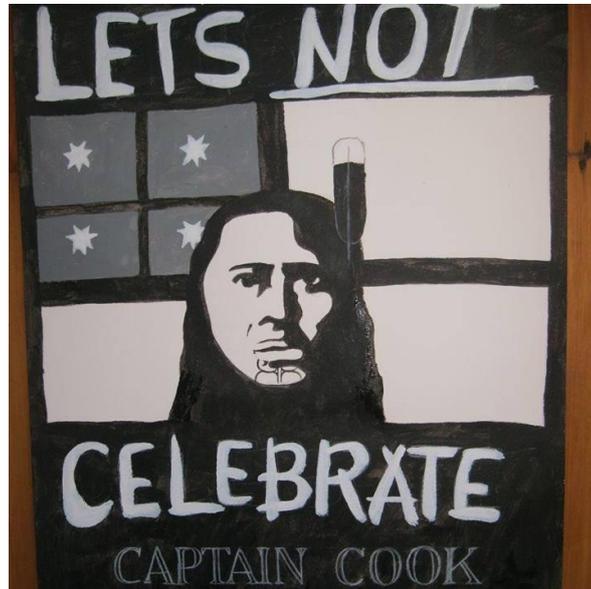


Université de Rouen

Faculté de Lettres et de Sciences Humaines

Département d'Anglais



## James Cook 250 years afterwards

Licence 3 LLCER Anglais

John Mullen



(Above left : Captain Cook on the Coast of New South Wales, J Backler, 1860. Above right : Protest poster against commemoration activities on 250th anniversary of Cook expeditions)

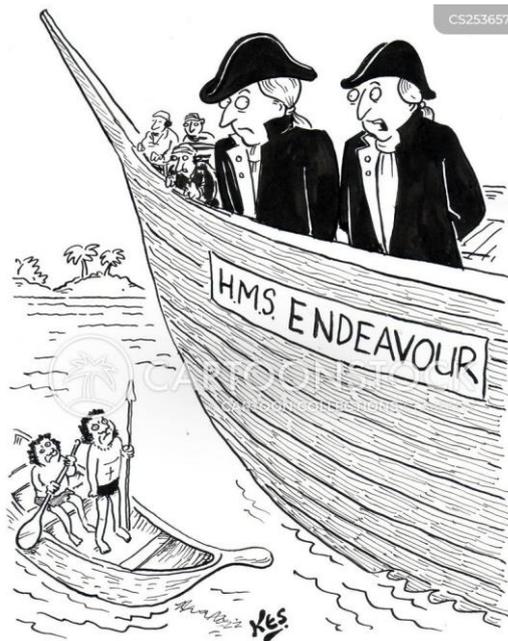
## Contents

- 1 Visual documents
2. Cook Islands to change name
- 3 Flawless hero or bogeyman ?
- 4 Captain Cook statue to be removed
- 5 Is it time to restore all of New Zealand's Maori place names ?
- 6 Recent museum exhibitions and authorized heritage discourses
- 7 How to kill a God
- 8 Cook's journal : Easter Island
- 9 Cook's journal : extract two
- 10 Cook's journal : extract three
- 11 : Video links.

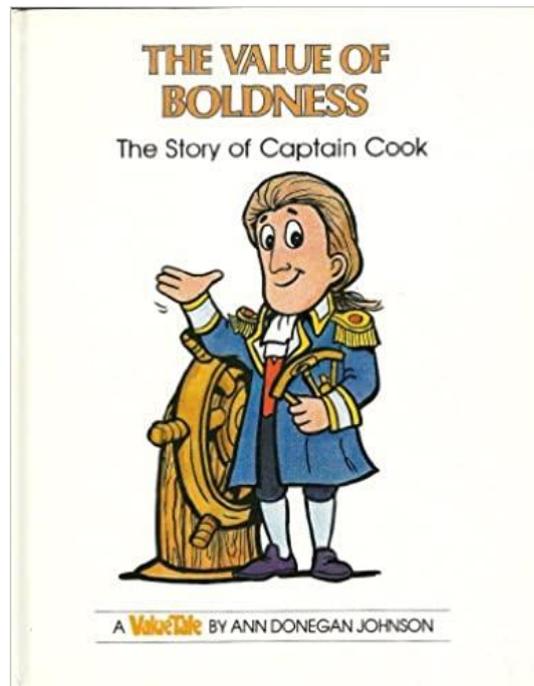


C

2020



"I think they're saying something about wanting to maintain the integrity of their border."



1986

C 2020



**WORLD**

# Cook Islands to change name to remove any association with Captain Cook

6 Mar, 2019 7:14am

3 minutes

A committee has decided to replace the association with Captain Cook in the archipelago's name with an alternative in Māori.  
Photo / 123RF

Daily Telegraph UK  
By: Jonathan Pearlman

---

The tiny Pacific nation of Cook Islands plans to change its name to drop the reference to the British explorer Captain James Cook in favour of a title that reflects its "Polynesian nature".

The group of small islands, about 1,900 miles northeast of New Zealand, was spotted by Captain Cook in the 1770s and became a British protectorate in the late 1800s. Since 1965, it has been autonomous but electively deemed to be in free association with New Zealand.

The Cook Islands government initially set up a committee to find an indigenous name that would sit alongside its existing title. But the committee members backed abandoning the honour to Captain Cook and adopting a standalone name in the local Māori language.

"When the committee members, which include Cook Islands historians and people with deep traditional knowledge, met we decided it was time we change the name of the country," committee chairman Danny Mataroa told AFP.

Mark Brown, the deputy prime minister, supported the change but said it would need to involve the nation's 12,000 residents. In 1994, the Cook Islands held a referendum to change the name to Avaiki Nui but the proposal was resoundingly defeated.



A committee has decided to replace the association with Captain Cook in the archipelago's name with an alternative in Māori. Photo / 123RF

"I'm quite happy to look at a traditional name for our country which more reflects the true Polynesian nature of our island nation," Brown told Radio New Zealand.

"I think the first steps are to find out what the public appetite actually is for a change of name."

The opposition also supported a name change but said voters were likely to be evenly split on the proposal.

"Whether or not it's going to command a support of the majority, it's very hard to tell," said the opposition leader, Tina Browne.

Captain Cook first spotted Manuae, a southern atoll that forms part of the islands, from his vessel The Resolution in 1773 and charted other islands in the group over the next four years. He initially called the atoll Hervey's Island to honour Augustus Hervey, a Lord of the Admiralty and politician.

## Related articles:

### NEW ZEALAND

#### **Drunk in paradise: Tourists behaving badly at island getaway**

31 Mar, 2018 4:39pm  
4 minutes to read

### NEW ZEALAND

#### **Holiday horror: NZ woman's jaw broken in Rarotonga attack**

21 Jun, 2018 5:48pm  
2 minutes to read

### TRAVEL

#### **Island luxury at Aitutaki, the precious jewel of the Cook Islands**

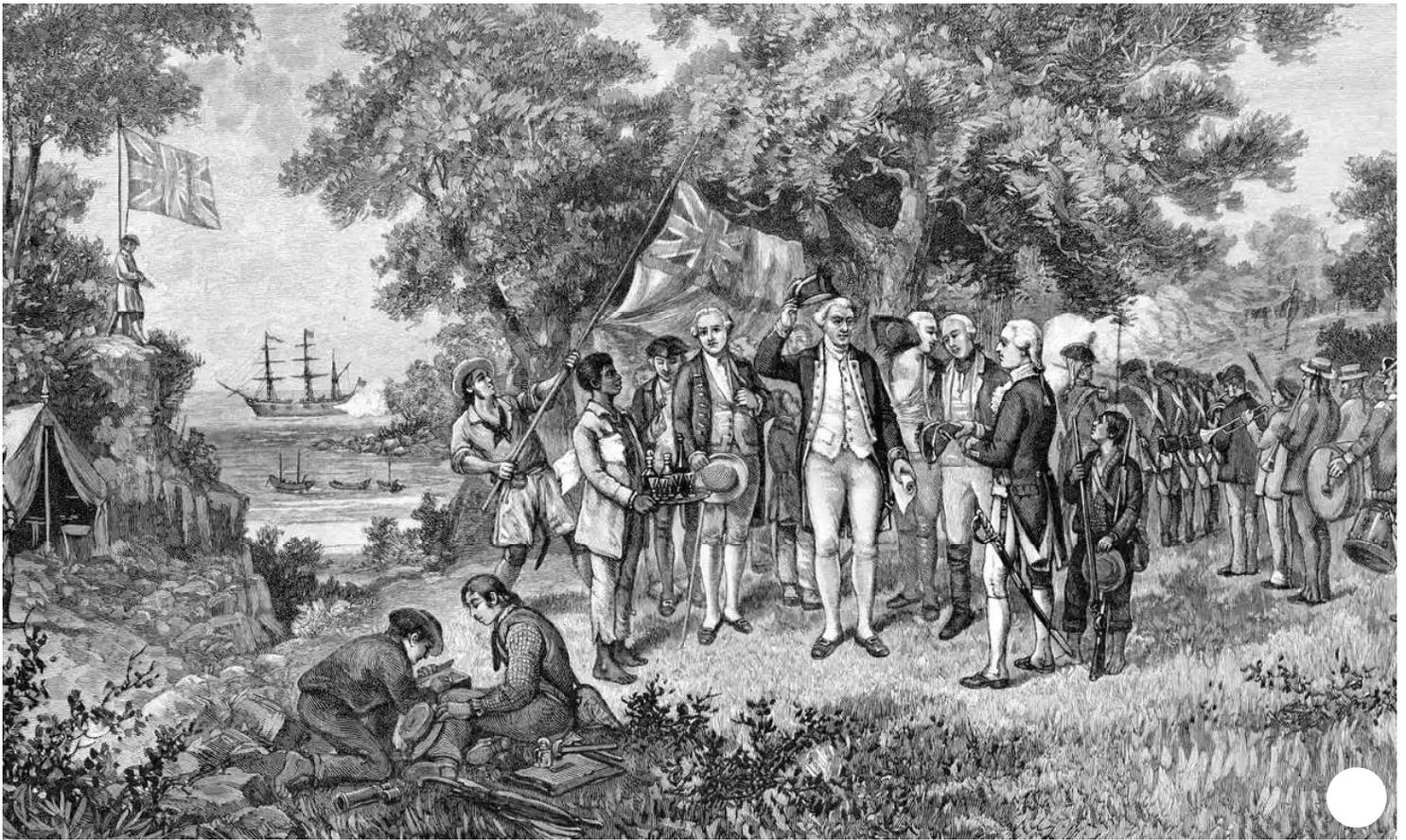
14 Jan, 2019 4:00am  
7 minutes to read

### TRAVEL

#### **Cook Islands: The Birdman of Atiu**

5 Nov, 2018 10:00am  
7 minutes to read

The southern group of islands later became known as Hervey Islands, but this was changed to Cook Islands in 1824 by a Russian explorer and navigator, Adam Johann von Krusenstern.



## Australia news

# Flawless hero or bogeyman? Captain Cook still divides along black and white lines

**As Australia prepares for a \$50m celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Endeavour's anchoring, what is left to learn about Captain James Cook?**

## Paul Daley

🐦 @ppdaley

Sat 14 Dec 2019 19.00 GMT

Kurnell is a no-fuss, unpretentious place given that it's supposed to be the cradle of the nation. Stretching along a promontory that looks like a witch's finger pointing west from the southern shore of Botany Bay, opposite Sydney airport, Kurnell is a hotchpotch sprawl of fibro modesty and glass-and-steel ambition, where trailered speedboats rest on the verges and Aussie flags snap on front-yard poles. Nestled in Kamay Botany Bay national park, Kurnell overlooks a mass of water lacking the frenetic beauty of luminous sails and green and gold ferries, and of some of the international signature structures of modernity, that characterise that other vast nearby inlet that the colonists instead chose as the harbour for their penal settlement.

Its cross-hay vista more Jeffrey Smart than Brett Whiteley is of the big jets levitating

its cross bay vista, more scenic than Black White, is of the big jets revving over the ever-frantic north-south runways, the containers, cargo ships, break-waters, piers and giant straddle cranes of Port Botany and, off to the right, the breakers foaming on the cliffs about La Perouse, home to two French naval ships for six weeks in 1788 and still Sydney's most enduring Indigenous settlement. As you enter Kurnell along [Captain Cook Drive](#) you'll pass the monolithic tanks of Sydney's seawater desalination plant, exemplar of 21st-century engineering built in anticipation of Sydney's now-extant twin perils of over-population and climate emergency, and, close by, the local community, sports and rec club with its Endeavour Chinese restaurant (a nearby café has the same name) offering Australian, Thai and Malay cuisine.

And just up on the left is the sign, cemented in the ground on a rusting fixture as unambiguously as the claim it stakes for Kurnell's place in Australian history:

*Welcome to Kurnell the Birthplace of Modern Australia*

It is a bold, hotly contested proposition, notwithstanding what happened on the rocks a few hundred metres away from here on 29 April 1770. That is when HM Bark Endeavour, in the charge of Yorkshireman Lieutenant James Cook, the most talented and celebrated British navigator of his epoch, anchored in the bay and sent ashore two longboats in the afternoon. There is no denying the historic character of this day.





📷 A replica of Captain James Cook's HM Bark Endeavour. Photograph: Charlotte Graham/CAG Photography Ltd

It was the first recorded landing of a European vessel on the east coast of what was already mapped by the Dutch to the north, west and partial-south as New Holland.

It was also the moment of initial contact between a civilisation stretching well beyond 60,000 years and another with its roots in an altogether different “old world” - one intent on further expanding its colonial claims in the name of the Enlightenment.

That welcome sign has its own complex evolutionary history. We will come to that. But its continued use, as non-Indigenous Australia plans a \$50m-plus jamboree for the sescentennial of the Endeavour's anchoring, is a reminder of just how exclusive of Aboriginal sentiment, history, culture and achievement has been - and remains - so much of Australia's civic celebrations about Cook. For modernity has been, from the dedication of the first Australian monument to Cook in 1822, the celebrated purported consequence of the clash of civilisations on Terra Australis that followed Cook. Never mind that this supposed civilising modernism found expression in the attempted annihilation of people from nations tens of thousands of years old - and a dogged denialism about it that would imbue Australian historiography for generations.

NSW premier Robert Askin, voicing a pervading sentiment of the 1970 Cook bicentenary that endures in some quarters today, said: “The Aborigines made some resistance and suffered from their contact with our culture. We are now trying to restore what they inevitably lost from moving out of the Stone Age and into the machine age.”

The words of today's mainstream political leaders about Cook and what he represents to them have tempered. But their sentiments about his arrival, hinging as most do on the purported improvement of continental life for it, do not diverge greatly. The prime minister, Scott Morrison, is a big Cook booster. Since his re-election Morrison has appeared in television interviews alongside a small replica of the Endeavour.





📷 Australian prime minister Scott Morrison with the anchor from James Cook's ship Endeavour during a visit to the Cooktown Museum. Photograph: Marc McCormack/EPA

Morrison, the member for Cook (named after the navigator and incorporating Kurnell), said, when announcing that \$50m would be spent on 29 April 2020, commemorations including an aquatic monument in Botany Bay and the circumnavigation of Australia by the Endeavour replica (Cook never sailed such a route but the facts rarely impede his mythology): “As the 250th anniversary nears we want to help Australians better understand Captain Cook’s historic voyage and its legacy for exploration, science and reconciliation. That voyage is the reason Australia is what it is today and it’s important we take the opportunity to reflect on it.”

Many Indigenous people and promoters of their rights scoff at Morrison’s asserted potential for federal Cook commemorations to further “reconciliation” - especially at a moment when his government has rejected the central tenets of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart and its wish that “ancient sovereignty ... shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood”.

### **‘White Australia in all of its guises’**

Cook - *Captain Cook*, though he never officially held that naval rank - is the behemoth of national non-Indigenous foundation imagination, the venerated hero and white-hatted Columbus of Australia.

As a nation we’ve never been good at parsing the moral and human shortcomings of our most prominent colonial leaders such as governors Phillip, Macquarie and

Brisbane, all of whom did appalling things to the continent's Indigenous. Yet Cook, the "discoverer", as non-Indigenous historiography cast him for so long - though not as the invader, occupier or settler - still manages to divide Australia along black and white lines with a passion and hatred that evades those who later oversaw colonialism's worst violent excesses.

In an essay to accompany East Coast Encounter, a 2014 National Maritime Museum art exhibition exploring Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on 1770, Worimi man John Maynard, a professor of history at Newcastle University, writes how Cook has evolved into "a time-travelling bogeyman to Aboriginal Australia":

**▲▲** *Cook transcends time and space to wreak havoc across the continent upon the Aboriginal inhabitants over the course of the past 243 years. In this manifestation he represents white Australia in all of its guises including invasion, occupation, dispossession and the conducting of a symphony of violence. Does Cook deserve this label as the navy grim reaper? In a counterpoint Cook remains in settler colonial history both misrepresented and mythologised.*

In 2018 Maynard again tackled Cook - the man, his legacy and the myth - for the National Library of Australia's Cook and the Pacific exhibition. Here Maynard, I think, nails the Cook conundrum, writing: "Whether he deserves this monster mantle is open to conjecture and challenge from wider non-Indigenous Australia, but from an Aboriginal perspective Cook remains the scapegoat for white invasion."

Cook, the usher of the colonial land grab - the doorman for British invasion in 1788, for dispossession and for all of the shootings, massacres, poisonings and stolen children that followed colonisation - is an understandable theme of much modern Australian Indigenous art (and that sympathetic to Aboriginal sentiment). It reflects the pervasiveness of Cook in Aboriginal story and bequeathed memory, his centrality to the spoken history of Indigenous people the continent over - including in places he never ventured anywhere near but where there are nonetheless enduring stories of Cook and his men raping and murdering.

**▲▲ Cook, the usher of the colonial land grab, is an understandable theme of much modern Australian Indigenous art**

Among the most evocative recent works themed on Cook the evil swindler is Jason Wing's bronze Captain James Crook (2013), the statue's face covered with a black balaclava. It riffs off the ubiquity in the Australian psyche and geographic/cultural landscape of Cook's statuary shape. Even with his face covered like that of a cat burglar or bank robber, Cook's head and shoulders are

**Indigenous art.**

OF DARK ROBBY, COOK'S HEAD AND SHOULDERS ARE

unmistakable. I returned to this work over and over again when I first saw *Defying Empire*, the third National Indigenous Art Triennial at the National Gallery of Australia in 2017. In an exhibition electric with provocation about land rights, massacres, deaths in custody and every other colonial Indigenous injustice, Wing's was, for me, the in-your-face work that most arrestingly exposed the deep, enduring Australian racial fissure on the white national foundation story.

Indigenous experiences of colonisation and its generational legacies have varied, of course. But there is doubtless a deep Indigenous emotional affinity with, and understanding of, Wing's explanation of the work. He writes:

*When I attended high school I was taught that Australia was discovered by Captain James Cook. This colonial lie is further reinforced by a huge bronze sculpture in Hyde Park, Sydney, which is situated on a massacre site. Etched in stone are the words 'Captain James Cook Discovered Australia 1770'. I feel physically ill every time I see this monument so I decided to create my own monument to Captain Cook, who personifies colonisation, in Captain James Crook 2013. There are many politically correct terms such as colonised, peacefully settled, occupied, discovered etc. The truth is that Australia was stolen by armed robbery. History is often written and erased by the victors, so I decided to challenge the colonial history of Australia from an Aboriginal perspective and simply tell the truth. As a result of my subversive Captain Cook bust I received many personal attacks on social media ... personal attacks on my physical appearance and Aboriginality, their disgust at my disrespectful and inaccurate version of Australia's history and my alleged defamation of Captain Cook's great name.*

## **'Welcome to Kurnell: Where Cultures Meet'**

I'd passed low over Kurnell on that southern approach while flying into Sydney hundreds of times. It's easy to miss the grassy expanse of Monument Terrace that meanders down to the landing place amid the more eye-catching discs, as they appear from above, of the desalination tanks, and the verdant carpet of national park that ends with the plummeting blond-sandstone cliffs at Cape Solander, named after Daniel Solander, the Swedish naturalist on Cook's first Pacific voyage.

This part of the Sutherland Shire - or just "the shire", as New South Wales knows it - where Cook stepped ashore looms large in Australian history and national memory.

Australia knows it emotionally, mythically. But not physically. When I visit with

historian Mark McKenna it's a mild, late winter's day with little of the breeze that so frequently buffets Botany Bay - a good arvo for sightseeing, yet few people are wandering Monument Terrace or the shore with its dimpled sandstone plateaus, upon one of which Cook first set foot. It's just after three o'clock and the visitor centre is closed. This is not a well-frequented place.

"It feels like such a long way away, but the story attached to it has become part of us, in all its various interpretations," McKenna says. We laugh while watching a bloke on Prince Charles Parade use a leaf blower to blast the ever-encroaching sand back towards the beach from the big expanse of grass outside his house. Modernity pushing back against the elements. We drive around and look for that welcome sign. We can't find it, even though it turns out we've driven past it perhaps two or three times.

It is McKenna who writes of Cook in his 2018 Quarterly Essay, *Moment of Truth: History and Australia's Future*: "We stand forever on the beach with him [Cook]." It's an incisive metaphor. McKenna explains:

*■ I wanted to leave the door open on Cook. All too often, we expect history to be definitive, to pass judgement and announce a verdict. But understanding Cook is about much more than apportioning praise or blame. We can't escape him, and we can't deny him. For better or worse, we're entangled with his legacy. He's one of those figures in our history to whom we'll always return; ceaselessly searching for new ways to see him and ourselves in one and the same field of vision.*





📷 Daniel Solander, right, with Joseph Banks, centre, and the Tahitian Omai. Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty Images

In the essay McKenna explores the provenance of that “Welcome to Kurnell” sign. With the help of local historians, including Sutherland Shire’s research librarian Stephanie Bailey, McKenna recounts how from about 1954, when Captain Cook Drive was opened (an unmade, potholed track, littered with industrial and household garbage, alongside the oil refineries, had previously linked Cronulla and Kurnell), a roadside sign had claimed it was “The Birthplace of Australia”.

In June 1981, after lobbying from the council and local members of state parliament, NSW premier Neville Wran ordered all plaques in The Rocks describing it as “Australia’s birthplace” to be removed. That tribute belonged to Kurnell, he said. Sutherland shire eventually settled on a sign reading, “Welcome to Kurnell, birthplace of the nation”.

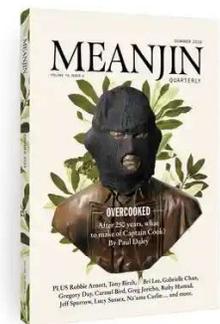
In late 1993, with growing awareness of Indigenous land rights amid the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the high court’s Mabo decision, Sutherland Shire - “conscious of the fact that the term currently used by Council, ‘Birthplace of the Nation’, causes offence to many Aboriginal Australians” - came up with the existing sign.

Cook commemorations at this place had long been conducted without deference to either Indigenous sensibility or desire, for 70 years from Federation in 1901 often involving the anchoring of a replica Endeavour, the dispatching of the long-boats and the recreation of shootings of resisting Indigenous people - who were brought from interstate to play the local Gweagal (although sometimes the role was given to whites

... to play the local swagman (although sometimes the role was given to whites in blackface). It wasn't until 2000 before council decided, in consultation with an Aboriginal Advisory Committee, officially to change the tenor of the commemorations, consistent with their new title, "Meeting of Two Cultures".

Bruce Howell, a former high school teacher of Wiradjuri descent, has served on the shire's Aboriginal advisory committee since retiring seven years ago. He has read the diaries of both Cook and Joseph Banks from the Endeavour voyage and he believes the navigator has been "mythologised and oversimplified in Australia" by those who, on one side, have cast him as a flawless hero and, on the other, as Maynard's "bogeyman".

He is adamant Australia, as it prepares for the 250th anniversary of Cook's arrival, can learn from the shire's annual Meeting of Two Cultures commemorations. Speaking in a personal capacity, he says:



■ I believe that the way to do it is to firstly ensure that both sides of the 1770 story are told ... warts and all, and that it be placed into the proper context of the times. This is what ... [happens with] the Meeting of Two Cultures ceremonies ... right where the first meetings took place, in Kamay Botany Bay national park. The premise is that proper respect and acknowledgement should be given not only to all those aboard the Endeavour, but equally to the local people ... who were confronted with both the Endeavour and then the landing party on the afternoon of

April 29th 1770. One hurdle is that for so many Australians, myself included, they've never been taught our foundational history - many will conflate the events of 1770 and 1788, and will generally know little about either.

As Sutherland shire and the state and federal governments plan the 250th anniversary celebrations of Cook's arrival - replete with yet another monument - the days of that Welcome to Kurnell sign may be numbered. McKenna writes that it ought to "be pulled down before it falls down. A new sign should be erected in keeping with the spirit of the annual commemoration of Cook's landing: 'Welcome to Kurnell: Where Cultures Meet'."

This is an edited extract from *On Cook*, by Paul Daley, [Meanjin summer 2019 edition](#).

---

Article count [on](#)

**Congratulations on being one of our top readers globally - you've read **327 articles** in the last year**

... as you're joining us today from France, we have a small favour to ask. Tens of

Subscribe (https://premium.telegraph.co.uk/? - 30 days free (https://www.telegraph.co.uk/secure/login? LoginCID=generic\_premiumlogin\_generic\_generic\_topnav&redirectTo=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.telegraph.co.uk%2Fnews%2F2018%2F10%2Fcook-statue-removed-new-zealand-mountain-maori-protests%2F).

Home > News

# Captain Cook statue to be removed from hill in New Zealand after Maori protests



The statue stands atop a local ancestral hill known as Titirangi CREDIT: ALAMY

Follow

By **Jonathan Pearlman**, IN SYDNEY  
2 OCTOBER 2018 • 3:21PM

A statue of Captain Cook will be removed from a hill in New Zealand following protests by the local Maori community which says its ancestors arrived there long before the famous British explorer.

The council in Gisborne on the North Island said it will relocate the statue, which was erected in 1969 but has been repeatedly defaced by vandals who have daubed it in red paint, stolen its sword, and once covered Cook in a painted white bikini and sandals.

Critics have described Cook, who landed in the area aboard HMS Endeavour in 1769, (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/19/captain-cooks-missing-hms-endeavour-discovered-us-coast/>) as a “murderer” and “crooked Cook”.

Leaders of the local Ngati Oneone tribe say historical records show that Cook’s crew shot nine of their people, killing six. They say Cook’s arrival was eventually followed by European settlement, which led to their dispossession and the demise of their culture.

Meredith Akuhata-Brown, a Gisborne councillor, said the council voted unanimously to move the statue, which stands atop a local ancestral hill known as Titirangi, to a museum as part of the 250th anniversary commemorations of Cook’s arrival.

She said it might be replaced by a statue of Raikaitane, the Maori chief at the time of Cook’s landing.

"It's significant because James never climbed Titirangi... and so for local iwi [tribespeople] it's been a massive disappointment that he's maintained that space for as long as he has," she told Radio New Zealand.

The plaza at the top of the hill will be redesigned to celebrate the Maori history of the area CREDIT: ALAMY

The statue has long been controversial, not least because it was apparently made by an Italian sculptor in Sydney who attired Cook in Italian clothing.

The council said the plaza at the top of the hill will be redesigned to “celebrate the Maori history of this area and the ancestors who arrived here before Captain Cook”.

"The Cooks Plaza will be upgraded so iwi stories and cultural design elements can be shared from this significant location... to create an aesthetic and safe gathering space," the council said in a statement.

Authorities will also consider renaming Poverty Bay, the local bay which was named by Cook after he landed there but could not resupply his ship.

The New Zealand Geographic Board this week indicated its support to adopt a dual name for the bay - Turanganui-a-Kiwa/Poverty Bay - to incorporate its Maori title.

## Profile | Who was Captain Cook?

Captain James Cook was an eighteenth century British explorer and navigator who made numerous celebrated voyages across the Pacific Ocean before he was killed by islanders in Hawaii in 1779.

Born in Yorkshire in 1728, Cook grew up on a farm before his mathematical and navigation skills helped him climb the ranks of the Royal Navy and eventually to lead three celebrated Pacific voyages.

Regarded as a humane explorer, he set numerous records, including becoming the first European to land on Australia's east coast in 1770 during a secret expedition to confirm the existence of a southern continent. He also led the first voyage to circumnavigate New Zealand and was the first European on record to discover Hawaii.

It was this last voyage that led to his death after tensions broke out between his crew and the locals.



There has been a growing push in New Zealand to remove statues of colonial figures, particularly those involved in attacks on local Maori civilians.

Australia has also experienced [growing debate about the role of Captain Cook in the nation's history](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/23/row-erupts-statue-sydney-calls-remove-reference-captain-cook/).

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/23/row-erupts-statue-sydney-calls-remove-reference-captain-cook/>)

Several statues of him have been vandalised, including one in Sydney's Hyde Park [which was spray-painted with the words "no pride in genocide"](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/25/paint-poured-captain-cook-amid-controversy-date-australia-day/).

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/25/paint-poured-captain-cook-amid-controversy-date-australia-day/>)

Scott Morrison, the prime minister, has announced a £27 million revamp of the main monument in Sydney that commemorates Cook's arrival in 1770.

He said it would be "sensitive" and would include a memorial dedicated to Australia's first inhabitants.

Contact us

[About us \(https://corporate.telegraph.co.uk/\)](https://corporate.telegraph.co.uk/)

Rewards

[Archive \(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/archive/\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/archive/)

[Reader Prints \(http://telegraph.newsprints.co.uk/\)](http://telegraph.newsprints.co.uk/)

Branded Content

Syndication

Guidelines

Privacy

Terms and Conditions

[Advertising terms \(http://spark.telegraph.co.uk/toolkit/advertising/terms-and-conditions/\)](http://spark.telegraph.co.uk/toolkit/advertising/terms-and-conditions/)

[Fantasy Sport \(https://fantasyfootball.telegraph.co.uk\)](https://fantasyfootball.telegraph.co.uk/)

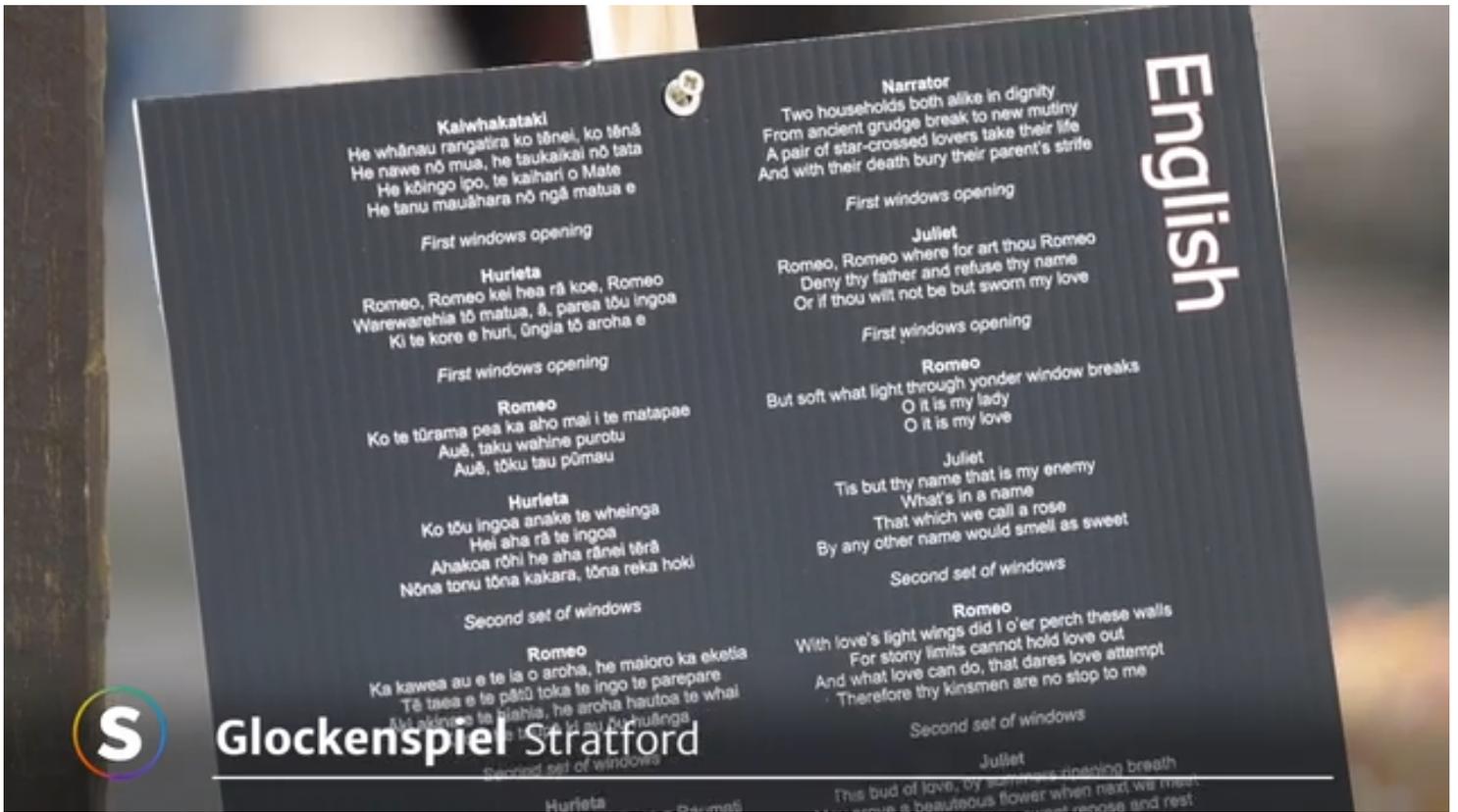
[Voucher Codes \(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/vouchercodes\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/vouchercodes)

Modern Slavery

© Telegraph Media Group Limited 2019

# Is it time to restore all of New Zealand's Māori place names?

Lorna Thornber · 05:00, Sep 17 2020



SIMON O'CONNOR/STUFF

The Southern Hemisphere's only glockenspiel is playing its usual Romeo and Juliet in te reo Māori for the first time ever for Te Wiki o te reo Māori (video published September 2020).

**During te wiki o te reo Māori, the Māori language week, the karanga or call to reclaim Māori place names and the history and culture connected to those names**

Earlier this year, when the Black Lives Matter movement kicked off overseas, [it reignited the embers](#) of an age-old debate here about colonisation and who we are as a nation.

Statues of colonists were defaced and removed and the non-Māori names of landmarks, towns, cities – and indeed the entire country – were once again called into question.

MORE FROM

**LORNA THORNER - TRAVEL REPORTER**

[lorna.thorner@stuff.co.nz](mailto:lorna.thorner@stuff.co.nz)

Many original Māori place names have now been restored and others, such as Aoraki/Mount Cook, hold dual names which reflect their Māori and Pākehā histories.

Critics, including the Māori Party, are asking why the country is still officially known as New Zealand, a bastardised version of the name bestowed by Dutch cartographers in 1642.

#### READ MORE:

- \* [Election 2020: Māori Party wants New Zealand to be officially renamed Aotearoa within six years](#)
- \* [Support for Wellington to be called Te Whanganui-a-Tara following Māori Party's language policy announcement](#)
- \* [We should reinstate every Māori place name](#)

## pou tiaki

[Log in](#)

JOHN BISSET/STUFF

Many Māori names, such as Aoraki/Mount Cook, have been restored through the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process, but there have been calls for all English names to be replaced with their original ingoa Māori.

There has been a growing recognition of the significance of Māori place names to both the tangata whenua and New Zealand as a whole since the 1970s.

Many Māori names have been restored as a result of the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process, while the New Zealand Geographic Board Ngā Pou Taunaha o Aotearoa, the national authority on place names, has reinstated others.

To coincide with Māori Language Week, the Māori Party yesterday pledged to officially [change the country's name](#) from New Zealand to Aotearoa if elected, and replace all English place names with their original ingoa Māori by 2026.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described the increasing use of the name Aotearoa as “a positive thing” but said the Government had “not explored” officially changing the country's name.

“Whether or not we change it in law I don't think changes the fact New Zealanders do increasingly refer to Aotearoa, and I think that's a transition that has been welcomed,” she said.

pou tiaki

**TE REO  
MĀORI**

POU TIAKI

Moves to restore Māori place names have gained momentum as more New Zealanders learn te reo Māori and gain a deeper appreciation of how important the language – and our Māori roots in general – are to our national identity, experts say.

Māori Language Commissioner Professor Rawinia Higgins said every part of our country has a Māori name unique to Aotearoa.

“As more New Zealanders become interested in the history of the towns and cities we live in, more people are wanting to know their Māori names as well,” said Higgins.

“I think that as we continue to learn more about our history and recognise te reo as being a big part of our identity, people are more aware of the need to reclaim our landscape with Māori names.”



contribute to our unique identities as a nation.

---

AUT Professor Pare Keiha also believes Māori place names strengthen our identity as New Zealanders.

“They give names to places which, amongst other things, recount history, identity and a sense of belonging,” said Keiha. “Māori place names should be seen as markers which ground us, no pun intended, to the whenua (land), our history, our whakapapa (genealogy) and therefore our common identity.”

Keiha, whose tribal affiliations lie with the principal tribes of Tūranga/Gisborne, said in failing to recognise Māori place names, we fail to honour our country’s history and culture.

“The unilateral change of a name ignores the complex stories of a place,” he said. “But let's make it clear: Māori did not ask for our place names to be changed. Such changed names represent an act of colonisation and aggression. And remain an act of aggression in the minds of many.

“We continue to delight in historical cleansing by continuing to deny Māori our own history in our own land ... [it] says much about a country still wedded to colonisation, still wedded to its own racism and, perhaps more problematically, wedded to poor grammar and poor pronunciation.”



123RF

AUT Professor Pare Keiha feels the wishes of mana whenua to rename Poverty Bay to Tūranganui-ā-kiwa should be granted: “Why on Earth would we want to maintain a name in this day an age with so little dignity or meaning?”

Columnist Karl du Fresne argued there [should be public debate](#) not stealth changes before Māori place names are restored particularly replacing New Zealand with Aotearoa.

But Dr Te Kawehau Hoskins, from the University of Auckland, said the debate overlooks the fact such respect was never afforded to Māori.

“Māori place names point to the earliest relationships of people with place,” said Hoskins. “They narrate unique histories and sets of relationships, all of which are obscured and potentially lost by the often thoughtless and colonial habit of claiming and naming.

“It is not that Māori would necessarily oppose names changing over time to reflect different patterns of settlement and new sets of relationships, as long as those Māori names and histories were preserved.

“However, in the context of continuing settler dominance and a lack of regard for Treaty relationships, no one should be surprised that Māori are making calls for all



JOSH MCGUIGAN/STUFF

Abel Tasman called Mohua/Golden Bay “Murderers Bay” after a bad experience there.

Massey University senior lecturer in linguistics Julia de Bres said New Zealanders need to understand why there is such strong emotional reactions from both sides of the debate. She was responding to the [Manawatū Standard’s campaign with local iwi](#) to reclaim the use of Te Marae o Hine for its popular town square.

[It isn’t just about racism](#), she said, there are issues of attachment to a name through personal experiences and being deeply uncomfortable with our colonial past.

“Do we turn to anger and resistance, cementing ourselves as part of the problem? Or do we sit with this discomfort, recognise the emotions beneath and seek more constructive ways to respond?,” said de Bres.

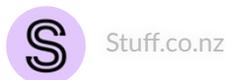
“This might involve changing the question: Not what do we lose when a place name is altered, but what do we gain? And we gain many things.”

Pākēha have been renaming places in New Zealand since Dutch explorer Abel Tasman became the first European to sight the country in 1642. Cook gave English names to many places on his voyage around New Zealand about a century later,

## pou tiaki

[Log in](#)

Many of these names honoured early Pākehā explorers, settlers, government officials and church leaders, while others memorialised British military men feted for imperial conquest and domination, often for their roles in subjugating Māori.



### Should NZ be renamed Aotearoa?

Yes, it suits us much better.

No. I think we should stick with New Zealand.

I'd prefer a dual name like Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Credit: Tobias Keller / Unsplash

She said attitudes towards Māori place names are changing, thanks in large part to efforts to revitalise the Māori language and the Government's stated intention to act in line with the Treaty principles of partnership, participation and protection.

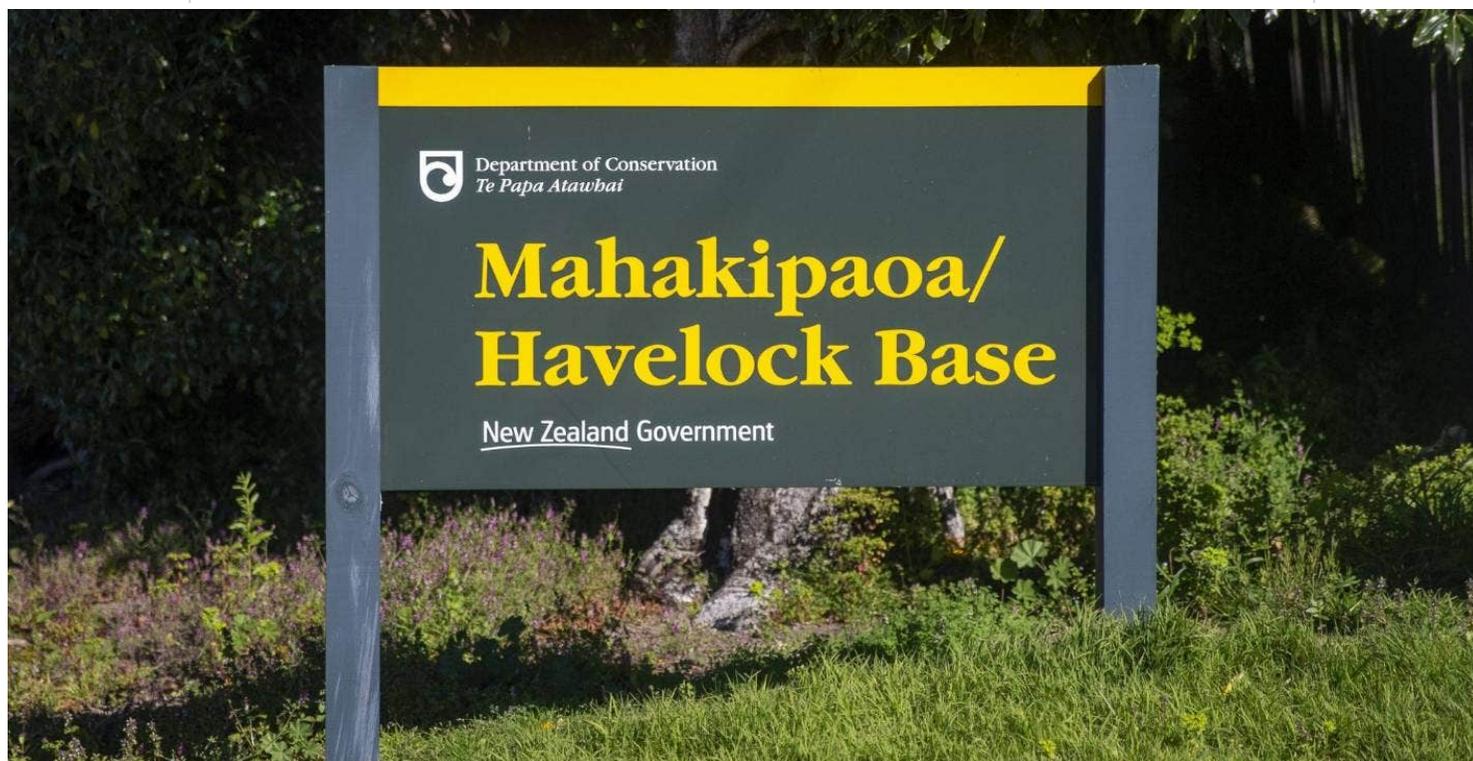
However, "many New Zealanders continue to express their objection to the restoration of original Māori place names, which is an important part of the consultation process", said Shaw.

While the board has received at least one enquiry about the country's name almost every year for the past decade, it does not have the power to change it: That would require an act of Parliament.

The board is charged with collecting and encouraging the use of original Māori place names on maps and charts, and its mission statement for 2020 to 2025 is to "secure and celebrate New Zealand's unique identity through place names".

Anyone can propose a name change to the board, but it's a lengthy process. Treaty settlement proposals can take years, while proposals made directly to the board may only take several months.

After the board receives a proposal, research is undertaken, local iwi and council reports are written and public submissions are sought. If there are objections, either the board or the Minister of Land Information makes the final call.



BRYA INGRAM/STUFF

The NZ Geographic board gives places dual names when it decides the Māori and non-Māori names are of equal significance.

The board's kaupapa (plan) for Māori place names states preference should be given to Māori place names, "where suitable". If the original Māori name has been altered over time, it should be restored in its correct form.

There are a variety of reasons the board or minister might decide to keep an English name, such as the name being of greater significance, changing the name may cause problems for emergency services, if the Māori place name already exists elsewhere, or if there are multiple Māori names for the same place.

If the board decides both the Māori and non-Maori names are of equal significance to the community, a place may be given dual or alternative names. The board prefers places to have single names and aims to replace the dual name with the ingoa Māori eventually, but it can take generations.

Auckland University Associate Professor Melinda Webber said it is critical all people who choose to live and work in New Zealand understand its history – and place names, and the wairua (spirituality) the names imbue, are a big part of that.

“They recount stories of connection between hapū, they contain scientific knowledge, they describe key events in history, including the coming together (or not) of Māori and non-Māori. And they help us to remember genealogical and historical information.

“It is important for all New Zealanders to learn these names because te reo Māori and place names are an insight into Māori world views.”

Cheers, Aotearoa. Thank you to our readers who have already supported Stuff's reporting. **Contribute today** to help our journalists bring you independent New Zealand news you can trust.

I'd like to contribute →

Stuff Puna

## paid content

about this content



### PhD Economist's Surprising Warning: A Strange Day is Coming

Visionary Profit



### C'est voté, l'État prend en charge et finance l'installation de vos panneaux solaires

Solaire Pas Cher

# Recent museum exhibitions and authorized heritage discourses about James Cook: “Shared History” and “The Performance of Privilege”

 [crlv.org/articles/recent-museum-exhibitions-and-authorized-heritage-discourses-about-james-cook-shared](https://crlv.org/articles/recent-museum-exhibitions-and-authorized-heritage-discourses-about-james-cook-shared)

For the 250th anniversary of Cook’s expeditions, a large number of events are being organized around the world, often with public funding. These events are generally situated in a space of tension between commemoration and celebration, and also between history and heritage. They are part of heritage activity in that they tend to communicate a vision of who “we” and “our civilisations” were 250 years ago. Scholars, in particular Laurajane Smith of the National University of Australia, have analysed heritage as not a series of objects and places, but as an activity, a performance, and a performance which often includes some and excludes others.<sup>[1]</sup> In this article, I shall look at just one aspect of the anniversary – museum exhibitions – and I shall explore some of these tensions.

The stated intentions, and often the real intentions of a number of institutional actors are to build up a “shared history” between dominant and dominated peoples involved in these encounters. However, partly due to the facts of domination, conscious and unconscious, and partly due to the persistence of material and symbolic injustice inflicted upon indigenous peoples, the performance of privilege remains very much present in authorized heritage events, even so long after Cook’s death.

I wish to introduce two elements of context before examining three museum exhibitions. Firstly, we must note that commemorations causing controversy, and leading to attempts to compensate in the interests of a claimed shared history, are not a new phenomenon. Let us look at two British examples. In plate 1, we see a statue erected in honour of the British soldiers in World War One who were executed for desertion, cowardice, sleeping at their post or other such crimes. Scholars working on the cases have shown convincingly that the most important factor which decided whether a convicted soldier was actually executed or whether he was reprieved was the immediate state of the war in the region and the perceived need to “strengthen morale”.<sup>[2]</sup> In short, the soldiers were executed *pour encourager les autres*.<sup>[3]</sup> This fact, and also the different views prevailing today concerning “shell shock” or post-traumatic stress disorder, encouraged the very long campaign run by relatives of the executed, demanding a posthumous pardon; for many years, the Ministry of Defence insisted that such a pardon was impossible. This monument was erected in 2001, 83 years after the end of the war, at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire – that is, at a site run by the military establishment. A few years later, 306 soldiers were officially pardoned. This pardon helped to make the huge celebrations of the centenary of the First

World War a touch more inclusive: those who at the time were seen as an enemy within were now to be forgiven and reintegrated into a national community re-energized by a shared history.

**The « Shot at Dawn » memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum. Photo: Noisette. Copyright Creative Commons.**

For a second example, let us look at plate 2, a plaque in the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, in Oxford. It commemorates local martyrs, Catholic and Protestant, each executed by the other side between 1530 and 1680. It was unveiled, in this leading Anglican church, in 2008, that is to say 330 years after the events commemorated. It is clear that the move towards shared history can take some time! In the twenty-first century, when tensions between Catholics and Protestants in England are incommensurably milder,<sup>[4]</sup> this symbol of shared history has become possible.



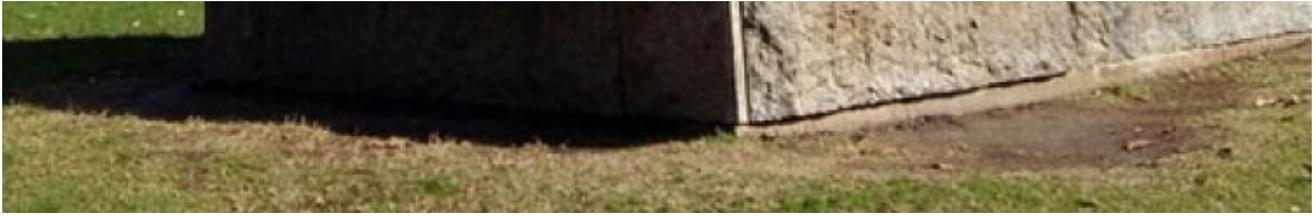
**Memorial plaque to Catholic and Protestant martyrs, University Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Oxford. Photograph: Kaisu Thai. Copyright Creative Commons.**

I give the two examples for context, though they are not fully comparable to the subject of this article. This is firstly because the painful history of colonization and racism in the Pacific is far more present today than are the pasts referred to in these two cases. In Australia today, to take just the example of one country, there are Aboriginal people alive who were taken from their families by police in the campaigns to forcibly assimilate or eliminate Aboriginal communities, during the events now known as the "stolen generation".<sup>[5]</sup> Aboriginal communities, who have had certain land rights officially recognized, are still often in conflict with plans to use their land for mining, and discrimination against Aboriginals is still widespread.<sup>[6]</sup>

The second reason why tensions and debate about the commemoration of Cook are present at a higher temperature than for the two other British examples I mentioned, is the flourishing of an immense current of thought and practice, in particular in New Zealand and in Australia, which aims now at rethinking or contesting the colonial legacy in the Pacific, and at considering possibilities for restorative justice on both symbolic and material levels.

The second element of context to my reflections on recent exhibitions is the weight of the tsunami of hagiography concerning Cook which has been built up over the last 250 years. In Australia in particular, Cook remains a key part of national foundational mythology, no doubt considered preferable as a founding father cum free spirit to the prison colony governors of the nineteenth century. In Britain and elsewhere in Europe he has been lauded as the enlightenment adventurer and bringer of civilisation, but also as being that most modern of heroes, the disruptive entrepreneur. Coming from a modest background, changing the world and dying in harness, Cook has been a perfect storytale figure. His story has been available to public consciousness in a myriad of ways, of which I can mention only a few.





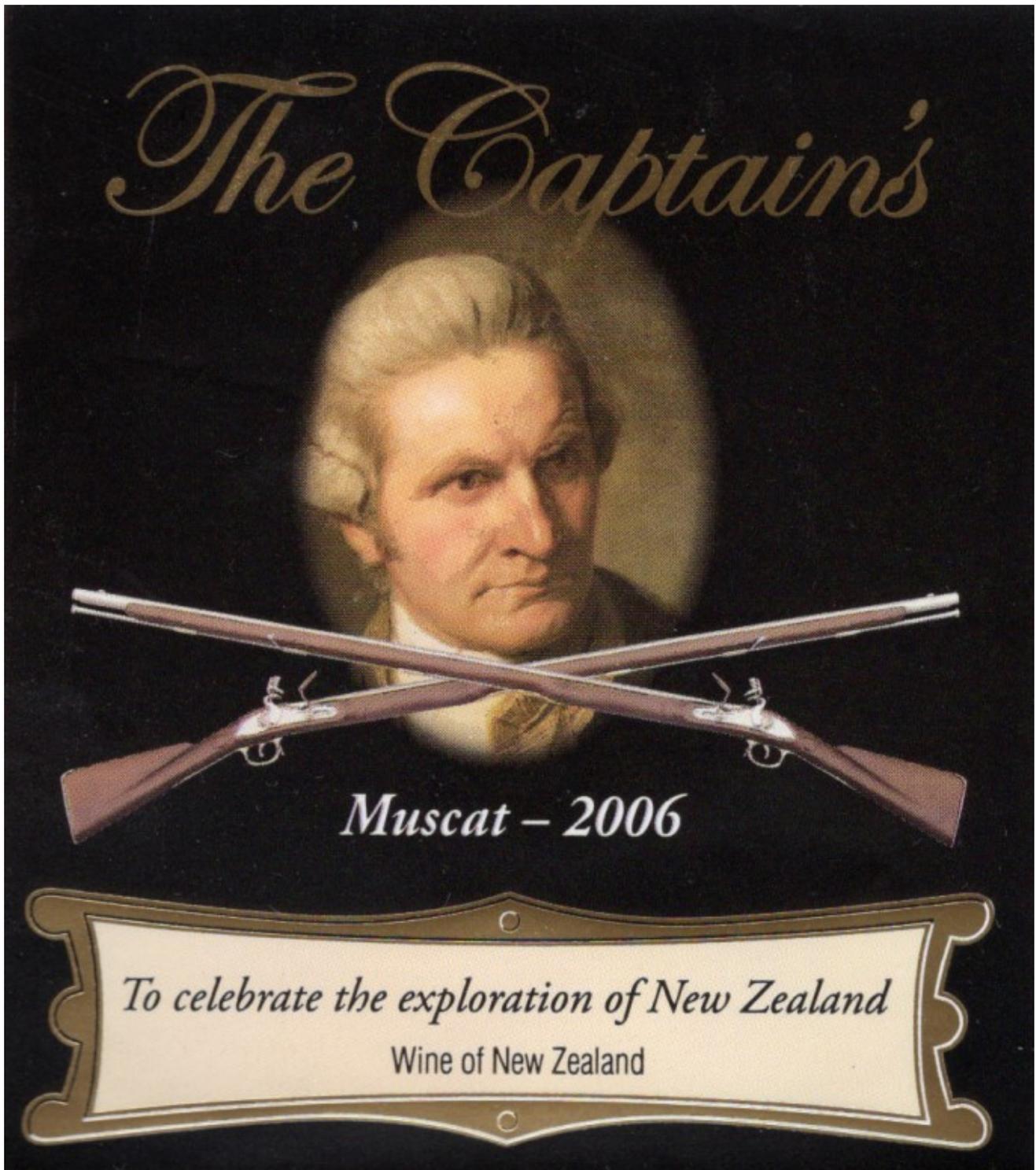
**Cook statue in Hyde Park, Sydney. Photo: John Mullen**

In the centre of Sydney's emblematic Hyde Park, only 200 metres from the Anzac memorial, a huge statue of Cook gazes triumphantly down at passers-by. In Whitby or London, and even in Rouen in France, statues and busts are displayed in public spaces. In Canberra, Queen Elizabeth inaugurated a memorial fountain on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cook's visit.



**Cook memorial fountain, Canberra. Photo: Bidgee. Copyright Creative Commons.**

Cook's face can be seen on banknotes, coins and stamps, on cigarette cards, matchboxes, wine labels, fridge magnets or Pokemon cards. His name is given to restaurants and universities, while fans can see his desk preserved in a museum in Canberra and see his parents' cottage in a park in Melbourne, after it was lovingly transported from Yorkshire brick by brick, in the 1930s.



Wine label in honour of Cook. Photo: Ian Boreham. Reproduced with permission.

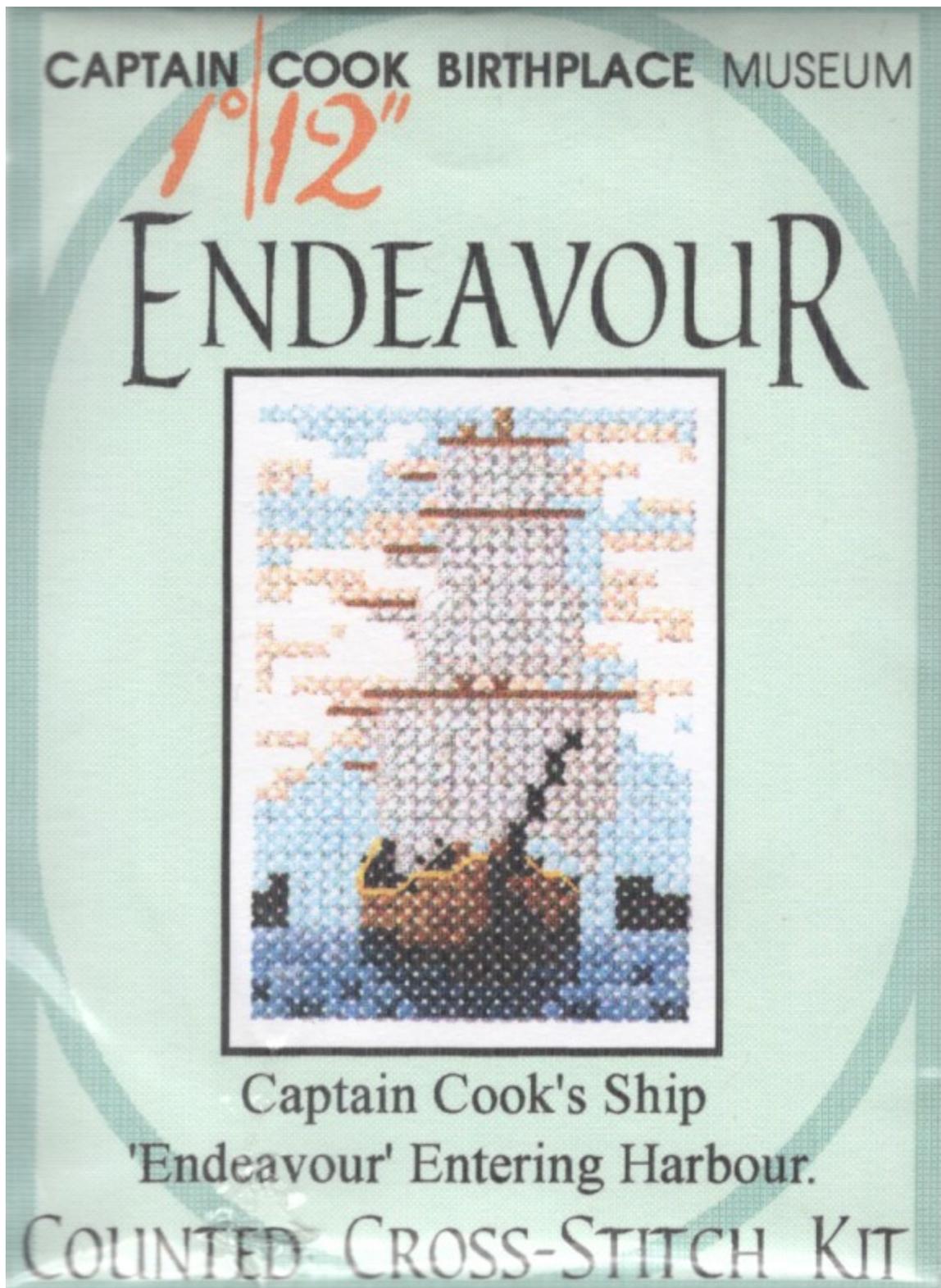


**Captain Cook's Cottage in Melbourne. Photo: John Mullen**

His story is celebrated in numerous paintings, his name given to ships, and hospitals, and the names of his ships were even given to space shuttles at the very end of the twentieth century.

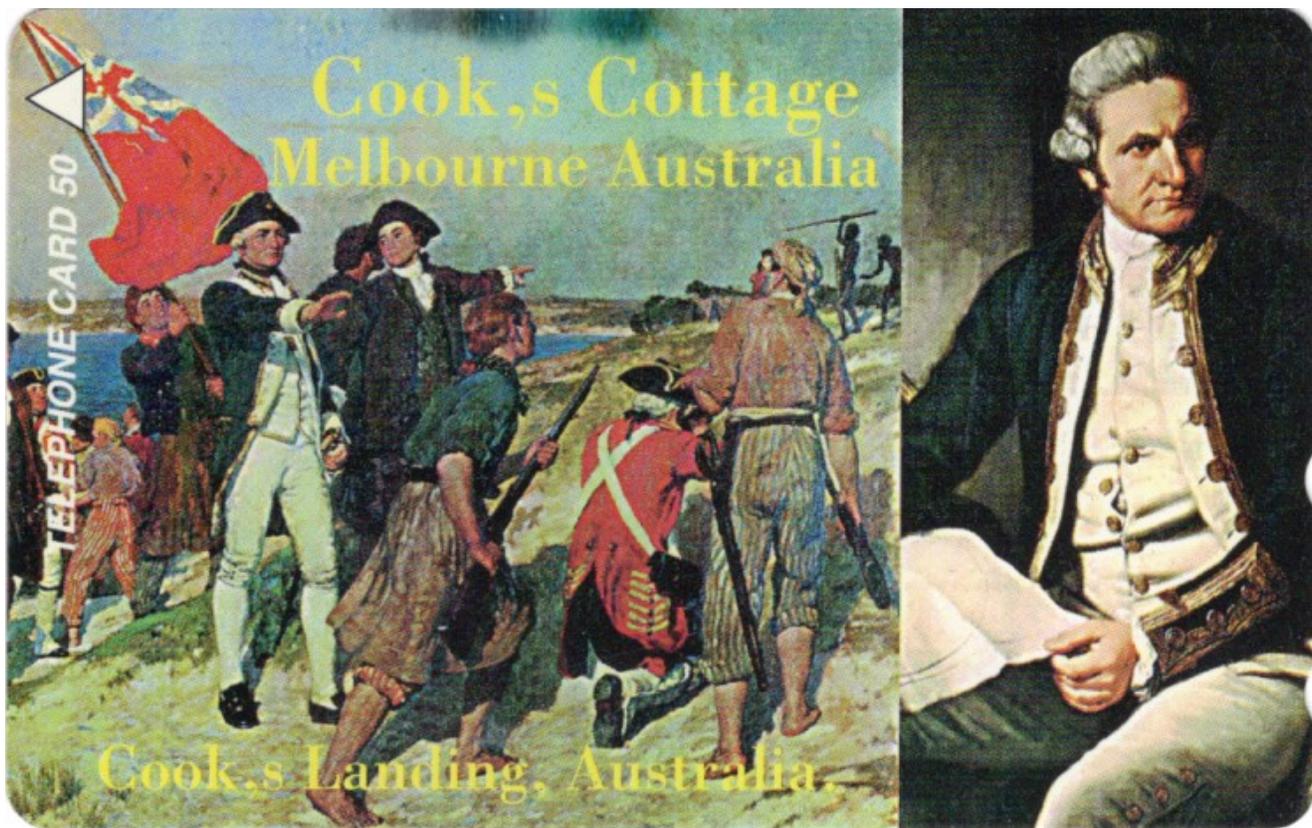


The Space Shuttle Endeavour. Photo: NASA, Public Domain.



**Cross-stitch pattern of Cook's ship Endeavour. Photo: Ian Boreham. Reproduced with permission.**

His story has been illustrated by models and board games, and even in cross-stitch kits and children's songs, such as this one:



Telephone card in honour of Cook. Photo: Ian Boreham. Reproduced with permission.

Captain Cook was a British sailor

One day he left his home and sailed away

And he sailed and he sailed and he sailed till he came to Australia

And he named the place he landed "Botany bay".

Captain Cook took a look, and he said to his men

"I think I'd better draw some maps so we find this place again!"<sup>[7]</sup>

All this is what the visitor, the journalist, or the curator may be vaguely conscious of before encountering or intervening in the museum exhibitions:

Exhibition 1

British Library: *James Cook, the Voyages*

April 2018 – August 2018. Entrance fee: £14

(and catalogue, 224 pages)

## Exhibition 2

British Museum: *Reimagining Captain Cook: Pacific Perspectives*

November 2018 to August 2019. Free entrance

(and catalogue, 64 pages)

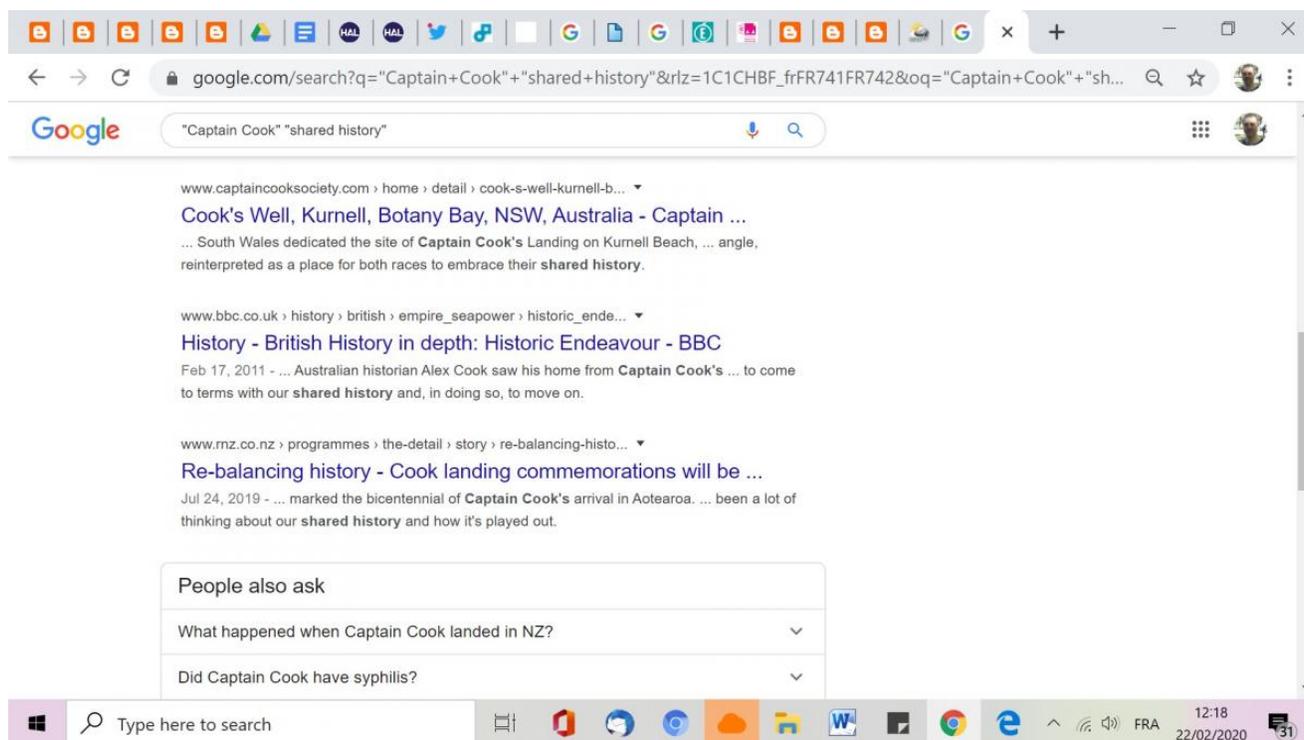
## Exhibition 3

National Library of Australia: *Cook and the Pacific*

September 2018 – February 2019. Free entrance

(and catalogue, 182 pages)

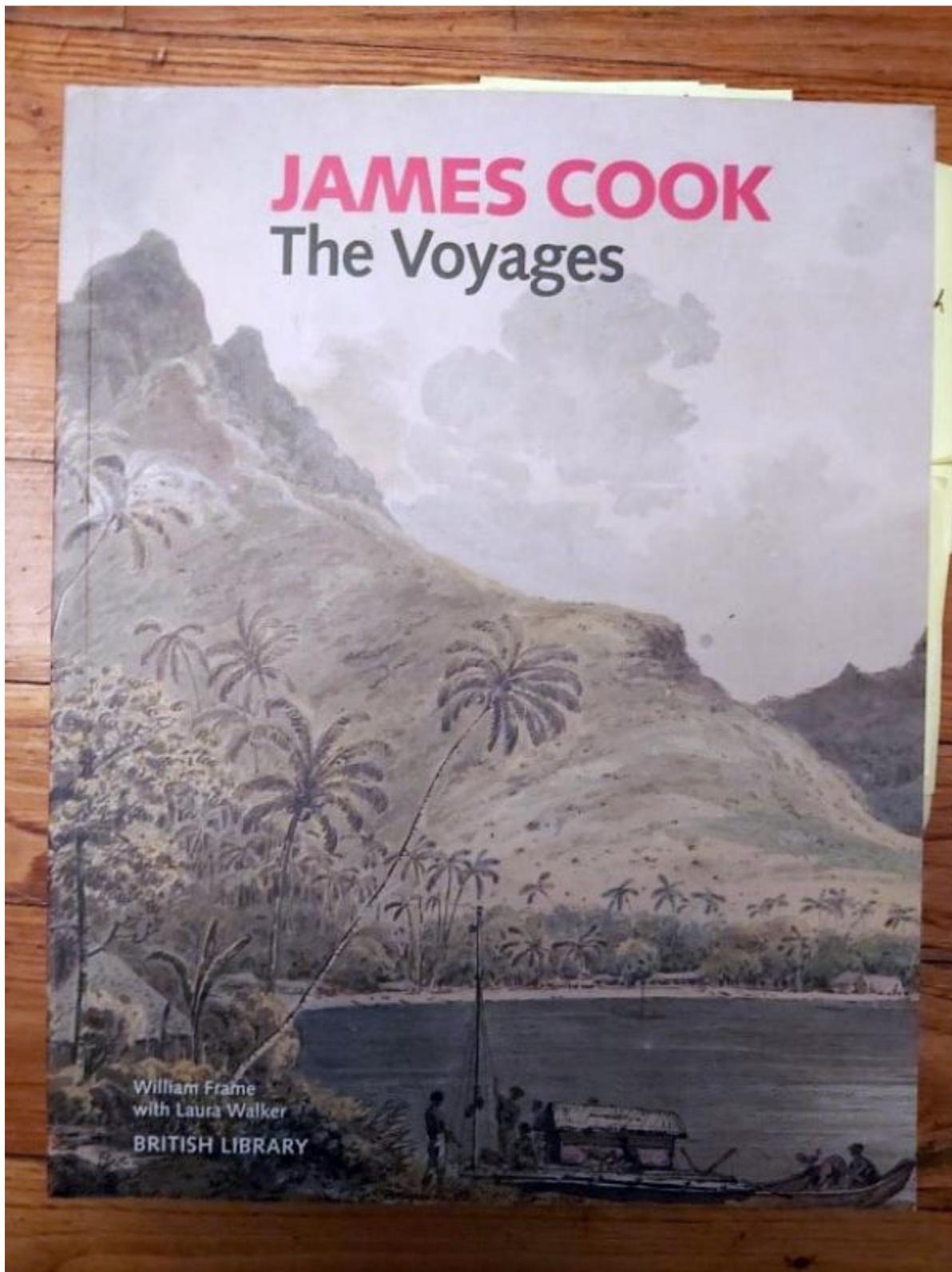
All three of these exhibitions attempted to include perspectives and voices from indigenous peoples. In Australia, this attempt was openly announced as a perspective or hope of "shared history" between indigenous Aboriginal and white populations. In London, it was presented as a move away from a colonialist national narrative and as a recognition of physical and symbolic injustice from the past.



The idea of "shared history" present around the world. Screenshot: John Mullen

## 1. *The British Library exhibition*

The first exhibition, at the British Library in London, appears initially as a fairly classical presentation of Cook's travels. A chronological approach is taken, from Cook's youth and naval training, through the three expeditions to his death in Hawaii.



**Catalogue from British Library exhibition. Photo: John Mullen**

In the catalogue, Fox's well-known heroic painting, *The Landing of Captain Cook in Botany Bay*, stands opposite the first page of the introduction, and the opening paragraphs do not mention First Nations. This traditionalist impression rapidly gains nuance as early as the second page of the catalogue, which is illustrated by Daniel Boyd's straightforwardly oppositional, anticolonialist rendering of the Fox painting. Boyd's version presents the same characters in identical attitudes, but a skull and crossbones are added to the British flag, Cook sports a pirate eye patch, and the painting is entitled "We call them pirates out here".<sup>[8]</sup>



**Emmanuel Phillips Fox: The Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay.**

The biographies of Cook, Banks etc. in the exhibition remain arguably hagiographic, certainly traditional, and so do the ethnographic tales about First Nations, even if the peoples are named. For dozens of pages there appear to be few or no indigenous voices present or quoted. Nevertheless, the account of the first encounter in New Zealand includes the information that "It is believed that the dead man was Te Maro, a chief of the Ngati Oneone". This is the sort of information which might easily have been omitted fifty years earlier.

The "taking possession" ceremonies are presented as being of doubtful validity, and the catalogue does include summaries of some Maori oral history accounts of Cook's visits, in particular that of Te Horeat, who saw the visit as a child and recounted it as a very old man in 1852. In the section presenting the second journey, space is given to the stories of named First Nation people who were in contact with Cook. For example, we see the story of Tu, a Tahitian chief, and that of Hitihiti, a navigator and memorizer of oral cartography, who travelled on Cook's ship for a while, before leaving the ship to stay on the island of Ra'iatea.

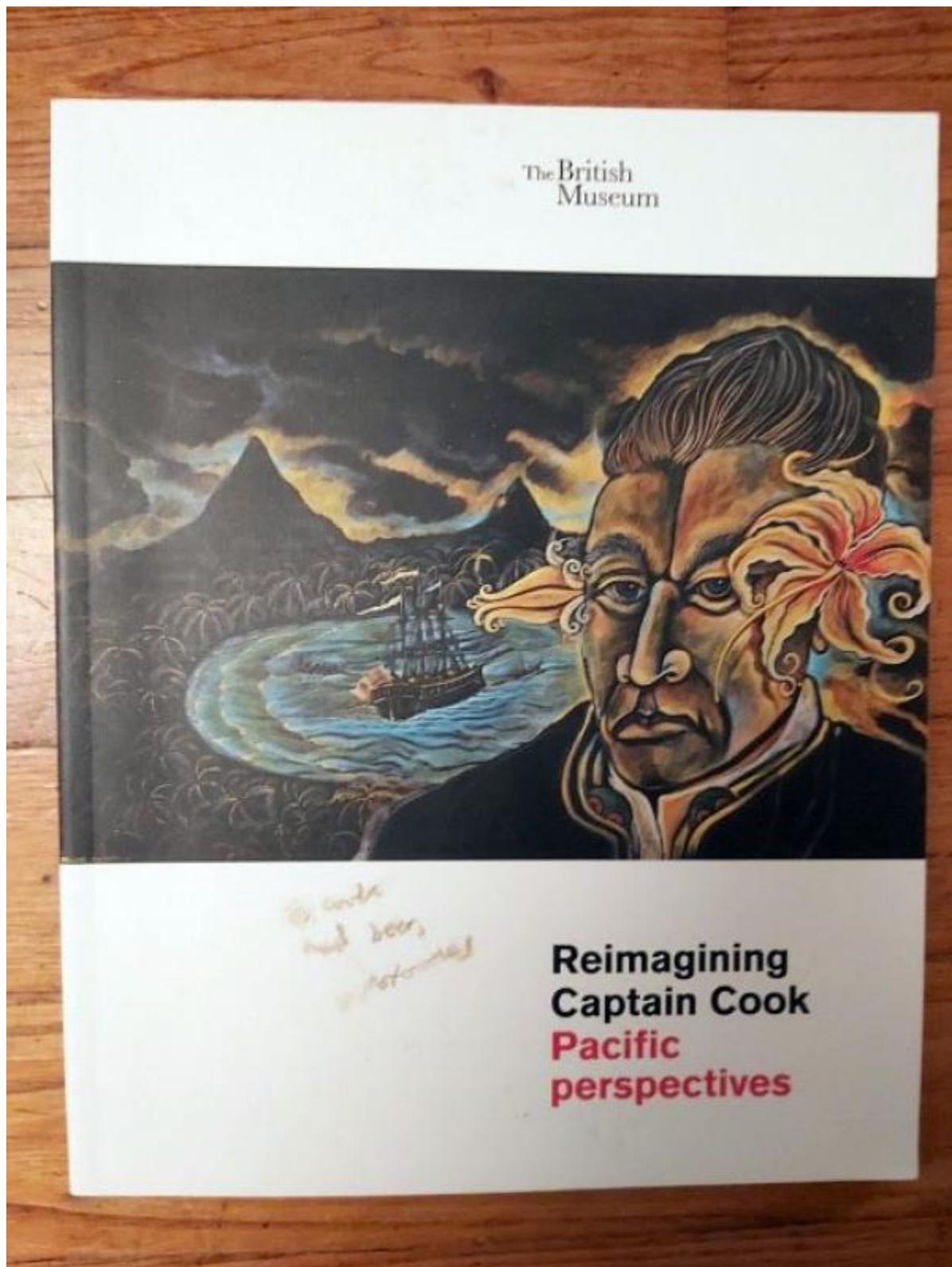


**O Hedideen or Hitihiti. Engraving 1777 after Hodges. Copyright Creative Commons.**

In short in this exhibition we see First nation voices included. The exhibition ends with a series of video interviews demonstrating contrasting and even contradictory opinions on Cook's legacy.

## ***2. Exhibition two – reimagining Captain Cook***

---



**Catalogue for British Museum exhibition. Photo: John Mullen**

The second exhibition was, unlike the first, a fairly small, free exhibition, situated in the middle of the free permanent collection of the institution. Whether museums organize paying or free initiatives is important in that the audience is not the same: generally, far more people

see a free exhibition, though they may not study it with as much attention.

The title, "Pacific Perspectives", suggested the display might put indigenous voices at its centre. At the entrance, the presence of posters from previous London exhibitions underlined its intention to be different. Nevertheless, the now rejected, straightforwardly colonial gaze from the previous exhibitions is not explained, analysed or deconstructed – it is only present as an unfortunate ghost from the past.

The museum added to the interesting objects Cook and his crew collected by showing a dozen examples of twenty-first century art by indigenous artists on the subject of Cook. In addition, the historical articles include two of Tupaia's drawings: the overall intention was to ensure there is a significant percentage of indigenous agency and voice. Furthermore, a number of these artistic productions were not just to be displayed for the duration of the exhibition, but were bought by the British Museum to add to their collection, clearly a signal of their being taken seriously.

I will only refer to one example, by Steve Gibbs, entitled *Name Changer*.<sup>[9]</sup> In this piece one can see Cook's ship displayed upside down, a fairly clear contestation of the hero worship often attached to the gentleman. The work takes up the question of the classic colonial practice of naming of places by Cook. The work's title is a basic reminder of something often downplayed – that Cook's activity was not really naming, but name changing: the places already had names. The specific example Gibbs refers to is the place which Cook decided to call "Poverty Bay" because it did not give him and his crew what they were looking for at that time. Such a negative name, which has remained until this day, constitutes a form of symbolic violence. This has been recently recognized in part, since in February last year, in 2019, the bay was officially given the dual name "Turanganui a Kiwa/ Poverty Bay". In Gibbs' painting, the local place names in indigenous languages are commemorated in the centre of the picture. The overall impression is of patient and harmonious contestation of Cook's legacy.

The British Museum exhibition was well received in many reviews, and the attempt to include indigenous expression as a move towards "shared history" was welcomed. Yet the performance of domination was also clearly identified by some. Some critics considered superficial the inclusion of indigenous voices. Others pointed out contradictions in connection with the British Museum's wider resistance to the return to their original communities of indigenous artefacts, in particular those whose acquisition is considered to be illegitimate. One critic, Liza Oliver, speaks of the museum's "wilful blind spots" and concludes:

Without the museum addressing this question directly, the exhibition's employment of contemporary indigenous voices could be read as instrumental, using them to create a veneer of institutional awakening and self-critique when in reality there is very little of either.

[10]

The tension around questions of acquisition and return is to be seen in connection with the centre point of the exhibition, which was the chief mourner's costume (Heva Tupapau) from Tahiti.



Chief mourner's costume acquired by Cook. Photo: John Mullen

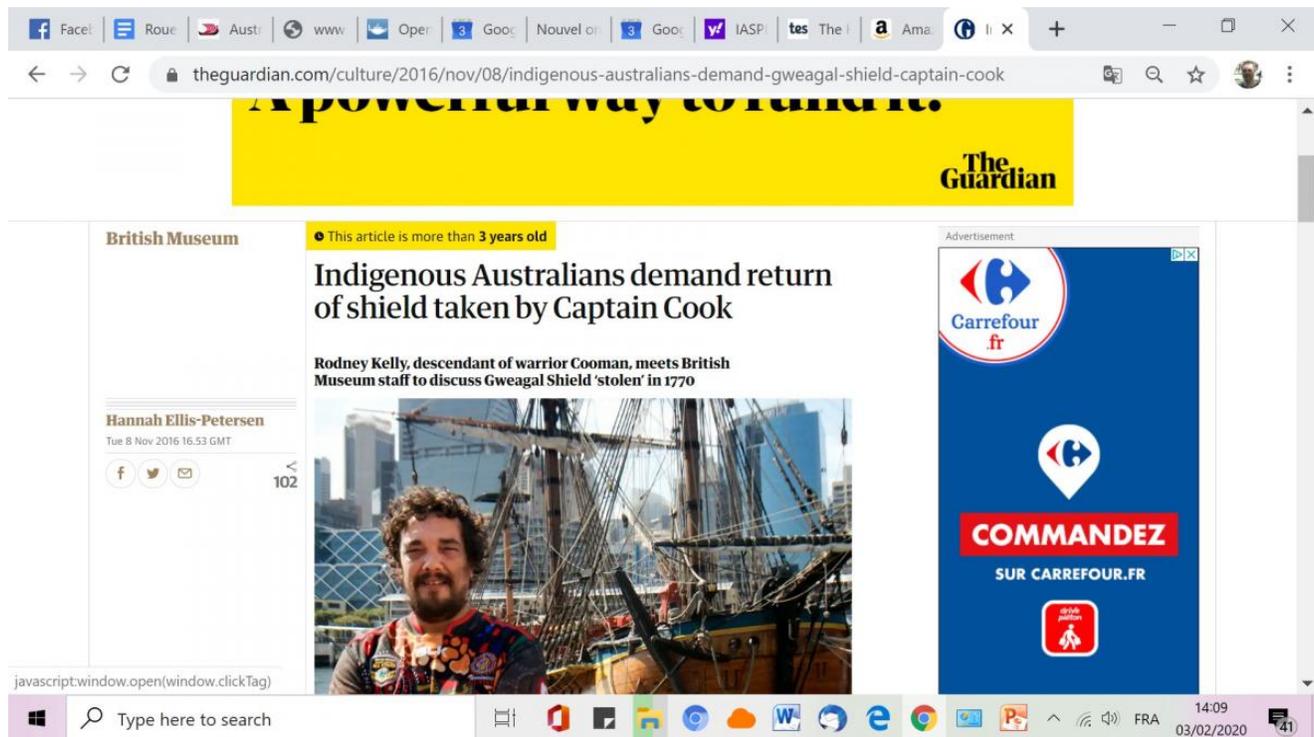
The text on the left of the costume explains how Cook came to possess such a magnificent object. He had been keen to acquire one when he first visited Tahiti, but the locals refused to part with it. On his second visit, he was able to exchange highly prized red parrot feathers for the costume. We see that the British Museum is keen to point out the legitimacy of their possession of the object, within a general context of the debate about restitution. The British museum is very much involved in this controversy, as can be seen by an article on the museum blog in 2019 showing the history and provenance of objects it possesses.<sup>[11]</sup>



### The explanation of the costume's provenance. Photo: John Mullen

This careful pedagogy led some critics to ironize about objects which were absent from the exhibition. In particular, the shield, known as the Gweagal shield, taken at Botany Bay during a violent encounter, which is in the British museum collection, did not find a place within the

exhibition. The bark shield has a bullet hole in it which comes from the initial encounter. The shield is considered a centrally important object in the museum's collection, to such an extent that it was included in the renowned BBC Radio series "A History of the World in 100 Objects".<sup>[12]</sup> Its omission from the exhibition is likely to be linked to the fact that its acquisition was fairly clearly illegitimate. Indeed, descendants of the original owner of the shield are campaigning for it to be returned to them, as can be seen in the newspaper article in plate 17.



**Article in The Guardian, 8 November 2016, on the controversy. Screenshot: John Mullen**

Even the key curating decision taken by the exhibition, that of using twenty-first century artworks from First Nation artists may be seen as involving less First Nation agency than First Nation illustration. As one reviewer laments:

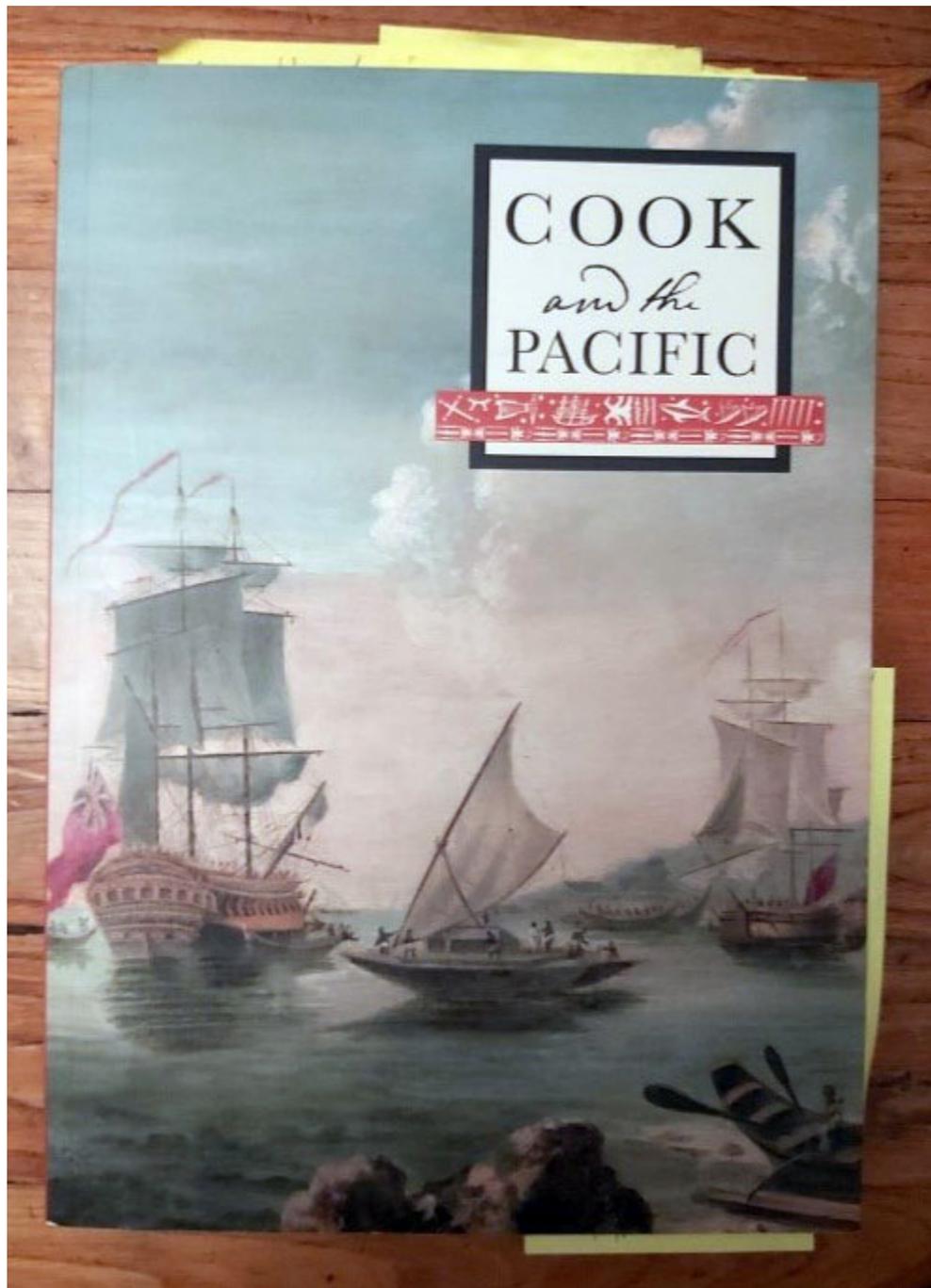
The impressions of indigenous cultures and First Nation peoples, in the form of contemporary artworks, remain subordinate to the narrative of Western enlightenment in which exhaustively written testimonies, the inventory and the actual relic, are considered pre-eminent guarantors of datum. Ultimately, artworks are enlisted to legitimise, rather than destabilise, the authority of Western visitors, who were supposedly engaged in an honest quest for knowledge and seeking détente.<sup>[13]</sup>

### 3. The Canberra exhibition

The third exhibition took place in Canberra. The political context in Australia is strikingly different from that in the UK. Cook had been for a very long time a national hero. At the time of the bicentenary of his visit, fifty years ago, newspapers had traced day by day the precise place where Cook had been exactly 200 years previously. Queen Elizabeth gave a celebratory tour, spending more than forty days in Australia. Many towns organized a re-enactment of Cook's arrival, with bit parts for "real Aboriginals", while large numbers of towns held "pageants of progress". Wilkinson, the razor blade company, sold replicas of Cook's sword.

The Liberal premier of New South Wales, Bob Askin, declared in 1969 that "Cook's discovery tilled the ground for the seeds of settlement for Governor Phillip. From these seeds comes a great and free nation – predominantly British".<sup>[14]</sup> Fifty years later, the political atmosphere is radically different. Indeed, knowing a number of left-wing activists who live in Canberra, I asked around to try to find one of them who had seen the exhibition, and was met with general incredulity, since, for them, the central characteristic of the exhibition was a celebration of Cook, which they did not want to support.

The exhibition, at the National Library, was a very large one. It was free, and saw 80 000 visitors including 4 000 schoolchildren (the population of Canberra is 360 000).



**Catalogue of National Library of Australia exhibition. Photo: John Mullen**

With over a million euros of funding from the government and a foreword to the catalogue written by Mitch Fifield, the Minister of the Arts, it seems fair to count the exhibition and its catalogue as Authorized Heritage Discourse, in the term invented by pioneering researcher Laurajane Smith. We again see a number of elements which appear to be in tension. The exhibition begins with a “welcome to country” in which a local Aboriginal representative welcomes the visitor and invites them to acknowledge the Aboriginal people on whose land the exhibition is taking place.<sup>[15]</sup>

The minister's foreword to the catalogue is barely 250 words long and remarkably lacking in content. It declares principally that "The exhibition will allow audiences to debate, question and explore the man and the myth" and will "contribute to the national conversation about what Cook means to Australia, including how he was perceived at the time, how Indigenous people responded and how he is remembered today".

This ministerial piece is followed by a one-page foreword from the director-general of the National Library, Dr Marie-Louise Ayres, who attempts to reconcile some of the tensions. Firstly she underlines her concern about Indigenous voices. "In developing this exhibition, the library has reached out to First Nation communities", she writes, explaining that "by listening respectfully to many voices, we hope to enhance and build our own understanding of the Cook collections". Her objective, she says, is "to reflect both our admiration for Cook as scientist, navigator and leader, and our recognition that the lives of communities around the Pacific were changed forever after his journeys".

The presence of voices highly critical of Cook's project is quickly evident. The first long essay in the catalogue is by John Maynard, director of an indigenous research studies centre, and its title shows a determination not to understate opposition to any Cook hagiography: the essay is entitled "I'm Captain Cooked!" (I think readers will have followed the rhyming slang) and is accompanied by a full page photograph of a graffiti "Colonialism is cooked!"

The essay begins "In raising the British flag on Possession Island in the Torres Strait, Cook unleashed cataclysmic consequences upon Aboriginal people of the Australian continent". We can see, then, a different emphasis to that of the London exhibitions. Fascinatingly, John Maynard feels the need to mention a little further down, "I am an admirer of James Cook as a skilled navigator and an inspiring leader of his crews". It is interesting to note that in discussion of many other historical figures, one reads rarely the sentence "I admire this person". Its frequency in discourse around Cook shows how vital he can be to certain versions of national or European identity. Maynard goes on to speak of the negative representation of Cook in traditional Aboriginal songs, and he quotes other voices from First Nations on the colonial experience.

Only once this Aboriginal perspective has been presented do we move on to the curators' views in a nine-page curators' essay, which includes a series of suggestions that Cook has been unfairly criticized. Cook, they write, "came to respect the Maori during his several visits". The attitude of Cook and his crews is presented in a tone which might well be considered generous ("The Europeans struggled to understand how their [the Aboriginals'] political and social life was organized ...").

The experience of the visitors to the museum was also marked by the curatorial intention of including indigenous voices. One review describes the entry to the exhibition: "You're greeted by a selection of First Nations' representatives, greeting you in their native tongues, and shown a huge, blown up picture of a small woodcut of the Captain."<sup>[16]</sup>

The review continues:

[the exhibition] includes [Aboriginal] voices and their stories. This way, they're transformed from the dehumanised curios they often became in the era into both a part of its story and its tellers. [...] Elders from multiple tribes throughout the country and the region were contacted to tell their half of the story, and they greet you as you arrive.

We see in this exhibition, then, an even stronger desire to move away from a purely colonial gaze, a desire shaped by the long struggle for Aboriginal visibility and rights over the last fifty years and more.



The Aboriginal embassy at Canberra. Photo: John Mullen

## ***Conclusions***

---

As an Australian journalist pointed out recently:

Whenever our Prime Minister makes an announcement of any event to mark the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's voyage, there are two reactions and both are angry [...] One is dismayed that this harbinger of colonialism should be celebrated at all. The other is that we are failing to properly appreciate this master navigator and scientist.<sup>[17]</sup>

If there is no reason to doubt the determination of a significant section of museum leadership to move away from a purely colonial view of Cook's activity, and to hope for "shared history", we have much reason to believe that this change of perspective is not as easy to implement, or as thorough-going as some optimistic commentators might want to think.

Firstly, as we have seen, although the "colonial gaze" perspective is now reduced and nuanced, it is not deconstructed or explained, either in the exhibitions or in the catalogues.

Secondly, the disinclination to engage with debates about restitution takes away much of the bite of a "shared history" perspective.

Thirdly, one might wonder whether the very existence of yet another exhibition on Cook might not participate more in a celebration of dominant "heritage" than to an understanding of events 250 years ago. We should remember that if tens of thousands may attend an exhibition, millions see the posters for the exhibition, the press and media coverage and so on: celebration of Cook may remain the principal visible aspect of the exhibitions. This may be one of the reasons why the 2018 exhibition at the Royal Academy in London, in contrast to the events studied here, was entitled "Oceania" – that is, it did not mention Cook in its title. Such choices may be difficult in a context where museums often need to sell tickets, and easily recognizable names of "heroes" are something of a guarantee of public interest.

A final key element is the reception of the exhibitions by visitors. Most visitors do not have the time or inclination to study the catalogues as I have done. The Australian researcher on heritage, Laurajane Smith, has done extensive research, interviewing thousands of visitors to heritage sites and museums in different countries about their reactions. Her main conclusions are that educational learning is nothing like as central an effect on visitors as is often claimed. More common, she finds, is reinforcement of views already held, a search in the exhibition for what corresponds to the mental baggage which the visitor brought to the exhibition.

In particular Smith has found that curatorial discourse has a very limited capacity to interfere with reinforcement of affect, of identity, and of opinions. So it may well be that the attempts of these museums to include other perspectives have a weak effect in comparison with the overwhelming fact that it is Cook who is being celebrated, and the visitors "already know" that he is a "hero".

After all, the museums exhibit "the Cook collection", decide which Aboriginal artists should be commissioned to contribute creative works, and what kind of intervention they should be allowed. Contemporary Aboriginal art is easier to integrate into a Cook celebration than is oppositional political text. And there are no First Nations Museums inviting European artists to contribute creative works: the curatorial voice in all the exhibitions remains a white one.

The situation, then, remains in tension, and may do so for a very long time. We have plenty of time to think about what kind of exhibitions will greet the 300th anniversary, in fifty years' time.

---

## Notes de pied de page

---

1. ^ *Laurajane Smith, Uses of Heritage, London, Routledge, 2006.*
2. ^ *Cathryn Corns and John Hughes-Wilson, Blindfold and Alone - British Military Executions in the Great War, London, Cassell, 2005.*
3. ^ *An expression coined by Voltaire in his philosophical tale, Candide, in reaction to the British execution of Admiral Byng in 1757, for incompetence.*
4. ^ *But see Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Géraldine Vaughan (eds), Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, 1600-2000: Practices, Representations and Ideas, London, Palgrave-Macmillan, forthcoming.*
5. ^ *For an analysis, see Quentin Beresford, Paul Omaji, Our State of Mind: Racial Planning and the Stolen Generations, South Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1998.*
6. ^ *It is quite impossible to summarize in a paragraph the history of racism against Aboriginal people, but if one symbolic fact might stand for this history, it might be that the first university in Australia was founded in 1850, while the first ever Aboriginal person to obtain a university degree in Australia graduated in 1966.*
7. ^ *Don Spencer, Australia for Kids, ABC Kids 1989. The album was nominated in 1990 for the ARIA prize for best children's album. The song can be heard on YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egLsc96CZ2E> . For aficionados, there are (at least) two other songs about Cook: Song for Captain Cook, by Phil Garland, available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyTjsf\\_ncuk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyTjsf_ncuk) and "Invader Captain Cook" by Angus Rabbitt available here : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfICkCQAX8A> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
8. ^ *The work, as well as a video interview with the artist, can be found at the following address: <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/works/2006.25/> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
9. ^ *The work can be seen online here: <https://www.artribune.com/dal-mondo/2019/05/mostra-captain-cook-british-museum-londra/attachment/steve-gibbs-name-changer-aotearoa-new-zealand-2016-courtesy-of-the-artist-image-the-trustees-of-the-british-museum/> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*

10. ^ *Liza Oliver, CAA REVIEWS, <http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/3596#.XIEJJihKjUF> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
11. ^ *<https://blog.britishmuseum.org/collecting-histories/> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
12. ^ *The shield is discussed in this episode of the series: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00vy3zr> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
13. ^ *Andrew Stooke, in Third Text, <http://thirdtext.org/stooke-cook-britishmuseum> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
14. ^ *ABC 24/01/2019.*
15. ^ *For people unfamiliar with this ceremony, this is what the website "Creative Spirits" which introduces Aboriginal culture, writes: "[This ceremony is to] **recognise the unique position** of Aboriginal people in Australian culture and history and **show respect** for Aboriginal people. [...] Incorporating a welcome or acknowledgement protocol into official meetings and events recognises Aboriginal people as the First Australians and custodians of their land. It promotes an awareness of the past and ongoing connection to place and land of Aboriginal Australians. Unlike New Zealand, Canada and the United States, Australia has no treaty with its Aboriginal people. A Welcome to or Acknowledgement of Country doesn't replace a treaty, native title or land rights, but they're a small gesture of recognition of the association with land and place of the First Australians, and their history."<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
16. ^ *<https://www.outincanberra.com.au/nla-voyage-cook-pacific/> (last accessed 22 February 2020).*
17. ^ *James Valentine, ABC 24 January 2019.*

[Subscribe](#) →**The long read**

## How to kill a god: the myth of Captain Cook shows how the heroes of empire will fall

In the 18th century, the naval explorer was worshipped as a deity. Now his statues are being

defaced across the lands he  
visited

by [Anna Della Subin](#)

An engraving of Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg's *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook* by John Thane and John Webber. Photograph: Royal Academy of Arts

Tue 18 Jan 2022 06.00 GMT

**I**n a type of neoclassical painting one might call *The Apotheosis of X*, the dead hero is bundled up to heaven by a host of angels, usually in a windswept tumult of robes, wings and clouds. A crowd of grieving mortals watches from below as their hero becomes divine. It's a celestial scramble: in Rubens' sumptuous [Apotheosis of James I](#), heaven is chaos and James looks terrified at having arrived.

In Barralet's *Apotheosis of Washington*, [the dead president has his arms outstretched](#) in a crucified pose, while Father Time and the angel of immortality bear him up to heaven. In a [mid-1860s Apotheosis](#), a freshly assassinated Lincoln joins Washington in the sky, and clings to him in a tight hug. In Fragonard's [Apotheosis of Franklin](#), the new god reaches back to Earth with one hand while a stern angel, grasping his other hand, drags him upward.

In 1785, in a Covent Garden theatre, a spectacle premiered depicting Capt James Cook's voyages in the South Pacific. During the final scene of *Omai, or A Trip Around the World*, at the words "Cook, ever honour'd, immortal shall live!" an enormous oil painting descended from the ceiling - [Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg's Apotheosis of Captain Cook](#), commissioned for the occasion. Cook is carried up to heaven by the angels Britannia and Fame, but his gaze is directed back at the vertiginous earth, where ships and canoes are facing off in Hawaii's Kealakekua Bay. His expression is queasy and his eyes seem to plead: "Don't drop me!"

Cook had been a revered figure among British seamen. "Wherever he goes he plants English gardens," noted a Sri Lankan anthropologist, not without some disgust. Cook's ship was an ark, heavy with sheep, cattle and potted plants, ready to domesticate any savage land he spied. Whenever he took possession of a new South Pacific island for the crown, Cook would sow seeds and set loose pairs of animals "almost in a loving fashion". Among his crew, Cook was allegedly adored as a father, who cared deeply for his sailors' health, and rarely lost a man. In England, he was renowned as the navigator

who determined the boundaries of the habitable world, and was praised for his humane conduct in dark, faraway waters.

But on his third voyage, on the quest to find the Northwest Passage, Cook had begun to drown in some unseen, interior deluge. He sank into a black mood, lost touch with reality and inflicted punishments on his crew at the slightest whim. He paced the deck and flew into rages that the sailors called *heivas*, after a Tahitian stomping dance. He spread terror across the islands, torching entire villages and carving crosses into natives' flesh in revenge for petty crimes. Even before he became a god, Cook had staked out the true space of divinity: violence, of the arbitrary kind. After weeks at sea, as supplies of food and water began to run low, his ship, the *Resolution*, sighted a paradisaic shore. Rather than landing, Cook insisted, for no reason at all, that they keep sailing, interminably, around the coast. As the unhinged captain circled the island, the year turned from 1778 to 1779. Eyes watched from the beach.

On 17 January, the *Resolution* cast anchor at last in a black-sand bay and a crowd of 10,000 gathered to await it. Five hundred canoes, laden with sugar cane, breadfruit and pigs, glided up to the ship. Histories narrate that for the people of [Hawaii](#), the arrival of Cook was no less than an epiphany. "The men hurried to the ship to see the god with their own eyes," wrote the 19th-century Hawaiian historian Samuel Kamakau. "There they saw a fair man with bright eyes, a high-bridged nose, light hair and handsome features. Good-looking gods they were!" An elderly, emaciated priest went on board the *Resolution* and led the deities ashore. Thousands fell to their knees as Cook passed by. The priest led the captain to a thatched temple, wrapped Cook in a red cloth and sacrificed a small pig to him, as the people recited lines from the Hawaii epic *Kumulipo*, a creation myth.

According to the late anthropologist Marshall Sahlins, among others, Cook's arrival marked an extraordinary coincidence. A ritual known as the *Makahiki* was taking place on Hawaii at the time, in which the god Lono is said to reappear from the distant land of his exile, and to seize power over the Earth from the king, for a period of time. As it circled the island in a clockwise direction, the *Resolution* had inadvertently traced the path of the effigy of Lono as it was borne in a procession around the coast. The idol is made of a pole and crosspiece with white cloth hanging from it, resembling a sail. And Cook, as if following the script of a myth he could not have known, had landed in the bay said to be the god's home. His sailors reported that the captain was hailed variously as Lono, Orono, Rono, Eroner - "a Character that is looked upon by them as partaking something of divinity" the ship's surgeon related, echoing a biblical phrase

portending something of divinity, the ship's surgeon related, echoing a biblical phrase describing Christ. Another word used to greet Cook was *akua*, a Hawaii term that was translated as "God".





An engraving of a Hawaiian dancing for Captain Cook in 1788, after John Webber, 1844. Photograph: Album/Alamy

The Hawaiians fashioned a special idol in Cook's honour, recorded the sailor Heinrich Zimmermann, but using "white feathers instead of red". The mariner John Ledyard wrote that the natives "observed that the color of our skins partook of ... the white from the moon and stars", and concluded that the strangers must have some connection with the heavenly bodies. The white men remained on the island for three weeks. They dismantled part of the temple at Hikiau for firewood, and turned the rest into an observatory housing their astronomical equipment, which they would take out, now and then, to stare up at the sky. Each day the priests ceremoniously presented the British with a barbecued hog. The people would gather all the fruits of their land - sweet potatoes, coconuts, bananas and taro - for these gods from a heaven where food had run out.

Can one become trapped, unaware, inside another's myth? During the Makahiki festival, after the Lono effigy has sailed around the island, a ritual is performed known as *kali'i*, meaning "to strike the king", in which Lono and the king fight a theatrical sham battle. According to Sahlins, Cook continued, unwittingly, to perform the Makahiki script. On 3 February, the Resolution departed Hawaii to continue its explorations in the north, yet was struck by a severe storm and forced to turn back. When the British anchored again in Kealakekua Bay, eight days after they had departed, a fog of suspicion and hostility settled over the island as the people attempted to discern the strangers' reason for returning. The tension soon erupted into violence; two Hawaii chiefs were killed, and Cook decided to take the king, Kalani'ōpu'u, hostage. When the captain waded ashore, hundreds of warriors fell upon

him with iron daggers and clubs.

Following Cook's death, the captain was accorded the traditional rituals for a vanquished chief. His corpse was dismembered, his flesh roasted and his bones separated and portioned out, with his lower jaw going to Kalani'ōpu'u, his skull to somebody else, and so on. Among Cook's sailors, who had fled back to the Resolution, "a general silence ensued", wrote the officer George Gilbert; it was "like a Dream that we could not reconcile ourselves to". Two priests rowed to the ship with a bundle containing a large chunk of the captain's thigh.

Along with their charred offering, they brought with them "a most extraordinary question". They wished to know when Cook would return to the vessel "and resume his former station". Would it be in - a very Christlike estimate - "three days' time?" The two men "shed abundance of tears at the loss of the Erono", Lt James King recorded, and they asked, "what he would do to them when he return'd". On shore, other islanders "asserted that he would return in two months & begged our mediation with him in their favor", according to Mid James Trevenan. The German sailor Zimmermann recorded a prophecy: "The god Cook is not dead but sleeps in the woods and will come tomorrow," as translated by an interpreter. Over the following years, the idea seemed to persist that Cook would resurrect.

Get the Guardian's award-winning long reads sent direct to you every Saturday morning

✉ Enter your email address

Sign up

We operate Google reCAPTCHA to protect our website and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and

According to the sailor Edward Bell, who visited the bay in 1793, Cook's death had become the definitive frame for the Hawaii sense of time. "The Natives seem to consider that melancholy transaction as one of the most remarkable events in their History," Bell wrote, and reported that they use it as a date to assist their calendrical calculations. "They still in speaking of him style him the Orono and if they are to be believ'd, most sincerely regret his fate." The accounts by later British travellers to Hawaii emphasise the surprise and guilt felt by the islanders at Cook's death, as if they had imagined it to be a play, with no consequence. "The natives had no idea that Cook could possibly be killed, as they considered him a supernatural being, and were astonished when they saw him fall," reported the English explorer William Mariner in 1806; despite having killed him, "they esteem him as having been sent by the gods to civilise them".

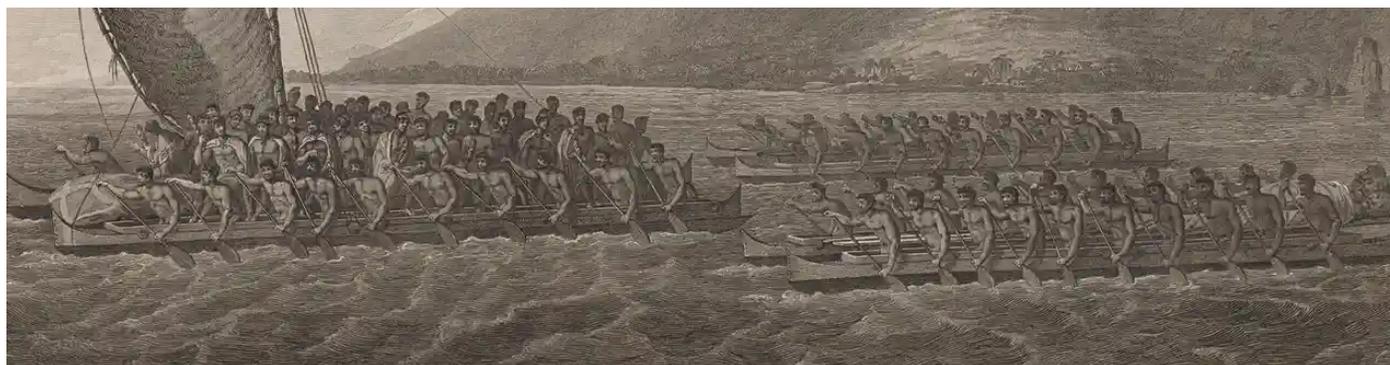
These stories, told and retold over generations, ignore one obvious fact: Cook was killed because he acted rashly and violently slaughtering chiefs kidnapping the king

and giving the impression the British had returned to conquer the island. The fur trader James Colnett, who arrived in Hawaii in 1791, reported that ever since the British first appeared, the islanders had been constantly at war and devastated by strange, unknown illnesses, all of which they attributed to Cook's revenge. Two volcanoes had awakened and burned night and day, the work, they contended, of the vengeful god. "They made strict inquiry of me, if ever he would come back again, and when I saw him last," Colnett wrote.

**W**hen the first missionaries arrived in Hawaii from New England in 1820, they used the cautionary tale of Cook as a potent parable. "How vain, rebellious, and at the same time contemptible, for a worm" - meaning Cook - "to presume to receive religious homage and sacrifices from the stupid and polluted worshippers of demons," thundered Hiram Bingham, the Calvinist leader of the first evangelical mission. After six months at sea, the Calvinists anchored at the archipelago and found it beset by the "thickest heathenism", its sun-drenched landscapes masking terrible despair. Viruses introduced by the British were killing off entire families and villages, and survivors had taken to drinking themselves to death.

The great Kamehameha, founder and first king of the newly unified Kingdom of Hawaii, had died the previous year, and his son had recently abolished the *tabu* system, the strict codes that had structured daily life for centuries, and which had unravelled after the British arrival. A crisis of faith seemed to grip the islands, as temples fell into ruin and the totems of the old gods were destroyed. "The nation, without a religion, was waiting for the law of Jehovah," according to one early missionary. The Calvinists blamed the rampant disease and malaise on the Hawaiians' immorality, sexual promiscuity, idol worship and on their reverencing of Cook.





A 1784 engraving of Hawaiians bringing gifts to Captain Cook by John Webber. Photograph: Alamy

Under the stern Calvinists, the Hawaii language was alphabetised, the Bible was translated and novel Christian concepts were mapped on to old Hawaii words. Schools and seminaries were opened and draconian morality laws introduced across the islands. The queen of Hawaii was among the first to convert, and much of the population followed her; a broom dipped in water baptised 5,000 Hawaiians at once. The myth of Cook-as-Lono lived on in the history books and school primers the evangelists produced, a tale that perpetuated the whiteness of divinity, while simultaneously affirming that Cook and all those who worshipped him were idolators of the worst kind.

Along with their indignations, the Calvinist missionaries brought with them a novel concept of private property, simply appropriating whatever land they desired. They were, after all, apostles of a God who possesses the Earth. “To the LORD your God belong the heavens ... the earth and everything in it,” Moses had declared. Their children went on to establish enormous sugar plantations, securing international markets for their lucrative crop. “The world is to be Christianised and civilised,” the evangelist Josiah Strong would assert, capturing the mood of the century, “and what is the process of civilisation but the creating of more and higher wants? Commerce follows the missionary.”

In 1840, with the looming threat of an invasion by France, Hawaii sought to clarify its ambiguous territorial status and seek nationhood. The king sent a delegation to the United States and Europe, and three years later Hawaii was officially pronounced an independent nation. However, the plantation owners, eager to sell their crop tax-free in the US, deeply resented the prospect of Hawaii sovereignty.

During the US civil war, with sugar production halted in the south, the wealth of the white Hawaii oligarchy soared, enabling it to consolidate its grip on the archipelago's economy, from banks, utilities and steamships to local commerce and trade. Beset by illness and poverty, the native Hawaiian population had shrunk to a fifth of its former

size. The industrialists deemed Hawaii workers to be lazy and unemployable, casting them aside in favour of labourers from China and Japan whom they could pay even lower wages. In 1893, the sugar cartel, along with a regiment of US Marines, overthrew the Hawaii queen Lili'uokalani, in an act that even the US president at the time, Grover Cleveland, condemned as unconstitutional. The American military occupation of the archipelago had begun.

In the American press, racist cartoonists deployed their anti-black arsenal of caricatures to sketch the Hawaii sovereign grinning as she heated a cannibal cooking pot. They claimed Lili'uokalani was the child of a “mulatto shoemaker”, who illegitimately lorded over her “heathenish” people. With such colouring, it was argued, she was clearly unfit by nature to rule. Along with the queen, the US occupiers arrested newspaper editors who supported her and clamped down on the opposition press. This meant that the only news that came out of Hawaii was delivered by the coup's spokesmen, who announced that the queen had willingly surrendered her kingdom and her claim to the land.

To this day, the myth that Hawaiians passively accepted the loss of their nation, without resistance, lives on. Historical accounts make little mention of the fact that 40,000 Hawaiians petitioned against the occupation and protested in the streets. A century later, in 1993, thousands of Hawaiians marched on the queen's former palace in Honolulu, again calling for independence. Yet the American public imagination rarely questions whether Hawaii wants to be part of the US; there is the assumption that Hawaiians, in a distant paradise, must be content. Didn't they venerate a white man as a god? Didn't they prostrate themselves before him, dress him and feed him with all the fruits of their land? They killed him in a ritual but, not knowing what they had done, didn't they, with guilty tears, impatiently await his return?

**W**hen news of Cook's death finally reached London in January 1780, 11 months after the captain was killed, it was met not with a public outpouring of grief but a rather morbid fascination at the exotic details. The success of Omai, which starred alongside the Apotheosis painting 80 dancing “savages”, some in blackface, inaugurated a new European ritual of slaying Cook onstage. In 1788, the wildly popular [Death of Captain Cook; A Grand Serious-Pantomimic-Ballet](#) premiered in Paris, before going on to tour the continent, England, and the US.

By all accounts, the ballet was violent, chaotic, “horrid”, overwrought with emotion -

and a great triumph. Year after year, it was revived, and the captain's death re-enacted, like a blood offering the imperial powers continued to make to guarantee their own ascendance. Cook was killed in Yarmouth, Bungay, Leeds and nine times in Norwich; he was bludgeoned to death in Dublin, clubbed in Quebec, speared on Greenwich Street in Manhattan and again in Charleston, South Carolina. Navy men got death-of-Cook tattoos and aristocratic women wore dresses inspired by "the Indian who killed Capt'n Cook with His Club", as the society diarist Mrs Hester Thrale noted.

By the mid-19th century, PT Barnum would joke that the celebrated blunt instrument had multiplied itself, securing a treasured place in every museum vitrine. The poet Anna Seward heaved the captain up to heaven in her 1780 *Elegy on Captain Cook, To Which is Added, An Ode to the Sun*. "To put it bluntly," wrote the anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere, "I doubt that the natives created their European god; the Europeans created him for them."



A defaced statue of Captain Cook in Melbourne, Australia, January 2018. Photograph: David Crosling/AAP

An apotheosis can arise in an epiphany or in an act of prostration, and it can also happen through poetry and painting, through pantomime and translation. What word do you take for God? The Hawaiian syllables were *akua*, but this is misleading, for in its original sense the word could refer to any number of sacred beings, objects, or living

persons - anything possessing immense power. So, too, with the word *Lono*: the crew of the *Resolution* was never able to figure out its precise meaning. “Sometimes they applied it to an invisible being, who, they said, lived in the heavens. We also found that it was a title belonging to a personage of great rank and power in the island,” Lt King recalled. Not only Cook but the Hawaiian king, too, was greeted with shouts of “*Lono!*” Misinterpretations create gods.

Kamakau, the historian, wrote of the coming of Cook in his 1866 *Mo'olelo* or “History”, a text widely esteemed as the authoritative “native” account. It was eventually published in English in 1961, after decades of work by a team of translators that included the 19th-century Australian-born settler and former sugar plantation worker Thomas Thrum. In the English edition, the story was heavily doctored, ostensibly to conform to “western” standards of history-writing, as the Hawaiian scholar Noenoe Silva has shown. Before his description of the arrival of Cook, Kamakau details, over 17 pages, other foreigners who had already arrived by sea, some with pale skin, some with brown. The translators, however, omitted the entire section, transforming the narrative of the appearance of Cook and his ark into a magical, utterly unprecedented event. In the original, Kamakau emphasises the violence, fighting and hostage-taking that culminated in the killing of the captain, and concludes with a list.

“The fruits and seeds that Cook’s actions planted sprouted and grew, and became trees that spread to devastate the people of these islands:

1. Gonorrhoea together with syphilis.
2. Prostitution.
3. The false idea that he was a god and worshipped.
4. Fleas and mosquitoes.
5. The spread of epidemic diseases.
6. Change in the air we breathe.
7. Weakening of our bodies.
8. Changes in plant life ...”

“The best part of Cook’s visit was that we killed him,” the Hawaiian activist Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa writes. If man imagines that a god resembles himself, then the god, eventually, must die. Cook has been killed again and again, on the beach, in the theatre, on the page, but the myth of his alleged divinity lingers. With every new death, it lives on.

Deicide is on my mind. How do you kill a god, if not by bludgeoning, stabbing, piercing, splitting, dismembering, boiling, roasting,

distributing? Is it through rewriting history, by exposing the machinations beneath myths, by breaking open syllables so that whatever is sacred inside spills out?

Is it by tearing down His image? In the 21st century, across New Zealand, Australia and Hawaii, statues of Cook have been defaced. Strutting across a pedestal in his breeches, telescope in hand, a defaced Cook wears a spray-painted bikini; around the neck of another Cook hangs a large, canvas sign that reads, simply, “Sorry”. The forecast calls for more. White gods will fall like raindrops. It feels as though the heavens are about to open up.

*This is an edited extract from [Accidental Gods: On Men Unwittingly Turned Divine](#), published by Granta. To order a copy, go to [guardianbookshop](#)*

Follow the Long Read on Twitter at [@gdnlongread](#), listen to our podcasts [here](#) and sign up to the long read weekly email [here](#).

---

Article count [on](#)

***Congratulations on being one of our top readers globally - you've read 328 articles in the last year***

... as you're joining us today from France, we have a small favour to ask. Tens of millions have placed their trust in the Guardian's fearless journalism since we started publishing 200 years ago, turning to us in moments of crisis, uncertainty, solidarity and hope. More than 1.5 million supporters, from 180 countries, now power us financially - keeping us open to all, and fiercely independent.

Unlike many others, the Guardian has no shareholders and no billionaire owner. Just the determination and passion to deliver high-impact global reporting, always free from commercial or political influence. Reporting like this is vital for democracy, for fairness and to demand better from the powerful.

And we provide all this for free, for everyone to read. We do this because we believe in information equality. Greater numbers of people can keep track of the events shaping our world, understand their impact on people and communities, and become inspired to take meaningful action. Millions can benefit from open access to quality, truthful news, regardless of their ability to pay for it.

Every contribution, however big or small, powers our journalism and sustains our future. **Support the Guardian from as little as €1 - it only takes a minute. If you can, please consider supporting us with a regular amount each month. Thank you.**

Single

Monthly

Annual

<b>€10 per month</b>	<b>€15 per month</b>	<b>Other</b>

**Support the Guardian** →

**Remind me in September**





.On Easter Island

Extract from Journal of James Cook

Thursday 17th March 1774

This is undoubtedly the same Island as was seen by Roggewein in Apl 1722 altho' the description given of it by the author of that Voyage does by no means correspond with it now, it may also be the same as was seen by Captain Davis in 1686, but this is not altogether so certain. In short if this is not the land and if it is not then his discovery cannot lie far from the continent of America for this Latitude seems to have been very well explored between the Meridian of 80 and 110, Captain Carteret carries it much farther, but his Track seems to be a little too far to the South. ...

No Nation will ever contend for the honour of the discovery of Easter Island as there is hardly an Island in this sea which affords less refreshments, and conveniences for Shiping than it does. Nature has hardly provided it with any thing fit for man to eat or drink, and as the Natives are but few and may be supposed to plant no more than sufficient for themselves, they cannot have much to spare to new comers. The produce is Potatoes, Yams, Taro or the Edoy root, Plantains and Sugar Cane, all excellent in its kind, the Potatoes are the best of the sort I ever tasted; they have also Gourds and the same sort of Cloth Plant as at the other isles but not much, Cocks and Hens like ours which are small and but few of them and these are the only domestick Animals we saw among them, nor did we see any quadrupedes, but ratts which I believe they eat as I saw a man with some in his hand which he seem'd unwilling to part with....

Such is the produce of Easter Island which is situated in the Latitude of 27o 6' South and the Longitude of 109o 51' 40" W. It is about 10 Leagues in circuit and hath hilly Rocky surface, the hills are of such height as to be seen 15 or 16 Leagues...

The Inhabitants of this isle from what we have been able to see of them do not exceed six or seven hundred souls and above two thirds of these are Men, they either have but a few Women among them or else many were not

suffer'd to make their appearance, the latter seems most Probable. They are certainly of the same race of People as the New Zealanders and the other islanders, the affinity of the Language, Colour and some of their customs all tend to prove it, I think they bearing more affinity to the Inhabitants of Amsterdam and New Zealand, than those of the more northern isles which makes it probable that there lies a chain of isles in about this Parallel or under, some of which have at different times been seen...

...

Their Arms are wooden Patta pattows and Clubs very much like those of New Zealand and spears about 6 or 8 feet long which are pointed at one end with pieces of black flit.

...

Of their Religion, Government &ca we can say nothing with certainty. The Stupendous stone statues erected in different places along the Coast are certainly no representation of any Diety or places of worship; but the most probable Burial Places for certain Tribes or Families. I saw my self a human Skeleton lying in the foundation of one just covered with Stones, what I call the foundation is an oblong square about 20 or 30 feet by 10 or 12 built of and faced with hewn stones of a vast size, erected in so masterly a manner as sufficiently shews the ingenuity of the age in which they were built...Some pieces of carving were found amongst these people which were neither ill designed nor executed. They have no other tools than what are made of Stone, Bone, Shells &ca. They set but little value on Iron and yet they knew the use of it, perhaps they obtained their knowledge of this Metal from the Spaniards who Visited this Isle in 1769 some Vestiges of which still remained amongst them, such as pieces of Cloth &ca.



The Wind remaining Southerly we continued to Tide it down the River and on the 5<sup>th</sup> in the Morning coming to the place Frid. 5 where we had lost our Kedge Anchor, made an attempt to find it which miscarried. Before we left this place Six Canoes came of from the East shore, some conducted by one and others by two men; they remained at a small distance from the Ships, viewing them with a kind of silent surprise a full half hour, without exchanging a single word with us, or with one another. At length they took Courage and came along side, began to barter with our people and did not leave us till they had parted with all or most of what they brought with them, consisting of a few firs and a little Salmon. All the people we have met with in this River are of the same Nation as those who Inhabit *Sandwich Sound*, but differ essentially from those of *Nootka* or *King Georges Sound*, both in their persons and Language. The language of these is rather more Gutaral, but like the others they speak slowly and distinct, in words which seem sentences. I have before observed that they were in possession of iron, that is they had Spears and knives of this metal and they had also of the former made of Copper. Thier spears are like a Spontoon and their knives, which they kept in sheaths, are of a considerable length, these with a few glass beads were the only things we saw amongst them that were not of their own Manufacture. It is probable they may get them from some of their Neighbours with whome the Russians may have a trade, for I will be bold to say that the Russians were never amongst these people, nor carry on any commerce with them, for if they did they would hardly be cloathed in such valuable skins as those of the Sea beaver; the Russians would find some means or other to get them all from them.

There is no doubt but a very beneficial fur trade might be carried on with the Inhabitants of this vast coast, but unless a northern passage is found it seems rather too remote for Great Britain to receive any emolument from it. It must however be observed that the most, nay the only valuable skins, I saw amongst them was the Sea beaver, or the Sea otter as some call it; all the other skins that I saw were of an

inferior kind the foxes and Martins in particular. It must also be observed that the most of the skins we got, which were not many, were made up in dresses, some were however very good other old and ragged enough, and all of them very lousey. But as they make no other use of skins than cloathing it cannot be supposed they are at the trouble to dress more than what is necessary for this purpose and perhaps this is the cheif use for which they kill the animal for the Sea and Rivers seems to supply them with food. Whereas a trade with Foreigners would increase their wants by introducing new luxuries amongst them, in order to purchas which they would be the more assiduous in procuring skins, for I think it is pretty evident they are not a scarce article in the Country, and to judge from the skins we saw amongst the Inhabitants, here are all the Animals that are found in the Northern parts of the world whose skins are sought after, though they may not be all of that high perfection.

Comment on the following extract from James Cook's journal.

Monday 9th [October 1769]

Gentle breezes and clear weather. PM stood into the Bay and anchored on the NE side before the entrance of a small river in 10 fathom water a fine sandy bottom ; the NE point of the Bay bore EBS1/2s and the SW point south, distant from the shore half a League. After this I went ashore with a party of men in the Pinnacle and yawl accompanied by Mr Banks and Dr Solander, we land[ed] abreast of the Ship and on the east side of the river just mentioned, but seeing some of the natives on the other side of the river whom I was desirous of speaking with and finding that we could not ford the river, I order'd the yawl in to carry us over and the Pinnacle to lay at the entrance. In the mean time the Indians made off ; however we went as far as their huts which lay about 2 or 3 hundred yards from the water side leaving four boys to take care of the yawl, which we had no sooner left than four men came out of the woods on the other side the river and would certainly have cut her off, had not the people in the pinnacle discover'd them and called to her to drop down the stream which they did being closely pursued by the Indians ; the Coxswain of the pinnacle who had the charge of the Boats, seeing this fire'd two musquets over their heads, the first made them stop and look round them, but the 2d they took no notice of upon which a third was fired and killed one of them upon the spot just as he was going to dart his spear at the boat ; at this the other three stood motionless for a minute or two, seemingly quite surprised wondering no doubt what it was that had thus killed their commorade : but as soon as they recover'd themselves they made off dragging the dead body a little way and then left it. Upon our hearing the reports of the Musquets we immediately repair'd to the boats and after viewing the dead body we return'd on board. In the morning seeing a good number of the natives at the same place where we saw them last night, I went ashore with the boats man'd and arm'd and landed on the opposite side of the river : Mr Banks, Dr Solander and my self at first only landed and went to the side of the river, the natives being got together on the opposite side. We call'd to them in the George Island Language, but they answered us by flourishing their weapons over their heads and danceing as we supposed the war dance ; upon this we retired until the marines were landed which I order'd to be drawn up about two hundred yards behind us. We then went again to the river side having Tupia Mr Green and Dr Munkhouse along with us. Tupia spoke to them in his own language and it was an [a]greeable surprise to find they perfectly understood him. After some little conversation had pass'd one of them swam over to us and after him 20 or 30 more, these last brought their arms with them which the first man did not, we made them everyone presents, but this did not satisfy them they wanted but everything we had about us particularly our arms, and made several attempts to snatch them out of our hands. Tupia told us several times as soon as they came over to take care of our selves for they were not

our friends, and this we very soon found for one of them snatched Mr Green's Hanger from him and would not give it up, this incourage'd the rest to be more insolent and seeing others comeing over to join them I order'd the man who had taken the hanger to be fired at, which was accordingly done and wounded in such a manner that he died soon after.

[...] Finding that nothing was to be done with the people on this side and the water in the river being salt I embarked with an intent to row round the head of the Bay in search of fresh water, and if possible surprise some of the natives and to take them on board and by good treatment and presents endeavour to gain their friendship [...]

James Cook, *The Journals*, ed. Philip Edwards [1999], Penguin Classics, 2003, pp69-71.

Video links. A few of these we will look at in class, others I will ask you to watch at home, others still are for those who wish to go further.

A debate about the heritage of James Cook, on a conservative TV channel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRluYStlu1g>

A TV series in which they attempted to recreate Cook's first expedition, using a replica of his ship, the Endeavour. Part one is here :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qo73ByQFoE&>

Contrasting songs about James Cook :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mui4u9AINOw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP8IZfmCWvc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rFvpshoWP4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egLsc96CZ2E>

A short video about first contact in Brazil a few years ago:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=tYEOlW93qvk>

Half hour lecture on one of the scientific aspects of Cook's expedition: chasing Venus : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zuh87q53Ehg>

Half hour BBC documentary on the longitude problem and Harrison's watch (history of science) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-g27KS0yiY>

Half hour children's cartoon from 1996 in French on Cook

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY7r1dNyxwg>

Discussion about the general period of the Enlightenment in Britain (radio podcast), 45 minutes [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-d6gMTr\\_5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-d6gMTr_5g)