Test Your Expedition Party
Stuart’s expedition was successful because of his experience, careful planning, discipline, bush skills and persistence. However, he laid down strict rules for his party. If your ‘expedition party’ would like to travel by Stuart’s rules, first nominate two officers - Exploration Leader and Stock Control Officer - and some expeditioners. Here are the rules:

Rules Enforced by Supply Control Officer
- Nothing to be taken out of bags without the Stock Control Officer’s knowledge.
- When anything is removed from a pack it is to be packed up in the same manner as it was found.
- Each pair of bags to be of equal weight.
- Breakfast to be ready at the same time for which an ½ hour will be allowed.
- Riding horses saddled first and everything belonging to them placed on the saddles.
- When on the march, no water is to be used from the canteens without permission from the leader.

Rules Enforced by Expedition Leader
- Officers to see that orders to be promptly and willingly obeyed. Any disobedience, disagreement or neglect of duty must at once be reported to the Leader.
- The officers will ensure that every man does an equal share of work.
- No horses are to be abused, kicked, or struck about the head.
- Everyone must be up at break of day, the bedclothes etc to be done up and put into their proper places.
- Horses brought in and unhobbled.
- No one is to leave the camp or on the march without arms and ammunition.
- No one is to fire on natives without the leaders knowledge (or his Officer-in-charge).
- When leaving the camp no one is to go without arms and ammunition.
- No one is to be sat upon (except the Naturalist).
- No journal to be kept or notes taken (except the Naturalist).
- Saddles are not to be sat upon (except when on a horse).
- Anyone detached on special duty from camp or on the march must report himself on his return.

Rules Enforced by Exploration Officer
- No one is to leave the line of march without the leaders knowledge (or his Officer-in-charge).
- When leaving the camp no one is to go without arms and ammunition.
- No one is to report himself on his return.
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An Epic Journey
Stuart's last expedition party was larger than his previous parties. It consisted of 72 horses and 10 men: Stuart (Commander), William Kelkew (2nd in Command), Francis Thring (3rd Officer, Cadet Surveyor), William Auld (Assistant), Stephen King Jnr, John Billiat, James Frew Jnr, Heath Nash, John McGregor (Shoeing Smith), Frederick Waterhouse (Government Naturalist).

They officially left North Adelaide on 25th October 1861. When they reached the previous camp at Newcastler Water where they rested the horses for a week before attempting to cross Stuart's Plains. Stuart scouted ahead finding waterholes, creeks, springs and rivers, which he named after his exploration party. As they neared the coast they followed what we now know as the Mary River, camped near what is now Mistake Billabong and Shady Camp. Then, via a similar route to today's Pt Stuart 4WD track, they reached the northern coastal floodplains.

'The sea has been reached'
On 24th July 1862, Stuart rode ahead on the coastal plains, he could hear the sea. The rest of the party crossed the plains and entered the thick monsoon vine forest. The party continued onto the beach and were...glad and delighted to behold the water of the Indian Ocean in Van Diemen Gulf.' Stuart dipped his feet then washed his face and hands in the sea.

The Return Journey
Stuart was very ill, suffering terribly from the effects of scurvy, and secretly doubted he could survive the return journey. Auld took observations for him, because Stuart had lost the use of his hand. As the journey continued, Stuart lost the ability to ride, so, in a stretcher made by McGregor, the men carried Stuart between two horses for the last 576 miles (960 km). Their care saved his life. After 5 months they returned, on 17th December 1862.

December 1862
As an expedition leader, Stuart had travelled over 12,000 miles (about 20,000 km) in just over 4 years, usually under harsh conditions, with limited rations and little or poor water.

Adelaide's Biggest Celebration
On 21st January 1863 Stuart and his expedition party and its 48 remaining horses were cheered down King William Street, and the people of Adelaide witnessed the biggest celebration of the town’s 26 years. Sadly, on the same day Victorians stood in silent tribute as the remains of Burke and Wills were laid to rest. Stuart received the £2,000 reward for reaching the coast, but his expedition ruined his health. He returned to Britain where his achievements meant little. He died in London on 5th June 1866 aged 50, and was buried at Kensal Green.

Stuart’s Great Northern Exploring Expedition across the Continent: October 1861 - July 1862

Reflections on a Great Man...nothing touches one more than the remembrance of the deeds of a truly brave man. We had the honour of having served one.' Auld, Expedition Member

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