

**Something Old, Something New: Further Notes
on the Aborigines of the Sydney District
as Represented by Their Surviving Artefacts, and
as Depicted in Some Early European Representations**

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ABSTRACT. An up-dated list of surviving pre-circa 1820 Aboriginal ethnographic material from, or claimed to be from, the Botany Bay-Port Jackson area is followed by discussion of a number of late 18th/early 19th century depictions of Aborigines, some hitherto unpublished. This material is examined in the light of a number of recent surveys of the art, archaeology and ethnography of the Sydney district at the beginning of the period of European settlement.

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The *rite de passage* conjured up by the title to this brief tribute to Fred McCarthy, selfless supporter over the years of many younger and more ignorant scholars than himself, is offered in the aftermath of the bi-centennial of European settlement in south-eastern Australia. While my sub-title smacks somewhat of the antiquarian, it may also perhaps be considered to mark an intellectual coming of age after a period of rugged individualism (Megaw, 1966a) and, as such, to represent a true marriage of the disciplines of archaeology, the history of art and anthropology. In this context, I may be forgiven a few semi-autobiographical remarks at the outset.

There has been much progress in all three of the areas of study just listed since the time when, more than 25 years ago, as a fledgling Lecturer in European Archaeology at the University of Sydney, I was first

encouraged by our honorand, then first Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, to undertake a series of excavations of coastal and estuarine sites in the South Sydney district. These excavations, like so many of those carried out in Australia in the last two decades, and unlike Fred McCarthy's own impeccable record of publication, alas largely remain at best inadequately reported in the literature (e.g., Megaw, 1965; 1966b, 1969a, 1969b, 1974; Megaw & Wright, 1966).

At the same time, and mindful of my own undergraduate training in fine arts as well as prehistoric archaeology, I became interested, as others before me, in the surviving iconographic and ethnographic evidence for the initial period of European culture-contact history in south-east Australia. In 1966 I began a preliminary study of early New South Wales ethnographic material

in British collections (Megaw, 1967). In this I was inspired and again generously assisted by another foundation director of an academic institution recently established, Bernard Smith (see particularly Smith, 1985a), at the time foundation Professor and Director of the Power Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Sydney.

It is some time since Fred McCarthy himself first embarked on a detailed survey of the ethno-history of the Port Jackson area and one must hope that one day the fruit of his labours will see the light of print. In the meantime, there have appeared in recent years a number of major publications which allow critical analysis to be applied to the early records, both artistic and anthropological, provided not only by those who accompanied James Cook and Joseph Banks to Botany Bay in 1770, but also by those English, French and Russians who followed Arthur Phillip and the first convict fleet's arrival in New South Wales 18 years later (Barratt, 1981; Joppien & Smith, 1985a; Mulvaney & White, 1987; Smith & Wheeler, 1988; Bonnemains, Forsyth & Smith, 1988). The following notes on a number of early artefacts and representations of Aboriginal daily life attempt to draw together information, both published and unpublished, which may assist further the analysis of the beginnings of Australia as a multicultural society.

Provisional Catalogue of Artefacts Collected or Presumed to have been Collected in the Sydney Region before about 1820

Probably the earliest material evidence for the collection of Australasian artefacts by Europeans comes not from New South Wales but from New Britain, Papua New Guinea. A waisted axe and slingstone in the Woodwardian Collection now in the University of Cambridge Sedgwick Museum of Geology is to be associated with William Dampier's visit there in March 1770 (Mulvaney, 1978). While there are, of course, apart from Cook and Dampier, other well-authenticated accounts of contacts between Europeans and Aborigines – Luis Vaez de Torres in 1606 in the Straits which now bear his name, Jan Carstensz in Cape York in 1623 and Abel Janszoon Tasman off the north coast of Australia in 1644, not to mention the Dutch in Western Australian waters – and even references to Aborigines being taken to Manila as well as to Britain (Mulvaney, 1989), nothing tangible has remained from before the arrival in Australian waters of the bark *Endeavour*.

There exists in many museums in Australia, Europe and North America much material clearly collected in, around or even before the middle of the last century. Almost without exception such material has little or no indication of provenance. Indeed, in view of what is known to have been collected during the early years of the Colony of New South Wales, it is surprising just how short a list can be made of even potential candidates, though the present catalogue is based on a far-from-total

first-hand museum search. For example, the absence of artefacts collected on the 1800-1804 expedition of Nicolas Baudin is an obvious major gap (Jones, 1988). Previous surveys of the ethnography of Cook's first voyage (Kaeppler, 1978a, 1978b) and a number of shorter studies concerned with other surviving early Aboriginal ethnographic material (Megaw, 1967: esp. 17-19, 1969a, 1969b; 1971; McBryde, 1970; Lampert & Konecny, 1989) have covered much of this. In the following list, which attempts simply to bring this material together in one place, references and basic data are restricted, therefore, to a minimum. The list is presented in order, or assumed order, of date of recovery.

Abbreviations

Inventory numbers are cited where known and the following abbreviations are used in the catalogue and final section of this paper: AM – Australian Museum, Sydney; BL – British Library, London; BM(MM) – Museum of Mankind, British Museum, London; MAE – Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, N.N. Miklukho-Maklay Institute of Ethnography, St Petersburg; UMAA – University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, England; [] – assumed attribution/provenance; ‘ ’ – information from collection records.

In the case of pictures, measurements are given as height preceding width.

Additional notes are listed in the Appendix.

Catalogue

[Botany Bay, New South Wales]

(ex Trinity College, Cambridge, Sandwich collection)

1-4. Four fishing spears, three multi-pronged (two with three and one with four prongs, all with bone tips) and one with hardwood head. Binding of two-ply vegetable cord (?kurrajong or *Brachychiton populneum* bark) binding. All have had their shafts cut down. Length of heads about 500 mm. UMAA D.1914.1-4 (Figs 1-4).

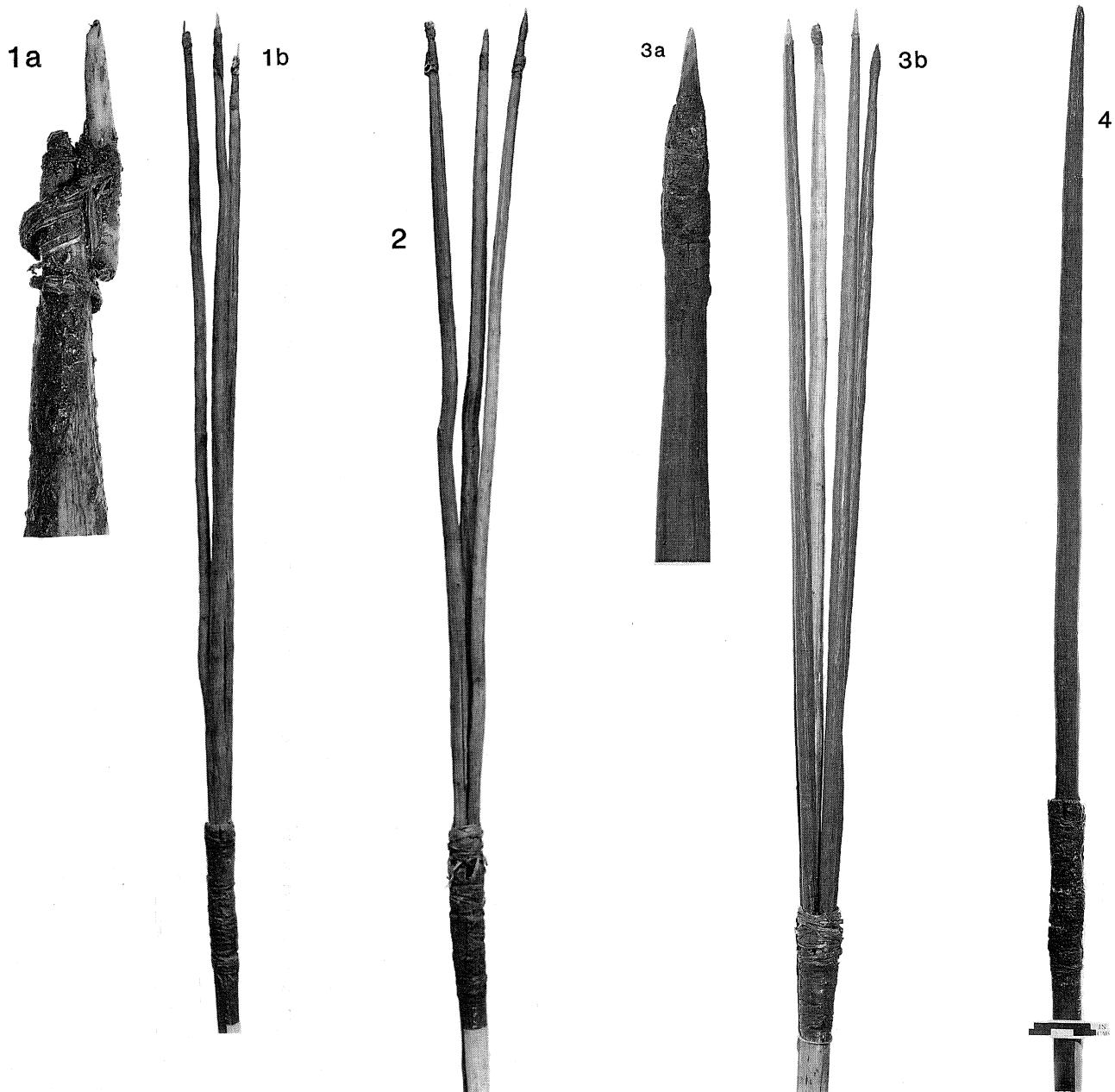
Since first noticed by D.J. Mulvaney in the UMAA collections and initially and only partially published by Megaw (1967:17,pl.V), these spears have justly found their place as the premier artefacts in any discussion of the early ethnography of the Sydney region. Subsequent publications include Megaw (1969a, 1969b, 1971:60-61,pl.4c), McBryde, (1970:pl.8a) as well as Kaeppler (1978b:40,250, with fig.546), but the opportunity has been taken here to publish illustrations of all four pieces for the first time. Originally part of the collection of John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, friend of Banks and patron of Cook (from whom he received them), they were donated by him in October, 1771 to Trinity College, Cambridge where he

had been a student. The material was transferred to the UMAA in 1914.

Like all the spears in this list, the basic material used in their manufacture appears to have been the grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea resinosa*). Although small change out of the 40 or 50 spears recorded by Banks as having been collected from Botany Bay, it is interesting in the light of his comments that 'all we had except one had...prongs headed with very sharp fish bones' (Beaglehole, 1963:55), since item UMAA 1914.4 is the only hardwood-headed (fighting) spear to have been identified as Cook material. On the other hand, none of the UMAA spears appears

to match the two 'fish gigs', one with four prongs, each clearly shown with bone tips set in gum, and one with four down-pointing stingray spines as barbs (one such barb was recovered in the 1968-1970 Botany Bay excavations) illustrated by John Frederick Miller in 1771 as one of a series prepared for Banks and annotated in the latter's hand (Megaw, 1972; Joppien & Smith, 1985: I.176) (Fig.6).¹

Lampert & Konecny (1989) – see below, catalogue numbers 25-29 – offer a good list of early published comparata for the multi-pronged 'fish gig' with bone tips similar to those of the Cambridge spears. Their references



Figs 1-4. (Cat. nos 1-4) Botany Bay, New South Wales. Four fishing spears with details of bone-tipped barbs (1a,3a). University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (*ex* Sandwich Coll.). Photos: courtesy University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge.

include the often-quoted illustration of 'Implements of New South Wales' engraved in 1789 and published in 1790 in John White's *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales* (pp.291-294), which also depicts a simple hardwood-headed fighting spear, while the Botany Bay excavations have added some two dozen identified unipoints to the more than 200 recovered from Lampert's own Durras North site.

[Botany Bay, New South Wales]
(‘New Holland’ ex ‘Banks collection’)

5. Spear shaft. Surviving length 2.15 m. Etnografiska Museet, Stockholm 1848.1.60.

Kaeppler (1978b:40,250) supports Rydén's claim (1965:94,fig.53N) of this spear as a genuine relic of Banks' and Cook's visit to Botany Bay; the original catalogue entry indicates New Holland as the provenance.

[Botany Bay, New South Wales]

6. Bark shield with bent wood handle. Length 970 mm. BM(MM) 'Captain Cook Acc.' (Fig.5a-c).

The ascription of this shield to the events of April, 1770, despite its uncertain documentation other than the fact that it came into the Museum's possession over a century ago, seems highly probable and it has found a place as a Cook relic in the highly restrictive listing of Kaeppler (1978b:250). McBryde (1970), Kaeppler (1978b:fig.545) and particularly Megaw (1967:17-18,pl.VIa, 1969a, 1972) have compared the shield in detail not only to the shields shown in Parkinson's Botany Bay sketches (Fig.13a) but also to that illustrated by John Frederick Miller in his page of drawings (Fig.6). Dated 1771, Miller's drawing is obviously an attempt at precise representation and the hole which he shows in the centre of the shield matches precisely the position of that visible on the BM(MM) example. It seems clear that there were, and possibly still are, more relics of Banks' and Cook's encounter with the Aborigines of Botany Bay than '40 or 50 spears'.

Other but presumably more recent examples of this type of shield with a withy handle are also to be found from outside the Sydney region. There is a shield, location 'Port Stephen, (sic) NSW?', also in the BM(MM). The original documentation records it as having been presented by Josiah Cato, Esq., in 1868 who had received it 'from Bobby Tinouee' (inventory number 4979). The AM also has a similar bark shield from Port Macquarie (inventory number E.42918).

?‘New South Wales’
(ex Widdicombe House collection)

7. Woomera or spear-thrower of wood with wooden peg at one end and shell adze at other, both fixed with ?grass-tree gum. Length 840 mm. UMAA 1922.994 (Fig.7a-c).

8. Edge-ground stone axe set in ?grass-tree gum with split sapling handle and two-ply vegetable cord (?kurrajong bark) binding. Length of axe-head 130 mm. UMAA 1922.995 (Fig.7d).

The only previous reference to this material of which the first published photographs are appended here, is a brief mention to catalogue no. 7 by McBryde in her discussion of the Sydney Parkinson sketches of Aborigines at Botany Bay (1970: caption to pl. 7) (Fig.13a). This material came to the UMAA in 1922 as the gift of Louis Clarke, formerly Curator of the Museum; it is recorded as having been 'collected by Admiral Gordon' and having originated together with a boomerang and bark basket from Widdicombe House, Kingsbridge, South Devon. It is just possible that these objects, whose immediate prior owner may have been a Mr Clarke of Uffculme – no relation of Louis Clarke – could have formed part of the collection of Sir Ashton Lever whose private Leverian Museum was sold in 1806 (Kaeppler, 1978b: 47; in preparation). Unfortunately, there is no record of the material amongst the Pacific items, largely collected on Cook's third voyage, which were purchased at the sale.²

There is little reason, however, to doubt the Sydney provenance of catalogue numbers 7 and 8. Both artefacts still have what appear to be original labels, although, unfortunately, in very poor condition. That on the axe reads in part:

Natives hatchet fr...N.S. Wales...g...d...the...of some animal.

The woomera with its shell adze and wooden peg both set in gum may be readily matched by descriptions and depictions, not only on the Parkinson sketches (Fig.13a-b) and the drawings of the Port Jackson Painter (Lampert, 1988:53), but less ambiguously for example amongst the 'Implements of New South Wales' in John White's *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*, David Collins' *Account of the English Colony of New South Wales* of 1798-1802, and somewhat later in Lesueur's illustrations for Baudin's expedition (Jones, 1988:60,pl.34). A shell adze of this general form made from the Sydney cockle (*Anadara trapezia*) was in fact recovered in the 1970 excavations at Captain Cook's Landing Place, Botany Bay.³ The edge-ground axe with its split and bound wooden handle (Lampert, 1988: 53) can also be paralleled on the same plate from White and on one of the plates illustrating *The Voyage of Governor Arthur Phillip to Botany Bay* published by Stockdale in 1789 – both the White and the Phillip plates are usefully reproduced in Kohen & Lampert (1987:346,353).⁴ On both plates we find not only axes with identical bindings but also a very similar bark basket and boomerang; one is tempted to think that the engravers in both cases may have been following the same models. This raises the unanswerable question of just what was the ultimate material source of the artefacts illustrated by the First Fleet artists and, even more, by those often anonymous artists and engravers working for the London-based publishers of the day.

'Eastern Australia'

('Cook collection' ex J. Calvert)

9-10. Two boomerangs, second with hand-grip. Lengths 560 & 680 mm. AM H.313-4 (Fig.8a-b).

11. Wooden club. Length 800 mm. AM H.294 (Fig.8c).

The Australian Museum's 'Cook collection' has had a rough ride in recent years. The three objects here listed were last publicly exhibited in Sydney and Melbourne in April-May 1970 as part of the Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Exhibition 'Cook, Banks & Australia' (Paget, 1970). All three objects have been

previously illustrated, but not as a group, by Megaw (1967:pl.VIb, 1969b:pl.5, 1971:pl.IVb). They form part of a large collection of artefacts mostly of Pacific origin purchased in September 1889 on behalf of the New South Wales Government from a Mr John Calvert of Kentish Town, London (see Beddie, 1970: item 3721 for complete list); all three have the acquisition information 'Sir J. Banks' Museum. Purchased from J. Calvert'.

Kaepler (1972:196, 1978b:40, n.13, 250, n.1), in stating categorically that the objects in the Calvert collection cannot be traced to Cook, also cites a letter in the UMAA written in 1887 to its then Curator, the Baron von Hügel, describing Calvert as 'an accomplished

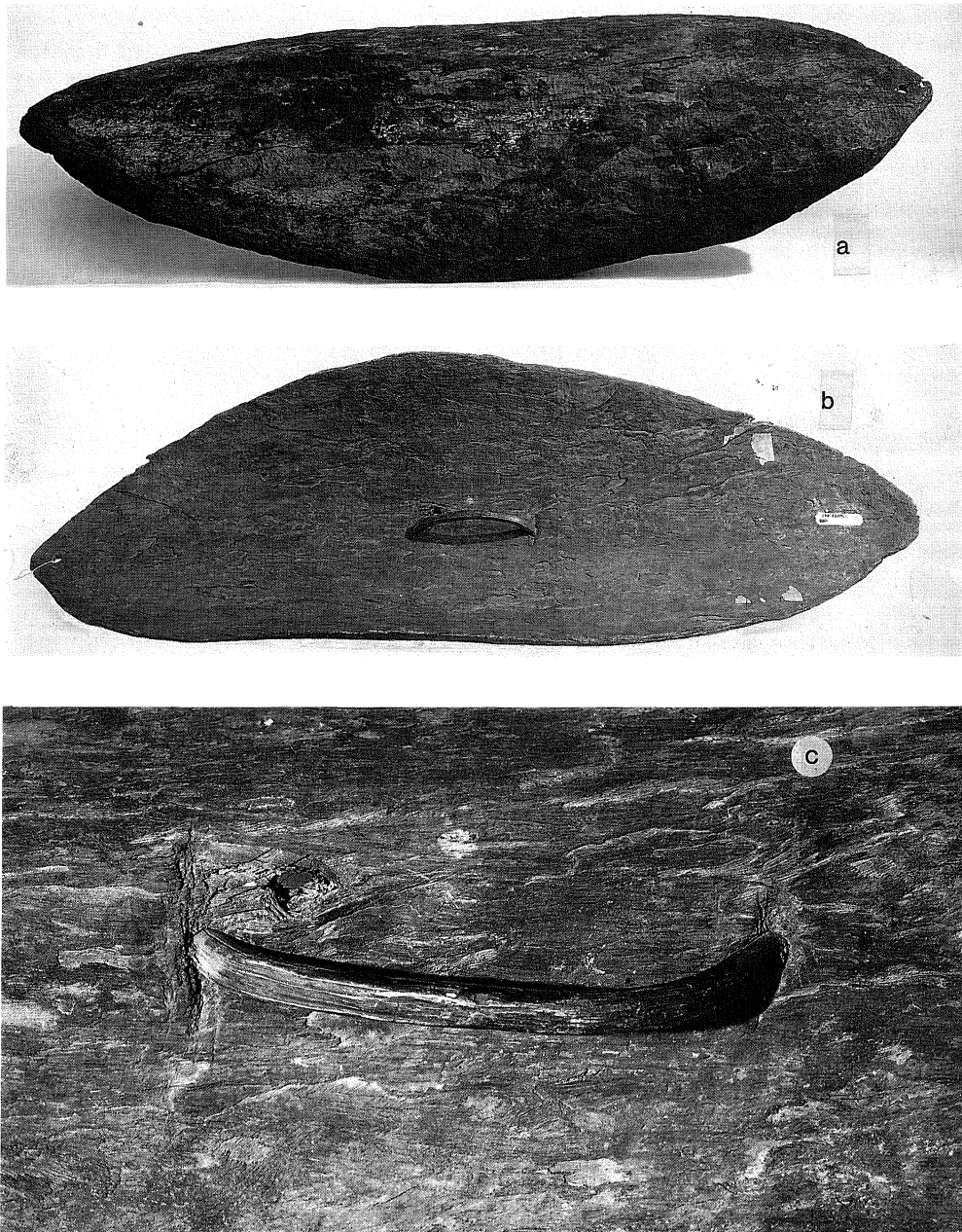


Fig.5a-c. (Cat. no.6) ?Botany Bay, New South Wales. 'Captain Cook Acc.' (a) Front, (b) rear and (c) detail of handle of bark shield. Museum of Mankind, London. Photos: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

swindler and the find may be a bogus one'. The find was long considered genuine as evidenced by the undated 'Notes about ethnographical artifacts collected during Cook's voyages...' (Beddie 1970:item 3746) compiled by W.W. Thorpe, Ethnologist at the Australian Museum and, in February 1912, first recorded excavator of the Kurnell region (Megaw 1968:17). Certainly, if 'a swindler', Calvert believed in doing the job properly. On 22 September 1859 he wrote to *The Times* claiming that the collection had been discovered during the demolition of Banks' house at 32 Soho Square in that year. This followed the death of Robert Brown, Banks' legatee, former private secretary and companion to Matthew Flinders on his circumnavigation of Australia in the *Investigator*. Calvert states that the objects had been found 'in a room that had not been opened for many years'. As if this Gothick vision was not enough, Calvert wrote two days later to the *Standard* quoting a supposed letter from Banks to a Capt. (?) Covey RN as follows:

So my old friend (James Cook)...presented me with a long box, made on board (the Endeavour)...filled with several paddles, stone tomahawks, and other strange things.

Calvert maintained that he had been shown this

collection in 1839 by Brown, whom he claimed to have been his tenant.

There can be no doubt, of course, that, despite this seemingly solid evidence, the 'Cook collection' is highly suspect with regard to its association with the visit of Cook and Banks to the east coast of Australia, and it is far from impossible that the material was assembled by Calvert from a number of sources including perhaps Banks. There is nothing surprising in evidence of dealers 'improving' the provenance of goods prior to their sale. On the other hand catalogue numbers 9-11, both boomerangs and club, would not be out of place in a Sydney context.

[Botany Bay]

12. Boomerang with incised meander pattern. Length 550 mm. Discovery Centre, Botany Bay National Park, Kurnell, NSW (Fig.9).

The known history of this piece is no less circumstantial or intriguing than that of the 'Cook collection' in the Australian Museum (catalogue nos. 9-11).⁵ The only published information on the provenance of the boomerang is to be found in an

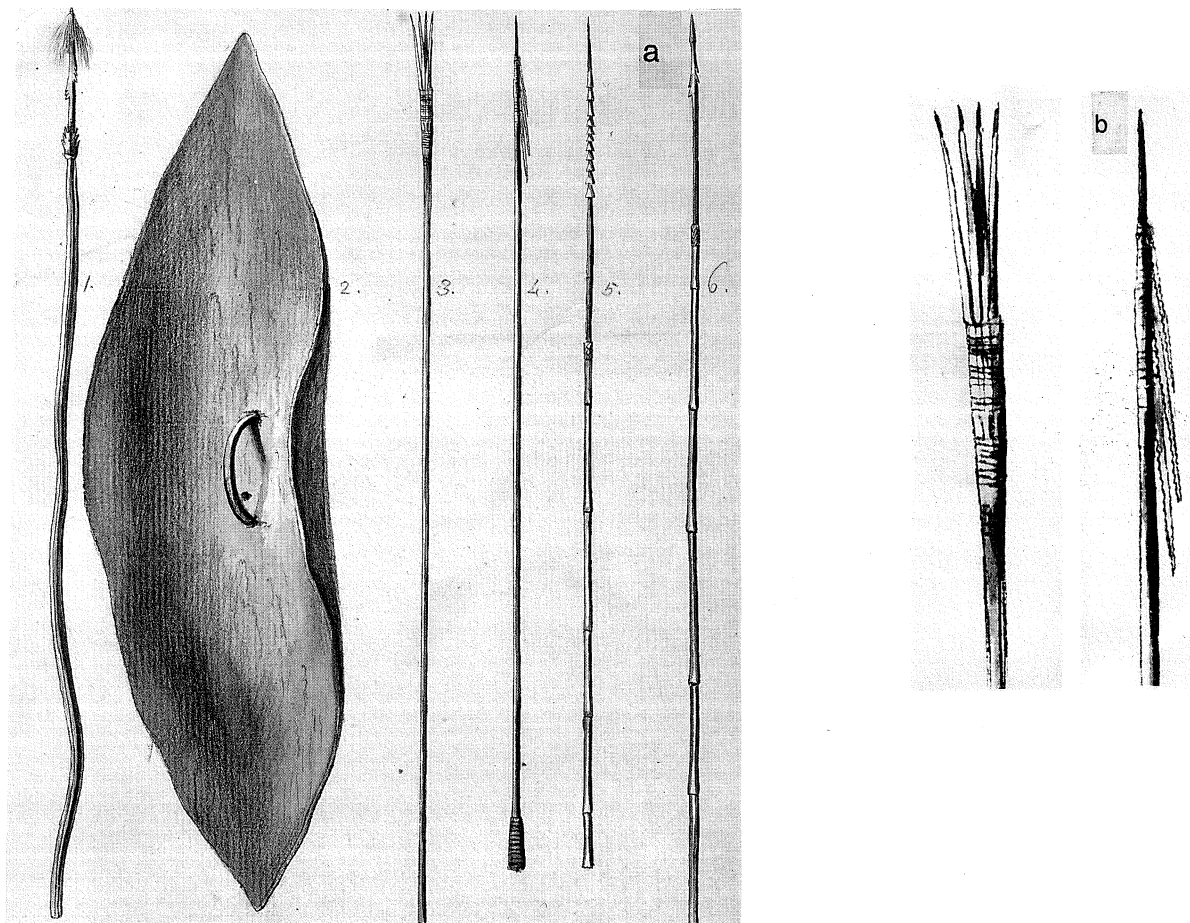


Fig.6. John Frederick Miller. (a) Pen and wash sketch of artefacts from Australasia (within frame lines 206 x 165 mm) and (b) detail of spear barbs. Signed and dated 1771 lower right. British Library Add. MS 23920, f.35. Photos: courtesy British Library.

article entitled 'Captain Cook's boomerang' which appeared under the name of Flinders Barr in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July, 1926 (Beddie, 1970: item 3751). 'Flinders Barr' was the pen name of C.R. Wylie who, as perusal of the New South Wales Public Service List shows, served as a Commander RNVR. His account

records how he purchased the boomerang in 'a little curiosity shop' in an otherwise unidentified market town in East Anglia; subsequent research has established the date of purchase as 1902. Wylie discovered that the boomerang had a label – alas, no longer extant – which read:

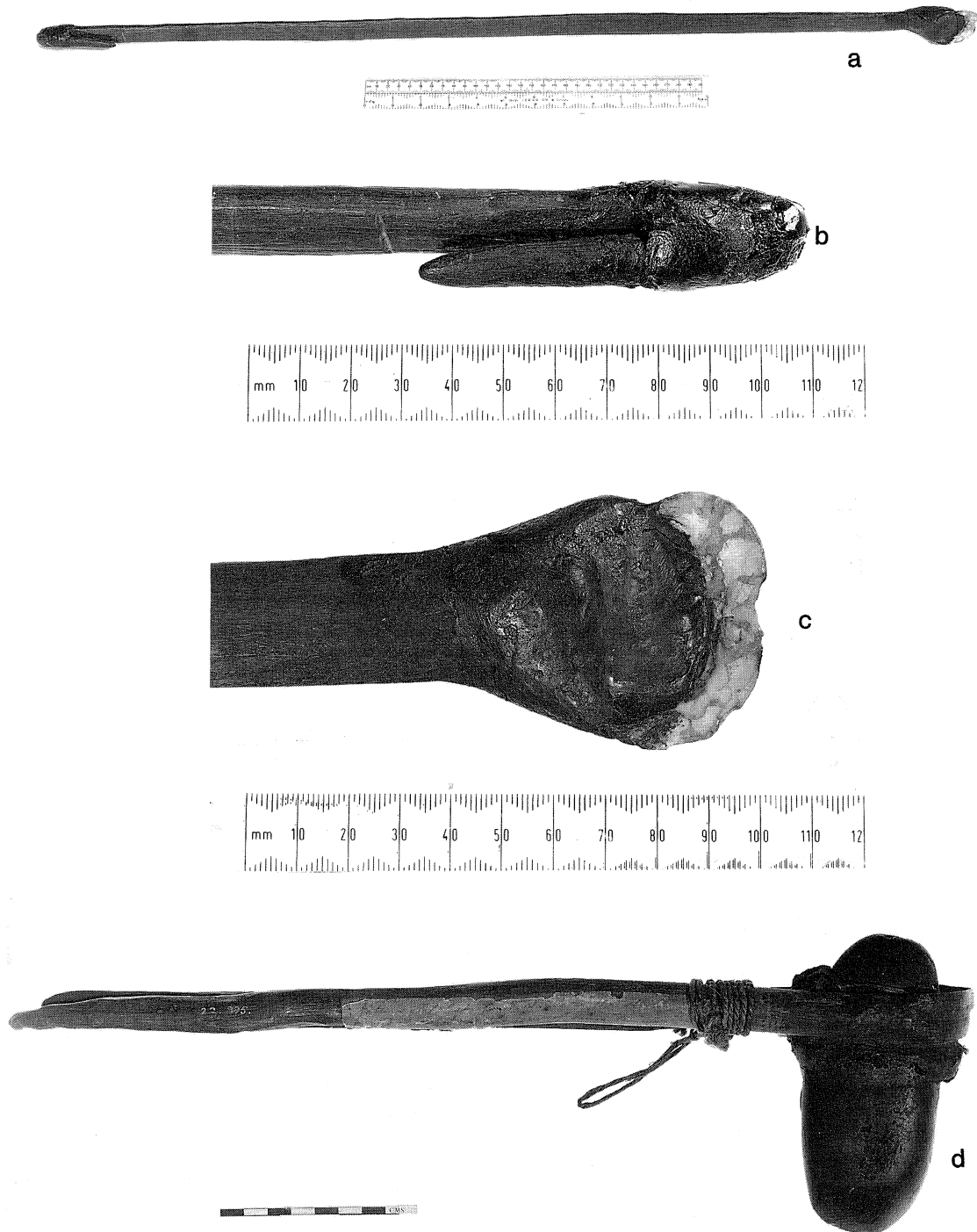


Fig.7. (Catalogue nos 7-8 New South Wales). (a-c) Spear-thrower with details of wooden peg and shell adze; (d) hafted edge-ground stone axe. University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (ex Widdicombe House Coll.). Photos: courtesy University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge.

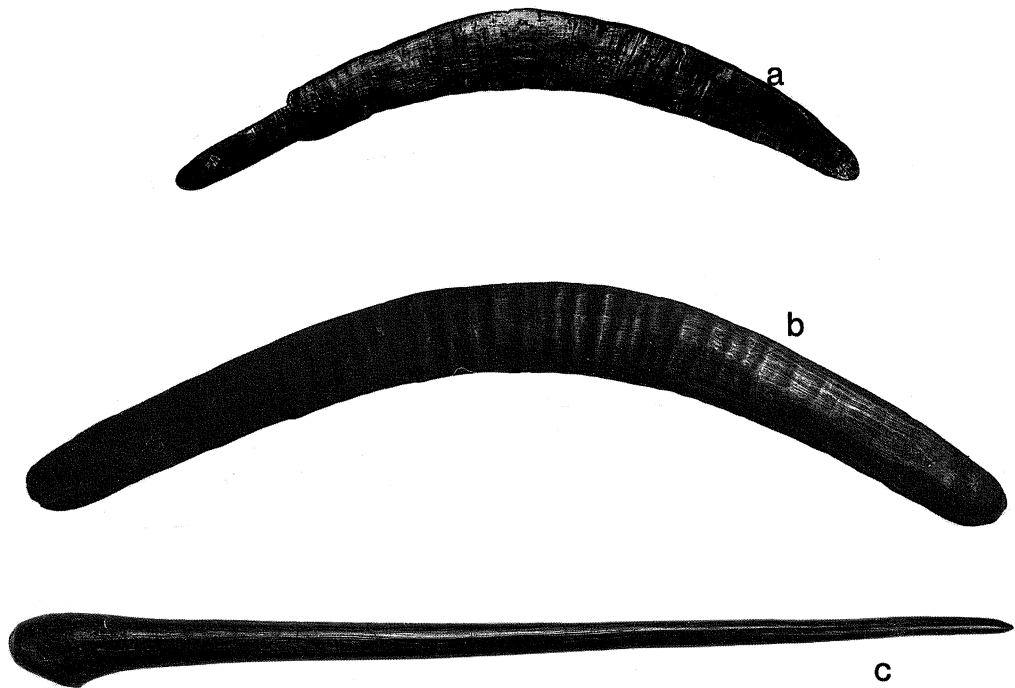


Fig.8. (Cat. nos 9-11) Eastern Australia. (a-b) Two boomerangs and (c) wooden club. Australian Museum, Sydney ('Cook Coll.'). Photos: courtesy the Trustees of the Australian Museum.



Fig.9. (Cat. no.12) 'New Holland'. Boomerang with incised meander pattern. Discovery Centre, Botany Bay National Park, New South Wales. Photo: courtesy NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

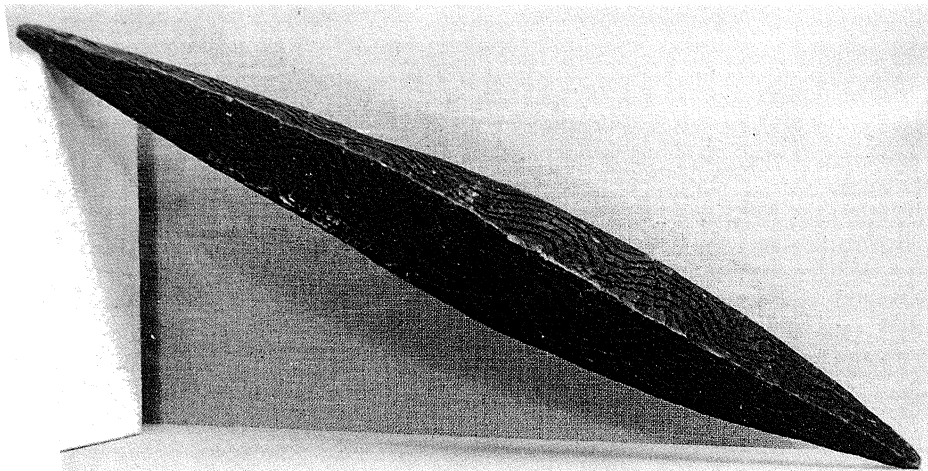


Fig.10. (Cat. no.13) 'New Holland'. Parrying shield with curvilinear incised pattern. Saffron Walden Museum (Southwark loan). Photo: courtesy Saffron Walden Museum.

Given to me by my old friend, Mrs. Elizabeth Cook, Dec. 21st, 1826. Brought back from New Holland by her late husband, the celebrated navigator. H. ROGERS, Clapham.

Elizabeth Cook, who died on 13 May 1835, having outlived her husband, whom she had married on 21 December, 1762, by more than half a century, indeed lived in Clapham for much of her life. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to trace 'H. Rogers' in the absence of, for example, rate books for the period. In *A key and companion to the plan of Clapham* published in Clapham by H. Batten in 1827, there is a reference to Thomas Rogers who lived at the time in Lark Hall Lane, Clapham, and in J.H. Burgess' *Chronicles of Clapham* published in 1929 there is a reference to a Rev. J.G. Rogers (1822-1911) who lived for many years at 109 North Side, Clapham Common.

After Wylie's return to Australia not long before publication of the newspaper article, the boomerang remained in his possession, subsequently passing to a Mr Esdaile by whom it was donated to the (then) Captain Cook's Landing Place Museum.

The unusual feature of the boomerang itself is its curvilinear decoration. Though is not unknown on other wooden artefacts from the Sydney region (e.g., cat. nos. 13 & 31 and, for early representations by the Port Jackson Painter and George Raper, see Lampert, 1988:pls 28,42-44,52,55,67), this is suggestive more of inland than of coastal New South Wales. There is no mention of boomerangs at Endeavour River in any of the *Endeavour* journals and the evidence of provenance, such as it is, makes the 'Cook' boomerang a not totally unreasonable candidate for inclusion in this list.

'New Holland' (ex Cuming collection)

13. Parrying shield with curvilinear incised decoration. Length 840 mm. Saffron Walden Museum (Southwark loan) C3496 (Fig.10).

14. Boomerang with incised decoration. Maximum length 760 mm. Saffron Walden Museum (Southwark loan) C3499.

15. Woomera with wooden peg set in ?grass-tree gum. Length 860 mm. Cuming Museum, London Borough of Southwark C3502.

The Cuming collection comprises a considerable body of material from both eastern and western Australia. Although it is not now all traceable and is dispersed in part between the Cuming Museum in Southwark, Saffron Walden and the Department of Anthropology at University College, London, it forms a most important, and little known, ethnographic resource.⁶ The manuscript catalogue to the collection was compiled before 1850 and there is evidence that my catalogue numbers 13 and 14 were entered between April 1840 and May 1841, while number

15 was certainly entered before May 1849. The term 'New Holland' which only appears on the three pieces from the collection described here, though frequently used to describe Australia as a whole, was certainly applied to present day New South Wales and generally became uncommon after 1820.

Of the three objects, number 14 has a label which reads:

TUR-RUR-MA called by Europeans Boomerang. When thrown into the air, it revolves on its centre and returns, forming a circle in orbit from and to the thrower.

The incised decoration on the parrying shield, catalogue number 13, is not unlike one of the 'musical instruments', obviously a shield, depicted by the Port Jackson Painter and described by David Collins (Lampert, 1988:60,pl.55).

'Port Jackson' (ex Arley Castle collection) (Fig.11)

16-17. Two boomerangs, one with label reading 'Boomerang from P. Jackson / New South Wales'. Lengths 670 & 810 mm. BM(MM) 978-9.

18-19. Two spears, one with barbed single wooden head, the other with simple four-pronged hardwood head. Total lengths 2.5 and 3.36 m. BM(MM) 955 & 944.

20. 'Necklace worn by females, a double string of sections of yellow cane'. Total length 2.06 m. BM(MM)1892.

21-22. Two net bags of two-ply vegetable (?kurrajong bark) cord. Maximum depth of bags about 380 & 500 mm. BM(MM) 4060-1.

23. ?Fishing line of two-ply twisted vegetable (?kurrajong bark) cord. Total length about 9.76 m. BM(MM) 4062.

Only brief mention has previously been made in print to this interesting body of material (Megaw, 1967:19,pl.VII). Acquired by the British Museum and incorporated within the Christy collection sometime between 1862 and 1867, while its association with Arley Castle near Kidderminster in Worcestershire is clear, any firm indication of how it came to be there is obscure in the extreme.⁷ Arley Castle was built in the neo-Gothic style probably between 1770 and 1800 by the first Earl Mountmorris and eighth Viscount Valentia who was succeeded in 1816 by his son, the ninth Viscount and second Earl. He died in 1844 and the titles passed to a kinsman of a collateral line who sold the Castle to the Woodward family in 1852. The Castle subsequently passed out of the Woodwards' hands and was demolished in the 1960s for building material. There is no evidence that the Valentias had any direct or indirect connection with the Colony of New South Wales in its early years even though the son of the ninth Viscount did travel in the Middle East and India between 1802 and 1806. One of the boomerangs has a lot number pencilled on

a location slip and it may well be that the collection, which also includes a club recorded as coming from Bathurst and two other boomerangs from Clarence, NSW, could have been purchased at auction at any time

before 1862.

On the other hand, by and large the objects from Arley Castle match types well known from the Port Jackson area and one label states that they were 'obtained from

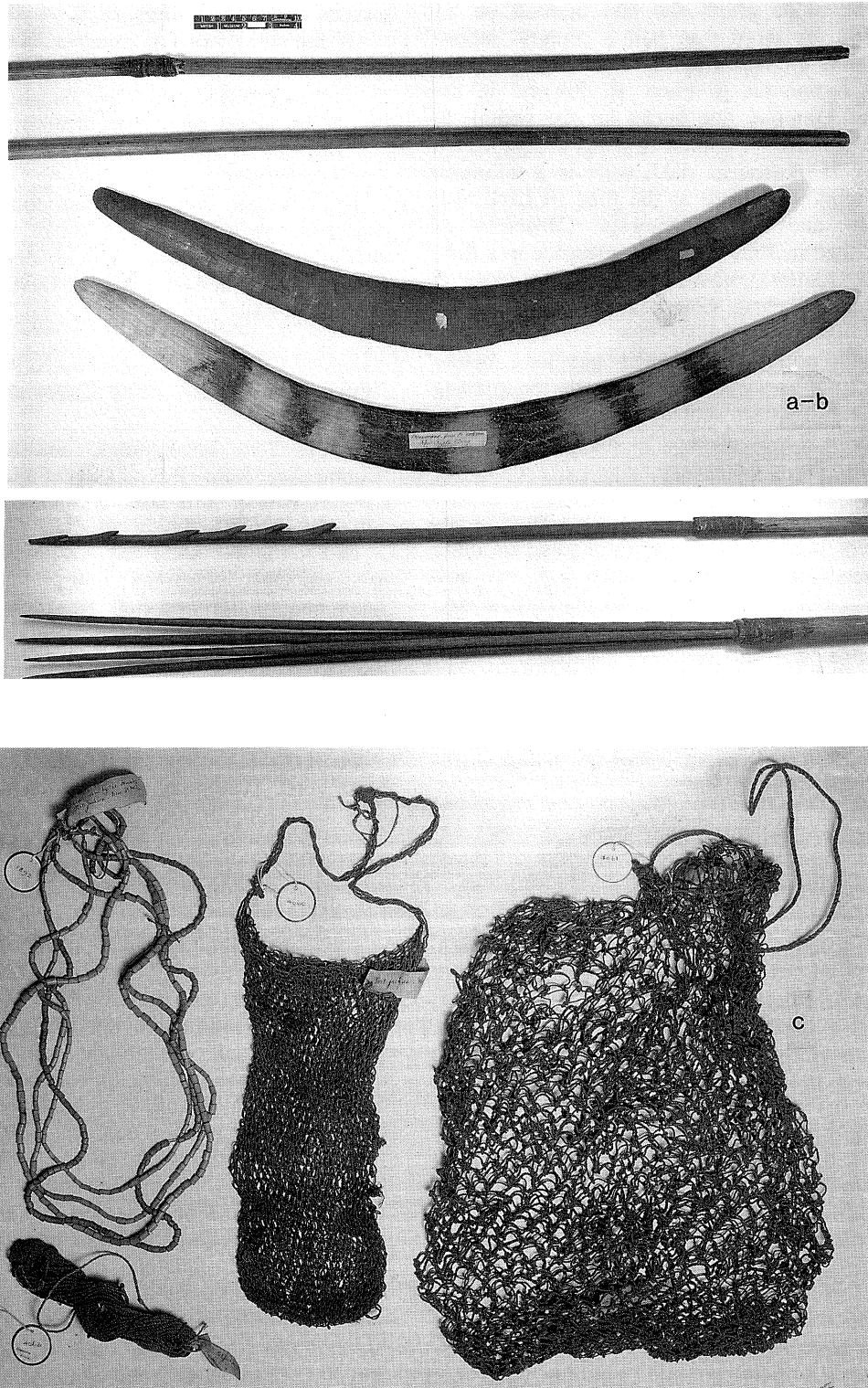


Fig.11. (Cat. nos 16-23) Port Jackson, New South Wales. (a-b) Two boomerangs and details of two wooden spears; (c) necklace, ?fishing line and two net bags. Museum of Mankind, London (ex Arley Castle Coll.). Photos: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

natives'. The spears – to be added, with those recently identified in the AM (cat. nos. 25-29), to those in St Petersburg (cat. nos. 35-37) previously described by Lampert as the 'only two complete fishing spears from the entire Sydney district' (1988: 43, n.51) – and boomerangs may also be compared with those listed elsewhere in this catalogue. Of particular interest are the string bags since, with the exception of one supposedly found in a rock-shelter at Killara (Allchin 1966:163) and now also in the British Museum, they would appear to be the sole surviving examples from the Sydney region. The bags are similar to that drawn by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and published in the second edition of François Peron's and Louis de Freycinet's account of the Baudin expedition (Bonnemains, Forsyth & Smith 1988:89); the Baudin bag appears to exhibit a similar knotting technique to that employed in the Arley Castle examples. If the length of line (cat. no. 23) was indeed used for fishing, it is a pity that the (presumably shell) hook does not survive since, despite the not infrequent descriptions and depictions of such hooks and line (Fig.15a; Lampert, 1988:43) and the archaeological evidence for such hooks (e.g., Megaw, 1974: 6ff.)⁸, no complete specimens of hook and line seem to have survived from the Sydney region although they are known from elsewhere in eastern Australia (Walters, 1988).

[Sydney region]

24. Wooden shield with red-on-white ochre decoration. Length 700 mm. AM E.77861.

Lampert (1988: 59-60, pl.53) mentions 'three (my emphasis) poorly documented bark shields' in the Australian Museum as being of this type. He also draws attention to their depiction and description in the surviving records of the Baudin expedition (see Jones, 1988:60, pls 33,34 and the originals for these published illustration now in the Lesueur collection of the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle at Le Havre: 16034 & 16035.1 & 2, 20028, 20029.1-3 & 20031.1 & 2). The Russian expedition of 1820 also described the 'wooden shield' decorated with 'dry white colouring substance' and 'red stripes' (Barratt, 1981:88).

[Sydney region]

25. Spear with hardwood head. Length 2.01 m. AM B.1770.

26. Spear shaft. Length 2.05 m. AM B.1766.

27-28. Two multi-pronged spears (one with four simple prongs, the other with four prongs each with split bird-bone points). Total lengths 1.74 & 2 m. AM B.1767 and E.31764.

29. Spear with barbed single solid head. Total length 2.12 m. AM E.17760.

Lampert & Konecny (1989) give a full description, though not all the five spears are illustrated, and, while the provenance is based solely on typological features, there is no reason to doubt their ascription. Catalogue number 28 with its bone points may be compared with one of the Sandwich collection Botany Bay spears (cat. no. 3). Catalogue number 29 with its solid barbed head and number 27 with its untipped prongs are both paralleled in the Arley Castle collection (cat. nos 18 & 19). As evidence of early cross-cultural influence, it is interesting to note that Lampert and Konecny identify the use of pitch and of cord similar to thin sash-cord in the assembly of catalogue no. 27.

Port Jackson

30. Boomerang with traces of ?grass-tree resin. Maximum length 875 mm. MAE 736-186.

31. Club or throwing stick decorated with white transverse and undulating stripes. Length 560 mm. MAE 736-190.

32. Parrying shield (unfinished). Length 510 mm. MAE 736-273.

33-34. Two spear shafts, one with two-ply vegetable fibre binding. Lengths 1.75 & 1.86 m. MAE 736-274 & 278.

35. Two spears with simple hardwood head (one with undulating incised decoration). Lengths 2.19 & 2.54 m. MAE 736-275 & 276.

36. Spear with barbed single solid head. Length 2.69 m. MAE 736-279.

37. Multi-pronged (four simple prongs) fishing spear. Length 2.04 m. MAE 736-280.

As Barratt (1981:81-91) points out in his thorough study of these pieces, all were collected on one or other of the two Russian visits to the Colony of New South Wales in respectively 1814 and 1820, the latter being the naval scientific expedition under the command of F.G. von Bellingshausen; all objects were in the Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg by 1828.

The artefacts correspond with the contemporary Russian accounts of Port Jackson ethnography. The use of decoration, both painted and incised, may be noted (cat. nos 31, 35); a parallel for the club may be seen in a painting by George Raper depicting 'Implements of Port Jackson' (Lampert, 1988:pl.67). Amongst the spears, all typical of the Port Jackson region, that with a barbed hardwood head is to be compared with catalogue numbers 18 and 29 and the quadruple-pronged 'fish-gig' without bone point tips with catalogue numbers 19 and 27.

South Creek, Sydney NSW

38-39. Two double-ended throwing sticks. Length about 850 mm. Werrington House collection.

An illustration of these throwing sticks is included by Kohen and Lampert (1987:356) who record them as having been acquired in the 1820s by the King and Lethbridge families. While at present there seems no reason to doubt their further comment that 'they are probably the only artefacts of this kind still in existence from the Sydney area', it will be interesting to see what further examples of the most fruitful type of excavation, the excavations of old collections, both private and institutional, may reveal.

[Sydney region]

40. Wooden club with incised decoration. Length 750 mm. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. 1900.55.57 (Fig.12).

It is fitting that the last object to be discussed here, which came to my notice while this paper was in the press, should be associated with Bungaree, 'chief of the Broken Bay tribe' as he was described by Governor King (McBryde, 1989: esp. 33 and pl.41). The club, which is decorated with two double rows of undulating incised lines (compare catalogue nos. 12-13 and 31) is recorded as having been given by Bungaree 'to Mr Smith, an assigned servant to Mr Ke[?]n]yon of Smith field', and had been used by Bungaree 'in the war between the tribes [of] Liverpool and those of Five Dock about 1823'. The club forms part of the collection made by N.H. Hardy and donated to the Museum by R.F. Wilkins in 1900. Bungaree, as McBryde notes, accompanied both Flinders and King on their voyages of exploration and by 1819 'had sailed every coast of the continent' (McBryde, 1989:33).

Discussion of Some Images Old and New

As noted at the outset, one of the positive gifts to scholarship of the Australian Bicentennial has been the wealth of publications on the early European depictions of Aboriginal life and culture in the Sydney region. These naturally build on earlier pioneering studies other of single artists or groups of artists such as Rienits & Rienits

(1963), Smith (1985a, a revision of a study which first appeared in 1960), Lysaght (1979, 1980:esp. 41-95) and Carr (1983). In the course of the previous section, mention has been made to a number of important artistic and literary sources for fleshing out the meagre surviving ethnography of the first generation of British settlement in the area. It is apposite, therefore, to conclude these notes on some evidence old and new with comments on three groups of images, two by now well known, one not fully published before and all raising points of interpretation and attribution.

There is little need to dwell on the earliest extant European depictions of Australian Aborigines and their artefacts in the Sydney region, Parkinson's sketches probably executed between 26-28 April, 1770, in view of the discussion of the page of some ten details offered by Joppien & Smith (1985:44ff., 220-1 & pl. 45 = cat. no. I.171; add to the references cited there Megaw, 1967:283 & pl. II erroneously attributed to 'Alexander Buchan', 1969a:pl. XXXIII a, 1969b:pl.2; Smith, 1985b – the reference to Rienits & Rienits, 1968 should read 'pl. on p.55 below') (Fig.13a). There are, however, some points worth emphasising and attention must be drawn to another page of Parkinson drawings which has gone almost unnoticed (Carr, 1987:viii, pl.ii) (Fig.13b). Art historically, there seems absolutely no reason to doubt the ascription of these drawings to Parkinson⁹ and the representation of a 'fish-gig', woomera and shield is obviously important in trying to establish a provenance for such objects as nos 6-8 above. As to location of the Parkinson sketches, there seems to be no ethnographic or historical support for Carr's preference for Endeavour River (Carr, 1983:viii)¹⁰. On the other hand, Carr also reproduces, rather poorly, as an insert to his reproduction of the page of drawings two details of f.20r from the same sketch-book. The details show part of a ?mother-of-pearl necklace, a woomera and the tip of a three-pronged fishing spear. The serrated edges of the barbs and the method of binding is so similar to that shown in the Miller drawings (Fig.6b) as to support the hypothesis that this may be one and the same artefact; certainly it would seem that in both cases the barbs are modified stingray spines (Megaw, 1972).

As has been commented on above, it seems clear from both artefactual and artistic evidence that Banks' and Cook's sojourn on the east coast of Australia must have been responsible for the collection of other objects than spears. Although it cannot be pursued here, one may also note Joseph Banks as having been identified as the so-called 'Artist of the Chief Mourner' whose work includes

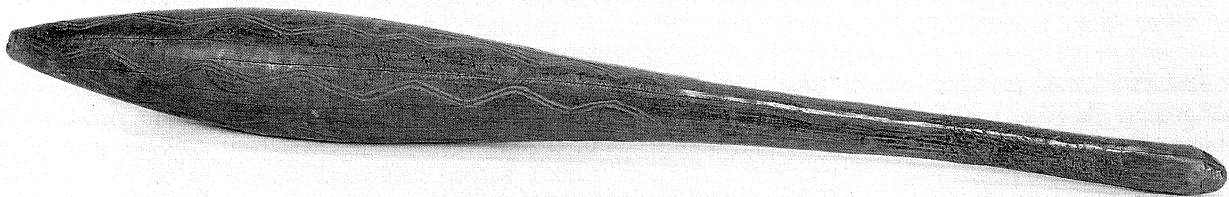


Fig.12. (Cat. no.40) Wooden club once owned by Bungaree, 'chief of the Broken Bay tribe'. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. Photo: copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

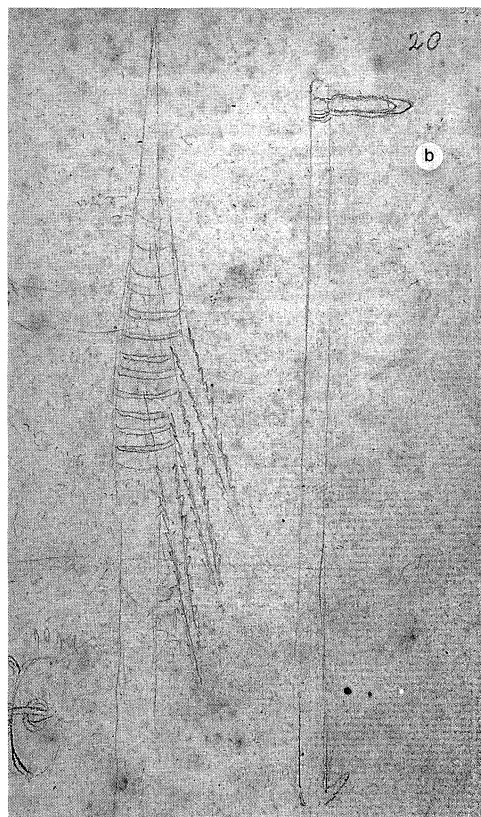
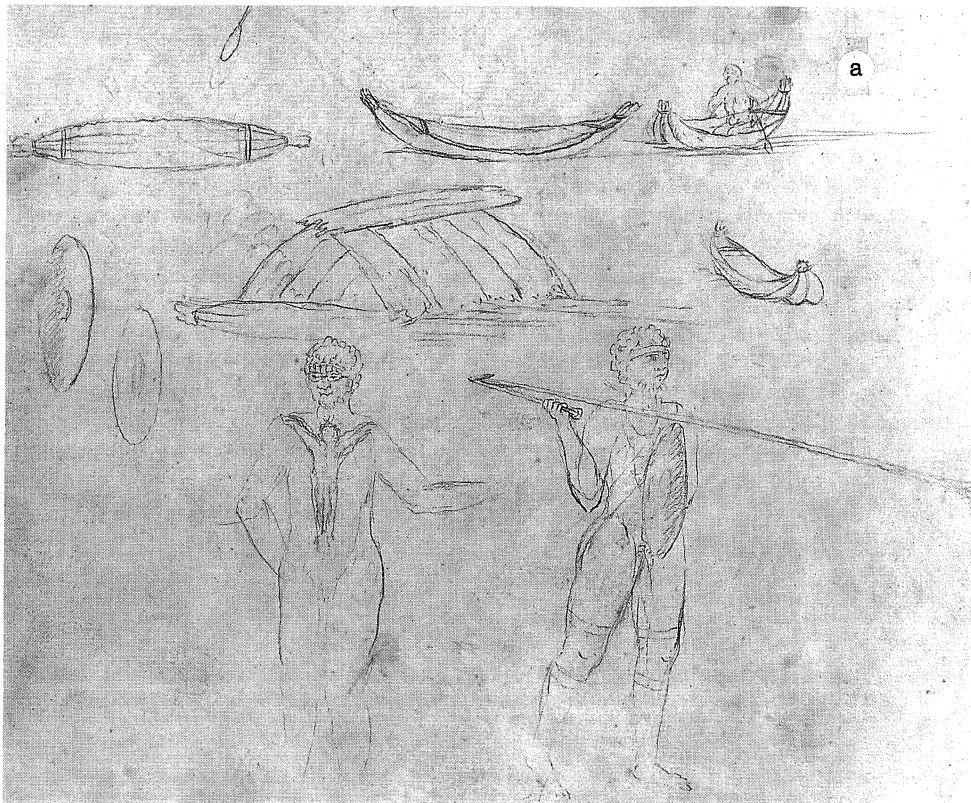


Fig.13. Sydney Parkinson. Pencil sketches of Aborigines and artefacts probably executed at Botany Bay in April 1770. (a) British Library Add. MS 9345, f.14v (total page size 184 x 235 mm); (b) British Library Add. MS 9345, f.20r (total page size 184 x 235 mm). Photos: courtesy British Library.

a crude watercolour sketch of Aborigines in bark canoes, one of whom is shown fishing with a multi-pronged spear (Smith, 1985b:34,pl.2.7; Joppien & Smith, 1985:60,I.172).

If the extant material record is partial, so obviously is the documentary or artistic. In discussing the engraving entitled 'Two of the Natives of New Holland, Advancing to Combat', credited as being after Sydney Parkinson and which illustrates the artist's posthumous account *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas* published in 1773 and 1784 by his brother Stanfield, Smith (1985a:170,pl.110, 1985b; see also Joppien & Smith, 1985:45,pl.45 = I.171 A; and Rienits & Rienits, 1968, pl. on p.55) notes that it may well be based in part on this group of sketches or another drawing. In either case, the improbable weaponry displayed suggests that the published illustration is at several removes from any on-the-spot observations

(Megaw, 1971:60,pl.5a; Smith, 1985b:30). However, as in the case of the engravings based on drawings by Robert Cleveley which illustrate *The Voyage of Governor Arthur Phillip to Botany Bay* (Smith, 1985a:171-173), there is sufficient accuracy to indicate the existence of at least some first-hand information. In the case of the two 'Natives' depicted in Parkinson's *Journal*, again, as Smith has noted, the shield with its eye holes and the body decoration, and, for that matter, also the nose bone, may be readily authenticated (add Lampert, 1988:20 to the comparisons offered by Smith).

Some further indication of just how many depictions of the 'natives' of Port Jackson there originally were may be indicated by two unsigned watercolours purchased by the British Museum in 1964 from the family papers of J. Tillotson Hyde, a former member of the staff of the

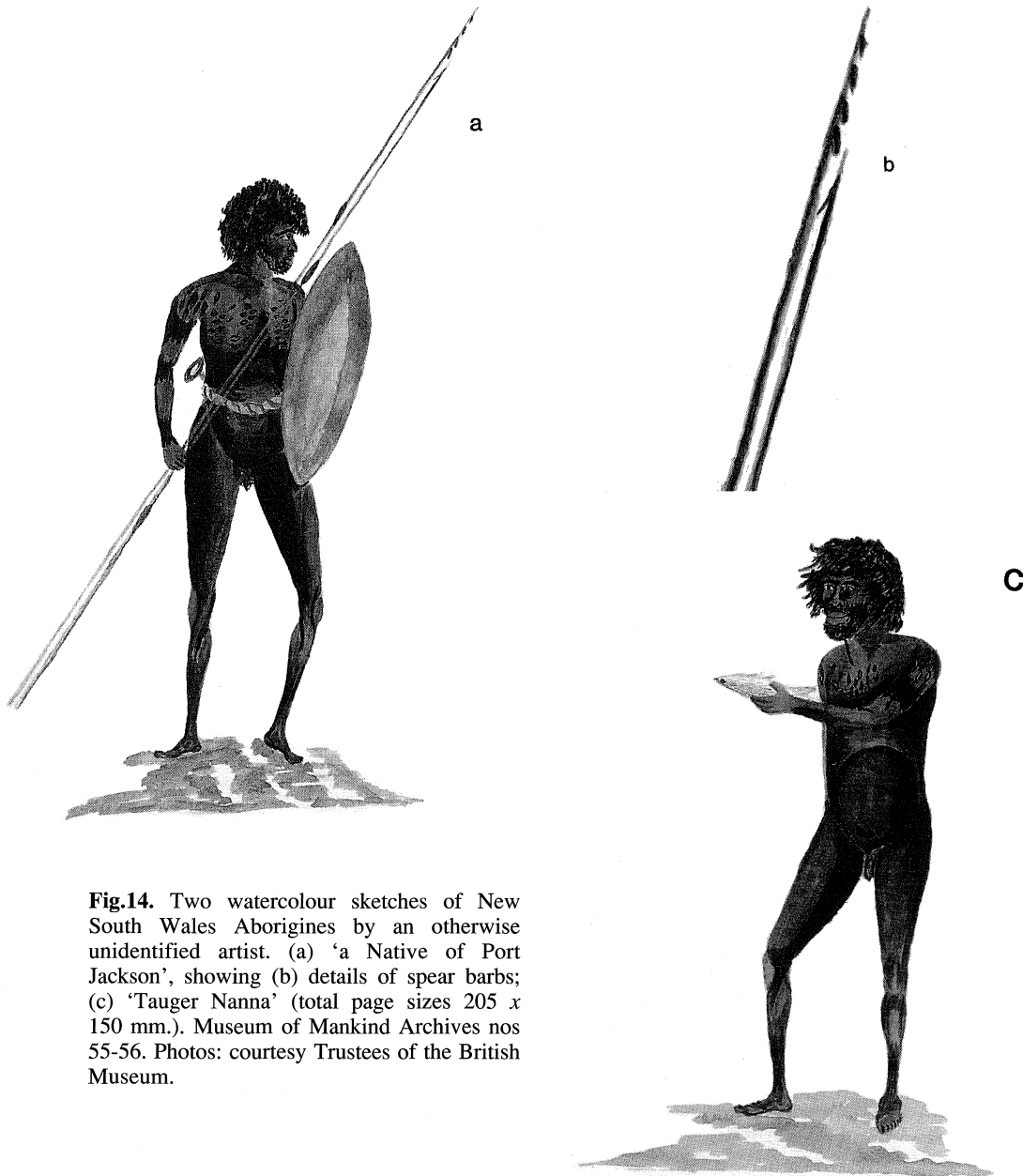


Fig.14. Two watercolour sketches of New South Wales Aborigines by an otherwise unidentified artist. (a) 'a Native of Port Jackson', showing (b) details of spear barbs; (c) 'Tauger Nanna' (total page sizes 205 x 150 mm.). Museum of Mankind Archives nos 55-56. Photos: courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

Museum; these drawings have only briefly been mentioned previously in print (Megaw, 1967:15,pl.IVa) (Fig.14a-c)¹¹. Both watercolours carry on the verso contemporary inscriptions. One, which has an incomplete watermark '17. . .', is described as 'a Native of Port Jackson in the / [A]ttitude of Deffence'. This is followed by 'No 2' in what may be another hand. The other watercolour, 'No 5' is that of 'an Old Native of the Settlement of Port Jackson known by the Name of Tauger Nanna--'. The old man is shown offering a fish and exhibits cicatrices which again recall those shown in studies by the Port Jackson Painter. The warrior has a typical Sydney region bark shield, a stone axe is stuck in a striped belt perhaps intended to represent one made of possum skin (Lampert, 1988:23), while the two spears are constructed in sections – compare those described above – with down-pointing barbs, one with what appears to be a bone unipoint, the other with four barbs clearly set in gum (Fig.14b). These two pictures have recently been ascribed to Thomas Watling on the basis of a comparison with the large body of works undoubtedly by him now held by the Natural History Museum, London but, in view of the comparatively crude nature of the sketches, the present author, and, more significantly, Professor Smith *in litt.*, prefers the anonymous ascription

followed here. There is certainly no comparison for example with Watling's study of 'A Groupe on the North Shore' (Smith, 1985a:187,pl.124; Lampert, 1988:pl.39).

What, then, may have been the origin or indeed purpose of these two sketches from what clearly was once a more extended series? A search of the early published accounts of Port Jackson has not revealed any other reference or approximation to the name 'Tauger Nanna'. On the other hand, they have the appearance of works executed in the Colony and perhaps intended for transmission to London¹² and subsequent use as the basis of a published illustration. There is a contrast here with the last group of works to be considered, the five watercolours in the Mitchell Library discovered amongst the Brabourne collection of Banks papers.

These have recently been discussed in detail by Smith & Wheeler (1988:211-213,pl.225-228); add to the references there cited Megaw (1967:11ff., n.50, pl.III) who first mentions the existence of a fifth watercolour. All five are published here as a set for the first time (Fig.15a-e). The set, with its uniform dimensions (the overall image size is about 195 x 265 mm) and carefully ruled margins separately laid down but in a similar hand to the pictures, was most likely intended for the engraver. These watercolours have frequently been attributed to

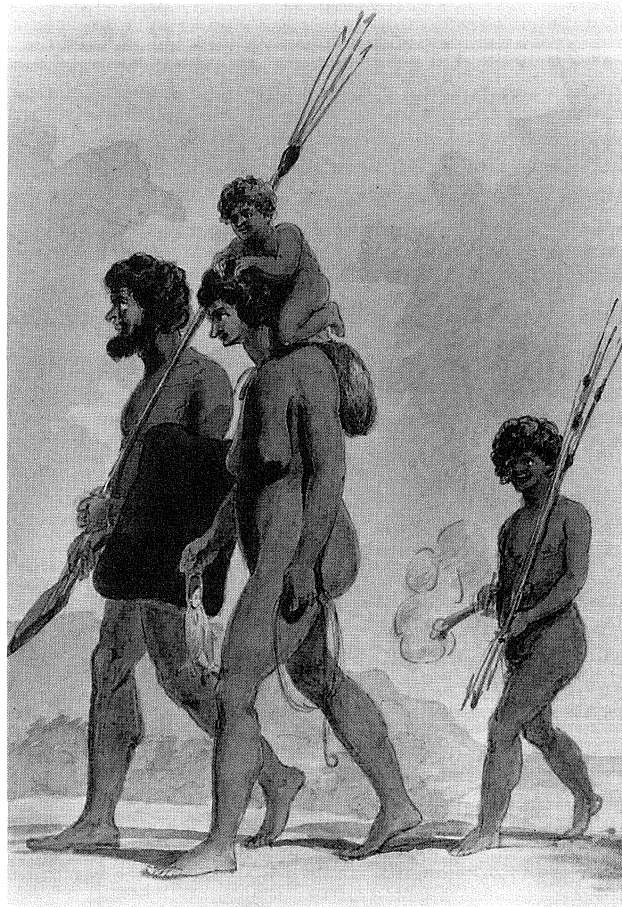


Fig.15a. Artist unknown (attributed to Philip Gidley King). Five watercolours of Aborigines (total image size about 195 x 265 mm). Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney (Brabourne Coll., Banks Papers vol.15, A80³, f.9-13). Photos: courtesy State Library of New South Wales. See over for 15b-e.

Philip Gidley King (e.g., Gleeson, 1971:82,pls 5-7; King & King, 1981:50ff; Kerr, 1984:74; Blainey, 1987:438-439; Berzins, 1988:17), but there seems to be no documentary or artistic evidence to support such a view, not least due to the absence of any other undisputed works by King¹³. Apparent evidence of a King connection is certainly to be found in the engraving entitled 'A Family of New South Wales' which was published by Stockdale in John Hunter's *An Historical Account of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* of 1793 where the engraver is noted simply as 'Blake sculp' 'From a Sketch by Governor King'. Leaving aside the question of whether this was in fact the poet-mystic Blake and not one of at least two other W. Blakes known to have been working at the time – a matter which is

perhaps still open to debate (Bentley, 1964:esp. item 476, 1965, 1977; Smith, 1985a:173-175,pl.114; see McCormick *et al.*, 1987:275ff.,pls 50-51 for the aquatint based on a painting attributed to Thomas Watling and dedicated to King by William Stadden Blake) – King was certainly friendly with Banks and called upon him on his return to London from the Colony in 1791. But this does nothing to support a definite ascription to King nor does it deny the fact that the 'King' watercolours exhibit a professionalism and neo-classical style unparalleled amongst other artists in the Colony. It is perhaps a bit hard of Smith, in commenting on this ability, that he seemingly excludes Thomas Watling also as a draftsman 'possessed of some facility in figure drawing' (Smith & Wheeler, 1988:211). After all, the latter's scene of 'A

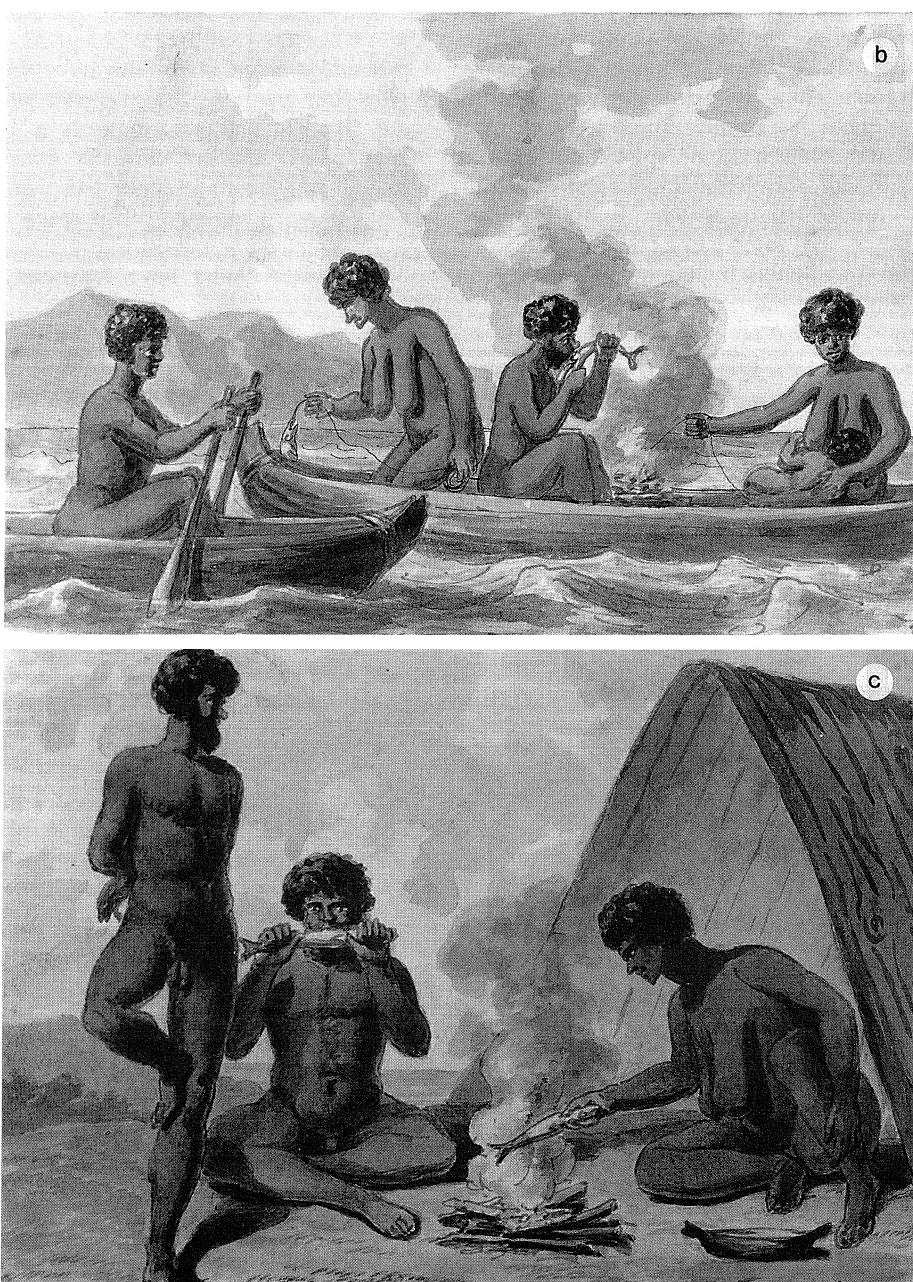


Fig.15b,c. See page 39 for caption.

Groupe on the North Shore' with its additional annotation possibly by John White, is not so unlike the 'King' watercolours in its careful composition and still far from un-classical figures. The carefully drawn borders are also suggestive that here could be another work intended for a never-realised publication. There is obviously a world of difference in such work and that by otherwise purely amateur hands such as, possibly, Banks himself as noticed above, much of the work by the Port Jackson Painter and work now ascribed to Charles Praval (or Charles Provall), supernumerary on the *Endeavour*. The latter's work seems to have included a copy of a drawing, now lost, by Parkinson of an *Aborigine of Endeavour Bay*, the only surviving visual record datable to 1770 for the region (Smith, 1985b:27,pl.2.5; Joppien & Smith, 1985:55-59,pl.49 = I.174).

Be that as it may, the 'King' watercolours hardly any less than Watling's work certainly show a detailed and generally accurate depiction of artefacts known from the contemporary ethnographic and archaeological record. Thus, the original on which the Hunter engraving is based (Fig.15a), accurately depicts multi-pronged fishing spears – like that on the anonymous British Museum watercolour just discussed, with downward pointing barbs – woomeras, net bag and shell hook and line. Depictions of the hook and line in use and actual collected specimens are illustrated by both English and French artists (Lampert,

1988:43; Bonnemains, Forsyth & Smith, 1988:60,pl.34 and Le Havre inv. no. 16034). Certainly, the woomera wielded by the club-carrying Aboriginal on another 'King' watercolour (Fig.15d) is less well understood, and the shield carried by the man of the 'family' has a curious outline. But the depictions in two other sketches suggest again accurate models being available to the unknown watercolourist. The scene of line-fishing from bark canoes (Fig.15b) shows women clearly undertaking this activity beside open fires as indicated by contemporary accounts (Lampert, 1988:41ff.; on fishing and sexual division of labour see most recently Walters, 1988). The camp fire scene shows a typical bark basket and a bark hut, the latter like that in the illustration by the Port Jackson Painter of 'A Native climbing a Tree' (Lampert, 1988:pl.56). The contrast to be made with an artistic stage removed yet further from reality as represented by the comparable scenes engraved after Cleveley in *The Voyage of Governor Arthur Phillip to Botany Bay* is striking (compare the man shown line-fishing from a beached canoe and the ludicrous lack of sense of scale: see Smith, 1985a:esp. pls 111-112). Despite the latter's obvious infelicities and while there seems no reason to challenge Smith's view that the 'King' watercolours do not appear to have been drawn in New South Wales, there is enough in common in all this material to suggest yet again that in the generation following the voyage of

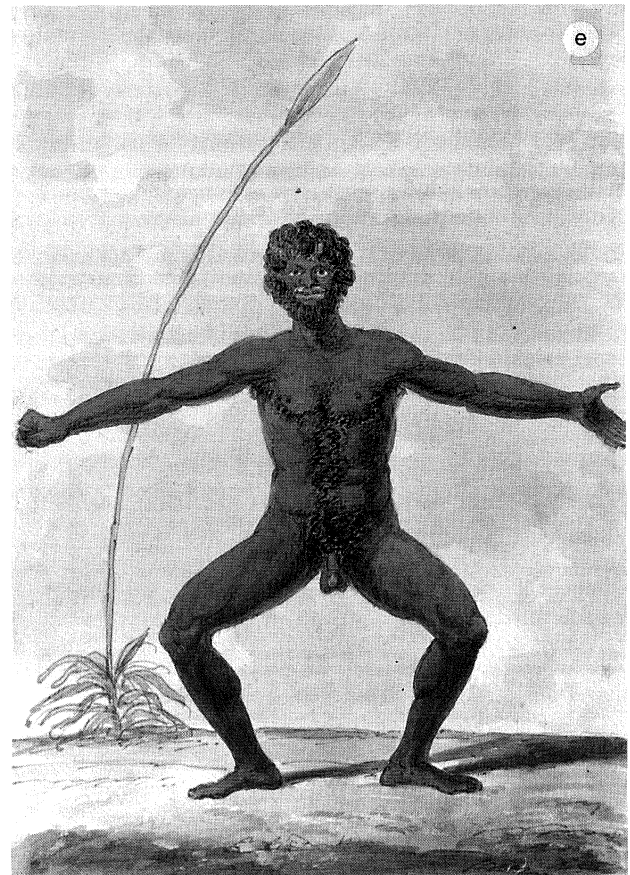
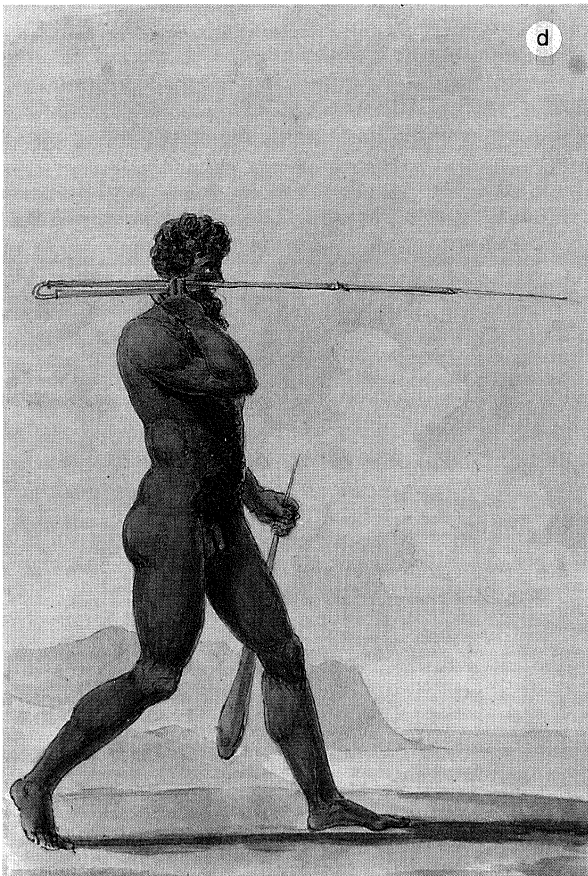


Fig.15d,e. See page 39 for caption.

the *Endeavour* there was indeed a pool of accurate information available to London-based artists and engravers. That this information was represented not only by written accounts but by actual artefacts as well as by their careful delineation this brief tribute to Fred McCarthy has, I hope, confirmed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS. It should be clear from my text and in the captions to the accompanying figures to whom my main debt is due. Amongst my contemporaries and near-contemporaries, I must particularly thank my fellow toilers on the shores of Botany Bay, Dr R.J. Lampert and my former student Dr Betty Meehan, as well as a number of the Koori community from La Perouse – descendants of those who, more than two hundred years ago, first faced the white man – who observed our excavations at Kurnell in 1968-1970. From all of these I have learnt more than they ever have from me. In the United Kingdom, in addition to the authorities at the British Museum (Museum of Mankind), British Museum (Natural History) (now the Natural History Museum), British Library, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford and the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, I have received unstinting assistance from the Curator of the Saffron Walden Museum and the Borough Librarian and Curator of Southwark and his staff. In Australia, apart from many on staff of the National Library of Australia and the State Library of New South Wales, I must also mention David Moore, Fred McCarthy's immediate successor as Curator of Anthropology at the Australian Museum, and my colleague Carol Cheshire who has read the whole text and offered many useful comments. Ms. Cheshire's unpublished MA thesis (Flinders University 1989), 'Foundations of printmaking within Australia 1788-1851' contains much relevant material for the student of early European depictions of Aboriginal Australia. In particular, however, I must single out, apart from Fred McCarthy himself and Professor Bernard Smith, my old friend and mentor of some forty years' standing, the late Dr Averil M. Lysaght. It was she who first introduced me both to the fascinating world of the early European explorers of Australasia and to what the words 'scholarship' and 'research' really mean.

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APPENDIX

Additional notes

1. Both McBryde and Kaepler erroneously ascribe Miller's drawings to Sydney Parkinson.
2. Peter Gathercole, at the time Curator of the UMAA, whose views I am citing here, and Alison Clarke – no relation of either of the Clarkes noted above – were most helpful in assisting my study of the Widdicombe House material.
3. Unpublished: BB4/F2 (65-70); all material from the 1968-1970 excavations is in the Australian Museum with the exception of some pieces on loan to the Discovery Centre at Kurnell.
4. It should be observed, however, that unfortunately the publishers of this volume have been less than careful in preparing captions for these illustrations. Thus, there is absolutely no evidence that White was responsible for the originals far less the engravings which were used to illustrate his Journal (compare Kohen & Lampert, 1987:353 with Smith & Wheeler, 1988:224-228).
5. For assistance in tracing the background to the 'Cook' boomerang I am grateful to Alan Roberts, University of Sydney and Suzanne Mourot, at the time Associate Mitchell Librarian at the State Library of New South Wales. R. Farley, Senior Ranger, Botany Bay National Park, was kind enough to relocate the boomerang and arrange for its photography. A brief reference appears in Megaw, 1971:62.
6. Dr Graham Dawson, Deputy Keeper of the Cuming Museum and his colleagues and Len Poole, at the time Curator of the Saffron Walden Museum have been most generous in assisting in tracking down the present location and history of possible Sydney region material in the collection.
7. I am indebted to the 14th Viscount, the late Brigadier Valentia, to Mrs A.T. Shaw (née Woodward) and to the County Archivist of Worcestershire for attempting to unravel the history of the Arley Castle collection. The material was first brought to my attention in 1964 by the late B.A.L. Cranstone, at the time Assistant Keeper in the Department of Ethnography at the British Museum.
8. Eighty six complete and 114 broken hooks made from the turban shell *Turbo* (formally *Ninella*) *torquata* were recorded from the 1968-1970 Kurnell excavations alone.
9. The ascription to Buchan, impossible on historical grounds since he died on the voyage from South America (Rienits & Rienits, 1963:9-10), has occurred from time to time owing to the fly-leaf inscription on the guard-book which now includes this and other sketches executed by Parkinson on the *Endeavour*.
10. Carr also identifies the markings on the left figure as representing a string bag. The second page of sketches is not mentioned by Joppien & Smith (1985).
11. Again, I am indebted to Mr Cranstone for originally bringing these sketches to my attention; Professor Bernard Smith *in litt.* supports my attribution, or rather the current lack of attribution.
12. Information from Dorota C. Starzecka, Assistant Keeper in the Museum of Mankind, London.
13. Elizabeth Imashev, Pictures Librarian at the Mitchell Library and Professor Bernard Smith have been good enough to confirm the negative opinions advanced here. In particular, Ms Imashev, who has examined again the watercolours, particularly notes that there is no extant evidence in the Library records to support an attribution to King. The two pen-and-wash drawings of Sydney Cove in the State Library of NSW and apparently attributed to King by his grandson P.G. King the younger are otherwise also unsubstantiated as actually being by King (q.v. McCormick *et al.*, 1987:90-91).

F.D. McCarthy, Commemorative Papers (Archaeology, Anthropology, Rock Art)

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Frederick David McCarthy: an appreciation	Kate Khan	1
Frederick David McCarthy: a bibliography	Kate Khan	7
Sesqui-centenary to bicentenary: reflections on a museologist	D.J. Mulvaney	17
Something old, something new: further notes on the aborigines of the Sydney district as represented by their surviving artefacts, and as depicted in some early European representations	J.V.S. Megaw	25
Ethnographic artefacts: the iceberg's tip	Tania Konecny	45
Archaeological studies at Bomaderry Creek, New South Wales	R.J. Lampert & D. Steele	55
The Terramungamine incident: a double burial with grave goods near Dubbo, New South Wales	Dan Witter, Richard Fullagar & Colin Pardoe	77
Pictures, jargon and theory – our own ethnography and roadside rock art	John Clegg	91
The depiction of species in macropod track engravings at an Aboriginal art site in western New South Wales	Josephine McDonald	105
F.D. McCarthy's string figures from Yirrkala: a Museum perspective	Stan Florek	117
The status of the horsehoof core	Kim Akerman	125
'...lost in the <i>Sirius</i> ...'? – Consideration of the provenance of the hatchet head recovered from the <i>Sirius</i> wreck site, Norfolk Island	Isabel McBryde & Alan Watchman	129
Additional evidence for pre-1788 visits by Pacific islanders to Norfolk Island, South-west Pacific	Jim Specht	145
Six pots from South Sulawesi	C.C. Macknight	159

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