

Using objects from the **Australian Journeys Gallery** to explore the concept of migration journeys

As visitors ascend the stairs they will find an exhibit that deals with the imagining of the Great South Land in the period prior to European voyaging to Australia. There we will see a series of medieval maps that depict different versions of what might be living in the area of the globe to the south. The maps are really beautiful.

This map is taken from an atlas by Abraham Ortelius, published in 1595. It is titled *Terra Australia, sive Magellanica, nondum detecta* — the Southern Land, or the Magellanic [Land], not yet discovered. The atlas was published in Antwerp, Belgium.

The atlas included information from European explorers who had visited the Pacific.

It also reproduced information about the Southern Hemisphere from ancient Greek times.

Made before any European is known to have set foot on the Australian continent, *Maris Pacifici* perpetuated the northern belief that at the bottom of the world was a great south land.



Ortelius's *Maris Pacifici* map

Maris Pacifici (Quod Nunc Vulgo Mar Del Zur)
Photo: George Serras
National Museum of Australia

They will then find an exhibit that deals with Indigenous journeys, the journeys of Indigenous people across the Australian continent over many thousands of years. We will be exploring a trade route that connected Cape York in Queensland all the way through to the Lake Eyre area in South Australia — a very long trade route that connects the north of Australia to the south of Australia. Indigenous journeys across the continent is the first exhibit that people will find after the Great South Land exhibit.

For thousands of years the Indigenous people of northern Australia traded shells, ochre, feathers and other materials with their neighbours on the continent and beyond it.

Baler shell was collected in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Australia's north and traded south and west across Australia. With each exchange the value increased. On the coast, shells were used for water carriers and scrapers. In Central Australia they became sacred and ceremonial objects.

This exchange connected Aboriginal people in Australia's north to others in Central Australia and as far south as the present-day Flinders Ranges in South Australia.

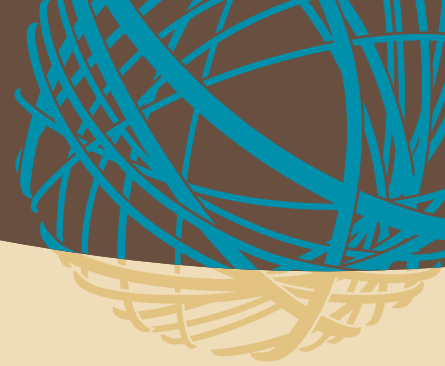
This baler shell, cut through the whorl section, is from the early 1900s.



Baler shell

Baler Shell
Photo: George Serras
National Museum of Australia

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We also have an exhibit about Macassan traders who came down from Indonesia and brought the equipment to gather sea cucumber in the north part of Australia and eventually, having prepared that cucumber in gigantic cauldrons on the north coast, sent it to China. That exhibit will have a smellorama where you can smell the sea cucumber. Perhaps don't schedule lunch either before or after that. It might be a bit gruesome.

From at least 1700 until 1907, hundreds of fishermen sailed each year from Makassar on the island of Sulawesi, now in Indonesia, to the northern Australian coast. They voyaged to this place in search of the valuable delicacy known as trepang — edible sea cucumber.

Fishermen arrived each December and camped along the Arnhem Land coast, catching, boiling and drying trepang. They met, traded and worked with the local Aboriginal people, and each group incorporated some words of the other in their language.

Then, each April, as the monsoon winds began to blow, the fishermen returned to Makassar (sometimes with Aboriginal people), their holds carrying trepang to be traded north to China.

Trepang live mostly in tropical waters and are usually 10 to 50 centimetres long, although some grow to more than a metre.

The rusted cauldron was recovered at Record Point, Port Essington in the Northern Territory. It was collected in 1909, a few years after the Australian Government banned visits by trepangers to Australia.

Today, fishermen from Makassar continue to use iron cauldrons to process trepang.

Trepang pot and specimen

Sea cucumber; Macassan traders: dried trepang
Photo: George Serras
National Museum of Australia



After that you will find a series of cases that deal with eighteenth and nineteenth century journeys to and from Australia. You will find exhibits that deal with the First Fleet and the experience of transported convicts.



Convict tokens

Some 160,000 convicts were sent to the Australian colonies between 1788 and 1868.

One of those convicts was Thomas Lock. He was convicted of highway robbery and sentenced to 10 years' transportation to New South Wales.

Before Lock left England, as he waited in prison for his sentence to be carried out, he used a penny to make a token of remembrance to leave behind. The inscription reads:

WHEN / THIS YOU / SEE / REMEMBER /
ME WHEN / I AM FAR / FROM the[e] /
THOMAS / LOCK AGED 22 / TRANSPed /
10 Years

Lock gave this memento to a loved one when he sailed for Australia. He arrived in Sydney in September 1845. It is not known if he ever returned to England.



Australian Journeys

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In this area we will also be exploring exhibits relating to the Irish convict and political prisoner William Smith O'Brien, a British parliamentarian who was convicted of high treason in the late 1840s for leading a rebellion against British rule in Ireland and sent to Tasmania. We have been able to borrow the journal that he kept whilst he was here and an address that was given to him when he left. They are prestigious loans that we have been able to get from the National Library in Ireland.



O'Brien figurines

Staffordshire figure of Seated male porcelain figurine
Staffordshire figure of Standing male porcelain figurine
Photo: George Serras
National Museum of Australia

Parliamentarian William Smith O'Brien was convicted of high treason in 1848 for leading a rebellion against British rule in Ireland. O'Brien avoided execution after 80,000 supporters across Ireland and England signed a petition seeking clemency. He was sentenced to 'transportation for life' to Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania.

These Staffordshire figures, made in 1848, portray O'Brien.

The standing figure shows him in chains and convict clothing, though in Van Diemen's Land he was not required to dress in convict uniform or wear chains. This image was based on the popular image of a convict.

The seated figure was made at about the time of O'Brien's arrest. It shows him in the clothes of an aristocrat, wearing the chains of his imprisonment. The companion piece to this was a seated figure, 'Mrs O'Brien'. O'Brien's wife, Lucy, remained in Ireland following her husband's transportation.

In the centre of this space is a case that deals with how the gold rushes enmeshed Australia with the world. This case includes a gold-washing cradle from our collection that allows us to tell the story of Hargraves, the man who is credited with the discovery of gold near Ophir in New South Wales in 1851. He had been in California at the gold rushes there and he recognised similarities in the landscape between where he had been living near Bathurst and where he was digging for gold in California. He thought, 'Maybe I should rush back and see if there is gold in them there hills too'. So he rushed back and he was right: there was gold there. We have been able to borrow the letter that he wrote to the government identifying that he had found gold near Ophir — he doesn't say where he found it; I found gold at 'blank' — and also the compounded nugget that he used to prove that he had actually found the gold.

Edmund Hammond Hargraves is credited with the discovery of gold at Ophir in Australia in 1851.

He returned to Australia from the Californian goldfields determined to find gold in New South Wales. In Bathurst, local men John Lister and William, James and Henry Tom showed Hargraves sites where they had found gold specks.

Hargraves taught the Toms how to build a gold-washing cradle and then returned to Sydney. He soon received news that the brothers had washed a payable amount of gold from Summer Hill Creek. Hargraves announced the find, claimed the £10,000 government reward and named the field Ophir. By 15 May 1851, over 300 diggers were at Ophir, washing gold with cradles like this one, and the first Australian gold rush had begun.

This cradle, collected in the Ballarat area of Victoria, is one of thousands of cradles used by miners to extract surface alluvial gold from sites across Australia in the mid-nineteenth century.

Made of Douglas fir imported to Australia, or recycled from packing crates or other objects, the cradle has handmade metal nails and corner fixtures.

Gold-washing cradle

Gold Washing Cradle
Photo: George Serras
National Museum of Australia



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Australia, Victoria, Port Phillip: in the English imagination of the 1850s, these names became synonymous with gold, opportunity and adventure.

Thousands of British men and women (and some children) boarded ships for the three-month journey to Victoria, braving separation and shipwreck for the chance to make a quick fortune.

In England in the 1850s, stories about life on the goldfields and advice for potential emigrants were in high demand.

One company produced the board game, 'Race to the gold diggings of Australia'. It invites the children to imagine the excitement and wealth promised by a journey to the far reaches of the British Empire.

(You can see another sort of goldfields game at www.australianhistorymysteries.info/ahm1/casestudies.html)



Diggings game

Race to the Gold Diggings board game
Photo: Lannon Harley
National Museum of Australia

We have also got exhibits relating to a Canadian gold miner who came to Australia, as well as material relating to the Chinese use of kiln technology in Bendigo. The gold exhibit is quite substantial.

In September 1859, the *Bendigo Advertiser* reported that A'Fok, Fok Sing and Co. had applied for a lease of ground near the Chinese encampment to build a brick kiln. One hundred and forty-five years later, archaeologists from Heritage Victoria excavated the site of the kiln, recovering several bricks. Some 4000 Chinese men and women migrated to the Bendigo goldfields in the 1850s. They were entitled to mine surface alluvial gold but the authorities excluded them from delving for the deeper quartz deposits.

As a result, many gave up mining and started businesses in service industries instead, doing laundry, market gardening, shopkeeping or, like A'Fok, Fok Sing and Co., making bricks.

The bowl was made in China. Its decoration is typical of the thousands of pieces of porcelain exported to Britain and British colonies, and later produced in Britain, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Chinese brick and vase

Kiln brick from a Chinese brick kiln, Bendigo
Photo: Lannon Harley
National Museum of Australia



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We also have an exhibit that looks at Charles Darwin's voyage to Australia in the 1830s when he was travelling around the world on HMS Beagle. The case focuses on Darwin's observations of an ant lion in the Blue Mountains. Darwin, observing the behaviour of this insect in Australia, realised that it displayed very similar behaviours and very similar shape, form and characteristics as the ant lions that had been observed in Europe. That was one of those moments on the Beagle voyage that helped to crystallise for him some of his ideas about evolution and how creatures that lived in different continents separated by vast amounts of ocean could somehow have grown to look and behave in a similar way.

Charles Darwin travelled as a naturalist on board the *Beagle* during its hydrographic survey expedition around the world between 1831 and 1836. As the *Beagle* carried out its surveys, Darwin often stayed on land, collecting fossils and specimens and making detailed observations of plants and animals.

Between January and March 1836, Darwin spent time in Sydney, travelled on horseback across the Blue Mountains to Bathurst, visited Hobart and called into King George's Sound in Western Australia. Tired and homesick, Darwin did not form a favourable impression of Australia, but some observations he made on Australia's natural history contributed to the development of the theory of evolution through natural selection.

This chronometer, made by the British watchmaker Robert Pennington, was one of 22 carried aboard the *Beagle*. The chronometers were kept in a special cabin, wound daily at 9 am, and compared at noon by instrument maker George James Stebbing, who had been specially employed for these tasks. These clocks were vital in helping navigators fix their latitude, and thus helping them avoid unexpected rocks or coasts, and possible shipwreck.



Pocket chronometer

Photo: George Serras National Museum of Australia

We have a case that displays mementos of the travels of the Aboriginal boys who left the New Norcia monastic settlement in Western Australia and travelled to a monastery in Caval, Italy, where they trained to be monks in the 1850s. The story of those little boys is told in a showcase there, thanks to another generous loan from the New Norcia settlement itself.

A small group of Benedictine monks from Spain founded the mission of New Norcia on the Victoria Plains of Western Australia in 1846.

Salvado's original vision was to create, among the Indigenous peoples of the Victoria Plains, a Christian, largely self-sufficient village based on agriculture. However, after the decimation of the local populations by introduced diseases in the 1860s, he concentrated his activity on giving a practical education to the Indigenous children who were brought to New Norcia from all over the state. Like other missionaries of the nineteenth century, his aim was to 'civilise' and evangelise according to the European ideals of the time.

In 1849, five Yuat children, including John Baptist Dirimera, aged 14, and Francis Xavier Conaci, aged 9, travelled to Europe with one of the founders of the settlement, monk Dom Rosendo Salvado.

The boys joined the monastery at Cava, in Italy, to train as monks. There, for distinction in his examinations, Conaci won this medal.

All five children died — Francis died in 1853, and John, the last survivor, in 1855, all in Europe.



New Norcia Medal

New Norcia medal – inverse
New Norcia medal – reverse
Photo: Lannon Harley
National Museum of Australia













