

Letters from Corresponding Editors

A Report from Canada to 'Itinerario'

An international conference on *Captain James Cook and His Times* was held at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, on April 26-29, 1978. The occasion was the last in a decade of Pacific bicentenary Cook celebrations and marked the landing and four-week stay of Captain Cook in April, 1778, at Nootka Sound, Vancouver Island. The aims of the conference, attended by more than 400 delegates, were to focus on Cook's Third Voyage to the North Pacific Ocean, to bring together international scholars from a wide variety of disciplines to discuss new research and to reconsider earlier assessments and perspectives. The 26 papers delivered at the conference had been printed in advance and supplied to the delegates so that the sessions were enlivened by concise, often cogent summaries frequently enhanced by illustrative slides. The superb technical organization of the conference organizers deserves special commendation for as a consequence of these arrangements discussions that followed the presentations were frequently lively, informed and argumentative.

In the first session on the *Implications of Cook's Voyages* Dr. Michael E. Hoare, (Victoria Univ., Wellington, New Zealand) argued in a provocative paper, 'Two Centuries' Perceptions of James Cook: George Forster to Beaglehole', that Forster has been unjustly denigrated and virtually ignored by Cook's greatest biographer. Forster who sailed with Cook and wrote the first critical biography of the discoverer left a valuable record that needs serious consideration. In 'Captain Cook and Canada', Dr. Barry M. Gough (Sir Wilfrid Laurier Univ., Waterloo, Canada) emphasized the imperial rather than the scientific thrust behind Cook's work on both east and west coasts of Canada. In the third paper Dr. Glyndwr Williams (Queen Mary College, London) spoke of the 'Myth and Reality: Captain James Cook and the Theoretical Cartography of Northwest America'. Illustrating his remarks with slides he discussed earlier geographical concepts, noted the unpublished Russian and Spanish pre-Cook cartography of the North Pacific, and emphasized that the theoretical cartography of the period had a disturbing, detrimental effect

on Cook's work during his Third Voyage unlike his earlier expeditions when he showed skepticism towards theoretical cartography.

The four papers presented in the second session, *Cook's Influence on Subsequent Explorations of the North Pacific*, developed this rather narrow topic in the much larger subject of imperial reactions in the North Pacific even prior to Cook, and the impact of Cook's Third Voyage on subsequent European rivalries. In 'The Spanish Reaction to Cook's Third Voyage', Dr. Christon I. Archer (Univ. of Calgary, Canada) revealed the depth of material in Spanish and Mexican archives that awaits historians of the Pacific Northwest. He emphasized the value of Spanish ethnographic records for scholars in several disciplines. He discussed the significance of the expeditions of Pérez, Martínez, Quadra, Arteaga and Malaspina. He concluded that Spanish reaction to Cook was primarily one of embarrassment, and that the Spanish tradition of secrecy and publication of the English accounts perversely became the basis for Spanish ideas of the Northwest coast. In the second paper, 'The Significance of Cook's Third Voyage to Russian Tenure in the North Pacific', Dr. James R. Gibson (York Univ., Canada) argued that Cook's appearance set off grave anxiety among Russians. Their generosity at Kamchatka may have been designed to disguise the weakness of the Russians who were unprepared for the resistance of the Pacific Northwest natives who were the first to offer serious resistance to centuries-long Siberian expansion. This, along with Cook's impact, sparked serious Russian efforts to strengthen their far-eastern presence, for the most significant aspect of the voyages was exposure of the secret of the Russian sea-otter trade. In a brief third paper Dr. T.E. Armstrong (Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, England) made two points about 'Cook's reputation in Russia'; firstly that it was considerably enhanced by later Anglo-Russian naval co-operations, and secondly, that this only diminished after 1949 owing to developments in Soviet Antarctic policy. During the discussion a fourth paper, 'La Pérouse following the path of Cook on the Northwest coast of North America' was summarized by Admiral Maurice de Brossard (former *chef de service historique de la Marine*, France). Revising the commonly held view that La Pérouse's voyage was simply a reaction to Cook's achievement, Admiral de Brossard demonstrated that the long background of planning and initial circumstances of the voyage indicate that French policy in the Pacific was more original and imperial in conception than reactive. He also noted that La Pérouse did not compete with, but complemented Cook's work and spoke of co-operation between British and French in science and discovery and French enthusiasm for the English discoverer.

The third session, *Impact on the European Mind*, was highlighted by two papers. Dr. Bernard Smith (Power Institute of Fine Arts, Univ. of

Sydney, Australia) convincingly argued in 'Cook's Posthumous Reputation' that the explorer's life furnished material for creation of a new hero for the industrial and imperial age of the nineteenth century in contrast to the cosmopolitan hero of the Enlightenment. Cook came to symbolize duty in the patriotic servant of the British empire *and* the professionalism, prudence and competence that composed the prototype of the tens of thousands of industrial apprentices whose application to science pre-saged the Industrial Revolution. The slides accompanying Dr. Smith's presentation illustrated the apotheosis of Cook in both areas. In a second closely argued and impressively researched paper, 'Artistic Bequest of Cook's Voyages', Dr. Rüdiger Joppien, (Univ. of Köln, West Germany) discussed the well-known paintings and engravings of Cook's voyages then went on to a more intensive examination of the little known categories of prints and graphic illustrations. Illustrating his remarks with carefully chosen slides he showed the illustrations of Pacific nations from Cook's voyages deepened enlightenment discussion about human physiognomy and the nature of man. They were also directly responsible for the sudden interest in costume books and ethnographic compendia. Dr. Joppien singled out five of these works for concentrated discussion and claimed that this artistic bequest was the foremost educational tool of living reality of the Pacific although they also stimulated the popular rage for such curiosities as *papiers panoramiques* of the Pacific peoples that decorated salons. The costume books functioned as popular ethno-historical anthologies for half a century after 1780. Dr. Allan Frost (LaTrobe Univ., Bundora, Australia), discussed the 'New Geographical Perspectives and Emergence of the Romantic Imagination', in a third paper. Beginning with the important observation that reports of Pacific geography and peoples were introduced to Europeans whose concept of nature was already formed, he emphasized the profoundly upsetting impact of the natural Pacific world which was neither reducible to order nor harmonious or proportionate. Combined with the French Revolution's decreasing ability to evoke concepts of regenerated society, later nineteenth century romantics turned increasingly to the new nature revealed by Cook who marked the imagination of his age as no other man of his times. Dr. E.H. McCormick (Univ. of Auckland, New Zealand) narrated the account of the return of the Polynesian, Omai, to the South Pacific and provocatively claimed that this was 'Cook's First Mission on His Third Voyage', not the search for the Northwest Passage. In subsequent discussion Professor Williams vigorously denied this thesis, but Dr. McCormick had his defenders. The concluding judgement might best be the option left to Scottish juries of 'Non Proven'.

The next session, *Cook and Navigation*, was given over to a more traditional aspect of Cook studies much to the pleasure of many naval

personnel and sailors among the delegates. In 'The Precursors of James Cook in the St. Lawrence River' Dr. James Pritchard (Queens's Univ. Canada) demolished an old myth that Cook and other British naval hydrographers were the first to scientifically survey the St. Lawrence River. He spoke of the advanced nautical and cartographic methods used to produce the first French printed chart of the St. Lawrence nearly two generations before Cook, revealed the program of hydrographic surveying carried on during the 1730s and identified several Canadian pilots who guided the British fleet up the St. Lawrence in 1759. Lt. Cdr. D.W. Waters (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich) followed with an illustrated lecture on 'Navigation at the Time of Cook's Voyages and its influence on the Opening of the Pacific', and in a second illustrated lecture, 'Captain Cook's Influence on Hydrographic Surveying', Rear Admiral G.S.Richie (International Hydrographic Bureau, Monaco) revealed the procedures followed by hydrographic surveyors when making running surveys of unknown coasts. The many questions to the panelists during the discussion revealed the keen interest of the delegates in nautical science and cartography which was further stimulated by Commander Derek House (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich) who illustrated a brief talk on astronomy with slides of the timekeepers from Cook's voyages that he has restored.

The four papers summarized and illustrated by slides during the fifth session revealed the breadth of the *Scientific Aspects of Cook's Voyages*. Dr. Wm. T.Stearn (Dept. of Botany, British Museum) emphasized that scientific organization, political and social circumstances, as well as the character of leading personalities were crucial in reassessing 'The Botanical Results of Captain Cook's Three Voyages and Their Later Influence'. These factors do much to account for the relative lack of importance attached to the far from negligible contribution to biological science from Cook's voyages. Despite significant collections made on the First Voyage naturalists were not sent on the Third. But though indirect the contribution of the voyages led later to the tradition of placing naturalists such as Hooker, Darwin and Huxley on exploring ships of the British Royal Navy and establishing standards of scientific excellence that equal those established by Cook himself for navigation and surveying. In a very detailed paper Phyllis I. Edwards (Dept. of Botany, British Museum) spoke more specifically about 'Sir Joseph Banks and the Botany of Captain Cook's Three Voyages of Exploration'. Concentrating on Banks's development of methods of collecting, describing, illustrating and transporting living plants she vigorously denied that Banks's was an amateur in his approach to science, and viewed him as England's first great director of natural scientific research. She also supported Dr. Hoare's revisionist view of the character and role of the Forsters on

Cook's Second Voyage, Dr. P.J.P.Whitehead (Zoology Dept., British Museum) presented an unusual paper summarizing his own and other work during the past decade to locate, authenticate the provenance, re-assemble and catalogue the 'Zoological Collections Brought Back from Cook's Voyage'. The three voyages brought back the most extensive eighteenth century zoological collections available for study in Europe, but for personal and political reasons as well as the primarily botanical interest of the naturalists on board these were broken up and widely dispersed. The significance of this apparently esoteric search for Cook artifacts is that they form the critical base line of all Pacific ethnology, confirm or deny reported distribution patterns, aid in dating introductions and provide clues to now extinct species. In 'Some Ornithological Results of Cook's Third Voyage' David Medway (New Plymouth, New Zealand) offered the Solander Catalogue not available to previous scholars in order to further, in due course, an assessment of the contribution to ornithology of the Cook voyages.

The highlight of the session was the paper of Surgeon Vice-Admiral Sir James Watt (U.K.) 'Medical Aspects and Consequences of Cook's Voyages'. In general Sir James argued that concern about vitamin C deficiency has obscured the general problem of multiple nutritional deficiencies in the medical history of the voyages and that scurvy literature has been clouded by other symptoms of dietary malnutrition. Cook's reputation based on his anti-scorbutic diet for his crews needs considerable revision in view of the 'blunderbuss approach' of the measures taken. The presence of scurvy also was often hidden and many equal or more significant medical aspects of the voyages have been overlooked. Dysentery and malaria struck savagely during the First Voyage and Cook cannot be absolved from rejecting lemon and orange juice that had been successfully used as an antiscorbutic a score of years earlier or from failing to use distilled seawater. Venereal disease, stress and tuberculosis were the fate of many on the Third Voyage and Cook's own health was very poor, and if, as was suggested, he suffered from parasitic infection of the intestine his mental symptoms and erratic behaviour might be ascribed to thiamine or vitamin B deficiency,

The three papers of the sixth session, *Cook and Indigenous People*, displayed considerable unity in their approach to the controversial subject of cultural contact despite the separateness of the topics. In a closely argued paper P.W.Gathercole (Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, England) spoke of 'Perceptions of Order: the Significance of Cook's Voyages for the Study of Polynesian Ethnography with Particular Reference to New Zealand'. The journals of Cook and his officers do not reveal a static Maori society but one adapting rapidly to European strangers even during the 1770s. Failure to appreciate this creates grave dan-

gers for ethnographers who use the journals as base lines or the finale of Polynesian pre-history. Using Cook's stay at Dusky Sound, N.Z., as a case study, he illustrated these dangers and indicated the difficulties. Yet, by no means can these European records be abandoned because of the wealth of information they contain. In a brilliant paper Dr. Adrienne L. Kaeppler (Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii) discussed 'The Significance of Cook's Third Voyage for the Study of Hawaiian Art and Society', and like the previous author emphasized the changes in Hawaiian society during the first contact. Strongly revisionist, cogently argued and forcefully presented, Dr. Kaeppler's paper stated, that a comparison between objects made of feathers, teeth and wood brought back by Cook and those by later visitors to the islands indicate that the so-called 'classic' Hawaiian art style was not present at the time of contact, but rapidly evolved during the post-contact generation. This evolution can be attributed chiefly to the introduction of metal tools, new materials and guns that stimulated an artistic efflorescence, refinement of traditional techniques and an elaboration of indigenous aesthetic traditions that often became attenuated in favour of standardization. The introduction of guns altered both the balance of power in the islands and the function of many objects, and the material changes were manifestations of crucial post-contact social changes. Dr. Robin Smith (Simon Fraser Univ., Canada), speaking on 'Cook and the Nootka', continued the theme of the first paper that for the Nootka Cook's arrival marked a beginning and not an end. But in contrast to the South Pacific contacts, he viewed relations between Cook and the Nootka as between equals. Trading relations were not new to the Nootka who proved skillful and strong. Despite disagreements in the journals they agree about the remarkable nature of the cultural contact, the independent spirit of the Indians, their self-confidence, well-developed sense of property and skill in trading.

The speakers in the final session on *Cook's Contemporaries* all called for revisions and reassessments. Dr. Howard T. Fry (James Cook Univ., North Queensland, Australia) reassessed Alexander Dalrymple's role in the commercial and scientific opening of the Pacific Ocean in: 'Alexander Dalrymple and Captain Cook: The Creative Interplay of Two Careers'. He demolished the old myth of enmity between the two men and Dalrymple's lack of command experience, and emphasized the latter's role in promoting the First Voyage. Indeed, some of the difficulties during the Third Voyage he attributed to Dalrymple's absence from its planning. Dr. H.B. Carter (Curator, British Museum) spoke similarly revising earlier assessments in 'Cook's Oxford Tutor: Sir Joseph Banks and European Expansion in the Pacific Region, 1767-1820'. Emphasizing Banks' perseverance and professional commitment to scholarship and to natural history in its widest sense, he expanded the earlier remarks of

Phyllis Edwards to claim that as President of the Royal Society Banks' role was decisive in almost all British Pacific Voyages and that for half a century he had placed his income and his talent at the service of the state. In 'Postscripts to the Voyages; Some New Sources and Assessments' Dr. Helen Wallis (Head, Map. Dept., British Library) spoke of the new editions of voyages and exploration that allow reassessment of Hawkesworth's *Voyages*, the re-discovery of the Forsters, father and son, for the Second Voyage, and the trials and tribulations of the editors of the works derived from the Third Voyage. Dr. David Mackay (Wellington Univ., N.Z.) offered a paper on 'Banks, Cook and Empire' designed to salvage the former's reputation and Dr. David Medway (Victoria Univ., Wellington, New Zealand) insisted that by 1795 Banks had indeed become the presiding genius of British exploration.

The Conference closed with a brief summary by Dr. Michael Hoare, but long before its conclusion it was clearly apparent that the aims of the conference had been met. Much new research was revealed and new areas opened. Earlier assessments were refined and new perspectives of Pacific studies considerably broadened. Selected papers from the conference are to be published later this year and information may be obtained by writing to the Department of History, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C., Canada, V5A 1S6.

Pierre Boulle

