

Sailing with Cook: Inside the Private Journal of James Burney RN

By Suzanne Rickard

Sailing with Cook: Inside the Private Journal of James Burney RN follows the young James Burney's experience of shipboard life and the momentous events that took place during the second voyage of exploration when he sailed with Captain James Cook on the *Resolution* and then on the *Adventure* between 1772 and 1773.

Under the command of Captain Cook and Captain Tobias Furneaux on the *Adventure*, Burney crossed the Antarctic Circle, he was one of the first Englishmen to walk on Tasmania's southern beaches, he endured raging seas and icy weather, he sailed to New Zealand's South Island and into its beautiful sounds, and then he sailed further north to explore the tropical waters of the islands and atolls of Polynesia.

This book features facsimile pages extracted from the private journal and is beautifully illustrated with maps, portraits, contemporary documents and artefacts.

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Sailing with Cook

INSIDE THE PRIVATE JOURNAL OF JAMES BURNEY RN

SUZANNE RICKARD
FOREWORD BY PETER COCHRANE



An example of Burney's musical notations from his private journal.

literary connections and social milieu, it would not have escaped Burney's thinking that, at a later date, such contemporary observations might be worth a publisher's attention. He may well have contemplated using his journal for a future publication, but his stated intention was to write a separate account for family and friends, hoping that as such it might fall outside Admiralty orders. But Burney could not have misconstrued the implications of keeping a private journal. The Admiralty's 'Secret Instructions for Capt Cook' of 25 June 1772 (see MS2, National Library of Australia), were patently clear and applied to all. Cook was instructed that on his return to England he was:

to Send to our Secretary, for our information, Accounts of your proceedings & copies of the Surveys and Drawings you shall have made. And upon your arrival in England you are to immediately repair to this Office in order to lay before us a full account of your Proceedings in the whole course of your Voyage; taking care before you leave the Sloop to Demand from the Officers & Petty Officers the Log Books & Journals they may have kept & seal them up for our inspection, and enjoining Them & the whole Crew, not to divulge where they have been to, until they shall have permission to do so.

Burney's off-the-record journal remained private and close to him throughout the voyage, as he was well aware that it could be commandeered at the journey's end. He made this clear in an entry he wrote on 9 March 1773: 'The 2 next days I shall write the Ships Log on one Side & my

own remarks on the other—the Log can be no kind of Entertainment to you, but may be of use to me in case my Journal is not returned me'.⁴

Both the *Resolution* and the *Adventure* were crowded vessels with few opportunities for solitude or privacy, thus he made limited references to other officers or crew members, or to his captains, Cook and Furneaux. There are almost no remarks about individuals' characteristics, and there is here a sense of personal distance. Burney made no mention of trusted friendships on board, yet he made friends with ease and kept them. Burney's writing suggests that he was never quite off guard. This explains to an extent why his remarks were often somewhat circumspect and we rarely read a completely unguarded or 'unbuttoned' Burney. But when he was particularly struck by significant events, he became more expansive on paper.

Even at a relatively young age, Burney was intent on exploring his talents. Like all Englishmen of his day, Burney was inspired by Cook, whom he was fortunate to first meet in 1771. As a young sailor, he was similarly inspired by those British, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch navigators and explorers who had gone before him. Burney would come to hold the Dutch explorer, Abel Janszoon Tasman, in highest regard.

Fortunately, Burney's journal was not called in, nor was it ever surrendered to the Admiralty. It stayed within the family circle for their admiration and Burney's later reflection.

THE PRIVATE JOURNAL ON VIEW

The private journal is a slim and unassuming volume of 35 full folio sheets, folded in half and hand-sewn to make a spine. The written pages are contained within a marbled soft board cover, with no external embellishment. It was very much a working document.

Burney did not use all the sheets and some are only half-filled. A few pages appear to have been cut out towards the journal's end. His writing is confident and legible, with very few flourishes, although his spelling is inconsistent. Capital letters spring up here and there, and his punctuation is slightly erratic. He used more dashes than full stops, although this form was not unusual for the times. Burney hatched over certain words and crossed out some lines, and made a few ink and charcoal blots on his copy. He may have intended to reorganise or rewrite certain passages later and, on occasions, he recorded several days' events under one entry.

The journal is sprinkled with a characteristic abbreviation of *memorandum*, which Burney recorded as 'Mem.', or occasionally as 'Mem^d' or 'Mem^{dms}'. The short form suggests snatched moments when, having completed his deck work and writing of the official daily log, he had time to write his own journal and reflect on events. He was as methodical as time permitted, and it is obvious that he tried to keep a chronological scheme to his notes. But events often intervened and when caught in mid-thought as an image returned to his mind, or as he recalled something he wanted to capture in more detail, he jotted down a quick heading, assuming he would expand later.



Burney's private journal is held by the National Library of Australia.

Against some of these 'Mem^{dms}', as he called them, Burney occasionally made a hurried note but more often managed only a brief line. The memoranda point directly to what intrigued him at the time and what he thought important to secure in his memory.

The journal is concise and Burney wrote with a distinctive and practical style. While brief and impersonal in some passages, elsewhere he is highly engaged and detailed, particularly when relating his encounters with unfamiliar people. Burney was interested in everything he saw, although regular duties, as well as fatigue or boredom, occasionally took a toll on the quality of his writing.

Burney copied Tasman's chart of Van Diemen's Land from Harris'

Collection of Voyages into his journal.⁵ Later, en route, he produced his own chart of Adventure Bay on Tasmania's south-east coast, a chart of Tasmania's east coast, a land profile of Cape Barren on Tasmania's north-east coast and a chart of Vaitepiha Bay in Tahiti. In New Zealand and Tonga, he also jotted down some important musical notations, probably intending these for his father's amusement.

Burney began writing his journal on 22 June 1772, and he ceased abruptly on 22 December 1773, while the *Adventure* was still anchored in Ship Cove in Queen Charlotte Sound, on the northern tip of New Zealand's South Island. Four days earlier, Burney had discovered the cannibalised remains of ten of his shipmates while leading a search party to look for the missing crewmen. This

horrifying experience deeply shocked Burney and the rest of the ship's company. The tragedy greatly affected his desire and ability to write any further journal entries in the *Adventure*.

BURNNEY'S PRIVATE JOURNAL AND ITS JOURNEY TO THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

In October 1921, Francis Edwards, the English rare bookseller, wrote to John Alexander Ferguson (1881–1969) in Sydney. Ferguson was a specialist collector of works relating to voyages of exploration, Australian history, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Seas. Edwards informed him that he had secured 'an original Manuscript Journal made by James Burney during Cook's Second Voyage, 1772–3'.



it was agreed that this time two ships would undertake the exploration. As far as practicable, they would sail together on the proposed route and aid each other in emergencies.

The two Whitby-built colliers were purchased from John Wilkinson, a wealthy ship supplier, general merchant and ship-broker, and part-owner William Hammond.³ The vessels had been constructed in 1770 at Thomas Fishburn's yard and were almost new. Sturdy, and with a deep draught, these three-masted ships were fit for the purpose of sailing far from English coasts. Each vessel received Cook's stamp of approval.

Following naval practice, the vessels were reclassified as sloops. The *Resolution* and the *Adventure* entered the navy's list of ships ready for duty.⁴

Reliability and resilience were the key qualities Cook sought for these expeditionary vessels. Cook said of the *Resolution*: 'she was the ship of my choice and as I thought the fittest for the Service she was going upon of any I had seen'.⁵ The collier was 'soundly-built', broad-beamed, with adequate room for the crew, stores and guns.⁶ The proposed journey was estimated to take more than two, possibly three, years and Cook knew from experience that the sloops had to withstand the stresses of gales, monstrous waves, gashing ice, howling seas, as well as sapping tropical humidity. He knew that they would be many months at sea without any opportunities for repairs, and safe, usable harbours would be few and far between.

The *Resolution* was 462 tons, 110 feet 8 inches (33.7 metres) in length at the lower deck,

Cook sailed into higher southern latitudes. A partial map of New Holland was published by the East India Company in 1744.

and 35 feet 5 inches (10.7 metres) in breadth, with a draught of 13 feet 1 inch (3.99 metres).

It was purchased for the sum of £4,151 and was to carry 110 men, with Cook as commander and captain. It was armed with twelve 6-pounder guns and 12 swivel guns. The *Resolution* would be the first vessel to cross both the Arctic and Antarctic circles, and it was the swifter of the two vessels.





sextants, accurate chronometers and mathematical longitudinal tables; like the islanders, they used celestial navigation to help them cross the oceans.

After five days in Huahine, the *Adventure* and *Resolution* had one further call: Raiatea, Omai's home island. Before departing Huahine, Cook confirmed that Omai could remain on board the *Adventure* and travel with them to England. Burney made no note, but Cook recorded the moment, including his desire to assure the *ari'i*, Ori, that he was not taking men from the island against their will. Cook noted in his journal for Tuesday 7 September 1773:

I immediately sent on board Captain Furneaux for them, when the Boat returned she brought only one no more being on board and as this man had been on board the *Adventure* from the first hour of her arrival at the Isle and it being known to all the natives that he intended to go away with us, without being once demanded and as Captain Furneaux being desirous of keeping [him] [his name was Omiah], I did not think it was necessary to send him on Shore for the Chief was now gone, he stayed aboard till we were a full half League out at sea.¹⁵

Captain Furneaux later received Cook's formal agreement to take Omai on the *Adventure*, and he was subsequently entered on the *Adventure*'s supernumerary list in September 1773 as 'Tetuby Homy'.

Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr's celestial map, published in Germany in 1742.



Brass navigational instruments used in the mid-eighteenth century.

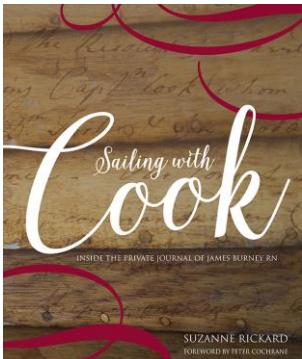
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"One of the most delightful moments in his journal is the record he makes of Māori singing and chanting and the musical notation he jots down."
From foreword by Peter Cochrane

At the age of 22, James Burney embarked on Captain Cook's second voyage of exploration between 1772 and 1773. As a young naval officer travelling in company with the famed Captain Cook, he was required to keep a log which would be surrendered to the Admiralty at the end of the journey but he also kept a private journal for the delight and information of his family and friends. He claimed at the outset, '*my chief aim is your amusement*'.

Author and historian Suzanne Rickard brings his story to life in this beautifully illustrated book, *Sailing with Cook: Inside the Private Journal of James Burney RN*, published by The National Library of Australia where the journal now resides.

"The NLA recognised the importance of James Burney's private journal in the context of his subsequently interesting career with the Royal Navy, a brief stint with the East India Company and later as a published writer and scholar. Naturally, Burney's voyaging with Cook makes him particularly interesting as a seafarer, coupled with his own important family connections and his later unorthodox family life and political philosophy. He had a fascinating family background," says Suzanne Rickard.

The story begins with the famous Burney family. His father Dr Charles Burney was a renowned musician and musicologist, his sister Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay) a famous novelist and his brother Charles Burney, a Greek scholar and clergyman.

Burney also had an extraordinary circle of friends and connections and a life-long friendship with botanist Sir Joseph Banks.

His private journal records the remarkable places and people he encountered and captures his experience of shipboard life. First on the *Resolution* under the command of Captain James Cook, and then with Captain Tobias Furneaux on the *Adventure*, Burney crossed the Antarctic Circle, he was one of the first Englishmen to walk on Tasmania's southern beaches, he endured raging seas and icy weather, he sailed to New Zealand's South Island and into its beautiful sounds, and then he sailed further north to explore the tropical waters of the islands and atolls of Polynesia.

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Burney witnessed death at sea from misadventure and scurvy, and he experienced the shocking death of ten shipmates at the hands of Māori warriors. He enjoyed cordial advances from Pacific Islanders and the friendship of Omai, a young Ra'iataian man who became the second Pacific Islander to visit Europe.

Burney listened carefully to island music making (to please his musician father), witnessed religious ceremonies and observed Pacific Islanders' hierarchies. He noted the building of war canoes and absorbed ancient Pacific myths and lore of navigation. All these experiences expanded his world view. This was in addition to working with his captain on making charts, maintaining ship's discipline and the ship's log, and upholding naval traditions as expected of a young officer.

Burney's extensive naval career took him to North America, the Mediterranean, the African continent, to India and the East Indies, to China, Alaska and Hawaii.

He sailed again with Cook on the third voyage of discovery in 1776 and witnessed Cook's death at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii, in 1779.

Burney died in 1821 leaving a legacy of writing, including this first private journal that opened up a new world to his friends, and now to us.



About the Author - Suzanne Rickard is a writer, editor and historian. In 2001 she edited George Barrington's *Voyage to Botany Bay: A Convict's Travel Narrative of the 1790s*, and co-authored *India, China, Australia: Trade and Society, 1788–1850* with James Broadbent and Margaret Steven in 2003. She has contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776–1832*. Suzanne was Project Manager and contributor to Volume One of the *Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*. She has written about the National Library of Australia's collections and was a contributor to the Library's Centenary publication, *Remarkable Occurrences*. She lives in Sydney and is also a traveller, reader, grandmother and gardener.

Suzanne Rickard is available for interview



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