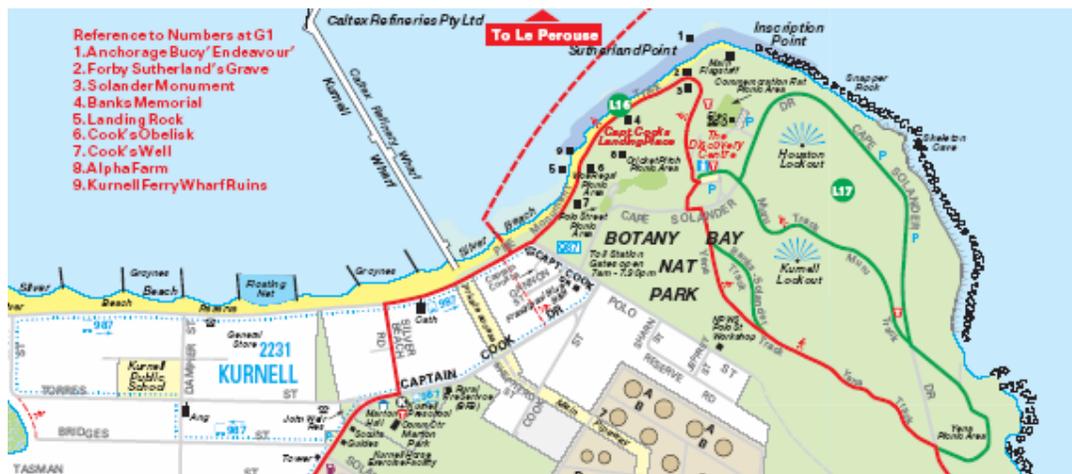


## LA PEROUSE TO CRONULLA

### LOOP WALK L16: KURNELL HISTORIC



- Main Walk:** —      **Loop and Connecting Walks:** —      **Alternative Routes:** - - -
- Distance:** 1 km.
- Time:** ½ hour walking (allow extra time for reading monuments and contemplation).
- Level:** Easy (concrete path).
- Transport:** 987 Kurnell bus from Cronulla station to corner of Prince Charles Parade and Captain Cook Drive 200 metres east of oil refinery jetty.
- Connects with:** Section of Main Walk.
- Facilities:** Toilets: Discovery Centre, Commemoration Flat;  
Picnic spots: Vice-Regal Picnic Area, Commemoration Flat Picnic Area;  
Shops or hotels: General store 1 kilometre along Prince Charles Parade.

This loop is part of the Main Walk but is a fascinating stroll for any visitor to Cook's Landing Place, which is the birthplace of European Australia.

James Cook had gained a reputation as a skilled navigator before his discovery of Australia's east coast and New Zealand. He had been sent to Tahiti by the British Admiralty in the bark "Endeavour" to observe the transit of Venus and then to search for the Great South Land. Six months were spent circumnavigating New Zealand before Cook, by chance, chose to return to England via the east coast of New Holland. He sailed west to sight the Australian coast at Point Hicks on April 19th, 1770. After ten days sailing north along the coast he discovered a bay at daybreak on April 28th and sent a party to find a channel. On the afternoon of the following day the "Endeavour" anchored "under the south shore about two miles within the entrance in five fathoms". This spot is marked today by a large red buoy.

Soon after, Cook took a landing party ashore. Tradition has it that the first European to step ashore on the east coast was Isaac Smith, a cousin of Cook's wife. The landing was not without incident as it was opposed by two aborigines who threw spears at the party. A return of musket shots was fired over their heads but they continued advancing and one blast of small shot was directed at their legs. Thus began a long history of bloodshed and intimidation of Australia's original inhabitants. The expedition spent eight days in Botany Bay. Banks and Solander feverishly collected specimens, the ship's water supply was replenished and Cook explored and surveyed the district. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, a seaman- Forby Sutherland - died from consumption and was buried ashore.

*From the corner of Prince Charles Parade and Polo Street, head north along the Monument Track. Two hundred metres along this concrete path you reach Cook's Well on the right.*

When Cook landed, he noted that the Aborigines had dug a hole in the sand for water and Cook's men began to collect water from this soak but it proved insufficient for their purposes.

*Continue north along the Monument Track for another 200 metres to the Monument to Cook's Landing on the right and the Landing Rock, just offshore on the left.*

The Monument to Cook's Landing was erected in 1870 by Thomas Holt a Kurnell landowner to celebrate the centenary of Cook's visit. Behind Cook's Monument there are several pine trees from New Caledonia, *Araucaria Cookii*. Then comes the Landing Rock with a plaque that records that Aborigines resolutely disputed the landing "although they were but two and we thirty or forty at least". The Landing Rock itself is some distance off shore and it is always a matter of conjecture as to how the landing party managed to get from the landing rock to the shore without getting thoroughly soaked. Maybe there was more sand in 1770! Contrary to common belief, Cook did not take possession at Kurnell. It was on Possession Island in Queensland in August 1770 that this occurred.

*The coastline and the Monument Track now veers east for another 200 metres to the ruins of the ferry wharf and the old ferry shelter shed.*

Until the oil refinery was built at Kurnell, the only road access was by 4WD bus from Cronulla along a sandy track that was often impassable at high tide. As a consequence, the small population of Kurnell used a ferry to travel to the La Perouse tram terminus. The daily service stopped in 1931 but the weekend service continued until 1961, and the wharfs at La Perouse and Kurnell were later destroyed by neglect and storms. There are many Cronulla residents who recall vividly the adventure of bush-walking from Cronulla to Kurnell and then crossing Botany Bay in a diminutive ferry to catch the clanking tram into Central and then the train home to the Shire.

*Three hundred metres along the Monument Track you reach the Banks Monument.*

Joseph Banks was a man of considerable means who made his reputation as a naturalist and collector on an expedition to Newfoundland and Labrador in 1766. Despite leaving Oxford without gaining a degree, he became a member of the Royal Society the same year. When the Royal Society persuaded the Admiralty to send the Cook expedition to observe the transit of Venus from Hawaii they recommended Banks as the scientist to accompany Cook with a staff of eight including Daniel Solander, a Danish naturalist and Sydney Parkinson, a botanical artist.

Bank's party was well-equipped thanks to his personal fortune and the experience he gained in Canada in transporting plant specimens. During the voyage to Hawaii, the scientists recorded and preserved fish, crustaceans and sea birds collected from a small boat towed behind the Endeavour. At Rio de Janeiro, Tierra del Fuego, Tahiti, New Zealand they added plants and animals to the growing collection.

On reaching Botany Bay, Banks and Daniel Solander made several excursions into the surrounding countryside. April is not a good month for flowering plants in Australia but they still managed to collect over 100 species including many unknown genera (or plant families) such as *Goodenia* and *Bauera*. These specimens were kept fresh in chests with wet cloth. While Solander prepared 107 pages of plant descriptions, the expedition artist, Sydney Parkinson completed 94 illustrations. They also collected and recorded reptiles, birds, fish and marsupials as well as noting Aboriginal customs. Collecting continued at every landing spot along the east coast of Australia as well as the New Guinea Coast.

Bank's collection created a sensation when he returned to England! In November 1771, he and Solander were honoured with honorary degrees from Oxford University and in 1778 Banks was elected President of the Royal Society, a position he held until death in 1820. In 1781, he was knighted and in 1795 he became a Knight Commander of the Bath. His name is immortalised in the genus *Banksia* and Cape Banks, the northern headland of Botany Bay. Banks was planning to join Cook on his second expedition in the *Resolution* but he fell out with the Admiralty. He became a major and very influential supporter of the interests of Australia and certainly had some input into the decision to establish a penal colony here in 1788.

*Continue along the Monument Track to a small, lily-covered pond that is part of a very small creek that rises in the sand dunes behind the coast.*

This was the second water supply used by the expedition to replenish the Endeavour's water supply but it was also insufficient rowed across Botany Bay entrance to Congwong Beach at La Perouse and completed their replenishment from the creek there. Across the creek is the site of the first house at Kurnell – Alpha Farm. In 1815, Captain James Birnie was granted 290 acres (116 hectares) on the Kurnell peninsula and he built a homestead called Alpha Farm. This grant was purchased in 1828 by John Connell and in 1851 it passed to his grand-son John Connell laycock who eventually owned 4,800 hectares stretching from Port Hacking to Kurnell. It is thought that Kurnell and Cronulla may be derived from the Tharawals' attempts to pronounce Connell's name. In 1861, the land was sold to the Honourable Thomas Holt for five shillings an acre. In the 1890s, 25 acres of Holt's land was resumed and combined with the adjoining block of Crown land to make a 100 hectare reserve. This land was dedicated as Cook's Landing Place in 1899 and became part of Botany Bay National Park in 1988. The original Alpha farmhouse fell into ruins and rumours of gold hidden in the house resulted in its total demolition by fortune seekers. It was eventually replaced with a ranger's cottage.

*Two hundred metres past the pond you reach Forby Sutherlands' grave on the left and Solander's Monument on the left.*

The grave of the first Englishman buried on the east coast of Australia is a simple affair, in marked contrast to the ornate tomb of the first Frenchman buried on the other side of Botany Bay. Sutherland was a seaman on the Endeavour and one of the few deaths on Cook's incredible expedition. At that time, the mortality rate on long sea voyages was over 30% and often exceeded 60% due to the ravages of scurvy, a severe vitamin deficiency. Cook pioneered the use of citrus and sauerkraut to increase the level of Vitamin A in his crew's diet and, as a result, he only lost x men until the expedition reached Batavia (Jakarta?), which was had a serious outbreak of black fever Sutherland Shire is named after Forby Sutherland.

The monument to Daniel Solander was erected by the Danish community in Australia to commemorate this remarkable scientist. It is difficult to put the scientific role of Cook's expedition into perspective. Whilst scientists had accompanied other British naval voyages, this was the first time that science was the main objective of an expedition. This objective was not the exploration of the east coast of Australia and an assessment of its botanical wealth. It was the observation of the transit of Venus across the sun that drew Cook's expedition with its motley collection of scientists to Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean. It was only after the transit that Cook opened his secret orders to check out the existence of a Great South Land on his voyage home. MORE INFO ON SOLANDER ABIOGRAPHY MUSEUM

*The Monument Track then swings in a wide arc tohead south and then east to the Discovery Centre.*

It is worth spending some time at the Discovery Centre as it has two excellent exhibitions. The first ??? provides an interesting account of Cook's landing but is nowhere near as comprehensive or interesting as the La Perouse Museum in the cable station at La Perouse. The other exhibition on the Botany wetlands provides a good insight into the important role that these wetlands play in the ecology of the bay and the surrounding ocean. MORE INFO FROM TEXT AND BBNP WEB SITE

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