Tales from the First Fleet

The State Library's First Fleet Collection includes journals, letters, drawings, maps and charts created by those who actually travelled with the First Fleet of British ships to Australia. It is one of the Library’s most significant and valuable collections.

These powerful eyewitness accounts not only tell us about how the British viewed Port Jackson and its inhabitants, they also record the hopes and ambitions of the First Fleeters, their feelings of homesickness and despair, along with detailed descriptions of the unfamiliar natural environment.

These observations also provide a glimpse into the Indigenous communities living in the Port Jackson area. Several journals record words from the local language groups and lengthy descriptions of the people, their daily pursuits of fishing, hunting and their responses to the new arrivals.

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Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, 1788
First interview with the Native Women at Port Jackson New South Wales’ watercolour


About this item:
Grass tree, or 'A View of the Tree at Botany Bay, wh yields ye Yellow Balsam, & of a Wigwan', pen ink and watercolour, from Arthur Bowes Smyth - drawings from his journal 'A Journal of a Voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales and China in the Lady Penrhyn ...', 1787-1789

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Grass tree, or 'A View of the Tree at Botany Bay, wh yields ye Yellow Balsam, & of a Wigwan', pen ink and watercolour

Arthur Bowes Smyth

Digital ID: a604006

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