

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

ARTHUR BOWES SMYTH

Journal, 1787-89

Reel M933

**The British Library
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3DG**

**National Library of Australia
State Library of New South Wales**

Filmed: 1974

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Arthur Bowes Smyth (1750-1790), the son of a surgeon, was born in Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Essex. He practised as a surgeon in his home town at least between 1778 and 1783. In March 1787 he was appointed surgeon to the ship's company on the *Lady Penrhyn*, one of the transports in the First Fleet, which carried 101 female convicts to New South Wales. He took charge of the prisoners on the ship when the convicts' surgeon fell ill at Tenerife. The *Lady Penrhyn* arrived at Botany Bay on 20 January 1788 and left the colony on 5 May 1788. During his brief stay, Smyth (who at this time was known as Arthur Bowes) collected natural history specimens and made some of the first sketches of Australian fauna, including a kangaroo and an emu. On the long voyage back to England, he visited Lord Howe Island, Tahiti, Macao, Canton and St Helena. He died a few months after his return.

THE JOURNALS OF ARTHUR BOWES SMYTH

The original journal of Bowes Smyth is held by the National Library of Australia (MS 4568). It was purchased in 1970. A fair copy by Bowes is held in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. It was acquired in 1915. Another contemporary copy, filmed by the Australian Joint Copying Project, is in the British Library (Add MS 47966). It was acquired in 1953. There are only slight textual differences between the three manuscripts, but the two copies have a number of drawings which are not in the original.

The copy in the Mitchell Library was reproduced in Paul Fidlon and R.J. Ryan, eds. *The journal of Arthur Bowes-Smyth: surgeon, Lady Penrhyn, 1787-1789*, Sydney, Australian Documents Library, 1979.

ARTHUR BOWES SMYTH

Reel M933

The British Library (Add MS 47966)

Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth kept on the *Lady Penrhyn* (master: William Sever) on the voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales and on the return voyage from Sydney to London, 20 March 1787 – 13 August 1789. (116 folios, 232pp)

The first part of the journal refers to Smyth's embarkation on the *Lady Penrhyn* at Portsmouth, the crew, the arrival of Governor Phillip, the departure (13 May 1787), landing at Tenerife (2 June 1787), Smyth's appointment as convicts' surgeon, illnesses of crew members, storms, deaths of convicts, visits by officers from HMS *Sirius*, sightings of other ships, sightings of whales, porpoises, seals and albatrosses, landing at Rio de Janeiro (6 Aug. 1787), procurement of medicines and other provisions, impressions of the city, dining on the *Alexander* and HMS *Sirius*, a mutiny on the *Alexander*, arrival at the Cape of Good Hope (13 Oct. 1787), impressions of Cape Town, the separation of the fleet, provisions for convicts, thieving, punishments, Christmas Day celebrations, the first sighting of Australia (6 Jan. 1788), storms, and the arrival at Botany Bay (20 Jan. 1788).

The following entries contain impressions of Botany Bay and the local flora and fauna and refer to Smyth's wanderings around the bay, a meeting with Australian Aborigines, the arrival of French ships, the transfer to Port Jackson, the selection of convicts for Norfolk Island, the disembarkation of the convicts from the *Lady Penrhyn* (6 Feb. 1788), the proclamation ceremony (7 Feb. 1788), kangaroos, encounters with Aborigines, the trials of convicts, excursions into the bush, and deaths and illnesses of convicts.

The final part of the journal records the departure from Sydney (5 May 1788), a landing at Lord Howe Island, scurvy outbreaks, arrival at Tahiti (10 July 1788), trading with Tahitians, dances, meetings with the King, Queen and chiefs, the procurement of cloth and other articles, visits to Huahine and Penrhyn Island, porpoises, tropical birds, descriptions of Saipan and Tinian islands (Mariana Islands), collecting shells and corals, arrival at Macao (18 Oct. 1788), meetings with British seamen and factors, including crew of the *Scarborough* and *Charlotte*, a visit to Canton, preservation of fish, the position of mandarins in Chinese society, departure from Whampoa (11 Jan. 1789), Sumatra, landing at St Helena (18 May 1789), news of Botany Bay and the other First Fleet ships, social life at St Helena, produce of the island, and the arrival at Portsmouth and London (12 Aug. 1789).

Scattered through the journal are a number of drawings: view of the peak at Tenerife (f. 7) Mayo Island (f. 8), the land about Rio de Janeiro (f. 19), the Cape of Good Hope (f. 27), a tree at Botany Bay

'which yields the yellow balsam of a wigwam' (f. 37), a kangaroo (f. 39), Grafton Island (f. 77), a dolphin and a fish (f. 106). There is also a newspaper cutting (Oct. 1815) with an article about St Helena and a sketch of the island (ff. 98, 116).

At the beginning of the volume there is an incomplete list of vessels in the First Fleet (f. 1), a list of officers stationed at Botany Bay (f. 2), a list of female convicts on board the *Lady Penhryn* with their ages, occupations, crimes and terms of transportation (ff. 2-5), and a list of children sent out with convict women (f. 6).

At the end of the volume is a list of the number of miles the *Lady Penhryn* had travelled from the time it left Portsmouth in 1787 until its return to the Isle of Wight in 1789 (f. 113), a list of the places touched on during the voyage (f. 113) and references to remarkable passages in the journal (ff. 114-15).