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This is the author’s preprint version of this article.
Scratch an Australian and you’ll usually find a Matthew Flinders fan – certainly most of us have at least heard of him and a surprising number of people will claim him as a personal hero. The situation is quite different in his native country, and both these books have been written with the aim of correcting this deplorable state of affairs.

Peter Ashley is a retired British naval officer who has become a self-confessed ‘Flindersphile’. *The Indomitable Captain Matthew Flinders, Royal Navy* is Ashley’s masters thesis, and in it he is, as is required by the genre, concerned to present an argument and prove a point. His hypothesis is that Flinders’ actions at three critical times of his life amounted to a ‘courtship with failure’, though he finally acknowledges that this is a little too neat to fit the facts. Much is made of the gonorrhoea Flinders contracted in Tahiti. In fact, his behaviour was typical of a healthy eighteen-year-old, and anyway it was the primitive treatment rather than the disease itself that was likely to have caused his long-term illness and early death. The unsoundness of the *Investigator* is described with convincing naval knowhow, but all the legends of the famous meeting with Decaen are treated as established facts even though no unbiased account survives. However, Ashley the naval officer gives a compelling assessment of Flinders’ ‘superb’ ability as a navigator.
Marion Body’s interest in Flinders sprang from a friendship with his great-grand-daughter Ann Flinders Petrie. *The Fever of Discovery* is a straightforward biography, shorter and less detailed than Miriam Estensen’s *Life*, aimed at introducing him to an English audience. She writes sympathetically, covering all the major phases of his short, eventful life, and including for good measure the full text of his tribute to his cat Trim, without mentioning that it has been published already.

Both books would benefit from some editorial assistance, to shape and sharpen the prose and to correct errors: particularly distracting is Body’s repetition of *Bellepheron* for *Bellerophon*. Ashley’s book is replete with supporting matter – notes, appendices and illustrations occupy nearly half the 86 pages – while Body’s has no bibliographical references at all, either to her sources or to further reading. It’s not intended as a scholarly work, but some guidance for readers whose interest has been aroused would surely be in the spirit of her undertaking.