

When Did Cook Land on the Shores of Kamay - Botany Bay

When did Lt James Cook sail into Botany Bay and set foot on shore there?

Was it 28 April 1770 or was it 29 April 1770?

Our Endeavour Voyage was billed as entering Botany Bay the same day as the original Endeavour did. We sailed in on 28 April.

The local council, in conjunction with the local Aboriginal Corporation, held a Two Cultures ceremony on 29 April, which we all attended.

Alternative Views

At the Two Cultures ceremony, conflicting dates were announced with confidence.

I was told that some signs around the Botany Bay National Park had one date and others the other date; but I didn't verify that.

A static display at the park HQ definitively opted for the 29th, even excising, without acknowledgement, a key part of Cook's journal entry of the 29th that might have raised a doubt about their choice of landing date.

To confuse the visitor even more, the display, if I recall correctly, made mention of Cook sending a watering team ashore rather than first setting foot himself. The former, according to my reckoning, he certainly did on the 29th, but that would seem to have come after he had landed and returned to the ship!

A booklet being sold at the park HQ also opts without hesitation for the 29th, similarly excising a crucial part of Cook's relevant journal entry.

Ship Time

I'm no expert on this. I hadn't read much about Cook – and none of his journal – before signing up for the Endeavour Voyage. In the lead-up to the voyage, I started a pre-voyage blog that tried to capture aspects of Cook's voyage around April 1770 and especially on the corresponding days of our voyage, 25-29 April. That got me into his journal, which I found initially quite baffling, constructed, as it is, on the concept of 'ship's time'.

Ship's time and ship's days differ from the normal world of clocks and calendars. Our days start at mid-night in terms of time, day and date. Not on a ship – or, at least, not on the Endeavour in Cook's time. The day began at noon. That meant noon was the start of the next 24 hours. It was the start of the day's name, eg Monday, Tuesday etc. It was the start of the new day's date, eg 8th, 9th etc.

How confusing is that? I guess, not at all if you're on the ship for three years without any other point of reference. But what about if you're trying to figure out suitable dates for anniversaries of events that are recorded in the ship's log or in Cook's journal? That might be different.

Might this dichotomy be at the root of conflicting dates of Cook's landing on the shores of Botany Bay?

And, if so, which date would be the more suitable to adhere to in 2010, the ship's date or the corresponding civil calendar date?

For starters, I have tried to understand the difference between the two dates, calendar date or day and ship date or day.

I hope the following table will help throw light on the issue.

Fathoming Ship Time

I have taken Cook's initial entries in his journal, which seem to clarify the relationship between calendar day and ship day.

He boards HMB Endeavour on Sunday 7 August 1768. He's stepping from the land-based world of civil calendar, so I'm assuming it's actually Sunday 7 August no matter how you look at it. He writes simply, "*On Sunday, 7th, I joined the Ship, discharged the Pilot, and the next day sailed for Plymouth*". It's not clear when he made the entry. Seemingly not necessarily on the 7th. It would seem that he played a little catch up with his early entries, including this one, before he got into a more disciplined rhythm from Monday 8 August 1768.

At noon on Monday 8 August he commences a pattern for his journal entries that he mostly adheres to thenceforward. He seemingly regards noon on Monday 8 August as the end of ship day 8 August and the start of ship day 9 August. Thereafter, follow ship days beginning at noon.

Calendar Days	Ship Days	Cook's Journal entries dated according to ship day (in italics); and Comments
Sunday 7th	Sunday 7 th	<i>Sunday 7th...Joined ship...discharged pilot...and next day sailed for Plymouth.</i> Blurs calendar and ship days. Suggests joined and discharged pilot on calendar Sunday 7 th and set sail "next day" on calendar Monday 8th
Monday 8th	Monday 8 th	<i>Monday 8th... At 10 a.m. weighed and came to sail; at Noon the South Foreland bore...</i> Seems to confirm sailed calendar Monday 8 th ; and that this, therefore, was also ship Monday 8 th until noon.
	Tuesday 9 th	<i>Tuesday 9th...At 7 p.m. the Tide being against us...At 11 a.m. Weighed and made Sail...at Noon, Beachy Head, North by East...</i>
Tuesday 8th	Tuesday 9 th	Suggests that ship day Tuesday 9 th began at noon on calendar day Monday 8 th and ended at noon on calendar day Tuesday 9 th
	Wednesday 9 th	<i>Wednesday 9th. At 8 p.m. Beachy Head North-East by East...and at 8 a.m. it bore North-East by North...at Noon the Isle of Wight North-West by North.</i>
	Wednesday 9 th	Likewise, ship day 9 th began at noon on calendar day 8 th

Wednesday 9 th		and ended at noon on calendar day 10 th .
	Thursday 10 th	

Difference between Calendar Day and Ship Day

The pattern established in the entries above, comparing them to corresponding calendar days, is that the ship day is a half day ahead of the calendar day. Each ship day begins at noon on the previous calendar day, i.e. ship day 10th begins at noon on calendar day 9th and runs until noon on calendar day 10th.

Cook almost invariably ends each of his journal entries with the ship's noon position. Most often he begins them with describing something in the "PM", then sometimes including night and early morning events before getting to midday. He would, therefore, seem to be writing at the end of each ship day, describing what has happened since the beginning of that ship day (i.e. the past 24 hours) and concluding with the noon position (noon being regarded simultaneously as end and beginning!).

So, for example, his journal entry dated Wednesday 9th covers all of the ship day Wednesday 9th, which, in calendar day terms, began at noon on Tuesday 8th and ended at noon on Wednesday 9th.

Applying this pattern to the days relating to Cooks sighting of and entering Botany Bay, I have come up with the following table.

Calendar Days	Ship Days	Cook's Journal entries dated according to ship day (in italics); and Comments
Friday 27 th	Friday 27 th	
	Saturday 28 th	<i>Saturday, 28th. In the P.M. hoisted out the Pinnace and Yawl in order to attempt a landing, but the Pinnace took in the Water so fast that she was obliged to be hoisted in again to stop her leakes...we found that we no where could effect a landing by reason of the great Surf... after which we return'd to the Ship about 5 in the evening...but luckily a light breeze came off from the Land, which carried us out of danger...At daylight in the morning we discover'd a Bay, which appeared to be tollerably well shelter'd from all winds, into which I resolved to go with the Ship, and with this View sent the Master in the Pinnace to sound the Entrance, while we kept turning up with the Ship, having the wind right out. At noon the Entrance bore North-North-West, distance 1 Mile.</i> Ship day 28 th spans calendar days 27 th (pm) and 28 th (am)
Saturday 28 th	Saturday 28 th	
	Sunday 29 th	<i>Sunday, 29th. In the P.M. wind Southerly and Clear weather, with which we stood into the bay and Anchored under the South shore about 2 miles within the Entrance in 5 fathoms...I went in the Boats in hopes of speaking...as soon as we put the boat in they again came to oppose us...Immediately after this we landed...After searching for fresh water without success, except a little in a Small hole</i>

Sunday 29 th	Sunday 29 th	<i>dug in the Sand, we embarked, and went over to the North point of the bay... I sent a party of men ashore in the morning to the place where we first landed to dig holes in the sand, by which means and a Small stream they found fresh Water sufficient to Water the Ship...After breakfast we sent some Empty Casks a shore and a party of Men to cut wood, and I went myself in the Pinnace to sound and explore the Bay.</i> Spip day 29 th spans calendar day 28 th (pm) and 29 th (am)
	Monday 30 th	

Interpreting the Table

If I've got all this correct, it becomes clear that Cook spotted Kamay (or Botany Bay) at daybreak on calendar 28th, after a quieter night than their unsuccessful attempts at a landing further down the coast the day before. That bit of would-be surfing is supposed to have taken place in the vicinity of today's Bulli. He records both his aborted landing near Bulli, spotting of Kamay and sending the master in the pinnace "to sound the entrance" in his journal entry of 28 April. All these event took place on ship day 28th. In calendar days, the aborted landing was in the afternoon of the 27th and his sighting Kamay and dispatching the pinnace in the early morning of the 28th.

His next journal entry is dated 29th and, logically and consistently, records all the events of ship day 29th, which began at noon on calendar day 28th and ended at noon on calendar day 29th.

So, having had the master "sound the entrance" and, presumably, report back that it was ok, Cook sails into Botany Bay "in the P.M." i.e. the afternoon of calendar day 28th. It's during the same afternoon that he lands and tries, unsuccessfully, to communicate with the aborigines who "came to oppose [them]."

Next morning, calendar day 29th, he sends a party ashore for water and wood; and explores further up the bay.

Based on Cook's journal, there seems little doubt that he actually set foot on the continent on the south shore of Botany Bay on the afternoon of 28 April 1770. In terms of ship time, day and date, it was at the start of ship day 29th, being after noon.

The question becomes, which day should count?

Certainly, for Cook and his crew, the only relevant and applicable time and day were Ship time and day. Cook's landing took place, according to ship log and Cook's journal, on 29 April 1770.

However, the momentous historical event, in civil calendar terms, took place clearly on 28 April 1770. If Cook could have rung home to tell his wife, he would have woken her in the early hours of 28 April.

My inclination is that Cook's ship time is relevant only to his ship and its time-frame. For any meaningful historical recording and noting of anniversaries, I would suggest civil calendar time is the appropriate course.

International Date Line

I did wonder about Cook waking his wife. I have read in a couple of spots that Cook would not have made any adjustment for having crossed the International Date Line. If he had done so, he would have dropped a day, thus making the 28th in reality the 29th! And his wife being woken on the 29th.

It's not surprising that he made no allowance for the date line. No one had thought of it in 1770. It came about a hundred or so years later.

I also wondered what date it was when he got home. He doesn't seem to make any reference in his journal to a lost day. His last entry is *"Saturday, 13th. At 3 o'clock in the P.M. anchor'd in the Downs, and soon after I landed in order to repair to London."* That would be calendar day the 12th. In his entry of 12th (ship day), he records his noon position as "abreast of Dover". I suppose he could have got a shock to later discover he was missing a day, but I don't know.

Conclusion

My conclusion, for what it's worth, is that Cook entered Botany Bay and stepped ashore on 28 April. That's the day we should be recording and noting as the anniversary.

Assuming I haven't missed something vital – and I don't necessarily assume that – I wonder why some, including NSW National Parks, are so categorically committed to the 29th. Unless some deeply committed sea farer has usurped the policy agenda.