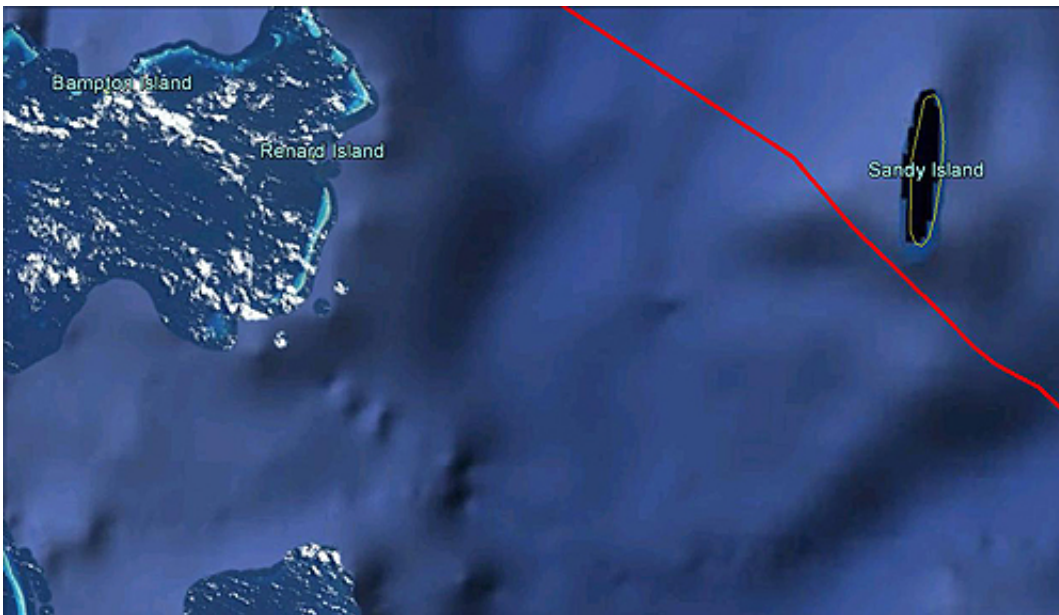


# Missing Pacific island riddle solved, researcher says

December 3 2012

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The supposed 'Sandy Island' as seen on Google Earth.

A New Zealand researcher Monday claimed to have solved the riddle of a [mystery South Pacific island shown on Google Earth and world maps which does not exist](#), blaming a whaling ship from 1876.

The phantom landmass in the [Coral Sea](#) is shown as Sandy Island on Google Earth and Google maps and is supposedly midway between Australia and the French-governed New Caledonia.

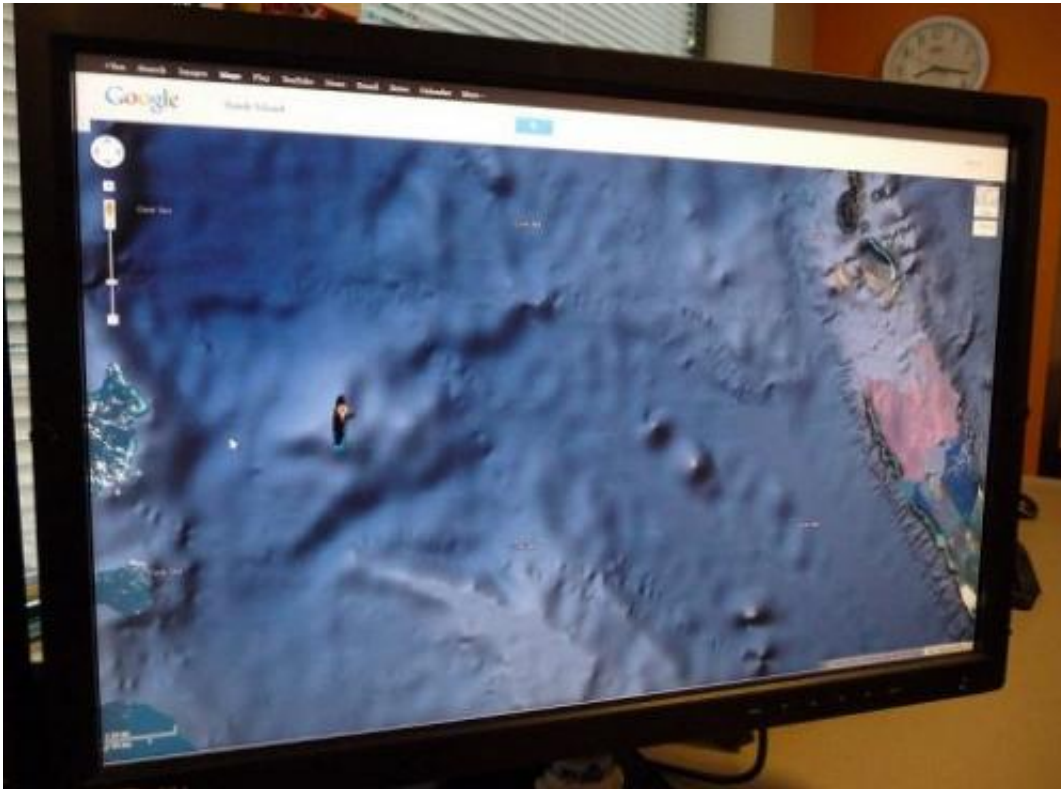
The Times Atlas of the World appears to identify it as Sable Island, but according to [Australian scientists](#) who went searching last month during a geological expedition it could not be found.

Intrigued, Shaun Higgins, a researcher at Auckland Museum, started investigating and claimed it never existed, with a whaling ship the source of the original error.

"As far as I can tell, the island was recorded by the whaling ship the Velocity," Higgins told ABC radio, adding that the ship's master reported a series of "heavy breakers" and some "sandy islets".

"My supposition is that they simply recorded a hazard at the time. They might have recorded a low-lying reef or thought they saw a reef. They could have been in the wrong place. There is all number of possibilities," he said.

"But what we do have is a dotted shape on the map that's been recorded at that time and it appears it's simply been copied over time."



This November 22, 2012 photo illustration shows a computer screen displaying the Google Maps location of Sandy Island, which Australian scientists said last month did not exist. It now appears to have been removed from Google Maps.

News of the invisible island sparked debate on social media at the time, with tweeters pointing out that Sandy Island was also on Yahoo Maps as well as Bing Maps.

On abovetopsecret.com, discussions were robust with one poster claiming he had confirmed with the French hydrographic office that it was indeed a phantom island and was supposed to have been removed from charts in 1979.

[Google](#) told AFP last month it always welcomed feedback on maps and "continuously explore(s) ways to integrate new information from our

users and authoritative partners into [Google Maps](#)".

It appears that Sandy Island has now been taken off its [map](#).

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