

The 'Joseph Banks and the Re-Making of the Indo-Pacific World' AHRC-funded Network  
Project

## ***Science, Self-fashioning and Representation in Joseph Banks's Circles***

**Workshop at the National Portrait Gallery**

**26–27 January 2017**

**VENUE:** Full address is 39-40 Orange St, London, WC2H 7HS. NB. The entrance on Orange St is across the road from the Orange St disabled access entrance to the main part of the Gallery

### **PROGRAMME**

#### **Day One**

9.30-10.00 Registration & Coffee

10.00 Welcome – Lucy Peltz

#### **Session 1 The scientific self: Banks, portraiture and visual culture – Chair: Lucy Peltz**

10.15-11.00 Michelle Hetherington (National Museum of Australia) – 'The unauthorised self: Joseph Banks, celebrity and satire'

11.00-11.45 Ruth Scobie (Universities of Oxford and Sheffield) – 'Joseph Banks and the scandal of exotic celebrity'

11.45-12.15 Discussion

12.15-13.15 Lunch (provided)

#### **Session 2 The Spaces, Symbols and Systems of Scientific Sociability – Chair: Lucy Peltz**

13.15-14.00 Alex Deans (University of Glasgow) – '“With a facility of communication”': Pennant, Banks, authorship and knowledge making'

14.00-14.45 Carl Thompson (St Mary's University, Twickenham) – 'Women, Romantic-Era Science and the (Post-)Banksian Empire'

## Programme and Abstracts

14.45-15.15 Discussion

15.15-15.30 Tea

### **Session 3**     **Home and Away: Fieldwork, Collections and Heritage – Chair: Geoff Quilley (University of Sussex)**

15.30-16.15 John Bonehill (University of Glasgow) – ‘ “Well versed in the Antiquities of this & other Nations” : Joseph Banks and the place of the past’

16.15-17.00 Nicholas Thomas (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge) – ‘Making collections: Joseph Banks, John Frederick Miller and the artefacts of the *Endeavour* voyage’

17.00-17.30 Discussion

17.30-18.30 Wine and further discussion

19.00 Dinner for speakers and chairs

## Day 2

### **Session 4**     **Patronage, Specimens and Scientific Networks – Chair: Clarissa Campbell Orr (St Mary’s University Twickenham)**

09.15-10.00 Jordan Goodman (University College London) – ‘The Art of Botany: Joseph Banks, Plant Collectors and Artists of the South China Sea, 1780–1820’

10.00-10.45 Beth Fowkes Tobin (University of Georgia) – ‘John Abbot’s Drawings and Enlightenment Practices of Knowledge Production’

10.45-11.00 Coffee

11.00-11.45 Patricia Fara (University of Cambridge) – ‘Poetry, Politics & Progress: “The Loves of the Triangles” ’

11.45-12.30 Sarah Easterby-Smith (University of St Andrews) – ‘Picturing Banks’s networks: patrons, scholars and botanical merchants’

12.30-13.00 Discussion

12.30-13.30 Lunch (provided)

13.30 Depart National Portrait Gallery for Natural History Museum (directions to be provided on the day)

**14.00-17.00 Study Visit at the Natural History Museum – background information:**

The tour will encompass visits to both the Department of Life Sciences and to the Museum's Library and Archives to see a range of collections associated with Sir Joseph Banks.

On display in the Rare Books Room of the Museum Library and Archives will be original artworks, manuscripts and books mostly from our Joseph Banks collection that came to the Museum with the specimens in 1781 when the Museum opened. Artwork and manuscripts from the Endeavour voyage will be accompanied by other artworks that will be referred to in some of the talks presented over the two days which demonstrate the global reach of Banks's collecting and interests. Other more unusual material will include illustrations of fossil fish and a rare manuscript herbal from southern India dated 1750 that was recently conserved and digitised with Wellcome Trust funding.

On display in the Life Sciences Department will be specimens of molluscs, insects and plants collected by Banks, including specimens collected on the Endeavour voyage. Related manuscripts and other collections will be used to illustrate how specimens were collected and processed on the voyage and how those specimens were subsequently used - and continue to be used - to understand biodiversity.

## TALK ABSTRACTS

### Session 1: The scientific self: Banks, portraiture and visual culture – Chair: Lucy Peltz

#### **Michelle Hetherington (National Museum of Australia) – ‘The unauthorised self: Joseph Banks, celebrity and satire’**

Joseph Banks returned from the Pacific in 1771 to great acclaim. In the next six months, despite the demands of a ‘social circle grown preposterous’, he would sit for his portrait to three of London’s fashionable painters; Benjamin West, John Hamilton Mortimer and Joshua Reynolds. Each portrait arose from and acknowledged the celebrity his circumnavigation had brought him, and each ‘authorised’ portrait helped cement Banks’ new position within his society’s elite.

However, when plans for a second Pacific voyage ended in fiasco, Banks’ celebrity ensured his private disappointment became a public humiliation. For the next 30 years, ‘unauthorised’ satirical portraits – both visual and literary – ridiculed his growing power. Providing the shading of a good likeness, these unauthorised portraits help us see Banks more fully, in the context of his society.

#### **Ruth Scobie (Universities of Oxford and Sheffield) – ‘Joseph Banks and the scandal of exotic celebrity’**

“Well may poor Pegasus rue the day that Otaheite was discovered by our voyagers,” sniggered the *Critical Review* in 1774, as since then “he has been kept almost constantly trudging between that island and this capital.” The volume of print which immediately followed the *Endeavour’s* return to England generated a moment of metropolitan celebrity for the voyage’s participants, especially the young Joseph Banks. As several scholars have noted, this celebrity was somewhat closer to infamy than to the distinguished Enlightenment status Banks would cultivate in his later career, and notably associated Banks’ natural historical and collection practices (“hunting after tall men and butterflies”) with sexual libertinism. This paper examines a range of representations of Banks published in the early 1770s, including caricatures, newspapers, and pamphlet satires, especially John Courtenay’s 1774 *Epistle from an Officer in Otaheite*, which uses Banks’ Otaheite as the setting of a parody of the Duke of Cumberland’s recently leaked and highly scandalous love letters. I suggest that these texts reflected contemporary anxieties about the new forms of print celebrity by which an apparently unending series of ‘Notables’ and ‘Macaronis’ were invading the public sphere as commodified curiosities. The most recent of these, Banks and Daniel Solander (and the books in which they featured) briefly seemed to embody celebrity culture’s overvaluation of trivia and novelty, as well as its potential to corrupt consumers. This was complicated by rhetorical parallels between Banks’s botanical work – understood as the collection of minutiae either for the public good, for private profit, or to satisfy an irrational curiosity – and the print media’s project of “hunting after” and making public the details of secret elite behaviour in the form of scandal; including at times the scandal of Banks’s own actions or treatment by others.

**Session 2: The spaces and symbols of scientific sociability – Chair: Lucy Peltz**

**Alex Deans (University of Glasgow) – ‘“With a facility of communication”: Pennant, Banks, authorship and knowledge making’**

Pennant's *Voyage to the Hebrides* is introduced by a dedication praising the spirit of scientific generosity and 'facility of communication' shown by Sir Joseph Banks, who had provided the volume with a set-piece written and visual account of the basaltic 'Fingal's Cave' on the island of Staffa. Letters written by Pennant to less famous correspondents as he solicited information and detail to layer onto his published tours, similarly praise the 'communicative disposition' of recipients. Pennant's dedication to Banks and dealings with his informants seem to chime with James Secord's notion of 'knowledge making itself as a form of communicative action.' With reference to the exchange of specimens, and written and visual material evidenced by Pennant's correspondence, this paper will consider to what extent this communicative ideal represented a self-image within the network of amateur collectors and professional men of letters connected through Pennant's knowledge-gathering efforts. It will also suggest that this mode of intellectual practice came under pressure when it came into contact with the competitive field logic of commercial publishing, at times leading to a resentment that disrupted lines of communication between Pennant and others, including Banks.

**Carl Thompson (St Mary's University, Twickenham) – ‘Women, Romantic-Era Science and the (Post-)Banksian Empire’**

The famous 'Banksian Empire' was overwhelmingly a masculine realm. In the overlapping networks of science, exploration, policy-making and empire coordinated by Banks, men undoubtedly took the majority of roles and were the leading players. Yet this was not an exclusively masculine realm. This paper contributes to feminist recovery research in history of science and travel writing studies - and aims to stimulate further recoveries in both these fields -- by identifying some of the ways women contributed to, and participated in, natural-historical and exploratory networks of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Addressing not only the Banksian Empire per se but also what might be labelled the 'Post-Banksian Empire' (here looking specifically at Robert Brown's inheritance of Banks's herbarium) as well as other natural-historical and exploratory networks of the period (for example, the circles around Cuvier in Paris), the paper will explore the way women like Maria Riddell, Maria Graham and Sarah Bowdich established a presence and carved niches for themselves in contemporary natural-historical circles. Conceptually, the paper also identifies and critiques a range of anachronistic assumptions about, inter alia, the nature and practice of Romantic-era science, contemporary hierarchies of genre, and the relationship between print, manuscript and oral culture - assumptions which today often cause scholars to overlook or neglect women's many contributions to late 18th and early 19th-century science and exploration.

**Session 3: Home and Away: Fieldwork, Collections and Heritage – Chair: Geoff Quilley (University of Sussex)**

**John Bonehill (University of Glasgow) – ‘“Well versed in the Antiquities of this & other Nations”’: Joseph Banks and the place of the past’**

In early 1766, a young Joseph Banks was put forward for membership of the Society of Antiquaries as ‘a Gentleman of great Merit, Learning & other accomplishments, & particularly well versed in the Antiquities of this & other Nations’. Over the next couple of years, Banks would of course go on to extend his knowledge of ‘other Nations’ through his celebrated involvement in exploratory voyages in both the northern and southern hemispheres. He would not neglect his native country, however, taking a series of extensive tours in and around these years along the coasts of Scotland and Wales as well as inland through the Midlands, making observations not only on matters of natural history but the antiquities and current-day progress of these regions. In light of Banks’ subsequent career overseeing a global network of knowledge gathering and exchange, this interest in the past and present state of things at a local level in the British Isles would perhaps seem rather marginal to his investments. Yet, as a Lincolnshire squire, Banks was very much rooted in a landed culture that gave particular status to such forms of topographical enquiry, not least as the knowledge collected may be projected and scaled up or evoke wider settings, national, even imperial ones. Drawings had an important role in such ventures, with Banks taking along artists on those travels he made closer to home as well as further afield. Drawing offered a means of coming to know the world and taking its measure. Like other forms of enquiry into people and place, it was then as much evaluative as documentary. This paper will explore these issues through Banks’ early travels in the British archipelago, situating the observations of his own journal accounts and associated drawings and prints in relation to various concerns, historic and modern, personal and patriotic, local and national.

**Nicholas Thomas (Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge) – ‘Making collections: Joseph Banks, John Frederick Miller and the artefacts of the *Endeavour* voyage’**

A current repatriation claim in relation to a shield and spears associated with the Kamay (Botany Bay) encounter of April 1770, and negotiation on behalf of Gisborne area tribes aimed to bring Maori artefacts collected in 1769 back to the region, to mark the 250th anniversary of the *Endeavour*'s journey. They underscore the sense in which collections made during the voyage do not matter only to scholars and curators of Oceania and the eighteenth century: they are vital resources in ongoing negotiation around heritage, colonial history and current indigenous identities.

Given that scholars have been researching and writing about Cook-voyage ethnographic collections for over 50 years, it may be assumed that there is little further to be discovered or said. But recent research has drawn attention both to major gaps in our understandings and to the real potential for further clarifying the nature of collections made and re-made during and after the voyage. This talk is concerned with two seemingly simple questions: what artefacts were brought to England by participants in the *Endeavour* voyage, and what

became of them? The collection-making of Joseph Banks is among the more complex dimensions of what turn out to be not-so-simple issues.

**Session 4 – Patronage, Specimens and Scientific Networks – Chair: Clarissa Campbell Orr  
(St Mary's University, Twickenham)**

**Jordan Goodman (University College London) – ‘The Art of Botany: Joseph Banks, Plant Collectors and Artists of the South China Sea, 1780-1820’**

Joseph Banks's interest in botany not only included collecting dried plants for his substantial herbarium, but also collecting living plants for the royal gardens at Kew. In India and in the south China Sea, these collectors encountered local artists who were prepared to work with them to produce botanical art (not just floral art) of plants indigenous to the area. The best known botanical art collections have subsequently been referred to as ‘Company Painting’ because they were commissioned by servants of the East India Company. While those made in India are fairly well known, the ones produced in Canton and by ethnic Chinese artists in the South China Sea are hardly known at all.

At some time in the latter part of the eighteenth century, Joseph Banks came into possession of a number of botanical drawings executed in Canton in the early 1760s for a European market. They had been brought to London by John Blake, an East India Company captain and shown to John Ellis, the botanist, at the home of a mutual friend. From this point on and for the next twenty or more years, Banks became very familiar with Chinese botanical art and, through his collectors, especially in Canton and Penang, who were not East India Company employees, brought these examples of hybrid painting to wider notice.

I will discuss how the commissions were made and what was illustrated. I will show examples from the commissions of two of Banks's collectors: William Kerr, who was in Canton in 1803 and 1804 (collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew); and Christopher Smith, who was in Penang around 1810 (collection at the Natural History Museum, South Kensington).

**Beth Fowkes Tobin (University of Georgia) – ‘John Abbot's Drawings and Enlightenment Practices of Knowledge Production’**

Drawing was central to the Enlightenment's construction of knowledge about the natural world. Although Linnaeus did not think that illustrations were necessary or even helpful in identifying and classifying plants and animals, Sir Joseph Banks, even as a young man, thought differently. Banks recognized the importance of natural history drawings as a way to record information about animal and plant life, especially specimens that faded with death or were destroyed by the harsh conditions of transportation. For this reason, he employed two artists to accompany him on Cook's first voyage. Banks's model for doing natural history included art as a key element in the production of natural knowledge, and his example set in motion the global dispersal of British artists to record the natural world. Among those artists who travelled abroad to record exotic plants and animals was John Abbot, a young Englishman, who left London in 1774 to journey to the American South to collect and draw specimens for Dru Drury, an amateur entomologist with close ties to

Banks. While in Georgia, Abbot drew thousands of watercolor drawings of birds, plants, and insects. The majority of his drawings were drawings of moths, wasps, dragonflies, beetles, and other insects on single sheets of paper. Abbot's entomological drawings were produced in conversation with Linnaean systematics with Abbot attending to those anatomical features required to identify and classify species. As an artist naturalist, he knew, for instance, the importance of drawing the correct number of spurs on a beetle's tibia and the correct venation of a cicada's wing. Abbot's artwork brought together art and science, embodying what Banks had been aiming at when he sat Sydney Parkinson side by side with Daniel Solander. The artist was coached and coaxed by the Linnaeus-trained taxonomist and together they produced scientifically accurate natural history illustrations.

**Dr Patricia Fara (University of Cambridge) – ‘Poetry, Politics & Progress: “The Loves of the Triangles” ’**

Joseph Banks is often presented as a central character in narratives describing the growth of science, imperialism and aristocratic ownership, but his wide circle of associates included men who held very different opinions on political, religious and scientific matters. Although marginalised in accounts that focus on his rise to power, such acquaintances are important for considering the broader context of Banks's self-fashioning, because they reflect beliefs he spurned and options he chose not to pursue. In this paper, I focus on two eighteenth-century poets who knew Banks and shared some of his interests, but were opposed to him politically and were both satirized by the short-lived Tory *Anti-Jacobin* in a series of poetic parodies. My major subject, Dr Erasmus Darwin, could be considered as Banks's counterpart in the Midlands: now celebrated as an influential figure in the Lunar Society and English industrialisation, Darwin participated in an extensive correspondence network and was renowned for his medical expertise and popular botanical poetry. In contrast, Richard Payne Knight is remembered as a landscape designer, but he was also familiar to contemporaries as a wealthy antiquarian collector, member of the Dilettante Society and author of controversial books on phallic cults and the progress of society. During the nineteenth century, all three faded from public view; Banks was dismissed as an old-fashioned autocrat, Darwin as a sacrilegious supporter of evolution, and Payne Knight as the connoisseur who misjudged the Elgin marbles.

**Dr Sarah Easterby-Smith (University of St Andrews) – ‘Picturing Banks's networks: patrons, scholars and botanical merchants’**

This paper examines the gap between the dominant representation of scholarship as elite and gentlemanly, and empirical evidence that shows that a much wider gamut of people participated in botanical scholarship (middling- and lower-class men; women of all ranks). The paper opens with a discussion of a portrait of James Lee, a commercial nurseryman who enjoyed a close association with Joseph Banks. The depiction of Lee opens up questions about social status and why cultural representations of the participants in Joseph Banks's network rarely reflect the full gamut of participation. The paper will discuss the broader social and scholarly networks that surrounded Joseph Banks, and in so doing will show that cultural representations of botanical participation offer a historically misleading view of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century botanical networks.