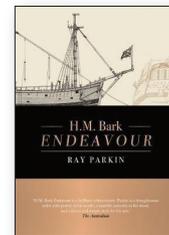


BOOK REVIEW:

H.M. Bark *Endeavour*

by Ray Parkin

The Miegunyah Press (an imprint of Melbourne University Publishing Ltd): Carlton, Victoria;
2nd Edition, 2020 reprint; 467pp.; ISBN 9780522876437 (hard cover); RRP \$100¹;
Ursula Davidson Library call number Q714 PARK 2020



This is a beautifully-produced volume about H.M. Bark *Endeavour* and her first voyage to the South Pacific under the command of Captain James Cook RN in which he charted the east coast of New Holland in 1770. It includes an account of the Admiralty's acquisition of the *Earl of Pembroke*; her conversion to H.M. Bark *Endeavour*; her fitting out, crew and equipment; and narratives by participants in the voyage.

This first voyage took almost three years of which eight months were in transit to the Pacific from Plymouth, about six were in Tahiti where Cook observed the Transit of Venus, almost six involved charting the New Zealand coast, and six involved charting the east coast of New Holland.

Cook's second voyage is best known for his unsuccessful search for the Great Southern Land (now Antarctica) although he reached Easter Island, the Tongan group, New Caledonia and South Georgia. He further tested the chronometers that enabled the accurate determination of longitude. His third voyage ended tragically on Hawaii in 1779.

The first edition of this book, published in 1997 when the author was 87-years-old, was entitled *H.M. Bark Endeavour: her place in Australian history: with an account of her construction, crew and equipment and a narrative of her voyage on the east coast of New Holland in the year 1770*. The first edition was reprinted three times and was followed by a second edition and a paperback edition. This 2020 reprint, a facsimile reproduction of the 2nd edition, was published to coincide with the 250th anniversary of Cook's landing in Australia. It is in two formats: a single volume reviewed here; and a two-volume boxed set. This 2020 reprint contains a foreword by Emeritus Professor Alan Frost of La Trobe University, an authority on 18th century European exploration in the Pacific, who notes that, since the ship was built, no one has known as much about *Endeavour* as Ray Parkin.

The late Ray Parkin had an extraordinary life. He served in the Royal Australian Navy for 18 years, which included surviving the sinking of HMAS *Perth* in 1942 before enduring over three years as a prisoner-of-war (POW) of Japan on the Burma Railway and in Japanese coal mines. Parkin's 'wartime trilogy' is a classic of Australian POW literature.

This book was the focus of his work for 25 of his 95 years and reflects his love of 18th century vessels, his

admiration for the voyages Cook undertook, and his own naval experiences. Parkin's own literary skills are remarkable. His writing is elegant but starkly evocative and he created most of the book's drawings and sketches.

The book is in two parts. Part 1 covers the plans for and construction of the *Endeavour* and the geo-politics of the world in which it was built. It constitutes a quarter of the book. Part II constitutes most of the book's remainder and focuses on the voyage itself. Each chapter in Part II has three elements:

- key extracts from Cook's daily log and his journal;
- extracts from journals kept by members of the ship's company, mainly those of botanist Joseph Banks and Sydney Parkinson (a botanical draughtsman, who provided the only contemporary sketches of *Endeavour* and its work boats); and
- analyses and comments by Parkin.

Parkin avoids putting words into the mouths of the characters but provides interpretations of their attitudes. The accounts of the ship's grounding on Endeavour Reef and of almost being washed onto the outer Barrier Reef (Part II, Chapters 8 and 13 respectively) are riveting and portray seamanship and leadership beyond reproach. Parkin's line drawings and maps illustrate the story as clearly as photographs embellish other books. Part 1 includes notes and a comprehensive index covers both parts.

The contribution of Cook's 1770 discoveries to the settlement of the Colony of New South Wales by Europeans in 1788, has attracted some critical attention 250 years after he mapped the east coast of New Holland. Many of his supposed attitudes towards the local inhabitants are now compared adversely and, in my view, unjustifiably, with current values. Parkin, whose work predates this development, examines Cook's responses to, and views on, the 'Indians' (Indigenous Australians) he met, following earlier encounters with Tahitians (very friendly) and Maoris (mostly hostile). He spent only about a week at Botany Bay and slept on board, but, while his vessel was repaired near what is now Cooktown, he spent some seven weeks ashore. He observed and interacted with the locals and provided the first small glossary of Aboriginal words.

Parkin's book has a dignity and authority rarely seen. A definitive reference for *Endeavour* and her times, it provides invaluable records and informed commentary. It is an attractive resource for those keen to understand Cook, his vessel, his crew and the conditions under which they created history.

¹Also available as an e-book at \$22.99.

Ken Broadhead