

Charting the Voyage of THE ENDEAVOUR JOURNAL

The sale of the *Endeavour* journal in 1923 attracted buyers from around the world. Annette Healy charts the unusual course of this precious manuscript from the hands of Captain James Cook to the National Library's strongroom

On 21 March 1923 a manuscript described as having 'unrivalled interest in the history of Australian discovery' was auctioned at Sotheby's in London. The manuscript was the *Endeavour* journal, Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook's diary of his first Pacific voyage (1768-71) aboard HM Bark *Endeavour*, during which he circumnavigated New Zealand and charted the east coast of Australia. The sale of the manuscript attracted buyers from around the world, but it was sold for £5000 to the Australian Government. Four copies of the manuscript were held in Australia and England, but Cook's original handwritten journal had been missing for over 140 years.

The *Endeavour* journal now resides in the National Library of Australia. The Library's most famous manuscript, it is an account of a voyage that resulted in the European colonisation of Australia and



New Zealand. Cook's words provide us with an eyewitness account of the landing in Botany Bay, the claiming of the east coast as New South Wales for England, and interaction with the Aboriginal people.

The voyage of the *Endeavour* generated great excitement in the eighteenth century, and continues to fascinate today. Every year hundreds of visitors come to the National Library in the hope of seeing 'Cook's journal'.

All British naval officers in the eighteenth century were required to keep journals. These journals were to be sent back to the Admiralty via ships returning to England, providing important information for navigators and mapmakers. Like a black box recorder on an aircraft, they would also let the Admiralty know the events of a voyage if a ship failed to return.

Cook's journal was kept from 12 May 1768 to 12 July 1771. It records the truly remarkable events of the scientific voyage of discovery aboard the HM Bark *Endeavour*.

The voyage of the *Endeavour* had several purposes. The Royal Society wanted to carry out observations of the transit of Venus across the sun, due to occur in Tahiti in June 1769. These observations would help to determine the distance between the earth and sun. The Admiralty wanted to search for the 'Terra Australis Incognita', the great southern land that geographers believed balanced the weight of the world's northern continents. Australia, then known as New Holland, was not considered the 'Terra Australis Incognita'. It was clearly marked on world maps, though the east coast remained uncharted.

John Chapman, fl.1792-1823
Captain Cook
colour engraving; plate mark
16.2 x 11.3 cm
Rex Nan Kivell Collection;
from the Pictorial Collection



E.G. Temple
Landing of Captain Cook in New Zealand,
1769

watercolour; 60 x 101 cm
Rex Nan Kivell Collection;
from the Pictorial Collection

(right) Antoine Cardon, 1772-1813
The Right Honourable Sir Joseph Banks,
Bart, KB, 1810

hand-coloured stipple engraving;
38.5 x 30.2 cm
Rex Nan Kivell Collection;
from the Pictorial Collection

north making a running survey of the coastline, taking soundings and describing landmarks. On 29 April the *Endeavour* landed at Botany Bay. Cook saw 'Several of the natives and a few huts, Men, women and children on the south shore abreast of the Ship, to which place I went in the

boats in hopes of speaking with them ... neither us nor Tupia [a Tahitian high priest aboard the *Endeavour*] could understand one word they said'. All fled except for two men who opposed the landing with stones and spears. Cook twice fired a musket loaded with shot to frighten them

Cook was accompanied on the voyage by the naturalist Joseph Banks, a Fellow of the Royal Society. Banks invested £10 000 of his own money into the expedition, employing an eight-man team of artists, scientists and servants.

The *Endeavour* sailed from Plymouth on 25 August 1768. Observations in Tahiti were completed by August 1769. Cook then sailed south in search of the southern continent, but finding only ocean turned west to New Zealand. In six months Cook charted both islands, proving they were not part of a southern continent. In March 1770 Cook decided to sail up the uncharted east coast of New Holland and investigate the Torres Strait before returning to England via Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia).

The east coast of New Holland was sighted on 19 April 1770. Cook sailed



away, striking one man in the leg. The man did not run, but picked up a shield to defend himself. 'Emmediatly after this,' wrote Cook, 'we landed.' Another musket shot was fired and the men retreated.

The *Endeavour* remained at Botany Bay for just over a week. Cook took only a day to 'sound and explore the Bay, in the doing of which I saw several of the natives but they all fled at my approach'. The next day '16 or 18 of them came boldly up to within 100 yards of our people at the watering place and there made a stand'. The Aboriginal people showed no interest in the beads and other items offered by Cook and his crew. 'All they seem'd to want was for us to be gone,' wrote Cook.

At 11 pm on the night of 11 June the *Endeavour* ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef, just north of Cape Tribulation. This unexpected event led to the establishment of communication with the Aboriginal people, as the *Endeavour* was beached for repairs for seven weeks at the site of present-day Cooktown, on the Endeavour River.

On 10 July four men approached the *Endeavour* in a canoe. Cook wrote that their bodies were painted with red and white stripes and 'their features were far from being disagreeable, the Voices were soft and tunable and they could easily repeat many words after us, but neither us nor Tupia could understand one word they said'. They showed no fear, visiting the ship several times, becoming 'more familiar than ever'. These encounters enabled Cook to record the first English word list of an Aboriginal language.

He concluded that the Aborigines he met were 'far more happier than we Europeans ... they live in a Tranquility which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Condition: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all the things necessary for life'. On 22 August

1770 Cook landed on Possession Island in Torres Strait and claimed the whole of the east coast as New South Wales in the name of King George III.

The *Endeavour* returned to England on 12 July 1771. Here Cook presented a copy of his journal to the Admiralty and another copy to King George III. Another copy had been sent from Batavia en route to England.

Cook's arrival in England is of great historical significance. He had cast serious doubt on the existence of the 'Terra Australis Incognita'. Due to a strict insistence on fresh food,

none of his crew had died from scurvy. He had correctly calculated longitude, the first navigator to do so. The scientists returned with hundreds of preserved specimens of unknown species of plants and animals. There were curious artefacts, and hundreds of drawings of the strange plants, places and peoples of the Pacific.

A copy of Cook's journal was incorporated with those of Banks and earlier explorers in a collection edited by John Hawkesworth. First published in 1773, it was an international bestseller. But Cook was not happy with the changes that Hawkesworth had made.



Providence Presiding Over the Globe 6. Britannia Recommending to Our English Youth the Study of Navigation (London: Langley and Belch, 1809)
Rex Nan Kivell Collection;
from the Pictorial Collection



He entrusted the journal of his second voyage to friends, asking them to tell his story.

The *Endeavour* journal disappeared soon after Cook's death in 1779, and was believed lost until 1922. Even when the journal was offered at auction in 1923, its owners, the Bolckow family of Yorkshire, could offer no explanation. The journal had been in the family's library 'for upward of 50 years, having been purchased by the late Mr Bolckow's uncle, but from whom and in what circumstances is unknown'. It was not until 1955 that an authoritative edition of Cook's journal was published, from the National Library's manuscript, edited by New Zealand scholar Dr John Cawte Beaglehole (*The Voyage of the Endeavour 1768-1771*. Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, Cambridge University Press, 1955-74).

Dr Beaglehole solved the mystery of the missing journal. He discovered that Cook's wife, Elizabeth, gave the journal and other papers to members of her family, who sold them at auction in 1868. The collection was purchased by the Bolckow family, who again offered it for auction in 1923.

Today the original journal is safely housed in the National Library's strongroom, protected from extremes of light and temperature. In 1972 the

The fragile nature of the *Endeavour* journal (pictured left) has meant that it is not possible for it to be on permanent display in the Library, but computer technology is allowing greater access to the journal than ever before

A handwriting expert verified that the journal was in Cook's own hand

journal was sent to England for preservation treatment and rebinding by Cambridge bookbinder Sydney Cockerell. The journal, which is a series of loose folio pages bound together, was found to be in excellent condition. Cockerell replaced the journal's original dark green leather binding with a cover of English oak and pigskin. The pages of the journal, made from cotton rag, were deacidified and treated with barium hydroxide and soluble nylon before being photographed and rebound. A handwriting expert verified that the journal was in Cook's own hand.

The journal returned to Canberra in 1975. The National Library could now offer access to it through photocopies, photographs and

microfilms, in addition to the volume produced by Beaglehole. The fragile nature of the manuscript has meant that it is not possible for it to be on permanent display in the Library, but computer technology is allowing greater access to the journal than ever before.

The National Library is putting the eighteenth century bestseller on CD-ROM for publication early in 1997. The CD will contain the manuscript and a transcript, a time-line displaying the major events of each month, including a map of the route travelled. To enhance understanding of the journal, the CD will also explore the historical context of the voyage.

Visitors to the National Library can view the development of the project through a multimedia kiosk operating in the Visitor Centre. After a century of confusion, the legacy of Hawkesworth and the mystery of the missing journal may finally be overcome. It seems that Captain James Cook could be assured that his journal is in the hands of friends who are eager to tell his story.

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