

(Wilson, J., 2009a)

Story: European discovery of New Zealand

Page 5 – Cook's three voyages

1777

Rabbits introduced

First sighting and landfall

Captain James Cook's ship the *Endeavour* was a relatively small vessel, just 32 metres long and 7.6 metres broad. It departed from England in August 1768 with 94 men, entering the Pacific around Cape Horn. After almost four months in Tahiti, from mid-April to mid-August, the *Endeavour* sailed south into uncharted waters. On 6 October 1769 a cabin boy sighted land.

Two days later Cook landed at Poverty Bay. But unfortunate skirmishes on that day and the next resulted in the deaths of several Māori. The incidents appear, like Tasman's bloody experience at Murderers Bay (Golden Bay) in 1642, to have been in part the result of Māori efforts to deal with strange newcomers in a different way. After the encounters, Cook sailed first south to Cape Turnagain, then north, pausing at Tolaga Bay and Anaura Bay before rounding East Cape to Mercury Bay. After a week in the Bay of Islands, he turned the top of the North Island in a storm, and sailed down its west coast.

Young Nick's sharp eyes

Sailing across uncharted seas in October 1769, Captain Cook offered a reward of rum to the man who first sighted land, and promised that 'that part of the coast of the said land should be named after him'. The sighting was made by the surgeon's boy, 12-year-old Nicholas Young. He had probably come aboard the ship in the retinue of the botanist, Joseph Banks. It is not recorded if Young Nick was given the rum, but the headland below the high hills which he first saw from the masthead was named Young Nick's Head after him. He was certainly sharp-eyed because he was also the first to see Land's End when the *Endeavour* returned to England in 1771.

A favoured anchorage

On 15 January 1770 Cook brought the *Endeavour* to anchor at Ship Cove in Queen Charlotte Sound at the top of the South Island. From a high point on Arapawa Island he gained his first view of the narrow strait that now bears his name. Sailing through the strait, he returned to Cape Turnagain, confirming that the North Island was indeed an island. He then sailed south down the east coast of the South Island and round the southern tip of Stewart Island.

Observing the new land sometimes from well out to sea, he made two famous mistakes, charting Banks Peninsula as a probable island and Stewart Island as a probable peninsula. He did not land again until he put into Admiralty Bay, D'Urville Island, on 27 March 1770 for wood and water.

On 1 April 1770 Cook sailed west to discover and chart the eastern coast of Australia. He reached Batavia (Jakarta) on 11 October and returned to England, having circumnavigated the globe, on 13 July 1771.

The second voyage

When Cook made his two subsequent voyages into the Pacific, New Zealand was no longer a place unknown to Europeans. The first voyage in 1770 had confirmed that it was not a vast southern land waiting to be discovered. Joseph Banks, the naturalist on board the *Endeavour*, had recorded that Cook's rounding of Stewart

Young Nick's Head



Replica of the Endeavour



James Cook's map of the South Island (1st of 3)



The Resolution medal



Impressions of 'Dusky Bay' (1st of 2)



Island's South Cape had totally demolished 'our aerial fabrick called continent'. Yet there still remained unexplored ocean to the east of New Zealand, where a great continent could lie. On his second voyage (1772–75) Cook used New Zealand as a base for probes south and east, which finally proved there was no such continent.

'Cook's Cove'

The *Resolution*, commanded by Cook, and the *Adventure*, commanded by Tobias Furneaux, sailed from England on 13 July 1772. Both ships spent time in New Zealand waters between excursions into the unexplored parts of the Pacific. The only significant achievement of the second voyage relating to New Zealand was Cook's charting of much of Dusky Sound, where he spent six weeks in the autumn of 1773.

Historic tree stumps

Some of the earliest evidence of a European presence in New Zealand is found in the far south-west of the South Island. When Captain Cook rested up in Dusky Sound in the autumn of 1773 after arduous voyages towards Antarctica, one of the tasks he had his party complete was accurately fixing the geographical position of New Zealand. So that the necessary observations could be made, about an acre (half a hectare) of land on Astronomer Point was cleared of bush. The stumps of trees felled by Cook's men can still be seen beneath the regrown bush.

The third voyage

On his third voyage (1776–79), Cook paid a last visit to New Zealand. He stayed from 12 to 25 February 1777 at 'our old station', Ship Cove in Queen Charlotte Sound, before sailing into the north Pacific. He was killed in an incident with the islanders at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii, on 14 February 1779.

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