

With Captain James Cook in the Antarctic and Pacific: The Private Journal of James Burney Second Lieutenant of the Adventure on Cook's Second Voyage 1772-1773. Edited and introduced by Beverley Hooper. National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1975, xi, 112 pp. Australian price: \$10.50.

BEVERLEY HOOPER makes no excessive claims for the contents of this admirably edited and beautifully produced book. If anything, she underestimates the value of the informal account which James Burney kept during his first Pacific voyage, apparently for the benefit of his family. True, the so-called private journal (the original is untitled) cannot compare in scope or authority with Cook's official record. Nor, as the editor remarks, is it as lively or as colourful as the journals of Burney's fellow officers, Clerke and Pickersgill. Yet it is of biographical interest as, I assume, the earliest extant piece of writing by the future historian of the Pacific; and here and there it provides information found nowhere else in the voluminous annals of the expedition. At any rate the present reviewer found it of sufficient importance for his own obscure purposes to transcribe the whole manuscript when it was still in the possession of its former owner, the late Sir John Ferguson.

Burney, who had already spent half his twenty-two years at sea, was enrolled on the *Resolution* as an able seaman but had been given some assurance of promotion by his father's friend and patron Lord Sandwich. Hence, after leaving Plymouth in mid-July 1772, he served for some months on the crowded lower deck, an experience that yielded a specimen of the humour his editor finds regrettably lacking in the journal. It is very coarse humour, worthy of Burney's favourite novelist Smollett, and presents Cook in the role of shipboard Solomon. As Burney delicately expressed it, two men 'made an house of Office' of a pair of breeches owned by the armourer. When their misdemeanour was discovered, the culprits were arraigned before the captain who ordered them to purchase the garment and toss up for its ownership. The winner was then told to try on his prize 'which after many wry faces, he did so to the no small diversion of the Spectators'. Little else enlivened the journal's sparse entries until the ships reached the Cape of Good Hope. There, to fill a vacancy caused by sickness, Burney was appointed second lieutenant and transferred to the *Adventure* under Captain Furneaux, so initiating his chequered career as a naval officer. Four days later, on 22 November, they left to begin their search for the fabled southern continent.

Though imagination was not Burney's strong point, he did convey some notion of the awe felt by the explorers as they cruised fruitlessly in Antarctic waters and their sense of desolation when the ships lost touch and the *Adventure* was compelled to make for the appointed rendezvous in Queen Charlotte Sound. Calling at Van Diemen's Land on the way, Furneaux sent his second lieutenant ashore with a landing party, so that Burney may have been the first Englishman to set foot on the future penal colony. A more certain and more substantial claim to distinction was the belief, inscribed on his chart, that this was probably an island, separated by a strait from the northern mainland. Furneaux advanced a contrary view and, anxious to settle into winter quarters, set out for New Zealand after a cursory examination of the problem which, as Beverley Hooper observes in one of her erudite notes, remained unsolved for two decades.

The *Adventure* reached Queen Charlotte Sound on 5 April 1773 and for more

than a month the weary voyagers recuperated after their exertions while they repaired the battered ship, botanized in the woods, and did a little amateur anthropologizing. Burney's comments are what might be expected from a young man who was not particularly well informed and who, moreover, was not entirely free from the prejudices of his time and class. Confronted by his first South Sea Islanders, he found them 'little, if anything, superior to the Brute part of the Creation — being Cannibals, many of them Thieves & cursed lousy.' Immediately, however, this harsh generalization was qualified: 'yet', he went on, 'I must do them the Justice to acknowledge the two last mentioned qualities are not general some being very cleanly & I believe honest.' The member of a gifted musical family, he transcribed the opening of a native song and, among more banal remarks, noted great differences of colour in a population as yet virtually unaffected by European contact. Some, he said, were almost white, some olive, and some quite black. He might have carried his investigations farther but for the *Resolution's* arrival in the middle of May. Cook banished all hopes of a peaceful winter by ordering the ships to prepare for a voyage to Tahiti whither they departed early in June. So ended the first and happiest of Burney's three visits to Queen Charlotte Sound — 'without exception, one of the finest havens in the World' in his farewell phrase.

As they sailed east and then north in search of the elusive *Terra Australis*, Burney cast a compassionate eye on the sailors packed below 'with scarce room to stir', some afflicted by the 'flux', others by scurvy. By the beginning of August conditions were so bad on the *Adventure* that Cook, now convinced there was no continent in these latitudes, decided to make with all possible speed for Tahiti where they arrived on the 16th. Since supplies were scarce on that war-torn island, they stayed only a fortnight at two anchorages before moving on to Huahine and Raiatea whose hospitable inhabitants overwhelmed them with fresh provisions. At these islands both captains picked up volunteers, Cook a youth he called Odiddy, Furneaux a slightly older man known to history as Omai. In the middle of September they again set off, bound for the Tongan Group, unvisited by Europeans since Tasman called there in the previous century.

It says much not only for Burney's eagerness to learn but also for his humanity that during the passage to Tonga he alone of the *Adventure's* officers befriended the native recruit and made some effort to acquire his language. He recorded particulars of Omai's early life, found in no other source, and used information gathered from the same witness in preparing his account of Tahitian customs. What he wrote of their social structure and religious practices was unduly simplified, as Beverley Hooper remarks. But he was free of the monarchical preconceptions cherished by other European observers (notably Cook), while certain of his apparently implausible remarks on the priesthood seem to be borne out in *Ancient Tahitian Society*, recently published by D. L. Oliver. When comparing the two Polynesian peoples he had thus far encountered (both, he recognized, sprung from the same stock), Burney likened the Tahitians to 'the enervated, luxurious Italians', the New Zealanders to 'the rude unpolished Northern Nations of Europe'. He thought the Tahitians superior 'in many aspects' — a judgment that further experience would soon confirm for him without need of qualification.

Burney's impressions of the Tongans, gathered during a fleeting visit to Eua and Tongatapu in the first week of October, are presented in a string of not very informative jottings. He mentioned their arms and sketched the construction of

their canoes; he censured the 'Impudence' of their thievery; he transcribed a specimen of their music; he decided they were better governed than their remote kinsmen in the Society Islands and, disagreeing with Cook, found them less friendly. He passed summarily over the return passage to New Zealand but described at length the frustrating interval when, after again losing touch with its consort, the *Adventure* was forced to shelter in Tolaga Bay. Here he judged the people 'more Cleanly and Sociable than at Charlotte Sound' and exclaimed in a cryptic little note: 'The Girls, how fond of each other'. It was not until the end of November that the ship crept into the Sound, only to find, as Burney graphically relates, that the *Resolution* had left for the Antarctic. He went on to record the second stay at Ship Cove, marred by differences with the New Zealanders culminating in the massacre of a boat's crew on 18 December, the appointed day of departure.

In his journal Burney made only passing reference to the 'dreadfull Accident' and failed to mention that he commanded the party which found the men's mangled remains. The editor remedies this omission by printing in an appendix what is probably the best and certainly the most moving thing Burney ever wrote, the report he prepared for Furneaux at the time. A number of versions exist, but with typical thoroughness Beverley Hooper has gone to the most authoritative, the one in Burney's log in the Public Record Office. Here and in the main body of the book her aim has been to render the text 'exactly as Burney wrote it'. My own transcript of the journal differs slightly in minor points of capitalization (always a difficulty in eighteenth-century manuscripts) and on p. 72 she prints 'darest' where I have 'durst'. But my copy was made under stress, and the likelihood is that she is correct. Her work in fact is beyond the reach of petty criticism. The introduction supplies the essential facts about Burney and the voyage; the notes are adequate but not excessive; both the bibliography and the index are done with professional skill; and the illustrations, drawn from the magnificent resources of the Australian National Library, are well selected and reproduced. Altogether the book in its modest compass measures up to the standards set by the late Professor Beaglehole.

The published journal is also linked with another tradition of modern scholarship where the Canadian authority Joyce Hemlow occupies the place held in Cook studies by J. C. Beaglehole. Displaying a single-minded devotion comparable with his, she has dedicated herself to the immense task of tracing the widely scattered, much defaced Burney papers and making them available in their original state. *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford, 1958) was succeeded by *A Catalogue of the Burney Correspondence 1749-1878* (New York, 1971). Now she and a team of assistants are bringing out *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (Oxford, 1972-), a series expected to run into ten volumes, of which the sixth appeared in 1975. This monumental enterprise, focussing on the sister of James, is far wider in scope than the title would suggest. The editors have printed not only Fanny's personal writings but much of her 'inward' correspondence and in their annotation have drawn heavily on the letters and journals of the whole family. Unfortunately the series excludes Fanny's early years and opens only after her retirement from Court in July 1791.

Beverley Hooper has used these and earlier publications to provide a sketch of Burney's career: the obscure childhood and naval apprenticeship; the two voyages with Cook; his service in American waters and the East; the long years of involuntary retirement; his emergence as historian of the Pacific; and his

elevation to the rank of rear-admiral a few months before his death. In addition she refers to an episode in his personal life unknown to earlier biographers but uncovered with lesser family scandals by Joyce Hemlow. After more than a decade of marriage, James left wife and children to elope with a young woman, Sarah Harriet by name, who was half his age and happened to be his half-sister. At the end of five years he returned to his wife (another Sarah) and, somewhat surprisingly, all three later became close friends. Equally surprising in this prolific family, the only offspring of the liaison was the first volume of Burney's *Chronological History of the Discoveries in the South Sea*. Contrary to appearances and contemporary opinion, could this seemingly Byronic affair have been intellectual rather than carnal? Perhaps an answer lies in the vast accumulation of Burney letters preserved in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. This reviewer still hopes to investigate the question. But, to adapt the words of Joyce Hemlow in explaining the limitations of her own work, I have learned through experience that he who would write on the Burneys must begin young.

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