

[ROOM 2]

Large
print
captions

seeing without
understanding

eight days IN
Kamlay

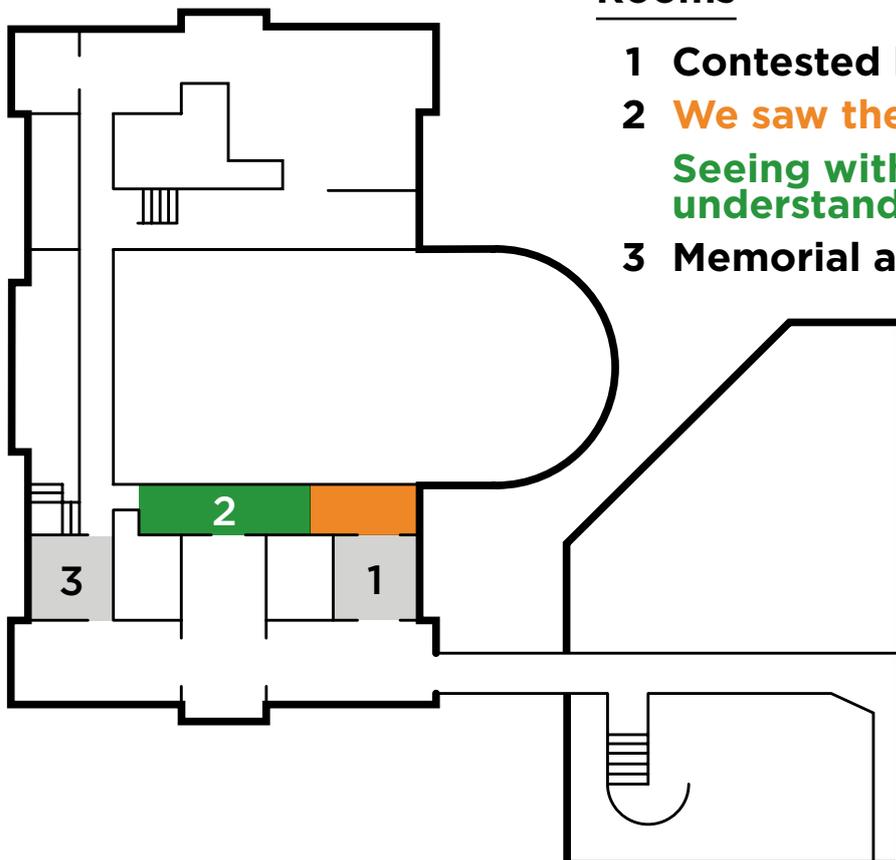
Sensitivity notice

This exhibition explores the topic of first contact and features the names, images and voices of people who are now deceased. It refers to historical events and violence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visitors may find distressing, and includes historical documents that contain words and descriptions which are now considered offensive.

The State Library of NSW respectfully acknowledges the trauma of this history and its ongoing impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Eight Days in Kamay Rooms

- 1 Contested legacies
- 2 **We saw them coming**
Seeing without understanding
- 3 Memorial and resistance



Seeing without understanding

During their eight-day stay, members of the *Endeavour* crew sketched, described and assembled an array of specimens. We can see their attempt to understand and record the vast number of new plants and animals they were seeing (and eating).

Cook first named Kamay 'Stingerray Bay' but later crossed this out and wrote 'Botany Bay'. In both names, he was recognising the area's diversity of plants and animals: this is one of the few common understandings between the strangers and the Gweagal people.

European naturalists were curious about the plants, animals and landscapes they encountered. But their ways of describing and classifying the natural world couldn't make sense of the complex inter-relationship between land, living ecosystems and culture at the centre of Gweagal life.

Cabbage tree palms

Like many plants and animals in Aboriginal culture, the cabbage tree palm has many uses, as well as a deep spiritual and cultural role. Aboriginal knowledge systems don't make a distinction between spirituality and science, and many dreaming stories weave in elements of both.

Gweagal people soaked the heads of the cabbage tree palm in water and roasted them before eating. The branches and leaves were used to build shade and shelter (and later to patch up the roofs of early colonists' homes). Cook notes in his journal that these trees had steps or ladders cut into them, which would have been used to harvest the edible heads and to gather seeds for cultivation. Gweagal people planted small clusters of trees for shade and harvesting food, although many European observers put this down to luck or the natural formation of the plants.

[AUDIO LABEL]

**LISTEN to senior Gweagal knowledge holder Shayne Williams
Transcripts at www.sl.nsw.gov.au/kamay-audio**

[SHOWCASE THEME]

Shore

The shores of Kamay have always been a place of significance and plenty. Teeming with plants and animals, they provided for the Gweagal people over thousands of generations. This diversity and natural abundance were recognised (though not understood) by the crew of the *Endeavour*.

In the last days of April 1770, the shore would become a symbolic and literal line in the sand as Gweagal people tried to stop strangers from the *Endeavour* from landing at Kamay without consent.



[ITEM LABEL]

Gweagal men

after a sketch by Sydney Parkinson, 1773

Two Gweagal men who stood on the shore at Kamay and resisted the arriving strangers were sketched by *Endeavour* artist Sydney Parkinson. This well-known illustration embellishes the original sketch, showing the men in an awkward classical Greek pose. Quick sketches made by expedition artists, such as Parkinson on the *Endeavour*, were later completed by other artists in England who had never seen Kamay or its inhabitants. These artists drew on their classical training, stereotypes and familiar imagery to complete the engravings.

'A journal of a voyage to the South Seas: in His Majesty's ship, the *Endeavour* ...' DL Q78/11

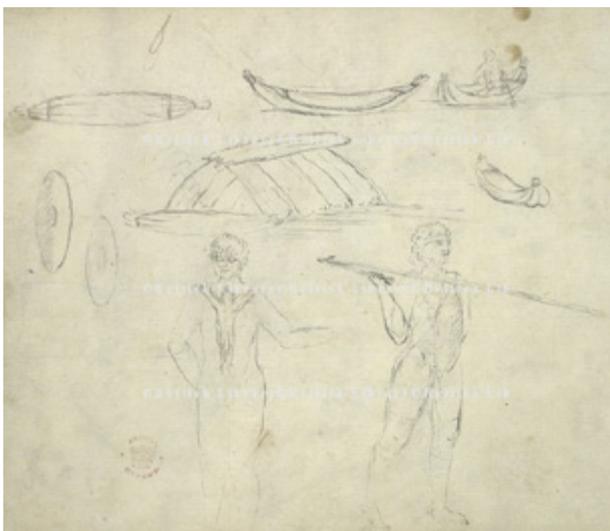


Image:

Sydney Parkinson's original sketch of the two Gweagal men at Botany Bay, April 1770.

© British Library Board, Add 9345,f14v



[ITEM LABEL]

Indigenous Australians in bark canoes

reproduction of a sketch by
Tupaia, April 1770

Tupaia was a talented sailor, navigator and artist from the Pacific Island of Rai'atea who joined the *Endeavour* expedition after it sailed through Tahiti in 1769. He was chiefly employed to act as a mediator and translator, but he was also a highly skilled navigator and explorer. Derided by many of Cook's crew, he was retained through the financial support of Joseph Banks. It would be more than 200 years before his contributions to the *Endeavour* journey would be recognised.

In this sketch Tupaia depicts Gweagal people in their nawi (canoes). His observations of the Gweagal people were informed by his own cultural background, which had more in common with Aboriginal culture than British. Drawn from life and completed by the artist himself, Tupaia's sketch appears natural and sympathetic. This is the earliest known outsider depiction of Gweagal people, and one of the few historical illustrations of Aboriginal people to be created by a non-European person.

Courtesy the British Library © British Library Board,
Add MS 15508, f 10

‘ I thout that they beckon’d to us to come a shore but in this we were mistaken for as soon as we put the boat in they again came to oppose us upon which I fired a musket between the two which had no other effect than to make them retire back where bundles of thier darts lay and one of them took up a stone and threw at us which caused my fireing a second Musquet load with small shott and altho’ some of the shott struck the man yet it had no other effect than to make him lay hold of a Shield or target to defend himself. ’

journal of James Cook, 29 April 1770



[ITEM LABEL]

Journal of James Cook

29 April 1770

This fair copy of James Cook's journal was penned by his clerk Richard Orton and sent

ahead to England from Batavia (now Indonesia) in 1770. It was common for copies of the captain's and officers' journals to be sent ahead to the Admiralty to ensure safe delivery if the ship was sunk or lost, along with the 'discoveries' they claimed. These journals were often turned into popular books, which both made money for the returned explorers and enhanced their fame and prestige.

While the descriptions of Aboriginal peoples and cultures in these accounts were clearly one-sided, they were largely treated as if they were objective and correct. These widely held assumptions about Aboriginal people would become part of the justification for British violence and invasion from 1788.

'A journal of the proceedings of His Majesty's Bark Endeavour on a voyage round the world, by Lieutenant James Cook, Commander, commencing the 25th of May 1768 — 23 Oct. 1770', Safe 1/71

‘ Uncle Dooka ... he used to do the nets. He knew how to fish and take the net around ... everyone would be down there [on the beach] helping to pull the net in, kids and all. And after that we’d all have a feed of mullet, or whatever was in the net ... and that’s how we used to live. ’

Aunty Norma Simms, land rights activist and Gweagal Bidjigal historian and senior knowledge holder, 2007

‘ We lived on fish. Fish was good in those days, we lived on it. You could have it for breakfast and dinner. ’

Aunty Jean Stewart (nee Simms), land rights activist and Gweagal Bidjigal historian and senior knowledge holder



[ITEM LABEL]

Chart of Botany Bay

This chart of Kamay (Botany Bay) is based on 67 different maps and charts created during the *Endeavour* voyage. Showing

the coastline and sources of freshwater, it includes some of the names Cook gave to different parts of Kamay. Rather than referring to features of the land or local culture, these names pay tribute to members of the expedition (Joseph Banks, Daniel Solander and James Sutherland). It would be another 200 years before the name Kamay would be formally returned to the site.

reproduction of a chart 'apparently by Cook',* 1768-71 from 'Charts and coastal views relating to James Cook's surveys in eastern North America, and to his first and second voyages to the South Pacific'

*RA Skelton, British Library, 1955, Courtesy of the British Library © British Library Board, Add MS 31360, f.032r



[ITEM LABEL]

Juniper wattle

Acacia ulicifolia

Juniper wattle (sometimes called ‘prickly moses’) comes into bloom in April, so the *Endeavour* crew would have seen it in flower. Low shrubs like this one were maintained through regular controlled burning to keep the undergrowth clear. This made it easier to move through the coastal scrub and woodland areas on foot, and minimised the risk of catastrophic natural bushfire.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

specimen collected by Joseph Banks

and Daniel Solander, 1770

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum London, A2/97; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, NSW133288

[SHOWCASE THEME]

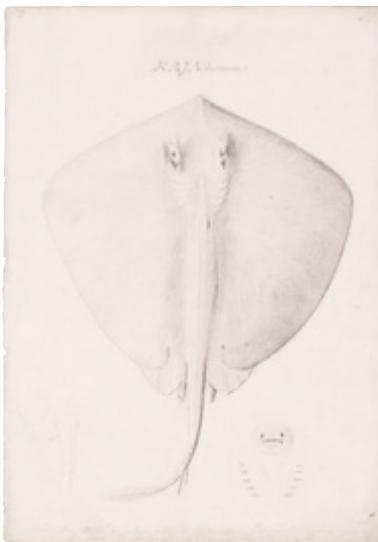
Rock, cliff, cave

The rocks and cliffs of Kamay were home to many caves and rocky overhangs that the Gweagal people used for shelter, cooking and socialising. In the cooler months, they would light large fires under the overhangs to cook shellfish and seasonal seafood, warming the surrounding rock as an added benefit.

Large deposits of shells, fish bones and implements (known as middens) can be found throughout Kamay, providing evidence of where the Gweagal people lived and the foods they ate.

“When we used to catch mutton fish, or fish or even oysters, there was a little cave there, we used to sit in there all day, like a day out ... we were only kids.”

Wallangang Elder Joe Timbery, 2007



[ITEM LABEL]

Eastern shovelnose ray and common stingaree

Aptychotrema banksii, *Urolophus testaceus*

Several species of stingray found at Kamay feature prominently in the accounts of Cook and his crew. While they caught and ate large quantities of rays — and initially named the place ‘Stingerray Bay’ — they noted that the Gweagal people did not. It was thought that the stingray might be a totem for the Gweagal people, but it is more likely that — with the wealth of other food sources — it was simply not part of their regular diet. These sketches by Herman Spöring, Banks’ secretary and an accomplished artist, are the first known illustrations of these species by a non-Aboriginal person.

reproductions of drawings by Herman Spöring, 1770

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum London, 49.(1:145), 50.(1:46)

‘Stingrays I believe they do not eat because I never saw the least remains of one near any of their Hutts or Fire Places. However we could know but very little their Customs as we never were able to form any connection with them, they had not so much as touch’d the things we had left in their Hutts on purpose for them to take away during our stay in the Harbour.’

journal of James Cook, 5 May 1770

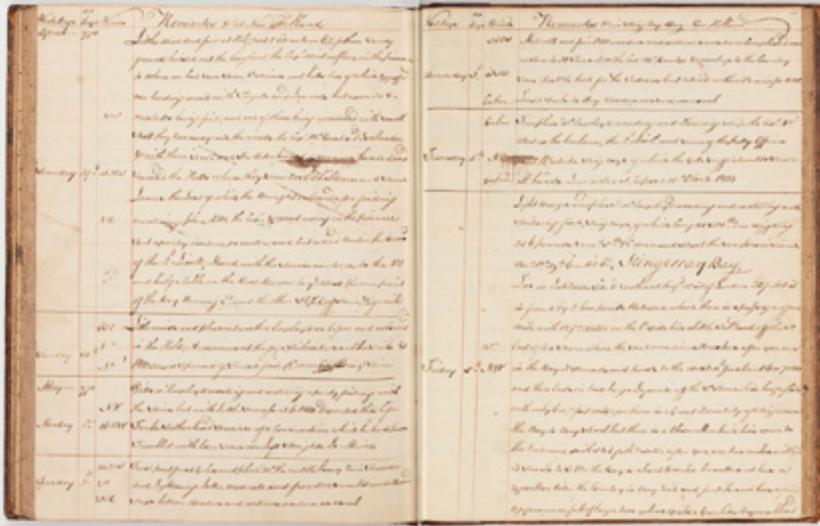


Image:

Rock carvings around Sydney’s coastline show different kinds of fish and sea life. Many of these carvings were sketched in the late 1890s by non-Aboriginal people. Some of these ancient artworks have since been built over, eroded or

forgotten, and the sketches are the only record of them. This whale with its calf is one of several carvings from the north side of Kamay copied by William Dugald Campbell in 1891, when he was working as a surveyor.

Detail from ‘Drawings by William Dugald Campbell’, vol 1, Carvings 1893–96, PXD 223



[ITEM LABEL]

Journal of Peter Briscoe

4 May 1770

Another of Banks' servants, Peter Briscoe, records in his journal the

original name Cook gave to Kamay — 'Stingerray Bay'.

'A journal of His Majesties Bark Endeavour by Gods permission bound to the South Seas, Lieutenant James Cook, Commander, 27 May 1768 - 14 May 1770', Safe/DLMS 96

Employ'd wooding and watering and strikeing fish, string rays, of which Caught 300 lbs. one weighing 236 pounds servd. 5 lbs 1st man and stop'd the sea provisions.

Varn. 1st Azth. 6 degrees 62' Et., Stingerray Bay.

journal of Peter Briscoe, 4-5 May 1770



[ITEM LABELS]

Jellyfish

Rhizostomeae

reproduction of pencil sketch by
Sydney Parkinson, April 1770

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum
London, 275.(3:55)



Seaberry saltbush

Rhagodia candeollana

The seaberry saltbush is in fruit from summer till late autumn. Its sweet, fleshy berries were described by Solander as 'green when young, dark green when older & a dark shining red when ripe'. The seeds and leaves of many saltbush plants can be ground and used when making damper, or to add a soft, salty flavour to other foods.



reproduction of drawing by
Sydney Parkinson, 1770
specimen collected by **Joseph Banks**
and **Daniel Solander, 1770**

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum
London, A7/299a; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney,
NSW133252

‘ The Captn and Dr Solander employd the day in going in the pinnace [small boat] into various parts of the harbour. They saw fires at several places and people who all ran away at their approach with the greatest precipitation, leaving behind the shell fish which they were cooking; of this our gentlemen took the advantage, eating what they found and leaving beads, ribbands &c in return. ’

journal of Joseph Banks, 4 May 1770

[SHOWCASE THEME]

Scrub and woodlands



[ITEM LABEL]

Flannel flower

Actinotus helianthi

This iconic wildflower blooms year round but with a particular flourish in spring months, and its resilient seeds grow back quickly after a fire or controlled-burning. The flowers have spiritual and medicinal properties and feature in Dharawal dreaming stories.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

specimen collected by Joseph Banks

and Daniel Solander, 1770

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum London, A3/162; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, NSW133494

‘ When different flowers are out you know what fish are running. The golden flowers on the wattle tell you that the bream are running. Mullet is associated with the tea tree which flowers around Easter. When you see whales up and down the coast it means that the snapper are running. This is taught to us by the Elders and passed on through generations. The bush is our atlas, our bible, history book, geography book and science book. Even the migration of the birds tell you things. You know what food is there because the birds are there to eat the berries.’

Gweagal Elder Beryl Timbery Beller, 2006

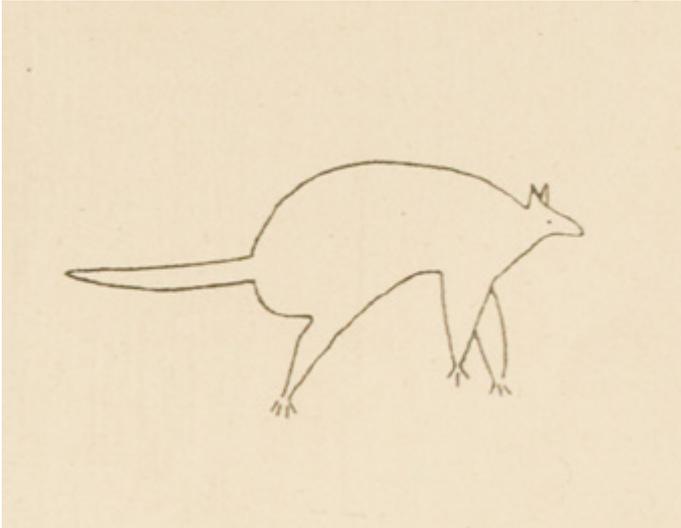


Image:

Rock carvings around Sydney's coastline show different kinds of animal and sea life. Many of these carvings were sketched in the late 1890s by non-Aboriginal people. Some of these ancient artworks have since been built over, eroded or forgotten, and the sketches are the only record of them.

Detail from 'Drawings by William Dugald Campbell', vol 1, Carvings 1893-96, PXD 223

“ We saw one quadruped about the size of a Rabbit ... we saw also the dung of a large animal that had fed on grass which much resembled that of a Stag; also the footsteps of an animal clawd like a dog or wolf and as large as the latter; and of a small animal whose feet were like those of a polecat or weesel. The trees over our heads abounded very much with Loryquets and Cocatoos of which we shot several. ”

journal of Joseph Banks, 4 May 1770



[ITEM LABEL]

Lemon-scented bottle brush

Callistemon citrinus

This striking bottlebrush contains a sweet nectar that can be sucked straight from the flower or used to make a sweet drink. The lemon-scented leaves from this variety make a particularly refreshing tea, which can be sweetened by adding nectar.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

specimen collected by Joseph Banks

and Daniel Solander, 1770

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum London, A3/129; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, NSW133462

[ITEM LABELS]

False sarsaparilla

Hardenbergia violacea



Samples and sketches of sarsaparilla plants were taken by Banks after observing their use by local Gweagal people, and noting their similarity to European varieties of sarsaparilla plant. Aboriginal people (and later colonists) would brew tea from the leaves of these different plants.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

**specimen collected by Joseph Banks
and Daniel Solander, 1770**

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum London, A2/83; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, NSW133310

Sweet sarsaparilla leaves

Smilax glycyphylla



These native sarsaparilla leaves were collected at Kamay by a colonist in 1790. This commonly occurring plant has a long history of use by Aboriginal peoples. It is a remarkable source of vitamin C and can be used to treat stomach cramps. The leaves are chewed or steeped into a bitter-tasting tea that can be sweetened with native bee honey.

R 807

[**SHOWCASE THEME**]

Scrub and woodlands

Moving inland from the shoreline at Kamay, through the scrub and coastal woodlands, you get a sense of the diversity of plants and animals that once thrived there. Banks and Solander described and collected more than 135 specimens in the eight days they spent at Kamay.

While many native flowers and trees still grow there, the marsupials that were once plentiful can no longer be found.

“ There’s still a lot of bush tucker there ,
and the bush medicines there,
there’s a lot there. ”

Wallangang (now) Elder Joanne Timbery, 2007



[ITEM LABEL]

Prickly leaved paperbark

Melaleuca nodosa

The oil in melaleuca plants has been used for thousands of years for its antiseptic properties. Commonly referred to as 'tea tree oil' it can be used to treat skin conditions or wounds. Cooking fish wrapped in the paperbark from Melaleuca trees adds a unique smoky flavour.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

**specimen collected by Joseph Banks
and Daniel Solander, 1770**

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum
London, A3/137; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney,
NSW133465



[ITEM LABEL]

Thyme honey myrtle

Melaleuca thymifolia

reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

specimen collected by Joseph Banks
and Daniel Solander, 1770

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History
Museum London, A3/131; lent by the Royal Botanic
Garden Sydney, NSW133463



we made an excursion into the country which we found deversified with woods, Lawns and Marshes; the woods are free from under wood of every kind and the trees are at such a distance from one a nother that the whole Country or at least great part of it might be cultivated without being oblig'd to cut down a single tree ...

journal of James Cook, 1 May 1770



[ITEM LABEL]

Journal of Joseph Banks

29 April 1770

Unlike Cook, the 25-year-old naturalist Joseph Banks was born into wealth and influence, and his support and money were essential to the *Endeavour* journey. Banks inherited his father's considerable estate in 1761 and soon after this, in 1766, became a fellow of the Royal Society in London. He lobbied fiercely to be part of the *Endeavour* journey and would later be instrumental in the establishment of the penal colony of New South Wales. Banks' account of the eight days in Kamay is the most florid and detailed, particularly his description of the violence that occurred on 29 April as the strangers attempted to force themselves onto the shore.

Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907, ML Safe 1/13

‘ A Musquet loaded with small shot was now fired at the Eldest of the two who was about 40 yards from the boat; it struck him on the legs but he minded it very little so another was immediately fired at him; on this he ran up to the house about 100 yards distant and soon returned with a shield. In the meantime we had landed on the rock. He immediately threw a lance at us and the young man another which fell among the thickest of us but hurt nobody; 2 more musquets with small shot were then fired at them on which the Eldest threw one more lance and then ran away as did the other. ’

journal of Joseph Banks, 29 April 1770



[ITEM LABEL]

Green five corners

Styphelia viridis

These plants were named by Europeans for their uniquely shaped flower, which in April 1770 would have been just starting to bloom. The small, sweet berries inside the flowers can be cooked or eaten fresh.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

specimen collected by **Joseph Banks**

and **Daniel Solander, 1770**

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum London, A5/219; lent by the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, NSW133488

“ When I was a young boy, there used to be a bush called the five corners – something like a tube, green. They had a little seed inside and you could eat them. You’d chew them. They were very nice. Five corners – they’re still around today. ”

Wallangang Elder Joe Timbery, 2007



[ITEM LABEL]

Native violet

Viola hederacea

While Banks and Solander noted the beauty of this purple flowering plant, for Gweagal people it was also a food source. The flowers of the native violet, which grows in partly shaded areas of Kamay, can be eaten fresh from the plant.



reproduction of drawing by

Sydney Parkinson, 1770

**specimen collected by Joseph Banks
and Daniel Solander, 1770**

Courtesy of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum
London, A1/9a; lent by the Royal Botanic Gardens
Sydney, NSW171096

The Endeavour collections

During the *Endeavour* voyage, Banks and his team of nine scientists, artists and servant-field assistants took more than 30,000 plant and 1000 animal specimens, representing over 3600 species. Most are now in the collection of the Natural History Museum in London. The specimens displayed here are from a group of 586 duplicates given by the museum to Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden in 1905.

Taking specimens and objects from First Nations people was common, and though objects were sometimes traded the exchanges were rarely equitable. Many museums and libraries are full of these materials, including human remains and sacred items that were taken without consent (and sometimes through violent force). The Gweagal people at Kamay showed no interest in the 'gifts' left by the *Endeavour* crew in the place of stolen spears, food and other objects.

[AUDIO LABEL]

**LISTEN to Aunties Norma Simms and Jean Stewart (nee Simms), land rights activists and Gweagal Bidjigal historians and senior knowledge holders
Wallangang (now) Elders Glen and Joanne Timbery senior Gweagal knowledge holder Shayne Williams**

Transcripts at www.sl.nsw.gov.au/kamay-audio