

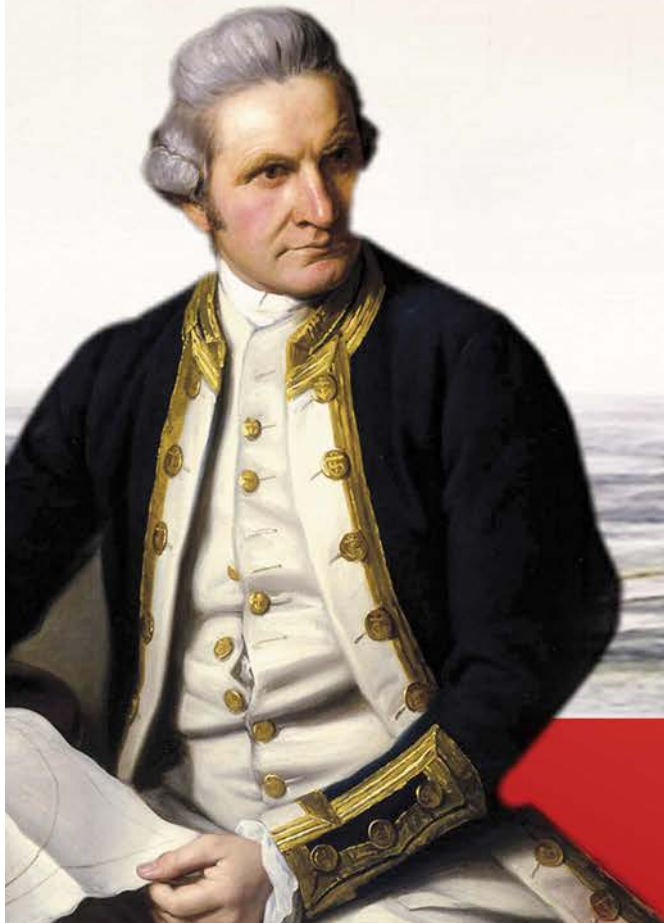
CHART
of part of the
SOUTH SEA.

Shewing
the Strait & Discoveries made by

COOK REDISCOVERED

The long voyage to Terra Australis

TRENT DALTON



THE AUSTRALIAN 
For the informed Australian

Editor's Note

Lieutenant James Cook earned the ranks of commander and captain the hard way. He earned them by sailing and mapping half the earth. He earned them by setting sail from Plymouth, England, in August, 1768, and returning home three years later with a coal boat full of knowledge that changed the world. He returned on His Majesty's Bark *Endeavour* with new insights into mathematics, navigation, geology, geography, botany, psychology, nutrition, astronomy, medicine, cartography, languages, man management, survival at sea and no less than the depths of the human spirit. He returned with a story; a three-year tale of courage, endurance and pure adventure etched by his own hand in an epic journal that stands today as black ink proof of why the human quest for knowledge is boundless and eternal.

As our nation and the world prepares for next year's 250th anniversary of *Endeavour's* departure, we tell that story again.

We mark its impact respectfully, but we tell this story to remind generations of Australians, young and old, that Captain James Cook represents a great deal more than the sum of his exploratory consequences. We tell this rich and detailed story from two perspectives –the journalised accounts of Cook and the brilliant young botanist Joseph Banks and the vessel's gentle artist Sydney Parkinson threaded through the oral histories of the indigenous elders who occupied this great country of ours long before *Endeavour* reached its sprawling white sand edges. The view from the ship. The view from the shore. Two complex narratives forming into one inspiring story of us. A story that should echo loudly through our schools and our living rooms and our pubs and our libraries and our outback roads and waterholes for another 250 years and beyond. A story always to be retold with equal measures of respect and wonder. Retold. Reread. Reassessed. Rediscovered.



Paul Whittaker

Editor-in-Chief, The Australian

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It was a courageous captain who set out with secret instructions to find the great unknown southern continent.

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The great Maori chief Te Horeta called her supernatural. He wondered if her mighty sails were engineered by spirits.

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James Cook's first encounter with Aborigines, and the Great Barrier Reef, came close to ending in disaster.

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The Endeavour returns to England full of stories. Soon Cook's vessel is put to work in a very different context — the American Revolutionary War.

The origins of an epic Endeavour

She has to be seen through the eyes of the young. Nicholas Young. The cabin boy they call “Young Nick”, the youngest of Cook’s crew. Hope in his heart, heart in his throat. He’s 11 years old and before he reaches his teens he will see death and glory, lust and violence, and a southern world that exists only on the latitude of his wildest dreams. But for now all he sees is her.

The ship they call Endeavour, anchored in the dockyard waters of Plymouth, on the south coast of Devon. August 26, 1768. She fills the boy’s senses. The adventure in her. The feel of her wood beneath his soft fingers. The smell of salt and sea in her ribs and rails.

She’s a product of Yorkshire, like the great captain who’ll make her famous. And like that towering 6ft-tall figure, James Cook, she’s all business. No figurehead on the prow. No useless decoration. A coal boat, more functional than fancy. Thirty-two metres long, only 9m across the beam. A broad bow, a square stern, a frumpy body and a flat bottom.

Her captain — who cut his 40-year-old sailor’s teeth plying coal along the English coast — sees things in her others can’t see. He sees reliability, a shallow draught that will allow him to manoeuvre close to shore in only a few fathoms of water, like the barks that carry coal across the North Sea into London. She won’t sail gracefully but she’ll sail far.

Ten four-pounder cannons for protection, 12 swivel guns fixed to the quarterdeck, sides and bow. A deep cargo hold carrying 18 months of provisions: 20 tonnes of biscuits and flour, 1200 gallons of beer, 1600 gallons of spirits, 4000 pieces of salted beef, 6000 pieces of salted pork and 7860 pounds of sauerkraut because the deep-thinking captain is convinced that potent fermented cabbage will keep his men safe from scurvy.

She’s loaded with red and blue beads, iron nails, hatchets, small mirrors and children’s play dolls, gifts and talk pieces for natives across the Pacific. She’s loaded with state-of-the-art navigational instruments, a newly engineered azimuth compass to find magnetic north; a vertical compass to measure the angle of dip; brass quadrants; sextants and precious cargo that’s been stored almost as carefully as the 1600 gallons of spirits, two cutting-edge astronomical telescopes supplied by the Royal Society that, on February 16, 1768, petitioned King George III to finance this bold scientific expedition across the vast blue Pacific to study and observe the 1769 transit of Venus from the island of Tahiti as it passes across the sun.

Young Nick hears history in the making. The sound of the animals on board. Pigs and chickens for livestock. A milking goat. The Devon gulls circling in the sky. The sound of cheering well-wishers on the docks.



A cutaway painting of the Endeavour.

He hears the whispers and rumours about the dashing and esteemed Mr Joseph Banks. How the captain bit his tongue when this gentlemanly fellow of the Royal Society, this brilliant and bold 25-year-old hunter-hipster-botanist, loaded up Cook’s already crowded vessel with a party of two artists, the gifted specimen sketcher Sydney Parkinson and landscape specialist Alexander Buchan, a secretary, four servants — two of them most likely products of the booming transatlantic slave trade — two hunting dogs, and an endless gangplank parade of boxed natural history reference books, scientific preservation materials, specimen tins and jars, curious underwater telescopes, dragnets for fish studies and reams of paper for reports and drawings.

Word’s spreading across the ship that Banks is the owner of a large inherited fortune, not to mention half of Lincolnshire county, who has spent as much as 10,000 of his own pounds on the once-in-a-lifetime expedition. More rumoured words follow about how, the night before he travelled here to Plymouth to board Endeavour, he was enjoying a night at the opera with an early true love, Miss Harriet Blosset, a wealthy young woman the great botanist calls “the fairest amongst flowers”.

A year from now, Banks will show extraordinary courage traipsing through unknown lands across the Pacific in search of countless unidentified specimens. But some say he showed little courage that night at the opera, failing to confess to Miss Harriet his plans to sail off into the treacherous South Seas in the name of science.

Young Nick hears whispers of Terra Australis Incognita. The unknown southern land. A handful of loudmouth rogues on board say there has to be a great southern continent, a vast super landmass rich with wild new life and certain wealth for all who walk upon it. A geological counterpoise to all that land in the north, say these rogues with pirate smiles, not yet realising volumes of water can weigh more than measures of dirt.



The interior of the Endeavour replica.

But the grand whispers of new silks and spices spread unbridled. Tales of silver and gold. Their overt mission is to find Venus above Tahiti. Accurate readings of when it passes the sun will help determine the “astronomical unit” — a unit of length roughly the distance from the Earth to the sun — which, in turn, will help 18th-century navigators calculate the observer’s all-important and oft-elusive longitude.

But it’s the ship’s covert mission that has their full hearts skipping beat. The captain’s so-called “secret instructions” from the British Admiralty, penned

July 30, 1768. Not quite secret enough to stop the locals from talking about them over pints of warm beer in every ale house in Plymouth.

Whereas there is reason to imagine that a Continent or Land of great extent may be found to the Southward of the Tract lately made by Captn Wallis in His Majesty's Ship the Dolphin (of which you will herewith receive a Copy) or of the Tract of any former Navigators in Pursuit of the like kind, You are therefore in Pursuance of His Majesty's Pleasure hereby requir'd and directed to put to Sea with the Bark you Command so soon as the Observation of the Transit of the Planet Venus shall be finished and observe the following Instructions. You are to proceed to the Southward in order to make discovery of the Continent abovementioned until' you arrive in the Latitude of 40°, unless you sooner fall in with it. But not having discover'd it or any Evident sign of it in that Run you are to proceed in search of it to the Westward between the Latitude beforementioned and the Latitude of 35° until' you discover it, or fall in with the Eastern side of the Land discover'd by Tasman and now called New Zeland. If you discover the Continent abovementioned either in your Run to the Southward or to the Westward as above directed, You are to employ yourself diligently in exploring as great an Extent of the Coast as you can, carefully observing the true situation thereof both in Latitude and Longitude, the Variation of the Needle; bearings of Head Lands Height direction and Course of the Tides and Currents, Depths and Soundings of the Sea, Shoals, Rocks and also surveying and making Charts, and taking Views of Such Bays, Harbours and Parts of the Coasts as may be useful to Navigation. You are also carefully to observe the Nature of the Soil, and the Products thereof; the Beasts and Fowls that inhabit or frequent it, the Fishes that are to be found in the Rivers or upon the Coast and in what Plenty, and in Case you find any Mines, Minerals, or valuable Stones you are to bring home Specimens of each, as also such Specimens of the Seeds of the Trees, Fruits and Grains as you may be able to collect, and Transmit them to our Secretary that We may cause proper Examination and Experiments to be made of them. You are likewise to observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of the Natives, if there be any, and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such Trifles as they may Value, inviting them to Traffick, and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard; taking Care however not to suffer yourself to be surprized by them, but to be always upon your guard against any Accidents. You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain: Or: if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for his Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and Incriptions, as first discoverers and possessors.

Young Nick hears the sound of new acquaintance. The sound of adventure. And the sound of the boy servant's master, the surgeon William Monkhouse, whose clomping heels he scurries behind dutifully, chancing glances left and right at the men he'll live upon the sea with for the next three years.

Men like the Scotsman Forby Sutherland, the ship's poulterer who'll turn all the wild Pacific game birds shot by Banks into dinner. Sutherland won't make it home. He'll succumb to consumption on April 30, 1770; be buried on the banks of Botany Bay, in a land the world will come to call Australia.

Men like Richard Orton, the captain's clerk, who'll scribble some of the most important notes in the history of world exploration, a man with a keen mind and a keener embrace of the bottle who'll have his ears mutilated by a mystery crewman after a long moonlight bender.

Men like Zachary Hicks, Cook's second-lieutenant, the modest man from London's East End whose name will forever be tied with the birth of modern Australia. He's already suffering from the early onset of the consumption to which he, too, will succumb before he can make it home.

Men like Stephen Forwood, the ship's gunner, who'll grow popular among these men for his remarkable skill for illegally tapping the rum casks on the quarter deck. Men like Robert Molineux, the ship's master, from the north bank of the Mersey, who'll take a liking to the fat and fire-roasted rats of Tahiti. And boys like Isaac Smith, a 16-year-old midshipman, the loyal cousin to Cook's wife, Elizabeth, who'll be a man by the time he takes one fateful step on to the complex shores of Australian history.

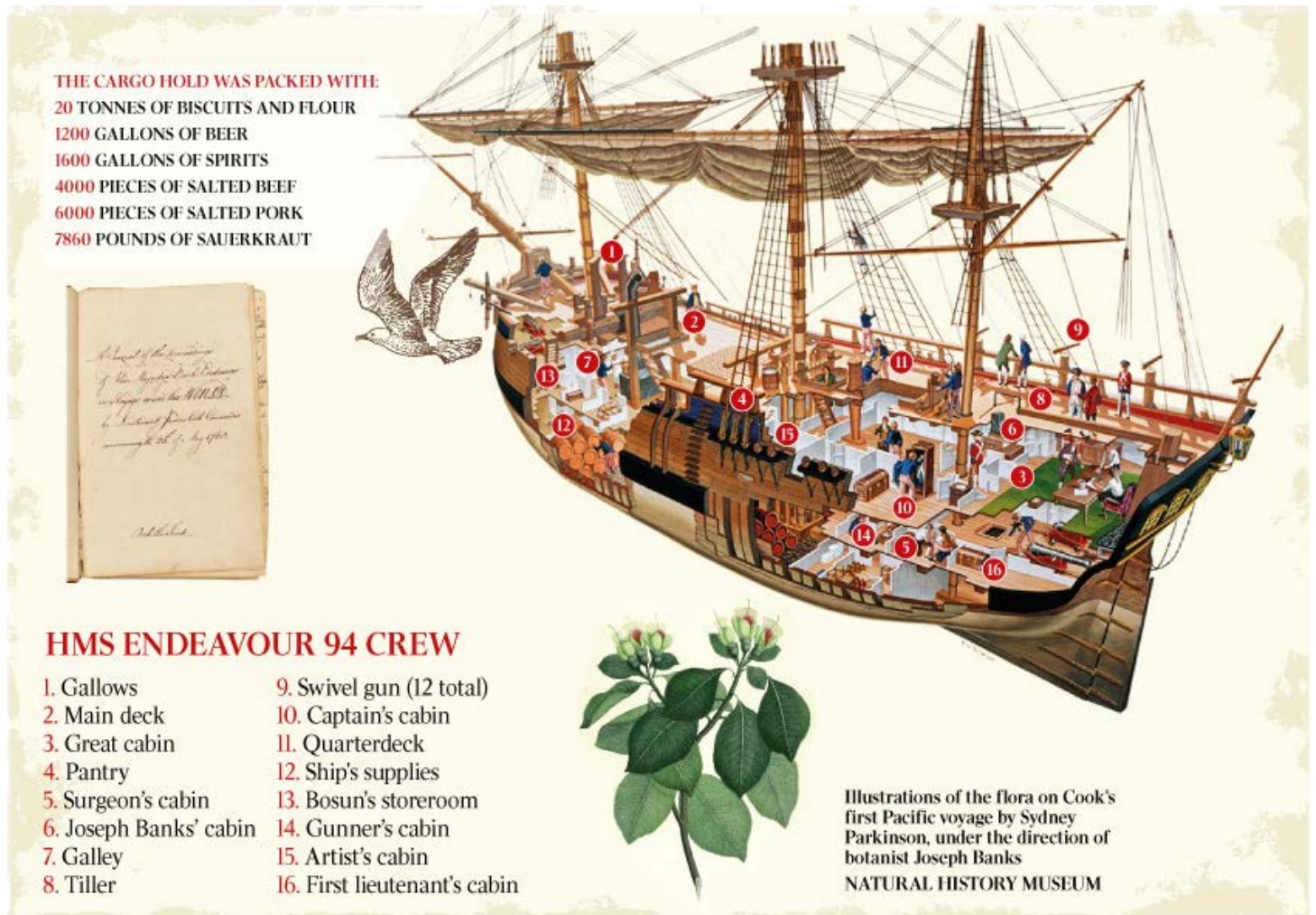
There are carpenters and cooks. Sailmakers and armourers. Quartermasters and marines. There are men from inland England and coastal Wales and Dublin and Cork, and one from New York. And the fates of all these men rest upon the shoulders of one.

He passes Young Nick on the deck. The boy's going one way and Lieutenant James Cook is going the other: towards his destiny, towards Terra Australis Incognita, towards immortality.

He towers over the boy, his long nose drawing in that cool English air he won't smell again for three years.

He'll spend these years teaching, instructing, disciplining, admonishing and inspiring men on deck, or mapping, researching and recording down in the Great Cabin, sitting down amid Joseph Banks's cluttered and expanding

below-deck natural history museum, or bending over so his head doesn't bump the cabin ceiling.



For three long years, he'll squeeze his tall frame into portless and boxy sleeping quarters lit only by whale oil lamp. David Samwell, a naval surgeon and poet who will later join Cook on his mighty Resolution voyage, will describe him as "a modest man, and rather bashful; of an agreeable lively conversation, sensible and intelligent".

"In temper he was somewhat hasty, but of a disposition the most friendly, benevolent and humane," Samwell will write. "His person was above six feet high: and, though a good-looking man, he was plain both in dress and appearance. His face was full of expression: his nose extremely well shaped: his eyes, which were small and of a brown cast, were quick and piercing; his eyebrows prominent, which gave his countenance altogether an air of austerity."

He's a lieutenant in rank only. The men will call him captain at sea and some would gladly call him commander if they could. Ambitious, curious, restless.

A self-made man. An avid reader. A clean freak. A visionary. A born and hardened seaman who served in the Seven Years War; who proved himself a surveyor of unparalleled precision mapping Newfoundland with its wildly unpredictable and jagged cliff edge coastline.

A brilliant mathematician from boyhood, with a star system knowledge earned the hard way, by staring up at the sky until his neck muscles hurt as a grocery boy in his first job in the fishing village of Staithes, 32km outside the seaport of Whitby; by walking on to any fishing boat in Whitby harbour that would allow him on it; by serving below deck on naval frigates, rising up, within two short years of service, to ship's master of a British man-of-war.

Husband, father of six, absentee dad. He pays the bills the only way he knows how, by sailing and mapping the world. He keeps his feelings close. He's a taker of only calculated risks, with a profound knowledge of the 18th-century British male mind and how to manage it.

"He is absolutely a man of his age," says Michelle Hetherington, senior curator, National Museum of Australia, one of the nation's most accomplished Cook historians.

"He is an 18th-century man who uses the opportunities that are available to improve his position in life. He's ambitious, he's talented and he works really, really hard. He knows the psychology of his men. He's compassionate. He's heroic, but I also think he has been heroised to such an extent that we lose important information about him. He was just a man who was doing his job and he brought to it some really useful skills and a huge amount of application.

"He was obviously good at what he did but if we see the voyage as just him, that he and he alone was the great discoverer, then the spotlight that focuses purely on Cook puts everything that's behind him into darkness. That upsets me. He's the pointy end of the ship but where's all that power coming from? Who else was there? What else was going on? And what allowed him to do what he could do?"

The wind breaks northwest and the captain calls for the mainsail to be unfurled. At 2pm, the Plymouth wind fills Endeavour's billowing sails and she carves her way out to sea, toward Rio de Janeiro, about three months' sail south.

At a writing desk the size of a 21st-century doll's house, the captain writes on a sheet of paper that will be bound with hundreds of other sheets into a journal that, come the year 2017, will be housed in the National Library of Australia in a city called Canberra. Its loyal custodians will call it "MS1". Manuscript One. The foundation document from which all research into the British colonisation of Australia begins. Young Nick will be found in that manuscript, along with the great Joseph Banks and Sutherland and surgeon Monkhouse and Hicks and that quiet, deep-thinking captain.

"At 2pm got under sail and put to sea having on board 94 persons including Officers Seamen Gentlemen and their servants...", the captain writes. Day after day Cook will document the fates of these 94 persons in his journal. Three of the 94 will drown. Two will freeze to death. One will be discharged. One will desert the ship. Some 40 men on board won't see the shores of England again.

Maybe it's the artificial lighting in the box, but something about MS1 makes it radiate. It glows with history. Something about it has you slowing your steps when you near it, has you softening your voice to an awed whisper. "The journey this book has made," you gush.

"It's all in there, the whole story," whispers historian Susannah Helman, exhibitions curator for the NLA. "It's in his own hand. You can tell what was going through his mind."

Helman is in the planning phase for a sweeping exhibition the library is hosting in commemoration of next year's 250th anniversary of the Endeavour's epic voyage of discovery. MS1 looms large in her plans.

"I'm interested in Cook, the man and the myth," she says. "He's such a huge figure. As the anniversary draws around I believe it's timely for us to re-examine our connection to Cook. He represents so many things to Australians. What does he mean to us today?"

How did that first epic voyage of discovery shape our nation? What does Captain Cook mean to every indigenous Australian in 2017? Where does this breathtakingly brave and towering explorer fit into the story of us?

She leans over the yellowing journal, locked in a clear display box inside the library's Treasures Gallery, open on an entry for Wednesday, November 15, 1769. "I turn the pages every four months," she says. "Every page is my favourite. He's in New Zealand right now."

By the time he writes on the two fragile 250-year-old pages in front of her, the captain's long left behind memories of Tierra del Fuego, off South America's southern tip, with its locals he considers "perhaps as miserable a set of people as are this day upon Earth". Two of Banks's servants have died of exposure on doomed specimen collection field trips. Mountainous waves of the South Atlantic have tossed the humble coal carrier around so violently, Banks's work desk crashed over the cabin floor in a mess of books and science equipment. "A very disagreeable night," writes Banks, with remarkable understatement.

Starry-eyed romantic Sydney Parkinson has survived so many storms, he's come to appreciate every second he breathes on this increasingly strange planet.

How amazingly diversified are the works of the Deity within the narrow limits of this globe we inhabit, which, compared with the vast aggregate of systems that compose the universe, appears but a dark speck in the creation! A curiosity, perhaps, equal to Solomon's, though accompanied with less wisdom than was possessed by the Royal Philosopher, induced some of us to quit our native land, to investigate the heavenly bodies minutely in distant regions, as well as to trace the signatures of the Supreme Power and Intelligence throughout several species of animals, and different genera of plants in the vegetable system, "from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall": and the more we investigate, the more we ought to admire the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Great Superintendant of the universe; which attributes are amply displayed throughout all his works; the smallest object, seen through the microscope, declares its origin to be divine, as well as those larger ones which the unassisted eye is capable of contemplating.

Endeavour's rounded treacherous Cape Horn and met the mighty Pacific Ocean. Cook has found Tahiti and Banks has found Tahitian women, three of whom enchanted him — for strictly anthropological reasons — with a memorable display of island cloth recorded in his journal:

(T)he foremost of the women, who seemd to be the principal, then stepd upon them and quickly unveiling all her charms gave me a most convenient opportunity of admiring them by turning herself gradually round: 3 peices

more were laid and she repeated her part of the ceremony: the other three were then laid which made a treble covering of the ground between her and me, she then once more displayd her naked beauties and immediately marchd up to me, a man following her and doubling up the cloth as he came forwards which she immediately made me understand was intended as a present for me. I took her by the hand and led her to the tents acompanied by another woman her freind, to both of them I made presents but could not prevail upon them to stay more than an hour. In the evening Oborea and her favourite attendant Otheothea pay us a visit, much to my satisfaction as the latter (my flame) has for some days been reported either ill or dead.

Cook has accomplished his chief task of measuring the transit of Venus across the sun, though not to his satisfaction.

There was a troubling “black drop” effect when Venus left the very edge of the sun where it drew out like a teardrop — as opposed to a perfect circle — making it impossible for Cook and Endeavour’s seasoned official astronomer Charles Green to be certain of the precise time Venus left the sun’s cusp.

“That was a tense moment,” says a colleague standing beside Helman, historian Martin Woods, the NLA’s curator of maps.

“It’s one of those key moments in the journal where you can feel the whole mission is hingeing on one moment, on one page in the journal.

“They have to set up on this rock in the Pacific, set up these complex astronomy instruments and take these measurements and so on, and the weather isn’t in their favour, and you’re always thinking, ‘Well, what’s gonna happen next’? You literally do feel that. It’s such a page turner.”

Woods nods at a mahogany and rosewood fall-front writing desk resting next to Cook’s journal, believed to be the very desk on which Cook wrote journal entries and letters on his Pacific voyages.

“There’s a secret compartment in it where he might have kept his more important documents,” Woods says.

“It might be where he kept the orders for the voyage, for example. The strategically sensitive orders are the ones saying he should try to determine whether there was an east coast to what the Dutch called New Holland.

“After marking the transit of Venus, it was up to him to decide for himself whether he was going to do this other mission. And it’s mission impossible. But, of course, off he went.”

He sails from Tahiti in search of the great southern continent. Helman casts her eyes over Cook’s words about his travails mapping the North and South islands of New Zealand.

“He’s gone out in the pinnace, having encounters with indigenous people,” she says. She points at a hard-to-read scribble. “He’s writing about the weather here,” she says. “There’s always something about the weather.”

Cook writes in a grand 18th-century cursive, “d” letters like samurai swords and “y” letters like dragon tails.

The book is a dizzying brain dump of sea-based history-in-the-making. There are lines crossed out where he’s checked his thoughts, measured his meanings, softened or hardened his opinions. There are random ink runs where you can almost feel Endeavour rocking as it passes Africa or South America and punishing Cape Horn.

He writes dates in a scarlet-coloured ink that has become the basis of an entire research project. Another research project entirely could be devoted to the journal’s paper stock; another to how many members of the Cook family held the journal before it made its way to the 1923 Sotheby’s sale in London where the Australian government bought it for about £5000; another to Cook’s habit of writing sudden or follow-up thoughts between written lines.

He writes about his strategic faults and successes and misfortunes and providences but he rarely writes about his feelings. No aching passages of longing about how much he misses his wife, Elizabeth Cook, who would outlive him by almost half a century, the beloved mother of six children, Nathaniel, Joseph, Elizabeth, George, James and Hugh.

“He really took to heart the mission to record what they saw and who they met,” Helman says. “That’s what he does. And he’s not afraid to be truthful. He reports things as he sees them.

“He was the commander of the ship and that ship was a little mini society. He was responsible for everybody. It must have weighed incredibly heavily upon him. He was ultimately responsible for getting these men home.”

He leads on platforms of discipline and diet.

“He didn’t act like your modern CEO, thank goodness,” says the NMA’s Hetherington. “He had real power. He had the power of life and death over people on that ship. But his role was both of an inspiring fatherly figure as well as commander.

“Any peep of disagreement would be punished with the lash and you could be hanged for mutiny. The men knew to behave well in front of this guy because he has your career in his hands.

“The thing about the navy is it’s one of those services where there’s great opportunity for promotion. You can come in as somebody without huge amounts of money, like Cook, and you will be promoted on your merits.



Cook's walking stick.

“And, of course, there’s such a high death rate, there’s always a vacancy coming up.”

“Life expectancy wasn’t high and the risks were great,” says Woods. “In the Dutch East India Company something like a third of their total complement died on the voyages they took from Europe to Australia, so there was a pretty high probability of death, but those were the days. There’s the seamen of the world, and then there’s everybody else who lives safely back at home.

“It’s physical courage. But what amazes me about Cook is that his courage is combined with a care, a concern for all people.

“You can read it into Cook. You hear it in him in the journal. He understands and empathises with the people he meets on that voyage.”

Susannah Helman leaves the library's Treasures Gallery and takes an elevator to an off-limits storage area in the library's upper levels. She pulls a set of keys from her pocket.

"These are the special keys," she says. For unlocking doors to special places. A room with a wide window overlooking Lake Burley Griffin. A large workspace is covered in reams of Mylar and rolled preservation plastic. She slides out a thin and wide metal storage drawer to reveal a wooden walking stick.

"He had to look the part," Helman says.

It's the captain's walking stick. More for show than for support on deck.



Cook's fork.

She opens a second drawer and pulls out a metal utensil, two pointy and sharp metal prongs fixed to a handle, 18.3cm in length.

"That's Captain Cook's fork," she says.

The Endeavour sails west from New Zealand and Cook's fork digs into another plate of sauerkraut. The captain's obsessed with diet. He counsels his men daily on the importance of eating fresh meat and greens.

On his long way down from Brazil he smiled especially fondly on any man who climbed aboard from a stopover with a handkerchief full of foraged

greens, though their cracked and weathered lips are more naturally yearning to wrap around a slice of the crackling fat encasing a salted pork, the kind of loose diet delicacy that invites the dreaded scurvy.

Crossing the Tasman Sea, on April 19, 1770, Banks eyes a minor miracle of the ocean. It's a mighty waterspout as high as a modern city building, a tubular saltwater vortex rising up from the ocean into a fulsome cloud, twisting and spouting for almost 15 minutes. He writes of it in his journal.

It was a column which appeared to be of about the thickness of a mast or a midling tree, and reachd down from a smoak colourd cloud about two thirds of the way to the surface of the sea; under it the sea appeared to be much troubled for a considerable space and from the whole of that space arose a dark colourd thick mist which reachd to the bottom of the pipe.

When it was at its greatest distance from the water the pipe itself was perfectly transparent and much resembled a tube of glass or a Column of water, if such a thing could be supposd to be suspended in the air; it very frequently contracted and dilated, lenthned and shortned itself and that by very quick motions; it very seldom remaind in a perpendicular direction but Generally inclin'd either one way or the other in a curve as a light body acted upon by wind is observd to do. During the whole time that it lasted smaler ones seemd to attempt to form in its neighbourhood; at last one did about as thick as a rope close by it and became longer than the old one which at that time was in its shortest state; upon this they Joind together in an instant and gradually contracting into the Cloud disapeard.

It's a wondrous welcome, of a kind. Far beyond that waterspout rests another natural miracle of dirt and rock, a place some 24 million people will come to call the greatest place on earth.

It's second lieutenant Zachary Hicks who spots it first, leaning out from the masthead. Land. Some 7,686,850sq km of it.

"The face of the Country green and woody but the seashore is all a white sand," writes Cook.

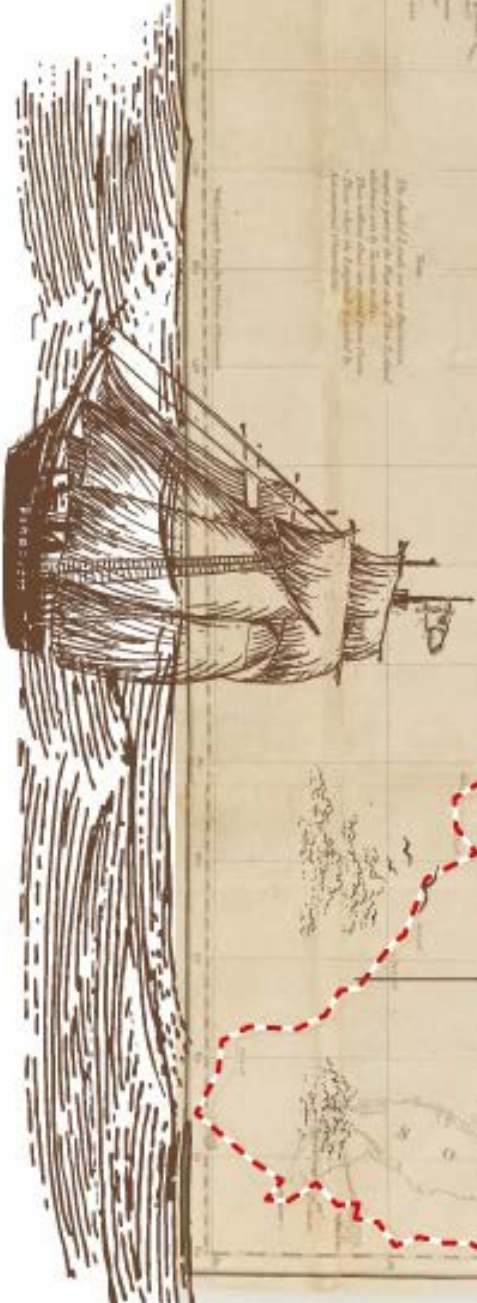
On deck, young Nicholas Young leans hard against Endeavour's side, hope in his heart, heart in his throat, squinting his eyes to catch his first glimpse of Australia.

COOK'S DARING VOYAGE

Captain Cook's Landing at
Botany, A.D. Published in *Town
& Country Journal*, 1872
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

When Cook
landed at
Botany Bay he
was the first
European to
set foot on the
east coast of
the continent

En route from Plymouth
in Devon, England



August 26, 1768 Sailed from Plymouth with orders to search for an unknown southern land
April 29, 1770 Landed in Botany Bay | July 12, 1771 Arrived back in Kent

The Endeavour's fiery landing

There's a ripping sailor's yarn Dr Nigel Erskine tells about how the Australian government's strikingly accurate *Endeavour* replica found its way to the wharves outside his office at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour, Sydney.

She launched in 1993 with some 30km of real-life rigging. She boasts 750 wood blocks and pulleys. Her masts and spars carry 28 sails spreading to 930sq m in canvas. She feels so real you step cautiously into her Great Cabin and swear you can hear Cook's footsteps pacing around Banks' crowded specimen table. She has sailed more than 170,000 nautical miles, and twice around the world.



Portrait of Captain James Cook by Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland.

In 2005, ownership of her was transferred from the HM Bark Endeavour Foundation to the Australian National Maritime Museum. To celebrate the handover, Dr Erskine, the museum's head of research, joined the then arts minister Rod Kemp, who had been instrumental in the handover, on the last leg of a triumphant global voyage she made from England through the Pacific and home to Sydney.

“I sailed on the vessel from New Zealand back to Sydney Harbour,” Erskine says.

Like all on board — dignitaries, historians, politicians — Erskine and Kemp were eagerly anticipating the replica’s brief stop at Kurnell, on the south eastern headland of Botany Bay, where, on April 29, 1770, Lieutenant James Cook first stepped on to Australian soil.

“The idea was that we were going to swing past the Kurnell site and fire off the guns as a salute and carry on up to Sydney Harbour,” Erskine says.

“But, interestingly enough, there’s a particular rock in the waters off Kurnell which Cook actually put on his chart.”

The brilliant navigator had safely negotiated the menacing and large outcrop of rock and had dutifully and accurately charted it for the benefit of sailors arriving at and departing Botany Bay in his wake. “But, somehow, the pilot who we had on board managed to put the boat on to the rock!” Erskine laughs, still flabbergasted.

The replica ship had fired her cannons in triumph then sailed fewer than 100m before coming to a rude halt, running aground on the troublesome hazard.

“So we were stuck there for about four hours and we did a bit of damage to the vessel; the keel was ripped off.”

Four local tug boats had to pull the boat to freedom.

“I most sincerely apologise for ruining your day,” the most unlucky Captain Chris Blake told his passengers.

“Of course, this is the last thing minister Kemp wanted to have broadcast all over the place with helicopters flying above,” Erskine says. “His day turned fairly black. But I always thought it was ironic that we struck this rock that Cook, the first European to survey that coast, had carefully noted on his map in 1770. And we managed to strike it in 2005.”

The moral of the story?

“Cook didn’t get the Endeavour voyage by accident,” says Martin Woods, curator of maps, National Library of Australia.

“He got it by being the best. He could navigate by the stars better than anybody else. People followed Cook into the Pacific. Cook teaches Bligh. Bligh teaches Flinders and so on. Cook opens up a completely different

world. And when you're talking about that, it's the opposite world. A whole other side of the world."

New Holland is more mountainous than the captain first anticipates. The Dutch described the western side of this mighty land mass as barren. The eastern side shimmers with high and low green country; dramatic capes and headlands that light up at night with the glowing red fires of natives.

"Cook's up on deck," says Erskine. "Anytime the vessel is that close to shore he's concerned about striking rock. And from the time they first sighted land on April 19, there's been a high level of interest. From a professional point of view, he had a huge opportunity in front of him.

"The west and north coasts, and some of the south coast, had been mapped. He was going to complete the jigsaw puzzle by mapping the east coast."

On the morning of April 29, 1770, a sheltered bay comes into view, enough water in front of it for Cook to anchor.

"When they finally enter Botany Bay, Cook drops a launch off," says Erskine. "The launch goes in, says, 'Yes, there's enough water and it's okay to come in', and so the Endeavour follows it in and they do see indigenous people fishing along the shoreline.

"Banks makes the point that the indigenous people make no point of recognition. They don't wave. They don't run away. They don't look surprised. They actually ignore the vessel completely and that's a really interesting thing. I don't know, from an indigenous point of view, what the explanation of that is, whether it was simply too foreign to their knowledge of the world that they simply didn't register it, or they thought it was a God appearing, or maybe something they did not want to know about, I don't know. It's not until Cook and his men are in the pinnace and rowing ashore that there's a reaction from the indigenous people."

Young Isaac Smith is honoured. His uncle, James, invites him to join him on the lead pinnace of a three-boat landing party comprising 30 to 40 men. Smith takes his seat in the crowded pinnace, amid Joseph Banks and the brilliant Swedish naturalist Daniel Solander, whose name will be immortalised by the "solander box" notes and specimen cases lining shelves in public libraries across the modern world. What happens next will be debated for centuries by historians, but one popular telling says the boats reach a flat rock at what is now the Kurnell landing site and Cook steps to the

edge of the pinnacle, about to place the first European foot on eastern Australia, when he realises the gravity of the moment and turns to his young and loyal nephew. “Isaac,” he says. “You shall land first.”

If young Isaac lives through this risky landing, he’ll have one hell of a story to tell his family about how he spent his 18th year on Earth.

Cautious Cook — still reeling and gut reactive from dangerous encounters in New Zealand — spots natives and native huts on both points of the bay. On shore, two spear-carrying natives, an older man and a younger man, approach the edge of the Kurnell waters, urging these strange travellers, in their native tongue, to row on back to their giant wood home on the sea.

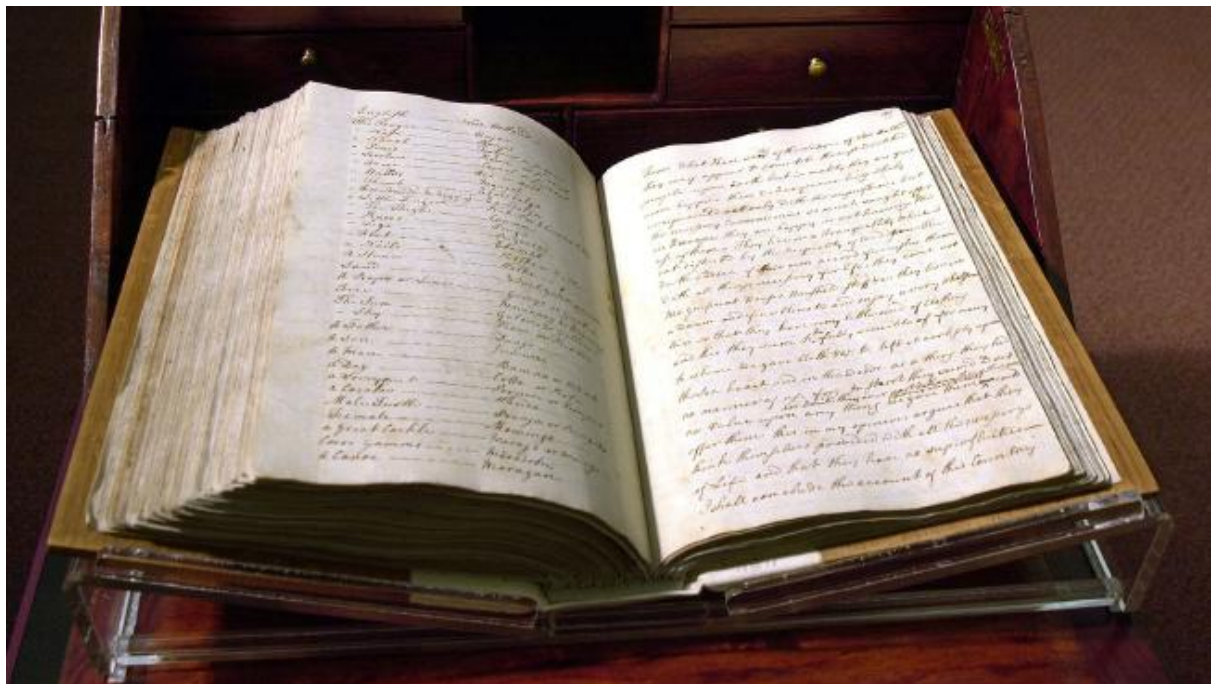
Cook writes: *“We then threw them some nails beds a shore which they took up and seem’d not ill pleased with in so much that I thought that they beckon’d to us to come a shore but in this we were mistaken for as soon as we put the boat in they again came to oppose us, upon which I fired a musket between the two which had no other effect than to make them retire back where bundles of their darts lay and one of them took up a stone and threw at us which caused my firing a second Musquet load with small shott and although’ some of the shott struck the man yet it had no other effect than to make him lay hold of a Shield or target to defend himself. Emmediatly after this we landed which we had no sooner done than they throw’d two darts at us this obliged me to fire a third shott soon after which they both made off, but not in such haste but what we might have taken one, but Mr Banks being of opinion that the darts were poisoned made me cautious how I advanced into the woods.”*

The cold welcome, says Erskine, should have been expected.

“That’s not strange, basically, within indigenous country,” he says. “If you were going to cross into somebody else’s country, you basically had to make arrangements. You had to negotiate with the other group to do that. Cook, of course, hadn’t made any negotiation whatsoever and so it was completely normal that the indigenous people should repel him. They see it as being incredibly impolite by rocking up on to their space and jumping ashore and it’s unfortunate that in the first instance when Cook and his men are threatened with spears that they react with bird shot.”

“They’re a bit frightened,” says Michelle Hetherington, senior Cook historian, National Museum of Australia. “They’ve just come from New Zealand where they could have died several times. I think they’re in a state of constant expectation and exhaustion.

“They don’t understand the protocols and there are very clear protocols in indigenous cultures: ‘I am coming on to your land. I will wait to be invited. I will bring you a gift. I will show proper respect’. And, of course, the English, they’re conquering the world. What do they know about proper respect to indigenous people? Nails were currency in Tahiti. You could get a number of things if you had a nail in Tahiti. They thought all of the people in the Pacific would be the same. But Australia was completely different. They didn’t have the same languages, they didn’t have the same set of cultural practises.”



The Endeavour journal.

But, says Hetherington, it would be folly to read recklessness into Cook’s management of a single moment in time that would echo and ripple through 250 years of Australian life.

“He was famous for his noted compassion for the people he encountered, for not notably killing people,” she says.

His journal crackles with moments where he’s regretting the impact of Endeavour’s arrival on an island community, be it from unintended slights of

native leaders or the possibility of his men spreading STDs to native women. The man who rarely shows his feelings shows feeling most of all for the strangers he encounters at sea.

“They were sensible and they were scientific,” says Martin Woods. “They would step on to the soil, understand the surroundings, measure it, meet the people, record that information. It’s hard to say if he could have done anything different.”

“But Cook’s not at all afraid to be truthful in his journal,” says - Susannah Helman from the - National Library of Australia. “He writes at one point, really poignantly, ‘all they seemed to want was for us to be gone’. He would report exactly the impression he got. To us, it’s the single most important moment in European discovery. To him, it was part of a very long management challenge that he was approaching the end of.”



A sketch of a rainbow lorikeet that Cook took back to England.

Monday, 30th: As soon as the wonders and waterers were come on board to dinner 10 or 12 of the natives came to the watering place and took away their canoes that lay there but did not offer to touch any one of our Casks that had been left ashore and in the after noon 16 or 18 of them came boldly up to within 100 yards of our people at the watering place and there made a stand — Mr Hicks who was the officer ashore did all in his power to entice them to him by offering them presents but it was to no purpose all they seem'd to want was for us to be gone — after staying a short time they went away they were all arm'd with darts and wooden swords, the darts have each four prongs and pointed with fish bones and those we have seen seem to be intend more for striking fish than offensive weapons neither are they poisoned as we at first thought — After I had returns from sounding the bay I went over to a Cove on the south north side of the bay where in 3 or 4 hauls with the Saine we caught about 300 pounds weight of fish which I caused to

be equally divided among the Ships Company — In the AM I went in the Pinnacle to sound and explore the North side of the bay where I neither met - with inhabitants or any thing remarkable.

History is built on Rashomon moments. Singular events, as in Akira Kurosawa's 1950 Japanese film, are told by various characters with varying points of view.

Joseph Banks will write subtle differences into his journal about events on Botany Bay in April, 1770. His perceptive and contemplative artist friend, Sydney Parkinson, will add his own point of view.

Their countenance bespoke displeasure; they threatened us, and discovered hostile intentions, often crying to us, Warra warra wai. We made signs to them to be peaceable, and threw them some trinkets; but they kept aloof, and dared us to come on shore. We attempted to frighten them by firing off a gun loaded with small shot; but attempted it in vain. One of them repaired to a house immediately, and brought out a shield, of an oval figure, painted white in the middle, with two holes in it to see through, and also a wooden sword, and then they advanced boldly, gathering up stones as they came along, which they threw at us. After we had landed, they threw two of their lances at us; one of which fell between my feet. Our people fired again, and wounded one of them; at which they took the alarm and were very frantic and furious, shouting for assistance, calling Hala, half, mae; that is, (as we afterwards learned,) Come hither; while their wives and children set up a most horrid howl. We endeavoured to pacify them, but to no purpose, for they seemed implacable, and, at length, ran howling away, leaving their wives and children, who hid themselves in one of the huts behind a piece of bark. After looking about us a little while, we left some nails upon the spot and embarked, taking with us their weapons; and then proceeded to the other side of the bay, where we had seen a number of people, as we came in, round a fire, some of whom were painted white, having a streak round their thighs, two below their knees, one like a sash over their shoulders, which ran diagonally downwards, and another across their foreheads. Both men and - women were quite naked, very lean and raw-boned; their complexion was dark, their hair black and frizzled, their heads unadorned, and the beards of the men bushy.

The firing of muskets and the wounding of natives, of course, is a clear contravention of the Admiralty's instructions to "endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a friendship".

"You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain," the so-called secret instructions state.

Cook will indeed claim the land for Britain but not with the consent of the natives.

The Gweagal elders of Botany Bay don't have quill and ink to record their version of events but they will recount them verbally and their perspectives will be passed down through ancestral lines that will lead them all the way to the doorsteps of the British Museum and Cambridge University where they will ask, in the year 2017, for the return of a sacred shield and spears taken aboard Endeavour by Cook's men that fateful day on the Kurnell beach.



Portrait of Sir Joseph Banks by Thomas Phillips.

Erskine recently saw the sacred Gweagal shield, widely accepted to be the one removed from Kurnell on the day of first contact, up close at the British Museum on an Endeavour research trip. He says forensic studies of such artefacts could reveal deeper insights into the events of April 29, 1770.

"When you look at the shield, it's got a hole in it which is about the perfect size for a musket ball," he says. "I've always wondered when they say that they used small bird shot, whether that was actually really the case, or whether that wasn't a bit of, after the event, smoothing things out. I mean, if you're firing a half-inch musket ball at somebody you're not mucking around. Whereas, a bit of bird shot and you hit (someone) they're probably not gonna die. To me, it's either a musket ball or it's a knot in the timber that was used to make the shield. It's a bit hard to tell. I think it would be worth somebody at the British Museum taking it to a science lab and looking for

residue, looking for lead or something in the outer rim of that hole, because it could change a small point of view of our history.”

There’s a new way modern Cook scholars are viewing his first great voyage of discovery. It’s based around ideas of Australia’s late and eminent Pacific historian Greg Denning. “He talked about how you can’t understand an event if you only take one perspective,” Erskine says. “And he talked about the beach as being a place of neutrality that has both a view from the shore and a view from the water and that you need to combine these views on the beach. That’s what I hope this 250th anniversary will become.”

A place of neutrality.

The Endeavour anchors in Botany Bay for eight days. Repairs are made. Sails are laid out and patched on shore. Some men dive for fat succulent rock oysters. A midshipman shoots a parrot and offers it to an indigenous elder who recoils from the dead bird. Cook, meanwhile, wanders into scrub and writes of the country with awe.

The largest trees are as large or larger than our oaks in England and grows a good deal like them and yields a reddish gum. The wood itself is heavy, hard and black like Lignum Vitae another sort that grows tall and strait some thing like Pines the wood of this is hard and ponderous and something of the nature of American live oak, these two are all the timber trees I met with, there are a few sorts of Shrubs and several Palm trees, and Mangroves about the head of the harbour — the Country is woody low and flat as far inland as we could see and I believe that the soil is in general sandy, in the wood are a variety of very boutifull birds such as Cockatoo’s, Lorry quest, Parrots and Crows exactly like those we have in England — Water fowl are no less plenty about the head of the harbour where there are large flats of sand and Mud on which they seek their food. The most of these were unknown to us, one sort especially which was black and white and as large as a goose but most like a pelican. On the Sand and Mud banks are Oysters, Muscles, Cockles which I believe are the chief support of the inhabitants who go into shoald water with their little canoes and pick them out of the sand and Mud with their hands and sometimes roast and eat them in the Canoe, having often a fire for that purpose as I suppose for I know no other it can be for. The Natives do not appear to be numerous neither do they seem to live in large bodies but dispers’d in small parties along by the water side. Those I saw were about as tall as Europeans of a very dark brown colour but not black

nor had they woolly frizled hair, but black and lank much like ours — no sort of cloathing or ornaments were ever seen by any of us upon any one of them or in or about any of their huts from which I conclude that they never wear any — some that we saw had their faces and bodies painted with a sort of white paint or pigment. Altho I have said that shell fish is their chief support yet they catch other sorts of fish, some of which we found roasting on the fire the first time we landed, some of these they strike with gigs and others they catch with hook and line ... However we could know but very little of their customs as we never were able to form any connections with them, they had not so much as touch'd the things we had left in their hutts on purpose for them to take away.

Forby Sutherland dies of consumption on the night of April 30. Writes Cook: "... his body was buried a shore at the watering place which occasioned my calling the south point of this Bay after his name". The men see kangaroo and dingo droppings. Cook sees promise in this land. "In many places a deep black soil which we thought was capable of producing any kind of grain, at present it produceth besides timber as fine meadow as ever was seen," he writes.

Banks and Solander collect so many bizarre and wondrous new plants the great captain is moved to name this glorious, if uneasy, landing place Botany Bay. The English colours have flapped on shore since arrival but, "having seen everything this place afforded", Cook decides to sail further north along this new and rich east coast of New Holland. He instructs a crewman to carve an inscription into a tree by a well-used watering place, some sign to say they were here. The crewman carves the date of their stay beside a word the Macquarie Dictionary for Australian English defines as "to exert oneself to do or effect something; make an effort; strive". He carves the word "Endeavour".

The view from the shore

The great Maori chief Te Horeta called her supernatural. He wondered if her mighty sails were engineered by spirits. He wondered if her great captain was more demon than navigator. Te Horeta was an old man in the mid-1800s when he told the early British settlers of New Zealand his great boyhood tale of how the Endeavour sailed into Mercury Bay in the eastern coast of the North Island's Coromandel Peninsula.

In his biography, *The Life of Captain Cook*, the late and celebrated New Zealand historian John Beaglehole penned a stirring passage detailing Te Horeta's great oral history.

The ship had come, it seemed a supernatural thing, and its men supernatural beings, for they pulled their boats with their backs to the shore where they were to land — had they eyes at the backs of their heads? They pointed a stick at a shag, there was thunder and lightning and the shag fell dead; the children were terrified and ran with the women into the trees. But these tupua, goblins or demons, were kind, and gave food: something hard like pumice-stone but sweet, something else that was fat, perhaps whale-blubber or flesh of man, though it was salt and nipped the throat — ships bread, or biscuit, salt beef or pork. There was one who collected shells, flowers, tree-blossoms and stones.

They invited the boys to go on board the ship with the warriors, and little Te Horeta went, and saw the warriors exchange their cloaks for other goods, and saw the one who was clearly the lord, the leader of the tupua. He spoke seldom, but felt the cloaks and handled the weapons, and patted the children's cheeks and gently touched their heads. The boys did not walk about, they were afraid lest they should be bewitched, they sat still and looked; and the great lord gave Te Horeta a nail, and Te Horeta said Ka pai, which is 'very good', and people laughed. Te Horeta used this nail on his spear, and to make holes in the side boards of canoes; he had it for a god but one day his canoe capsized and he lost it, and though he dived for it he could not find it. And this lord, the leader, gave Te Horeta's people two hand-fuls of potatoes, which they planted and tended; they were the first people to have potatoes in this country.



A shield collected from the Gweagal people at Botany Bay in April 1770.

The oral histories of the Gweagal elders of Botany Bay speak of similar views from the shore as these strange Europeans sailed into the waters of their home. Shayne Williams, language and culture consultant, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, is a Dharawal elder who says those oral histories include thoughts that Cook and his men may have been ghosts and their great vessel a supernatural floating island. Some saw the sailors running up and down mast poles out at sea as scrambling possums.

The oral histories that indigenous campaigner Rodney Kelly heard as a boy about the arrival of James Cook were told from the perspective of the Gweagal warrior Cooman. That oral history speaks of April 29, 1770 as the day warrior Cooman courageously stood defiant in the face of Cook's approaching marines who had sought no permission to enter a land Cooman's people had occupied for 60,000 years.

Cooman, the oral history says, stood on the shores of Botany Bay with a younger man, instructing the Europeans to sail back to wherever it was they came from. Cooman was shot in the leg and dropped his shield as he ran for cover. Kelly acknowledges himself as a sixth-generation descendant of Cooman and is leading a campaign to have the Gweagal shield and spears collected by Cook's men and housed in the British Museum and Cambridge University returned to his people in Sydney.

However, Williams has since stated in a report prepared by Cambridge University: "We do not know the individual identities of any of the Gweagal population of 1770, and we certainly cannot link any individual Gweagal person of that time to any of the spears that were obtained by Cook."

In a quiet corner of the National Museum of Australia, Ian Coates stares into a sketch of a banksia plant by Sydney Parkinson, part of Joseph Banks's

breathtaking *Florilegium*. Between 1771 and 1784, Banks underwrote a monumental project where he hired 18 engravers to create copperplate engravings from Parkinson's countless Endeavour drawings of the 30,300 specimens Banks's team found on their voyage through the Pacific, representing 3607 species in total, 1400 of which were unknown to science.

That banksia plant named in honour of the great botanist from Westminster, England, says Coates, was, of course, not unknown to the Gweagal people. Coastal banksia plants could be sucked for nectar, soaked in water to make a sweet and refreshing drink. The plants attracted honeyeater birds so they could be used as food traps.

“The view from the shore,” Coates says. “The story of Banks and Cook is such a fantastic story but the other part of that story, which we are now in a position to start telling, is the earlier knowledge of this material collected on that voyage. I think that’s one of the things we can look at as we approach the 250th anniversary. We can flesh out that side of the story.”

“The information is already there,” says the museum’s Cook specialist, Michelle Hetherington. “From Cook’s point of view, he’s interested in what is good to eat. He’s often asking the locals, ‘What’s fresh, what’s healthy, what’s nutritious?’ ”



Gararra (fishing spears) collected from the Gweagal people at Botany Bay in April 1770.

Coates was co-curator of a National Museum exhibition last year named *Encounters* that temporarily displayed, among many indigenous objects held by the British Museum, the Gweagal shield many elders believe was the shield dropped by Cooman in that fateful moment of first contact.

“What sort of family history accounts are still out there about that moment?” he asks.

“I think it’s really important to describe Cook’s navigational feats through the Pacific, it’s an extraordinary story. But I think it’s also important to

acknowledge the impact of those moments in Australia. It's important to reveal the complexity of the situation and that space between the indigenous and the ship's crew, to think about how that's impacted on where we are today. The legacy of that moment."

As Endeavour sailed north up the east coast of New Holland, the crew member who became the most adept at bridging that space between European and Aboriginal, says Hetherington, was the thoughtful artist Parkinson.

"Parkinson in particular spends his whole time on the voyage getting to know the indigenous people," she says.

He's courteous and kind and patient with the indigenous of the Pacific, especially, later, the inhabitants of far north Queensland.

"He must have been a very skilled person," says Hetherington. "His nickname on board the ship was 'Shy Boots', which I think is just lovely. They called him 'Shy Boots' because, when everybody else was having lots and lots of fun in Tahiti he was holding back. He was reserved. He was Scottish. He was a Quaker."



A botanical illustration produced by Sydney Parkinson.

Parkinson was the first European artist to set foot on Australian soil, the first to draw an authentic Australian landscape, the first to paint the face of an Aborigine from direct observation. He takes the time to see the view from the shore. "Artists look at people in a different way," Hetherington says. "He's looking with the question, 'Who are you? I'm looking at you.' Who are these people as individuals? 'I see you, not just a people.' That was part of his great skill and he helped make these amazing word lists. He would sit with portrait subjects saying things like, 'This is my nose, what do you call this? This is my arm, what do you call this?'"

Parkinson pens a vast vocabulary in his journal, indigenous Australian words for woman, man, father, son, hair, blood, head, bones, eyes, chin, arms,

thumb, belly, the pit of the stomach, hips, anus, thighs, knees, legs, scars, toes, body sores, earth, dancing, swimming, paddling, yawning and a word for all those curious “leaping quadrupeds” the men will see bouncing around New Holland.

“Kangooroo,” he writes.

The Endeavour sails cautiously north from Botany Bay past another place of safe anchorage Cook names Port Jackson. Conscious of provisions and with his men naturally eager to return home after so long at sea, he doesn't have time to investigate the wonders the area holds within it, including the most glorious harbour in the world that will one day be home to a pointy white opera house that will sparkle gold in the dropping afternoon sun.

The men eye the coast of New Holland as they go about their duties.

They see a paradise but they dream of home.

“Cook's always keeping them busy,” says Hetherington. “Normally sailors worked 12 hours a day, but Cook instituted a system where men were on for eight and off for 16 hours.

“One of the things that makes scurvy worse is you've used up all your stores of vitamin C because you're not getting enough sleep. The more pressure our bodies are under the more vitamin C we need.

“But there's always cleaning to do, fumigating the ship, removing the bilge water, which really stinks. There are so many opportunities to learn from Cook. Men are learning astronomy, mathematics, drawing, all the things that will form part of their command when they're promoted up the ranks. It's like a school on board the ship.

“Then there's all the readings to be done. Where are we? What's the time? Have we worked out our position? ‘Mr Simmonds, have you checked your results against Mr Green's results?’ It was busy, tiring, terrifying and very exciting.”

On May 9, 1770, Parkinson sees a rainbow and sings about it in print.

In the evening of that day we saw two of the most beautiful rainbows my eyes ever beheld: the colours were strong, clear, and lively; those of the inner one were so bright as to reflect its shadow on the water. They formed a complete semicircle; and the space between them was much darker than the rest of the sky.

Sailing well past what would become the fine city of Brisbane, on May 23, a frustrated Cook is distracted by a moment of ill discipline on board, potentially involving the New Yorker midshipman James Magra and Cook's own keen-drinking clerk Richard Orton.



A botanical illustration produced by Sydney Parkinson.

Last night some time in the Middle Watch a very extraordinary affair happend to Mr Orton my Clerk, he having been drinking in the Evening, some Malicious person or persons in the Ship took the advantage of his being drunk and cut off all the cloaths from off his back, not being satisfied with this they some time after went into his Cabbin and cut off a part of both his Ears as he lay asleep in his bed, the person whome he suspected to have done this was Mr Magra one of the Midshipmen, but this did not appear to me upon inquirey, however as I know'd Magra had once or twice before this in their drunken frolicks cut off his Cloaths and had been heard to say / as I was told / that if it was not for the Law he would Murder him, these things consider'd induce'd me to think that Magra was not altogether innocent, I therefore, for the present dismiss'd him the quarter deck and susspended him from doing any duty in the Ship, he being one of those gentlemen, frequently found on board Kings Ships, that can very well be spared, or to speake more planer good for nothing. Besides it was necessary in me to show my immedate resentment against the person on whome the suspicion fell least they should not have stop'd here. With respect to Mr Orton he is a man not without faults, yet from all the enquiry I could make, it evidently appear'd to me that so far from deserving such treatment he had not designedly injured any person in the Ship, so that I do and shall all ways look upon him as an enjure'd man. Some reasons might however be given why this misfortune

came upon him in which he himself was in some measure to blame, but as this is only conjecture and would tend to fix it up some people in the Ship whom I would fain believe would hardly be guilty of such an acton, I shall say nothing about it unless I shall hereafter discover the Offenders which I shall take every method in my power to do, for I look upon such proceedings as highly dangerous in such Voyages as this and the greatest insult that could be offer'd to my authority in this Ship, as I have always been ready to hear and redress every complaint that have been made against any Person in the Ship.

Cook will later deem Magra innocent and the most likely offender, a midshipman named Patrick Saunders, will desert the ship.

The Endeavour moves slowly into what Cook is quickly realising is some of the toughest navigating he has had to do throughout the voyage, a tense maze of shoals and small islands the frumpy workhorse Endeavour splits through indelicately. Cook has no clue of the length and breadth of the greatest tourist attraction to the state of Queensland, a 2300km coral reef that will one day be seen by navigators of a different kind exploring outer space. What he calls an “insane labyrinth”, the world will come to call the Great Barrier Reef.

On the full moon night of June 10, Endeavour is sailing slowly but safely through the waters off far north Queensland, some 70km south of what is now called Cooktown. Cook descends to his cabin for a welcome night's rest.

He slips into his drawers and rests his buzzing head. Shortly before midnight, he's woken by the most terrifying sound a captain can hear at sea.

The indigenous politician Eric Deeral was born in 1932 at the Hope Vale Lutheran Mission on Cape York Peninsula, almost 50km northwest of Cooktown, in far north Queensland. Eric, who died in 2012, was the first Australian Aboriginal to be elected to state parliament.

He grew up with the oral histories of his people, the Guugu Yimithirr, swirling through his big and busy mind. These oral histories he passed on to his niece, Cooktown historian Alberta Hornsby, who has dedicated her life to providing indigenous perspective to Cook's *Endeavour* journal. The view for her Guugu Yimithirr ancestors from the shores of Cooktown in June 1770 would have looked much the same as it does in any June, Alberta says.

“The southeast trade winds blowing like nothing else,” she says.

“Come June in Cooktown it just blows and blows and blows. And the rain comes. The miserable squalls.” Alberta would talk often with her uncle Eric about what it must have felt like for their people sitting by the fires on the shore and looking out to find the curious site of the British Royal Navy research vessel HMS Endeavour bobbing in the reef waters off their beloved home.

“My uncle and I discussed that moment at great length,” Alberta says. “He had heard the histories from his grandparents. There’s another aspect about Cook that added more to the story.”

She takes a deep breath.

“We believe our people were waiting for their ancestors to return,” she says. “It was believed that when our ancestors died their spirits travelled to the east and when they returned they would come from the west. But their spirit would have been changed when they returned and they would return with white skin and they would come with the hand of plenty and they would hunger no more. My uncle and I would talk about this story.”

And Alberta would wonder what her ancestors made of the British colours flapping in those southeast trade winds.

Did they wonder, like the young Maori boy Te Horeta did back in New Zealand, if these visitors were made not of flesh and bone but of something supernatural? Did they consider these men in heavy clothes and hats the spirits of their ancestors? And if they did consider them thus, did they wonder why on earth their mighty ship was sinking?



A botanical illustration produced by Sydney Parkinson.

Miracle on the Great Barrier Reef

She can hear the cannon blasting. She can see the worn, callused hands of Captain Cook's men touching it. She can see where it sat on the Endeavour before it was desperately heaved overboard into the night-time waters of Endeavour Reef to be found 200 years later by researchers from the American Academy of Natural Sciences. Cook historian Michelle Hetherington draws a long breath. There's no story she can tell more thrilling than the story of the black iron cannon she stares at now in a soft-lit room inside the National Museum of Australia.

"This is our actual history sitting in front of us," she says. "Who touched it? They may have all touched it! This is our link to that voyage in the 18th century."

June 10, 1770. A fat-bottomed coal carrier sails awkwardly along the coast of far north Queensland under a full moon.

"Cook's retired for bed," Hetherington says. "He's in his drawers, according to Sydney Parkinson. They're doing a running survey along the coast. Nobody really knows the Great Barrier Reef is there. It's about 11 at night. The men are sounding the lead, testing the depth as they're going and, suddenly, it goes from 20 fathoms to five in seconds. And, 'Booooooooooom'. They bang into a coral outcrop of the Great Barrier Reef."

The banshee howl of timber splitting. The Endeavour jolts to a stop. Men look overboard to find broken planking floating atop the water. A hidden reef of sharp coral has stabbed a sickening hole in the underside of what, right now, looks certain to become the most famous vessel to ever rest at the bottom of Endeavour Reef.

The men see death. The men see two years of bold and brave exploration and groundbreaking scientific research lost to the Pacific Ocean that's pouring into Endeavour's hold.

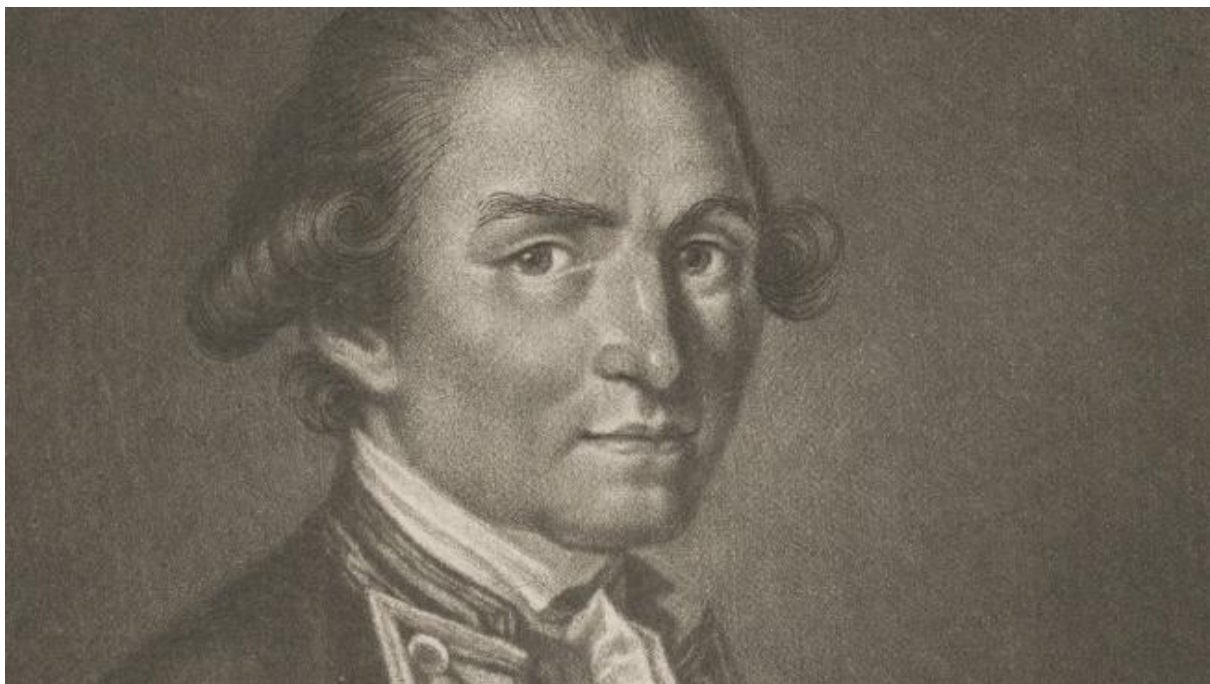
"The great fear when you hit something like that is that your ship is going to break up and you're all going to drown," Hetherington says. "There were not enough boats to take everybody to the shore. These sailors weren't encouraged to learn to swim. Most of them couldn't swim. Normally when something like this happens the crew mutiny. They'd break open the rum, they'd get completely drunk, and the theory is we might as well ease our passage out of this world. If your ship's going down, better to go down quickly than struggle along. We'll just have a bit of fun before we go."

Hetherington shakes her head in awe.

“But they don’t do that.”

Something magical happens that night on Endeavour Reef. Cook’s men unite. To the face of certain death, they raise a combined middle finger.

Cook rushes to the deck, still in his nightshirt. He barks orders to his men in clear, sharp sentences. He calls for calm and effort. Robert Molineaux assesses the damage from a small boat. Men of all ranks rush to the wood pumps to lower the rising water levels in the hull.



A portrait of Cook by John Webber at Cape of Good Hope.

“Immediately, they all move into action to save the ship,” Hetherington says. “They pull down the sails, they row anchors out from the boat at two separate points attached to heavy rope so that they would have leverage points. There were four wooden pumps on board and only three of them worked and everybody on board — including Joseph Banks, who was a gentleman and part of a private party — took their turn manning the pumps. They all work in unison for Cook. They’re a real team.”

Cook instructs the men to lighten the ship.

“There are 10 of these cannon on board and six of them go straight overboard along with tonnes of iron ballast pigs.”

Decayed stores go over. Oil jars and hoops and casks go over too.

Wise Banks is heartened by the efforts of the men but he can't shake his fear of certain death.

All this time the Seamen workd with surprizing chearfullness and alacrity; no grumbling or growling was to be heard throughout the ship, no not even an oath (tho the ship in general was as well furnishd with them as most in his majesties service). About one the water was faln so low that the Pinnacle touchd ground as he lay under the ships bows ready to take in an anchor, after this the tide began to rise and as it rose the ship workd violently upon the rocks so that by 2 she began to make water and increasd very fast. At night the tide almost floated her but she made water so fast that three pumps hard workd could but just keep her clear and the 4th absolutely refusd do deliver a drop of water. Now in my own opinion I intirely gave up the ship and packing up what I thought I might save prepard myself for the worst.

The most critical part of our distress now aproachd: the ship was almost afloat and every thing ready to get her into deep water but she leakd so fast that with all our pumps we could just keep her free: if (as was probable) she should make more water when hauld off she must sink and we well knew that our boats were not capable of carrying us all ashore, so that some, probably the most of us, must be drownd: a better fate maybe than those would have who should get ashore without arms to defend themselves from the Indians or provide themselves with food, on a countrey where we had not the least reason to hope for subsistence.

But stout Cook has a sailor's faith. He believes in the sea. He believes in his men. He believes in his ship. He believes in himself. He believes in providence.

"They had this idea of providence," Hetherington says. "I don't know that Cook is particularly religious but he had this idea that they were being looked after. That they had great fortune, possibly due to some superior God-like being — providence."

As night turns to day turns to night, and the mighty vessel remains lodged on the reef, Cook calls on his men to pump faster and work, work, work towards a high tide that might just enable the men to winch the vessel off the reef. As the tide rises, Cook calls on his men out on the full boats to pull hard on their

oars until the winch ropes are so taut they might snap clean away from Endeavour. About 10pm, she moves.



A painting of the Little Old Man, a Waymbuurr Warra elder, commissioned by the Cooktown Re-enactment Association.

“They manage to winch the ship off the coral,” Hetherington says.

The men rejoice. Their darkest hour is their finest. Banks writes:

During the whole time of this distress I must say for the credit of our people that I beleive every man exerted his utmost for the preservation of the ship, contrary to what I have universaly heard to be the behavior of sea men who have commonly as soon as a ship is in a desperate situation began to plunder and refuse all command. This was no doubt owing intirely to the cool and steady conduct of the officers, who during the whole time never gave an order which did not shew them to be perfectly composd and unmovd by the circumstances howsoever dreadfull they might appear.

“I dived in the Endeavour Reef in 2009,” says Nigel Erskine from the Australian National Maritime Museum. “There is still material there on the reef you can identify as being part of Endeavour. Then you look out at how

far off the coast he was, you can see a distant mountain range, and you just think, ‘God, that guy was lucky that he got off that reef’. If he doesn’t, everything is lost. Chances are, Banks dies. It’s Banks who later becomes the ambassador for a British colony in NSW. Who would have done that if he hadn’t? If Cook doesn’t get off that reef, there’s a whole range of dominoes that do not fall.”

It takes Cook and his men six days to pull a dangerously wounded Endeavour delicately to shore.

“Even though they can see the shore, and they’re not that far away, they have to carefully nurse the ship along,” says Hetherington. “They can’t put up too much sail because it could tear the ship apart if there’s too much force put upon it. But they do this thing where they make what’s called a fothering sail. They lay a sail on the deck and they fill it with all the dung from the sheep and animals on board and the straw from their bedding and used up bits of rope to make a gooey sticky mess that they fold over like a bandage and then they fling it over the ship to bring it up to the point where they know where the hole is. The pressure of the water pushes it into the hole like a plug and with that they manage to limp to shore. Extraordinary.”

Hetherington makes a grave face.

“Of course, they then had no idea what they would see on shore.”

The Guugu Yimithirr people call it Waalumbaal Birri, the Endeavour River, near Cooktown, far north Queensland, where Cook spends almost seven weeks repairing his ship on the river’s protected south bank. Cook doesn’t know it yet but providence is at play again.

“They’re at the mouth of the Endeavour River,” says historian Alberta Hornsby, a Guugu Yimithirr woman from Cooktown. “Fortunately for them, they bring the boat in at the south bank of the river. Fortunately for them, this is a neutral zone. That particular clan land is part of the land that is shared and used by surrounding clan groups for ceremonies and sharing of resources, for example, during flying fox season. This is where the people from five surrounding clans could meet and come to Cooktown to share in that resource. This is a place where disputes are settled and where women gave birth. A special place.”

If there is one place for strangers to respectfully land along this long and rugged coast, then Cook has miraculously landed upon it.

“They beach the ship on the banks of the river and it’s laid over on its side,” says Hetherington. “When they turn the ship over there’s this giant boulder of coral still jammed into the hole.”

Cook writes:

... the rocks had made their way thro’ four Planks, quite to and even into the timbers and wound’d three more. The manner these planks were damaged or cut out as I may say is hardly credible — scarce a splinter was to be seen, but the whole was cut away as if it had been done by the hands of Man with a blunt edge tool — fortunately for us the timbers in this place were very close other wise it would have been impossible to have saved the ship and even as it was it appear’d very extraordinary that she did not made no more water than what she did — A large piece of Coral rock was sticking in one hole and several pieces of the fothering, small stones, sand had made its way in and lodged between the timbers which had stoped the water from forceing its way in in great quantities.

“They feel this was an act of providence, that the ship had taken the coral with it,” Hetherington says. “Otherwise the hole would have been so big they would have gone down. They now empty the ship out and start chopping down trees to make the timber they’ll use in repairs. They’ve got two things on their mind. Who lives here and are they going to be safe?”

“It takes them 10 days to fix the boat but they stay for 48 days,” says Hornsby. “Our people are observing them the whole time but it’s not for about a month that our people make contact with Cook.”

Some oral histories passed down to Hornsby say the Guugu Yimithirr people may have believed Cook’s men were the spirits of departed ancestors returned in white skin, as foretold in shared stories. “I think that’s one of the most important things that adds to Cook’s success in that first voyage,” Hornsby says. “They were shipwrecked far from home. There was no way out for them, but they did not have the added burden of aggressive natives. What happened on that river was a cultural exchange. It was a deep insight into two cultures meeting for the first time.

“Of course, Cook’s men came with gifts and all the gifts were useless, nails and cloths and everything, because all our people were interested in was the colour of their skin. All they were interested in was making Cook’s men strip off so they could examine them and in the journals Cook says he lets them do what they need to do.”



Alberta Hornsby. Picture: Brian Cassey

Some Guugu Yimithirr oral histories, says Hornsby, suggest “our people were wondering why these white people were not recognising them as their relatives”.

“They were still waiting for their ancestors to return.”

Banks and Solander explore the area for specimens. The many ill crew on board have time to recuperate. Provisions for the long journey home are found in the food-rich land. It’s here that Parkinson learns of the intrepid “kangaroo”, which Hornsby’s people say he misspelled from the native “gangurru”.

“It’s only the second time they’ve spent any time on the Australian continent,” says Hetherington. “And they have this really remarkable relationship with the local people who, to this day, consider that first meeting as the first act of reconciliation between black and white on Australian territory.”

It’s here that the Guugu Yimithirr record what Hornsby considers a beacon moment for indigenous and non-indigenous relations in Australia. The oral history says Cook’s men collected 12 turtles from a breeding area that formed part of a sacred storyline connecting land and sea.

“They were taken from a part of the reef that was sacred to the clans who had

exclusive use of those waters,” Hornsby says. The locals demanded that two of the turtles be returned. This request was refused, says Hornsby, upon which a brief conflict occurred in which a local man was struck in the shoulder by British musket fire and several spears were removed from increasingly aggravated natives.

“But this was sacred ground and our men could not do anything that could cause blood to fall on it,” she says.

“The reconciliation was taken by a little old man and he came forward out of the bush while Cook and them was resting, he came forward carrying a spear with a broken tip and he performed a ritual where he drew sweat from under his arms and he threw the sweat in the air, indicating that he was calling on his ancestors to recognise him and to help him with this situation, to make amends for the conflict that had just happened. He came forward and Cook couldn’t understand anything he was saying but he knew, by the little old man’s actions, what was actually happening.” Cook writes:

After some little unintelligible conversation had pass’d they lay down their darts and came to us in a friendly manner . We now returned the darts we had taken from them which reconciled every thing.



A cannon from the Endeavour.

The events surrounding Cook's time on Endeavour River have been re-enacted annually in historic Cooktown for almost 60 years. The re-enactment script was rewritten in 2008 to better represent the perspective of the Guugu Yimithirr people. To better represent the view from the shore.

"We try very hard now to tell the story of two cultures and one people," Hornsby says. "And there's all these people working together now, you know, from a little place like Cooktown. It's that reconciliation."

Before he died in 2012, Hornsby's uncle, Cooktown politician Eric Deeral — the first Australian Aborigine to be elected to state parliament — spoke of his admiration for Cook's diplomacy. The captain seemed to put people before politics. He judged events by the information he had before him, surveyed right and wrong with the same balanced eye he cast across the Australian coastline.

"I'm 62 years old," Hornsby says. "I was born on a mission, a place set up to take care of a dying race. For a lot of people, that great journey of Cook's represents the beginning of so much destruction for our people that lasted right up to the 1960s.

"But then I look around Australia and I see today that we have so much strong Aboriginal culture and we have so much beauty and interest and connection within Australian society. Our people are strong and so resilient and I see so many young people carrying on our traditions and we still have so many strong elders in the 21st century and every effort is being made to maintain our language. The stories are still in our heads and our hearts.

"If only we took that diplomacy that was shown in Cooktown into the future. Cook did things without argument. He didn't argue about those spears. He just gave 'em back."

Early August, 1770, and Cook is anxious to put back to sea.

"So they're about to go and Cook climbs up a place called Grassy Hill in Cooktown," says Hetherington.

Looking out to the Pacific, he hopes to find safe passage north in the direction of the East Indies.

"But he's appalled to find the Great Barrier Reef stretching the whole way up like a labyrinth in front of him," says Hetherington.

His dreaded "insane labyrinth" is not finished with him yet.

But he does not baulk. He sails on. On August 22, 1770, he lands on a small island at the extremity of the Cape York Peninsula. This island will be called Possession Island, where Cook claims the east coast of Australia for Great - Britain.

Having satisfied myself of the great Probabillity of a Passage, thro' which I intend going with the Ship and therefor may land no more upon this Eastern coast of New Holland and on the Western side I can make no new discovery the honour of which belongs to the Dutch Navigators and as such they may lay claim to it as their property but the Eastern Coast from the Latitude of 38° South down to this place I am confident was never seen or viseted by any European before us and therefore by the same Rule belongs to great Brittan Notwithstanding I had in the Name of his Majesty taken possession of several places upon this coast I now once more hoisted English Coulers and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern Coast from the above Latitude down to this place by the Name of New South Wales together with all the Bays, Harbours Rivers and Islands situate upon the same said coast after which we fired three Volleys of small Arms which were Answerd by the like number from the Ship.

He sails on with haste, pushing his bruised and battered coal boat further and further into the unknown because there's another place he desperately wants to find. A place truly like no other.

Home.

At rest in a watery grave

It has to be seen through the eyes of the young. Nicholas Young. The youngest on board. The boy will go on to become a servant to Joseph Banks. He'll join the great botanist in 1772 on a journey to Iceland. But there'll be no greater story he will tell in his lifetime than the one about how he joined Lieutenant James Cook on his first great epic voyage of discovery. He leans out from Endeavour's masthead and pierces his eyes to catch a glimpse of England. The boy has made it home.

On July 12, 1771, young Nick watches Endeavour's storm-bashed and sunbaked ribs and rails sail gently into the port of Dover. She carries weary but elated men, illuminated men. She carries objects and artefacts and great specimens to be celebrated and written about for the next 250 years. But most of all, she carries knowledge. New insights into navigation, mathematics, geology, astronomy, map-making, botany, languages. She carries new strategies to manage men, to survive at sea, to cross entire oceans into new hemispheres of thinking. She carries a whole new world.

Far behind her crew is an invisible string of adventure stretching back down and around the southern hemisphere, passing through cyclones and deadly storms and coastal trees etched with their names and the sounds of native tribes telling stories of their ghostly arrivals. And scattered like thumb tacks on a world map are the buried bodies of their friends, the men who didn't make it home — men like Zachary Hicks and Sydney Parkinson and Forby - Sutherland — the brave men who dared to sail through all those blue and black seas with their great Captain Cook.

In a strictly off-limits temperature-controlled room inside the National Library of Australia, historian Martin Woods, the library's curator of maps, casts his eyes over a table of priceless world maps from the 18th century. He studies a late-1700s map titled "Map of the World on a Global Projection - Exhibiting Particularly the Nautical Researches of Captain James Cook".

"Look at what he did," Woods gasps. The map is split into two circular halves, two sides of the world, the right side being Europe, Asia and the Americas, the left side being Cook's vast Pacific. Woods waves his hands over the whole left side of the map. "He expanded the globe by that much. It's a completely different world by the time he's done."

Nigel Erskine of the Australian National Maritime Museum says: "Even in the places he was seeing nothing he was seeing something. If you're seeing

nothing you're able to put on your chart that there is no land in that area. To find nothing was adding something.

“Basically, after his third voyage, Cook put everything on the map and there wasn't a lot left for others to do.”



Divers at Newport, Rhode Island after completing a first day's dive in 1999 in search of the possible wreck site of the Endeavour. Picture: Stuart Ramson

Erskine has dedicated much of his recent life to academically tracing the fate of Endeavour after Cook.

“Dr Kathy Abbass (from the Rhode Island Marine Archeology Project) announced in 1999 that she had found evidence that the Endeavour — renamed the Lord Sandwich — had been part of this fleet of vessels scuttled in 1778 in Newport Harbour, Rhode Island, to repel a French attack in the town during the American Revolutionary War,” he says.

“And in the last couple of years I decided that somebody needed to do the basic research into this. In 2014 I spent two weeks in London in the National Archives and the library at Greenwich and the British Library going through all the records. I was able to find the documentation which showed that ultimately she was one of five vessels scuttled at Rhode Island.”

More significantly, Erskine has since been able to narrow the final resting point of the most important vessel in Australian history down to a target area of roughly 1000sq m.

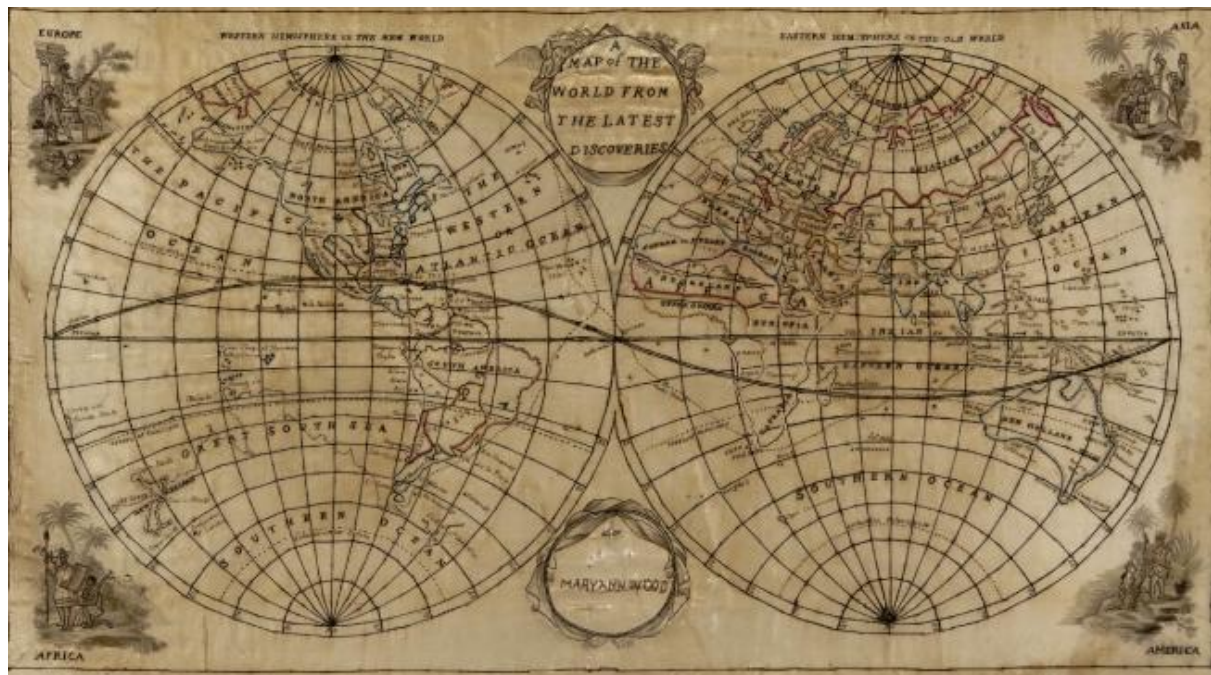
“There was a place called Goat Island, which sort of sticks off the mainland in Newport Harbour, and north of that there was a little fortification called the North Battery. The Endeavour was one of five vessels scuttled between the northern tip of Goat Island and the North Battery, so you’re talking about an area of about 1000m and you’re looking at depths of around 40ft.

“What my research has done is it has said, ‘Look, if you’re interested in finding Endeavour, then this is the area that we should be focused on.’ So the Rhode Island Marine Archeology Project people have taken that on board.”

Erskine says Abbass’s team will commence its next potentially revelatory major research dive on September 11.

“I feel we’re close,” says Erskine, who has visions of Australia marking the 250th anniversary of Cook’s landing in Botany Bay in 2020 by gazing upon the actual remains of the Endeavour recovered from Newport Harbour.

“We’re hoping that we could positively identify the vessel, say, ‘Yes, the remains are there’, and be able to say it with hand on heart, having done all the research and archeology by 2020.”



A silk embroidery of a double hemisphere map of the world. Picture: National Museum of Australia

If it is found, says Erskine, it will be a hugely significant archeological moment connected to the foundation stories of both Australia and the US. The next debate after that will be a complex one: who gets to keep it?

Cook's dogged old coal boat of discovery may be more intact than one might think after sleeping for 240 years at the bottom of the sea.

"We've seen other vessels that were scuttled in Newport Harbour and there's quite extensive remains of timber down there," Erskine says. "These vessels were built from great big bulks of oak. If they've been covered by the mud and things then that timber tends to still remain, not necessarily as hard as it was originally; it tends to get quite porous and be a bit spongy but still, if the Endeavour is still down there, then I would expect to find, certainly, part of the keel and the ribs off that keel and maybe some of the lower planking.

"We could easily find cannon. We could find some of the iron ballast and because it was scuttled in relatively quick time, you might expect there were things on board that they didn't have a chance to get off ... So we might find ceramics, things like plates and jugs and cups and things. Those things survive for centuries underwater."

Erskine has made five research dives himself since 2005 in Newport Harbour. "It's far from an ideal site," he says. "Rhode Island, and Newport in particular, is a bit of a mecca for boats. You have to be aware of recreational boaters and lobster fishermen and the other people around the site. Often commercial fishermen don't like the fact you've occupied a part of their harbour where maybe they've got lobster pots down there. The lobsters themselves like to burrow down among wrecks so you have to be careful where you put your hands because they have one big claw which can crush your finger.

"Then there's a very big tidal movement. Twice a day the tide moves in and out, so visibility is generally not great, maybe a visibility of three, four metres, whereas, when we're diving in the Coral Sea you're talking about 30m. Diving in the Coral Sea is like diving in gin. Diving in Rhode Island is more like diving in sewage."

But the adventure of it draws him back. It's the same thing that drew James Cook back to the sea on all those voyages after Endeavour. "It's filled with wonder," he says. "It's modern exploration. You're always wondering what you'll find next."

There's a beautiful passage in Cook's journal where he briefly ponders the wonder and compulsions in the life of an 18th-century explorer of uncharted worlds — the thrill of wondering what you're going to find next. He wrote it in mid-August 1770 after surviving yet another hellish ocean battering — maybe the worst he would ever face — in the Great Barrier Reef in which he was saved by “nothing but providence”. “The same sea that washed the sides of the Ship rose in a breaker prodigiously high the very next time it did rise so that between us and destruction was only a dismal Vally the breadth of one wave,” he writes. “All the dangers we had escaped were nothing little in comparison of being thrown upon this Reef where the Ship must be dashed to pieces in a Moment, a Reef such a one as is here spoke of is scarcely known in Europe, it is a wall of Coral Rock rising all most perpendicular out of the unfathomable Ocean.”

Rattled and alive, and awed by God and sea, Cook gathers his thoughts the following day and writes some of the most powerful words he's ever written. It's one of the few times the normally businesslike and humble leader owns his courage and his commitment.



A bust of Captain Cook. Picture: National Museum of Australia

Was it not from the pleasure which naturly results to a Man from being the first discoverer, even was it nothing more than sands and Shoals, this service would be insupportable, especially in far distant parts, like this, short of

Provisions and almost also every other necessary. The world will hardly admit of an excuse for a man leaving a Coast he has unexplored he has once discover'd, if dangers are his excuse he is than charged with Timorousness and want of Perseverance and at once pronounced the unfittest man in the world to be employ'd as a discoverer if on the other hand he boldly incounters all the dangers and obstacles he meets and his unfortunate enough not to succeed he is than charged with Temerity and want of conduct.

The former of these aspersions cannot with Justice be laid to my charge and if I am fortunate enough to surmount all the dangers we may meet the latter will never be brought in question. I must own I have engaged more among the Islands and shoals upon this Coast than may be thought with prudence I ought to have done with a single Ship and every other thing considered, but if I had not I should not have been able to give any better account of the one half of it than if we had never seen it, that is we should not have been able to say wether it consisted of main land or Islands and as to its produce, that we should must have been totally ignorant of as being inseparable with the other.

Words too long for a song or sea shanty, much less a T-shirt or Twitter feed. Words written only for history.

In the off-limits maps room of the National Library of Australia, Martin Woods holds up a small yellow box made of shark skin not much bigger than the kind of box that would hold a diamond ring.

The box dates back to the year 1790 and has a small yellow lid that flips open to reveal the entire world.

“It’s a pocket globe,” Woods says. A prized possession cooler than an iPhone in the 18th century.

“Look,” he says, spinning the marble-sized globe inside the box to the perfectly mapped continent of Australia. “It’s a complete world.”

He spins the globe again and stops on a series of words etched over Hawaii. A date: February 14, 1779. “It’s a world that recognises the death of Captain Cook,” Woods says.

It’s the only significant event from world history the pocket globe’s makers thought to mark on it.