

HMB *Endeavour* in the tropics

As *Signals* goes to press the replica of HM Bark *Endeavour* has reached Darwin via Torres Strait during its 2011–12 circumnavigation of Australia. In this issue, however, we focus on the winter voyage up the coast of Queensland in the wake of James Cook. Curator **Dr Stephen Gapps** visited Cooktown, site of Cook's longest stay on Australian soil after his fateful encounter with the Great Barrier Reef.



IT WAS IN THE LAND of the Guugu Yimidjir people, at Endeavour River near today's Cooktown, that Lieutenant James Cook and his crew spent the longest period of time ashore of all the 13 landfalls that they made along the eastern coastline of our continent in 1770. It was here in July of 1770 that they repaired their damaged vessel, holed on a moonlit night on a coral reef. Here too the scientists and crew of *Endeavour* collected many plants and animals, finally killed a specimen of the elusive kangaroo, and spent a good deal of time attempting to communicate with the local Aboriginal people.

Indeed, the residents of Cooktown today note that their locality was the site of the first instance of reconciliation between Europeans and Indigenous Australians. Cook's efforts to communicate had turned sour after the local people found that the *Endeavour* crew would not share the catch of turtles they had taken in the country of the Guugu Yimidjir. But after the crew members returned some spears they had picked up, this 'reconciled everything' in the words of Cook's journal. The *Endeavour's* 1770 stay was in some ways a rehearsal for future relations between Europeans and the First Australians,

with many familiar elements appearing: cultural misunderstanding, conflict over resources, inquiry, negotiation.

In July 1770 James Cook climbed the hill at the southern head of Endeavour River several times to try to spy a way through the treacherous reefs that seemed to stretch forever up the coastline. On a windy July afternoon in 2011, scores of Cooktown residents and tourists drove their cars up to the vantage point of Grassy Hill to view the *Endeavour* replica sailing in to Cooktown after its voyage from Cairns.

The view of *Endeavour* blustering along with some sail up, and then anchoring at the mouth of the river, was spectacular. It conjured up images of what it was that the Guugu Yimidjir saw on their ocean in July of 1770. Unfortunately the vessel could not risk mooring in the river where the clearance was reportedly in the range of centimetres rather than metres. *Endeavour's* Captain Ross Mattson had hoped to come ashore and attend a series of engagements that the Cooktown Council and Cooktown Re-enactment Association had coordinated. A modern-day Captain Cook and his marines, members of the re-enactment association, waited on shore to welcome him.

The original *Endeavour* voyage was very much about scientific inquiry. Fittingly then, the *Endeavour* replica has also become involved in scientific data collection



Unfortunately the winds picked up, gales were predicted and the vessel's anchor dragged in the sandy mooring overnight, so Captain Mattson made the difficult decision not to stay for the scheduled two days, but to head back out to sea. Although this was a great disappointment for the people of Cooktown, it was prudent not to risk the *Endeavour* replica amidst the same sharp coral traps that came so close to destroying the original vessel 241 years ago.

The original *Endeavour* voyage was very much about scientific inquiry. Fittingly then, the *Endeavour* replica has also become involved in scientific data collection. The ship has joined the Bureau of Meteorology's Volunteer Observation Fleet, collecting and communicating meteorological observation data to the database of the Bureau of Meteorology while at sea. The first test observations were sent on 13 April 2011 and *Endeavour's* officers have since submitted in excess of one hundred observations to the Bureau.

The circumnavigation has also provided an opportunity for *Endeavour* to deploy surface drifting buoys to measure currents in two areas that are less frequented by shipping – the Hiri Current in the Coral Sea and the Leeuwin Current in the Indian Ocean. The buoys are tethered to a sub-surface drogue and drift with the oceans' currents. They include instrumentation to measure ocean temperature and atmospheric surface pressure, and transmit these measurements and their position every three hours via satellite.

They are part of a drifting buoy program of over 1,500 buoys distributed around the globe under the administration of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration (NOAA), with the Australian Government's Bureau of Meteorology making buoy deployments in the Indian and Southern Ocean. The data gathered provides information for weather prediction, and feeds into broader historical information about climate.

The *Endeavour* deployed two buoys in the Coral Sea. On 11 July the ship left the shelter of the Great Barrier Reef for open sea and between 13 and 14 degrees south latitude the buoys were launched overboard by voyage crew Frank Mills and Jay Kaumees. The Hiri Current will carry them into the Gulf of Papua Gyre. At Frank's suggestion they were named Manu 1 and Manu 2 – 'bird of the sea' in the Motu language of the Hiri people of coastal Papua New Guinea. The ship will deploy a further two buoys in the Indian Ocean on the Exmouth to Geraldton leg of the circumnavigation.

Cooktown has an intriguing history outside of the *Endeavour* associations. It was founded as a gateway to the Palmer River goldfields and its James Cook Museum has an excellent display of regional history. It is also the home of several of the artefacts that were jettisoned by Cook at Endeavour Reef to lighten the stricken vessel, including one of the *Endeavour* cannon and an anchor that were recovered in 1969. Cooktown's Botanical gardens have living examples of all the species collected by Joseph Banks from the Endeavour River region in 1770, including the emblematic Cooktown Orchid.

Cooktown's re-enactment association has been recreating elements of the *Endeavour's* 1770 stay for over 50 years. Recently, the Guugu Yimithir people

have become more involved in the historical re-enactments and the annual Cooktown Discovery Festival, held each year over the June long weekend.

In November 2011 Cooktown is hosting a conference, 'Towards 2020 – The 250th anniversary of the landing of Captain Cook on the east coast of Australia', in a newly built conference centre facility. With a bit of good luck, the Endeavour River mouth will have been dredged by the time of the 250th anniversary and Cooktown might be able to welcome the vessel at close hand this time around. ■

For further information about the buoys launched from *Endeavour* and to monitor their progress of visit www.aoml.noaa.gov/phod/dac/index.php.

For further information on the Cooktown conference visit www.cooktowndiscoveryfestival.com.au.

Thanks to *Endeavour* chief officer Dirk Lorenzen; Dr Gary Brassington, Bureau of Meteorology; Loretta Sullivan, Cooktown Re-enactment Association.

above: Salutes from HM Bark *Endeavour* replica's four-pounders – themselves faithfully replicated by an armament factory in Victoria – accompany the ship's arrivals and departures. Photographer Fiona Harper

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Voyage of reconciliation



North Queensland marine journalist **Fiona Harper** sailed on the Townsville to Cairns leg of the *Endeavour* replica's Australian circumnavigation in June. She recounts the camaraderie of tall-ship sailing that links professional and paying crew with the young Indigenous people who have been given berths on each leg.

left: For new crew unused to square-rig sailing, the first trip aloft into the upper rigging is a rite de passage and a threshold. Photographer Fiona Harper.

opposite: Indigenous crewmembers alongside in Darwin when they disembarked after their voyage from Thursday Island. Left to right: Lionel Ogden, Shannon Cagney, mentor Dave Kurnoth of Workboats Northern Australia, James Clarke, Carolas Dai and Myti Wood. Photographer Belinda Parry, DEEWR



'For me, this journey was a chance to walk in the footsteps of my ancestors who experienced the arrival of the First Fleet'

'THE SHIP STRUCK and stuck fast,' notes James Cook as HM Bark *Endeavour* was holed on what's now known as Endeavour Reef near Cooktown. Cook quickly displayed the leadership qualities for which the British Admiralty had appointed him, at the age of 38, to command the 1768-1771 voyage. Lightening the ship, staunching the leak and running her aground on the beach for repair was a remarkable feat of seamanship from the entire crew. Cook was proud of his officers and men, noting that no-one had panicked nor shirked their duty: 'No men ever behaved better than they have on this occasion ... every man seemed to have a just sense of the danger and exerted himself to the utmost.'

This spirit of camaraderie, teamwork and seamanship lives on in the replica of his ship. One of the unique things about any sailing voyage is the bonds that emerge as the miles slowly slip astern. Following Cook's original route northwards wherever possible (while naturally avoiding Endeavour Reef), there is ample opportunity to get to know fellow shipmates on the *Endeavour* replica. Coming from all walks of life, each has their own story to tell, gradually revealed as days revolve around watch keeping. After just a few nights of interrupted sleep performing oddly unfamiliar tasks in the dark, an intimacy soon develops that's not seen among strangers ashore.

Embracing these bonds of friendship was particularly relevant to the Indigenous crewmembers on board, part of an initiative in the spirit of reconciliation that the ship's custodian, the Australian National Maritime Museum, has willingly taken on. As the museum's director Mary-Louise Williams

has said: 'This voyage gives us the opportunity to build relationships and work with remote and regional communities and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to encourage mutual understanding of our shared history.'

The Job Futures Endeavour Project is an inspiring concept that will see up to 32 disadvantaged Indigenous jobseekers join the 33-metre sailing ship as voyage crew during her 2011-12 circumnavigation. It's part of a partnership between the museum, the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and Job Futures, a not-for-profit network of community-based employment agencies. It's a partnership that is building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enroute. The aim of the program is to assist disadvantaged Indigenous jobseekers to build skills and confidence in order to find meaningful employment. Some of these crew members are seeking work in the maritime industry, while others hope to use the experience to give them confidence to make positive change in their lives.

According to the master of the *Endeavour* replica, Captain Ross Mattson, many of these participants have found themselves way outside their comfort zone upon embarking. Though he too observes that tall-ship sailing does seem to bring out the best in people who are otherwise strangers.

'To join a ship full of people of mostly European descent can be confronting. Fortunately we have sailing crew who by nature are very genuine people, who do not place people by gender or class,' he says, which helps to ease the awkwardness of being confined in an unfamiliar environment. 'Look after your

shipmates and they will look after you,' is the message from the master to everyone from the officers all the way to the newest voyage crew. After just a few legs, results are becoming apparent, with one young Indigenous crewmember, Monique, saying that 'being picked to crew on *Endeavour* was a once in a lifetime opportunity that changed my life'.

Another participant stepped ashore filled with enthusiasm for both his own future and that of his culture. 'For me, this journey was a chance to walk in the footsteps of my ancestors who experienced the arrival of the First Fleet ... to heal and move on to a better place where all Australians can know and understand each other better. It was a chance to share some of my culture with others,' said Gary.

HM Bark *Endeavour* flies both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags alongside the Australian maritime ensign. 'Arriving in port, people see the flags and make the connection about Cooks' history. Could this ship be the perfect tool for reconciliation?' wonders Captain Mattson, steely blue eyes scanning the horizon. 'It's very satisfying to watch these people grow in confidence as they, literally, learn the ropes. It's a privilege to show them the essentials of 18th-century seamanship and to remind them of Australia's seafaring history,' he says from beneath a dishevelled mop of curls prior to pointing *Endeavour's* bow seawards again.

No pleasure cruise, each crewmember is expected to stand watch, climb aloft, wash dishes and keep the ship, well, shipshape. Once the sails are set and trimmed, conversation helps to while away the hours since the likely speed is a modest three or four knots. Sharing the experience, even the dirty jobs like hauling up by hand the tar-soaked, muddy, slimy anchor rope, seems to bring out the best in people. Perhaps it has something to do with the notice in the communal galley that urges crew to 'Be excellent to each other'. Maybe it has more to do with lack of connection with 'onshore' lives as phone and internet connectivity drop out. Whatever the reason, getting to know one another is an unexpected treasure to take home from such a voyage.

Whether you call it reconciliation, friendship or simple humanity, as HM Bark *Endeavour* sails on those lasting bonds that develop onboard are sure to remain long after she has returned to her home berth in Darling Harbour. ■