



The 'Joseph Banks and the Re-Making of the Indo-Pacific World'

AHRC-funded Network Project

The Maritime Worlds of Joseph Banks:

a workshop at the National Maritime Museum

Friday 17 – Saturday 18 February 2017

PROGRAMME

[Day One – Venue: Seminar Room](#)

09.30 ***Registration and Coffee***, under the giant Propeller (to the right of the reception desk inside the Romney Road entrance to the Museum)

Session 1 Chair: Sophie Forgan, Captain Cook Memorial Museum, Whitby

10.00 *Trade, Folly and Politics: the British Pacific before Banks*
Katherine Parker, Hakluyt Society

10.45 *Joseph Banks Traces Out a New Pacific World, 1780–1820*
Jordan Goodman, Department of Science and Technology Studies,
University College London

11.30-35 ***Short break***

11.35 *Collecting, Mapping and the Gyres of the Pacific: The Network
Strategies of Joseph Banks and the Tracks of James Cook*
Robert Batchelor, Department of History, Georgia Southern University

12.20 General Discussion

- 12.45 Introduction to Royal Observatory and Enlightenment science collections by Louise Devoy, Curator of the Royal Observatory
- 13.00 **Lunch**
- 13.45 Walk up to the Royal Observatory
- 14.00 Visit to the Royal Observatory
- 15.15 Delegates to make their own way back to the Seminar Room
- 15.15 Coffee available (under the Propeller)
- Session 2** **Chair: Simon Schaffer, Department of the History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge**
- 15.30 *Serving the State: Joseph Banks and the British Hemp Crisis of 1800–1801*
James Davey, National Maritime Museum
- 16.15 *Reproducing the Tour: Banks and the Development of Romantic Art*
Tim Fulford, School of Humanities, De Montfort University
- 17.00 Round up of the day & discussion
- 17.30 Wine
- 19.00 Speaker dinner

Day Two – Venue: Lecture Theatre

9.30 **Coffee** (under the giant Propeller (to the right of the reception desk inside the Romney Road entrance to the Museum))

Session 3 **Chair: Felix Driver, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London**

10.00 *Placing Joseph Banks in the North Pacific: Assignment, Agency and Assemblage*

Dan Clayton, Department of Geography, University of St Andrews

10.45 *'Of infinite advantage': Banksian Networks, Botanic Gardens and Britain's Route to the East*

John McAleer, Department of History, University of Southampton

11.30-35 **Short break**

11.35 *'Thirsting after Knowledge': Joseph Banks, the British East India Company and the Visualization of South-East Asia in the Late Eighteenth Century*

Geoff Quilley, Department of Art History, University of Sussex

12.20 General Discussion

12.45 **Lunch**

Session 4 **Collections study visits to Caird Library and Queen's House**

14.00 This will include: 1) an introduction to some of the paper collections of Royal Museums Greenwich, including letters, rare books and charts

concerned with the geography of the Indian and Pacific Oceans in the later eighteenth century; 2) a viewing of some of the famous paintings commissioned and influenced by Banks from Cook's voyages, in the newly refurbished and redisplayed Queen's House.

15.45 (Coffee available)

16.00 Round-up of the three workshops led by Jordan Goodman and Dominik Huenniger, University of Goettingen

16.30 End

ABSTRACTS

Trade, Folly and Politics: the British Pacific before Banks

Katherine Parker, Hakluyt Society

Banks and his fellow voyagers on the *Endeavour* had a profound influence on the ways in which the Pacific was later perceived by the British public. New specimens like the 'kongouro' and tales of supposedly scandalous Tahitian rituals painted the world's largest ocean as an exotic space filled with natural historical and botanical potential. Prior to the *Endeavour* expedition, however, the Pacific had very different connotations for the British reading public. This paper will overview Britain's changeable encounter with representations of the Pacific in the century prior to Cook's first voyage, an encounter that took place largely within the pages of printed materials. The dominating feature of any Pacific representation was its sheer size—it was, and is, a daunting waterscape where the domination of blue overwhelms the few specks of green. European representations of Pacific space were intimately tied to European politics and economy, which explains its variable depiction as a long coast ripe for legal and illegal trade (ca. 1680), a deep sea of folly (ca. 1720), an imperial sphere of influence (1740s), and an open ocean ripe for European classification and categorization (1760s). All of these ideas were communicated via

voyage accounts and printed maps, materials Banks would have read when he set out on the Transit voyage that was to further complicate the way the British public understood the Pacific region.

Joseph Banks Traces Out a New Pacific World, 1780–1820

Jordan Goodman, Department of Science and Technology Studies, University College London

The death of Captain James Cook in February 1779 deprived Britain of one of its finest navigators but the voyage continued. For Joseph Banks, the final voyage of the *Resolution* and the *Discovery*, in which he had a part, was the beginning of a new relationship with the Admiralty, the East India Company and private traders through which he helped trace out new connections in the Indo–Pacific Ocean and South China Sea area.

Banks never went to sea after 1773 but it continued to be at the heart of what he loved to do most. From 1778, when he was elected President of the Royal Society, Banks intervened in all of the Admiralty voyages of exploration making them his kind of scientific project: he selected vital personnel, including gardeners, botanists and artists; he wrote out instructions for commanders; and most importantly, he changed the architecture of the ships by commandeering space, by turning them into ‘floating gardens’, moving living plants from one part of the world to the other, and supplying King George III’s Royal Gardens at Kew with exotic plants unique in Europe. But it wasn’t just Admiralty ships that saw the visible hand of Banks. Private fur trade ventures to the Pacific Northwest and Canton beginning in 1785 solicited information and help from him and welcomed a scientific purpose to be put alongside the commercial one. Not long after, Banks convinced the East India Company to let him use one of their ships to move living plants in a glazed plant cabin between Kew and Calcutta, an unprecedented project. With similar techniques and other East India Company ships, Banks moved hundreds of living plants between Kew and Canton from 1803 to 1810.

This paper will explore how Banks's maritime involvements forged a new and different Pacific Ocean in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Collecting, Mapping and the Gyres of the Pacific: The Network Strategies of Joseph Banks and the Tracks of James Cook

Robert Batchelor, Department of History, Georgia Southern University

"A current... everything which makes [our navigators'] reckonings and observations disagree."

--Joseph Banks, Journal, April 3, 1770.

As Anne Salmond describes in *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog* (2003), it became clear after the circumnavigation of New Zealand in 1770 that James Cook's first expedition on the *Endeavour* would not find a massive southern continent. Against Cook's scepticism, Joseph Banks had held onto the belief that the weight of Terra Australis would balance a top-heavy world. The failure to find it led to their falling out in May of 1770. Two different archives compiled by Joseph Banks—the collections made with the help of Tupaia on the *Endeavour* expedition (1768-1771) and those obtained through Archibald Menzies on the *Discovery* (1791-1795)—suggest how Banks himself came to reconceptualize the North and South Pacific as his beliefs in the southern continent flagged. In both cases, the goals of Banks were to some degree at odds with those of the respective captains, Cook and Vancouver. These collections have been studied (N. Chambers, G. Williams, et. al.), but questions remain about whether and how such collections differed from earlier European practices elsewhere in the world, the precise way in which such collecting shaped conceptions of science and Enlightenment, and the degree and significance of transcultural collecting and exchange involved. While Cook and then Vancouver produced data-driven survey maps of their 'tracks' aiming at mathematical precision, Banks, Tupaia and Menzies built collections based on layered conceptions of networks, including ecological (breadfruit, sea otters), linguistic and ethno-technical ones. They believed in the potential for 'projecting' agency through them. In addition to analyzing maps produced by the respective expeditions, including those

of Tupaia and Menzies, the paper employs archival findings in the Banks collection at the Sutro Library as well as new interpretations of the collections assembled in the British Museum. Inherent in these expeditions were contrasting and even conflicting definitions of modernity shaped by human and ecological encounters in the Pacific, engagements that proved disruptive in an age before the great discoveries of Humboldt and Darwin.

Serving the State: Joseph Banks and the British Hemp Crisis of 1800–1801

James Davey, National Maritime Museum

Nations have always been concerned about their access to resources. During the eighteenth century it was the supply of hemp that prompted headaches for successive governments: along with wood and iron it was the basic ingredient of British naval, commercial and imperial power, and a resource without which the Royal Navy and mercantile marine could not function. Unlike other shipbuilding materials, however, it could not be grown in Britain, and came overwhelmingly from the Russian territories of northern Europe. This reliance proved precarious and increasingly unreliable, and in 1800, amid a great European war, the supply of hemp was permanently stopped by the Russian Tsar. This forced Britain to address the long-standing problem head-on, and in December that year a new governmental committee was formed designed to find a solution.

The committee was charged with finding new sources of hemp, debating which regions should be invested in, and encouraging future cultivation. The investigation that followed was truly global in its scope and forced the British state to look beyond its own departments, as numerous civilian, mercantile and agricultural experts were brought in to give evidence and offer suggestions. Chief among these was Sir Joseph Banks who had written extensively on the subject of hemp cultivation, and an individual who had been drawn into the workings of government on a regular basis. Though he received no state salary, he was considered an essential consultant for the state's endeavours, and was placed at the head of the 'hemp committee'.

The state fixed on Banks as a man who could provide knowledge about hemp cultivation, and also as a man who also had access to an international and imperial network of scientific contacts whose opinions could be brought to the committee. This paper will explore the aims, findings and legacy of the committee, analysing Banks's extensive imperial networks and how these were utilised by the state. More broadly, it will reflect on the late-eighteenth-century state's ability to solve problems, and consider how it considered various – and often competing – notions of expertise and authority.

Reproducing the Tour: Banks and the Development of Romantic Art

Tim Fulford, School of Humanities, De Montfort University

My contribution to the workshop will be to explore Banks's role in one of the most significant artistic developments of the Romantic era – the rise of the engraving reproducing landscape views for a mass audience. The taste for the picturesque and sublime was spread beyond gentlemen connoisseurs to a mass public by technologies that enabled artists mechanically to reproduce 'landskips' on a scale, at a price, and with a realism, not previously seen. Banks influenced this development directly, as the tourist patron of Paul Sandby, the pioneer of aquatint engraving in Britain. He also influenced it indirectly by promoting the reproduction of voyages of exploration in engravings as well as sketches, watercolours and oils – voyages by Cook and others. I explore in detail the work of William Westall, the artist sent by Banks on the Flinders expedition to Australia, who, once back in Britain, developed, with unprecedented success, the picturesque and sublime rendering of exotic landscapes in the aquatint medium. Westall, like his brother Richard and like Turner, became renowned as a Romantic artist not primarily as a painter of oils but as an engraver of views that circulated, on the printed page, by the thousand and ten thousand. In that respect, he, and Banks behind him, were instigators of the modern era of art as reproduction and of virtual possession of the exotic.

Placing Joseph Banks in the North Pacific: Assignment, Agency and Assemblage

Dan Clayton, Department of Geography, University of St Andrews

The fulcrum of Joseph Banks' maritime world was the South Pacific. The North Pacific (northwest coast of North America) was a fringe. Nevertheless, his interests and influence reached far and wide. This paper considers the diverse non-native figures – explorers, traders, cartographers, scientists, collectors – on the northwest coast of North America in the 1780s, 90s and early 1800s whose projects, tribulations and representations of this distant and intangible corner of the world passed through Banks' offices and patronage networks. Particular attention is paid to questions of geography and how, as Paul Mapp neatly characterises 'the elusive west' during the eighteenth century, this North Pacific fringe was incorporated into a "competitive, territorially insecure, diplomatically unstable, and conflict-ridden international system." Banks sensed that this fringe was freighted by a complex mixture of geographical opportunism and ignorance. I will add that those who involved him in their schemes also provide us with glimpses of the ability of the Native peoples of this vast and intricate coastline to bring newcomers into their own maritime worlds.

'Of infinite advantage': Banksian Networks, Botanic Gardens and Britain's Route to the East

John McAleer, Department of History, University of Southampton

In late 1802, Sir Joseph Banks received a flurry of correspondence from the South Atlantic island of St Helena. Three letters from three separate correspondents described the decrepit state of the Asian plants being carried on the *Princess Charlotte*, an East Indiaman anchored in the roads, and intended for Kew. But they also informed Banks of the solution to the problem: the recuperation of these specimens on the island's own nascent botanic garden. The establishment of such gardens along the maritime route to and from the East shaped British botanical engagements with the wider world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the example of the *Princess Charlotte* highlights, their activity was

facilitated through the maritime networks and connections that Joseph Banks played a fundamental role in establishing, extending and maintaining. By considering examples at St Helena, Ceylon, and the Cape, this paper explores the various roles fulfilled by these scientific institutions. Colonial botanic gardens were important loci of scientific activity, enmeshed in a web of connections spanning the globe and frequently circumventing London, at the notional metropolis of imperial science. They presented opportunities to introduce new species, exchange specimens and acclimatize plants. In doing so, they were located at the heart of maritime networks of transport and communication. And in facilitating exchanges, such gardens became quintessentially 'hybrid spaces', connecting disparate places and recalibrating conventional centre-periphery relationships. In time, they forged their own botanical networks, and created alternative axes of exchange, association and movement. Joseph Banks has long been credited as the original promoter of these colonial botanic gardens, and much of the evidence explored in this paper is drawn from his voluminous correspondence. However, it deploys these archival records in an attempt to understand what his correspondents were doing in the wider world and to argue for their importance in this enterprise. It interrogates how their activities on the ground – and in the field-science institutions such as botanic gardens on which they often depended – affected and influenced the development of empire and its relationship with science in the period.

'Thirsting after Knowledge': Joseph Banks, the British East India Company and the Visualization of South-East Asia in the Late Eighteenth Century

Geoff Quilley, Department of Art History, University of Sussex

From the 1770s the British East India Company was increasingly concerned to open trade routes to China and South-East Asia, with greater numbers of voyages, in ever larger vessels, travelling to Canton via India and Indonesia. Many of these were also partly exploratory in character, and produced visual records, frequently of high calibre and occasionally by professional artists, as part of a systematic exercise in compiling information about an extensive, complex and relatively little-known region stretching from Papua New Guinea to Calcutta. One of the most important was

Thomas Forrest's voyage to New Guinea of 1774-6, which was published in 1779, with 'thirty copperplates', in the form of a treatise of natural history in the mould of the official publications of the Admiralty voyages of James Cook. The most impressive plate in the book, the *View of Dory Harbour on New Guinea*, was dedicated effusively to Joseph Banks, who is thus presented as the central figure in uniting the interests of commerce and natural history, and as an advocate of the potential of the Company to be a vehicle for the advancement of knowledge. Using Forrest's book as a case study, this paper will consider the visual culture pertaining to the Company's maritime expansion, in terms of the ways in which it negotiates a path among the perceived requirements of a universalizing concept of scientific knowledge, the commercial interests of the Company, and the private professional motives of individual officers seeking advancement: crucial to this was Banks, at the centre of a network of voyaging, knowledge and commercial expansion.