pastoral district known as the "Nor' West," lying between the Ashburton and De Grey Rivers. Higher up is Roebuck Bay, on which the township of Broome is situated. King Sound is an extensive indentation, on the western extremity of which is situated the important headland of Cape Leveque. The inlet is the centre of the shipping trade of the great West Kimberley district, and the harbour offers excellent facilities for shipping. At the entrance to the Sound is the cluster of rocky islets known as the Buccaneer Archipelago. Between King Sound and Cambridge Gulf, the coast is deeply indented, the principal inlets being Collier Bay, Brunswick Sound, York Sound, Montague Sound, and Admiralty Gulf. Cambridge Gulf is a fine inlet, offering excellent anchorage for vessels of every class. The township of Wyndham, at

the head of the gulf, is the business centre of the whole of the East Kimberley district, and is the north-eastern terminus of the West Australian system of telegraphs. A large volume of trade is carried on with the southern ports, and also with Port Darwin, in the northern territory of South Australia. Numerous islands lie off the coast between King Sound and the Gulf, the most important being Augustus Island, near Camden Sound, and Bigge Island, north of York Sound. None of these islands has been very carefully examined, but they appear to be of the same rugged sandstone formation as the adjoining coast. Dampier's Archipelago, Barrow Island, and numerous others lie north-east of the North-west Cape. They are chiefly of granite formation, and some of them are well-grassed.

GENERAL PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

The whole of the interior of Western Australia, embracing the country between the 19th and 31st parallels of latitude, and 121st and 129th meridians of longitude, consists of a vast tableland between one and two thousand feet above the level of the sea. Of this immense stretch of territory, the greater portion consists of sand dunes and stony ridges, with here and there areas of clayey soil. Except in connection with the development of its mineral resources, it is believed that little of this portion of the state will ever be available for settlement. The lakes found in this district, except in periods of heavy rainfall, are merely salt marshes of greater or less extent, and sometimes become dry clay-pans. North of the 19th parallel the country consists of alternately high and low-lying expanses of tableland, intersected by several ranges of mountains. The Kimberley portion of this district contains several fine rivers. Much of the south-western and southern sea boards is of a flat, sandy character, and is covered in parts with vast forests, containing jarrah, karri, white and red gum, and many other timbers of great commercial value. In the limestone region north of the Great Australian Bight there are some fine stretches of grass country, needing only a permanent water supply to make them rank amongst the productive divisions of the state.

As previously stated, there are no streams of much importance flowing into the Southern Ocean; indeed, on the shores of the Bight there is a stretch of country, 300 miles in length, unpierced by any watercourse. The Blackwood, Warren, Kalgan, and Phillips enter the sea west of the Bight, towards Cape Leeuwin, some magnificent forest country being found in the basin of these streams. Flowing into the Indian Ocean, on the west coast, are the Preston, Collie, Swan, Greenough, Murchison, and Gascoyne. The Swan, upon which Perth, the capital of the State, is situated, receives the name of Avon above the tidal waters. On the north-west are the Ashburton, Oakover, Fortescue, and Fitzroy. The Kimberley district is watered by the Fitzroy, Ord, Pentecost, Durack, Drysdale, &c. Pastoral occupation is rapidly

spreading in the districts traversed by these streams, while the rich auriferous discoveries have also conferred an added importance on the territory.

In the southern portion of the State the Stirling Range, situated about 40 miles to the north-east of Albany, attains its highest elevation in Mount Toolbrunup, which reaches an altitude of about 3,000 feet. The range possesses a certain grandeur from the fact of its being perfectly isolated and rising abruptly from a level plain. In the south-western district the Darling Range runs north and south from Yatheroo to Point D'Entrecasteaux on the south coast. From its proximity to the western seaboard, this range exercises a great influence over the climate of the State in its most populous area. The highest point is Mount William, 1,700 feet in altitude, situated in the Murray district. Between the Fortescue and Ashburton Rivers is the Hamersley Range, in which Mount Bruce rises to a height of 3,800 feet, and is supposed to be the loftiest peak in the State. In the Kimberley district is situated the Princess May Range, running in an easterly direction from York Sound, the highest point in which, called Mount York, is probably 3,000 feet high. Mount Hann, in the same range, reaches an elevation of 2,000 feet. The King Leopold Range stretches south-easterly from Collier Bay, but no point in the chain exceeds an elevation of 2,400 feet. In the south-western district, between Cape Naturaliste and the Leeuwin, an interesting series of limestone caves is found in undulating country at a distance of from 1 to 3 miles from the coast. For beauty and picturesqueness these caves rival those in the Jenolan district of New South Wales, and in some respects are unsurpassed anywhere in the world.