

Captain James Cook's Voyages in The Pacific 1768-1779

synopsis

This exhibit shows the Pacific voyages of Captain James Cook and the increase of knowledge of Polynesian & aboriginal culture along with new discoveries of flora and fauna. The scope comprises of various philatelic material, including die proofs and other relevant items specifically 18th century maps illustrations and engravings from descriptions in his journals published on his return to Britain.

Background and importance

In 1768 the Admiralty commissioned Cook to command scientific voyages to the Pacific. Here he achieved the first recorded contact of the eastern coastline of Australia, the Hawaiian Islands and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand. His contact with the environment and culture of the Pacific has left a lasting legacy that is felt to this day.

Contents of exhibit

This exhibit consists of philatelic material: stamps, first day covers including scarce printers proofs and essays and other relevant items such as coins & medals, cigarette cards, illustrations maps, and copperplate engravings dating from the 18th and early 19th century. These would have given western civilization's first glimpse of the cultural society and flora and fauna of the Pacific. Philatelic and other items of particular interest are indicated: • The cromalin die proofs by Walsall Security Printers have only 8 known examples with monochrome versions of which about 20 are known to exist.

Development of this exhibit

This exhibit began as a continuation of a previous one about the Mutiny on the Bounty. I soon decided to develop one on the theme of Captain Cook's voyages of discovery with an emphasis of the impact on the Pacific and Cook's legacy on the conclusion page.

Philatelic material relating to Cook's voyages are wide ranging. Several countries have issued commemorative stamps and covers such as Australia New Zealand the Cook Islands, French Polynesia amongst others. I included copperplate engravings, which are extracts from encyclopedias published at the time, which are appropriate by giving a first-hand impression.

This exhibit is a culmination of research using the following sources:

- An Account of Cook's Voyages (1768-1779)
- Captain James Cook (Richard Hough, 1994)
- Museum of New Zealand
- National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
- The Captain Cook Society

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Cook joined the Royal Navy in 1755, fought the Seven Years War, and surveyed the St Lawrence River of Quebec, bringing him attention to the British Admiralty and the Royal Society.

In 1768 the Admiralty commissioned Cook to command scientific voyages to the Pacific. Here he achieved the first recorded contact of the eastern coastline of Australia, the Hawaiian Islands and the first recorded circumnavigation of New Zealand.

Cook displayed a combination of seamanship, navigation and cartographic skills, physical courage and an ability to lead men in hostile conditions.

His contact with the environment & culture of the Pacific has left a lasting legacy that is felt to this day.

Philatelic and other items of particular interest are indicated: ●

Exhibit contents

1. Early Exploration and planning

- 1.1 Terra Australis Incognita
- 1.2 Tasman, Janszoon and de Vlamingh
- 1.3 James Cook: Early Career
- 1.4 The Ships commanded by Cook
- 1.5 Preparation and overview of voyages

2. Cook Explores the Pacific

- 2.1 Observing the Transit of Venus
- 2.2 Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia
- 2.3 Cook Islands and New Hebrides
- 2.4 Tonga and Norfolk Island
- 2.5 Christmas Island

3. Culture of the Polynesians

- 3.1 The Indigenous peoples of Oceania
- 3.2 Sea Navigation
- 3.3 Architecture of the Pacific
- 3.4 Tools and Weapons
- 3.5 Religious Beliefs

4. Flora and Fauna Encountered

- 4.1 Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander
- 4.2 The Breadfruit and other flora
- 4.3 The Kangaroo
- 4.4 The Opossum

5. Last Voyage and Legacy

- 5.1 Cook lands at Tasmania
- 5.2 Landing on the Hawaiian Islands
- 5.3 Alaska: Nootka Sound
- 5.4 Cook killed on Kealakekua Bay
- 5.5 The Legacy of Cook