

Finding Aboriginal lives in United Kingdom museum collections: artefacts from the 1868 Aboriginal cricket tour of England

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The history and exhibition of ethnographic collections in museums are rich topics for debate and research. Yet despite an explosion of theorising and publications over the past 20 years, it remains the case that museum collections in Australia and overseas contain thousands of individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander objects that are surprisingly little researched or published on. Some decades ago, Australian researchers such as Plomley (1961), with his work on Tasmanian collections, and McBryde (1977, 1978), with her work on collections from Port Phillip and the Richmond River regions, highlighted the significance of United Kingdom (UK) and European collections. Later surveys such as Cooper's (1989) report on *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections in overseas museums* and Coates' (1995) unpublished report on archival sources in the British Museum highlighted strengths of other collections in Britain. Philip Jones (2001:18) suggested that there are perhaps up to 40,000 Australian Aboriginal objects in museums in Europe and flagged the potential for integrated databases to digitally reconnect such collections. More recently, as a follow up to Ian Coates' work, the British Museum, the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia jointly undertook more detailed work on the significant Australian collections in the British Museum.¹ Research from this project was included in exhibitions and associated publications of both museums in 2015 (NMA 2015; Sculthorpe et al. 2015).

A number of UK museums produced early catalogues of their Australian collections. These

include the Manchester Museum (Lewis 1977), the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (Straw 1982) and the Royal Ulster Museum (Glover 1987, 1988). Both the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology have produced significant publications on aspects of their Australian collections (Herle and Rouse 1998; Morphy and Edwards 1988). In the digital age, museums have moved towards the production of online catalogues and this, together with the increased digitisation of newspapers and other library resources, has facilitated research on associated makers, collectors and object histories. Major museums in the UK with ethnographic collections online include the British Museum, the Horniman Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the National Museum of Scotland and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (economic botany). Some regional museums, such as the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery (RAMM) at Exeter, have online catalogues of most, if not all, of their collections.

This short report documents Aboriginal artefacts associated with the 1868 Aboriginal cricket tour of England — artefacts housed at the Marylebone Cricket Club Museum at Lord's and a small collection of weapons that I located within the collections of RAMM in 2015. It highlights the potential for using ethnographic collections for new historical research in Australian Indigenous studies and advocates the need for increased digitisation of collections, particularly within Australia, to facilitate comparative research.

The 1868 Aboriginal cricket tour and the Aboriginal club at Lord's

The history of the pioneering Aboriginal cricket team that toured England in 1868 is well researched and published (Mulvaney and Harcourt 1988; Sampson 2000, 2009). Between May and October 1868, 13 Aboriginal men, most from Victoria, played 47 matches of cricket at various venues in England, winning 14 matches, losing 14 and drawing 19. This tour has been included in a recent list of 100 defining moments in Australian history by the National Museum of Australia (NMA n.d.) and, in Harrow in western Victoria, the Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre was established in the team's honour.

As well as playing cricket, the Aboriginal players put on displays of their traditional skills before or after the matches. These demonstrations included boomerang throwing, spear throwing, a 'sham fight' and dodging cricket balls deflected with a club and a shield (*Sporting Life*, 27 May 1868). The style and skill of one of the cricketers, Jungunjinuke (variously spelled but then commonly referred to as 'Dick-a-Dick'), received particular acclaim. His performance in London at The Oval on 6 June 1868, in which he dodged cricket balls 'armed only with a long narrow shield, shaped like a canoe, and with a strange club or bat in the form of the letter "L"', was praised for its 'really marvellous display of proficiency', drawing forth 'loud expressions of admiring surprise' (*Penny Illustrated*, 6 June 1868).

Jungunjinuke's club (or *leangle*) has been housed at the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) Museum since 1947 (see figure 30 in Mulvaney and Harcourt 1988, between pp. 96–97). It is mentioned and illustrated in publications (noted above) relating to the tour. An 1867 photograph of Jungunjinuke with a shield, two other weapons and what is possibly this club is pictured in the collage of images of the cricketers held at the State Library of New South Wales (see figure 25 in Mulvaney and Harcourt 1988, between pp. 96–97). Close visual inspection of this club and an examination of the MCC Archive in 2014 (in preparation for a loan of the object for the British Museum's *Indigenous Australia: enduring civilisation* exhibition in 2015) has uncovered its history from 1868 until 1947. A worn

handwritten paper label stuck on one side of the head of the club reads:

Leowell [*or possibly lionel*]

A war weapon used by the Aborigines of Australia. This is the weapon used by Dick a...one of the Australian cricketers in matches throughout England. When [*or while*] defending himself against showers of cricket balls thrown at him from a few yards distance. G.W.G. 9/10/2.

The first number of the year is not legible, but it could possibly be '72'. Mallett (2002:x) suggested that the initials refer to George Giffen, the South Australian cricketer who was part of the Australian test team that visited England in 1882 (and several times later). Records of Giffen, such as in the *Australian dictionary of biography* (Morris n.d.) and cemetery records, do not contain a middle name to explain 'W' and his cricket reminiscences (Giffen 1898) do not refer to any Aboriginal cricketers. It seems more plausible that 'GWG' refers to George William Graham (1830–86), the Sydney solicitor who co-financed and accompanied the tour. He stayed on in England after the cricketers left, possibly until 1875, before returning to Australia. The handwritten initials on the label appear similar to his writing in his ledger housed at the Melbourne Cricket Club Museum (see unnumbered image in Mallett 2002, between pp. 130–31).

Historian David Sampson (2000:213) has noted that some of the Aboriginal artefacts used by the cricketers were publically displayed in a kind of small museum at the offices of the sporting magazine *The Field* in London in 1868, where naturalist and writer W Tegetmeier had offices. Tegetmeier had seen the Aboriginal cricketers play and demonstrate the use of 'the boomerang, the spear, and the bripe or waddy; the large fighting club, or leowall, was not used'; he wrote that 'by the kindness of Mr Hayman I have obtained specimens of all of these weapons and deposited them at *The Field* office so that anyone interested in the subject may inspect them at their convenience' (*The Field*, 23 May 1868). It is not clear if the club used by Jungunjinuke was one of these.

The history of the club from its use in 1868 is obscure for some decades but in the early 1900s it was housed in a 'sort of grotto' in the garden of a

house named 'Littlewood' belonging to the Bishop family (of Bishop's Move removal company) in Pampisford Road, South Croydon (see MCC Archive ARTS/GIF/EB 1947; Sculthorpe 2015). In 1947 the sons of the late Mrs E Bishop remembered that the weapon was 'of interest to them purely as an instrument of fratricidal purpose during their boyhood' (MCC Archive). During the Second World War, the house in South Croydon was requisitioned by the Royal Engineers, and sometime between May and June 1941 some engineers took the club to Gables Lodge, a house at Rotherfield in Sussex that had also been requisitioned. In 1947, the owner of that house found the club and tried to trace its owner but was advised by the Army that the club had been packed by mistake when the engineers had left Croydon. It was subsequently offered in 1947 to the MCC, where it has remained since. Until 2015 this club remained the only Aboriginal artefact from the 1868 tour known to have survived.

The 1868 artefacts at RAMM

An appeal to fund a museum in Exeter in honour of Prince Albert (1819–61) was made in 1861 but it was not until 1868 that the first phase of what is now the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery was constructed and opened with grand local festivities. The origins of RAMM's collection, however, date back to earlier local institutions such as the Devon and Exeter Institution, which was founded in 1813. Its collections include significant eighteenth century objects associated with James Cook, William Bligh and George Vancouver. It once held a shell necklace believed to be associated with Truganini that was repatriated to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in 1997. Arts Council England has awarded RAMM's World Cultures collection 'Designated status' in recognition of its national and international cultural significance. With a grant from the Designation Development Fund, a program of renewal has been underway since 2014, which has allowed the museum to invite Pacific specialists to review its collections. As part of this program, in July 2015, I was invited to inspect the Australian collections.

Over two days, curator Tony Eccles and I physically reviewed the objects in the Australian collection (approximately 300 objects) and the accompanying documentation entered on the

museum database.² The museum has objects from every state of Australia, including many important nineteenth century items. Having then only recently read the literature on the 1868 cricket tour and archives associated with the Aboriginal club at Lord's, a donor's name — WR Hayman — for objects from Victoria and the date of donation — 1868 — stood out. A review of the original museum documentation and a search of digitised newspaper accounts confirmed the provenance of these objects as being associated with the historic cricket tour.

WR Hayman (1842–99) was the tour manager of the 1868 team. Born in Devon, he migrated to the Lake Wallace region in western Victoria in 1858, his uncle JP Hayman having previously migrated there (Mulvaney and Harcourt 1988:55). In 1868 his father, Dr Phillip C Hayman, was living in Oakhayes House, Woodbury, five miles from Exeter. Hayman arrived back in England in March 1868, ahead of the team, 'in order to make arrangements for the black cricketers' (*Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 6 March 1868).

At the end of the tour, Hayman arranged a sporting demonstration at Plymouth, not far from Exeter, on 19 October. There the cricketers — named as Mullagh, Dick-a-Dick, Cuzens, Redcap, Mosquito and Dumas — participated in athletic sports such as running, high jumping and hurdling, as well as 'native sports' of throwing the spear and boomerang (*The Sportsman*, 21 October 1868). Mulvaney and Harcourt (1988:128) described this final public event near Hayman's birth place as a 'foolhardy excursion' made with the (unsuccessful) aim of expecting a profit from the display, and suggested that Hayman may have wanted 'to bask in the reflected glory of his exotic colonial charges'. More simply perhaps, Hayman may have wished to see his aging parents again before returning to Australia. Hayman was thus clearly with the cricketers, not far from Exeter, at the end of the tour.

RAMM records list objects donated by 'W. R. Hayman' on 29 October 1868, three days after the cricketers left Plymouth by boat for the return journey to Australia. Hayman's specific reasons for the gift are not known but the objects would not have been needed on the boat and, if needed for further demonstrations on return, new weapons could be manufactured. Hayman was likely aware of the museum from the local publicity surrounding its opening in April 1868.

Hayman's donation consisted of 12 objects. They are listed as follows in the register, with the dimensions shown from 2015:

E1123 boomerang (see Figure 1)	L 460mm W 62mm
E1124 war club or nulla nulla	L 704mm W 92mm
E1125 woomera or throwing stick	L 597mm W 83mm
E1126 woomera or throwing stick (see Figure 2)	L 670mm W 41mm
E1127 spear made of hard wood inserted in the woomera	L1793mm W 43mm
E1128 spear [illegible] of the grass tree	L1885mm W 45mm
E1129 waddy for killing game	L 715mm W 90mm
E1130 waddy for killing game (see Figure 3)	L 698mm W 89mm
E1131 waddy for killing game (see Figure 4)	L 655mm W 76mm
E1132 fire-stick flowering stem of grass tree or bulrush	
E1133 fire-stick flowering stem of grass tree or bulrush	L429mm W 55mm
E1134 fire-stick	



Figure 1: Boomerang from the 1868 cricket tour, E1123, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter, UK. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council.



Figure 2: Spearthrower from the 1868 cricket tour, E1126, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter, UK. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council.

Two firesticks could not be located in July 2015: one is likely to have been lost many years ago. Although there is no information recorded to identify where the individual objects are from or who made each one, their manufacture and form are consistent with objects from western Victoria commonly found in museum collections in Australia. All the items are finely manufactured as for original use and remain in remarkably good physical condition.

It has not been possible to correlate any of these objects with specific weapons that can be seen in the few historic images of the cricketers — most taken in Australia before the tour — but the spears, spear throwers and clubs are certainly similar to those depicted in those photographs. Of all the objects noted as being used in displays by the cricketers, notably the donation included no shield or the flexible throwing instrument, the *weet-weet*. Perhaps further objects from the tour, including the shield, will be located elsewhere in the future.

The newly opened museum in Exeter in 1868 had no specific focus on collecting Australian items but a wide range of cultural and natural history objects from around the world were being accepted as donations. Apart from the Australian objects, donations to the museum in October 1868 included six weapons from Fiji, an opium pipe from Japan, books for the library, two cases of British insects, two cases of mounted birds and a 'fine specimen of the Solitary Snipe shot at Stoke Canon' (*Exmouth & Plymouth Gazette*, 23 October 1868, 6 November 1868). The artefacts donated by Hayman were not the



Figure 3: Club from the 1868 cricket tour, E1130, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter, UK. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council.



Figure 4: Club from the 1868 cricket tour, E1131, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter, UK. Photograph courtesy of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Exeter City Council.

first Australian objects acquired. The earliest item is a tobacco pipe from the Torres Strait collected by Colonel Godfrey and donated by Mr Elsner in 1866. WB Tucker donated a club from Victoria in 1867 and, in 1869, J Teschemaker donated a boomerang and other objects. Since the donation in 1868, all the objects from Hayman have remained in the RAMM collection. Since 1998 a spear and boomerang from this collection have been displayed in the World Cultures Gallery; two different items are included in the revamped gallery from March 2016, referencing the cricketers' story.

Discussion

While images of the objects at RAMM can be viewed online, research to compare their form with objects with more specific provenances in other collections is hampered by the lack of online catalogues, especially in Australia. As noted above, UK museums, including the British Museum,³ have made significant advances in putting collection data and images and data online. This benefits not only external researchers but the museums themselves as research results are returned or published or when comments are received on database entries. Work by Australian researchers who have concluded or are currently working on Australian collections at the British Museum include Jude Philp's (2015) work on nineteenth century turtle-shell masks from Mabuiag in the Torres Strait (collected by the Reverend Samuel MacFarlane) and Louise Hamby and Lindy Allen's work on objects from Milingimbi and Groote Eylandt collected by Hubert G Wilkins in the 1920s for the Natural History Museum and now housed at the British Museum.

Other research in progress on the early Australian collections at the British Museum includes work on collections made by Royal Navy personnel in the early nineteenth century in Australia. This is being carried out by Daniel Simpson, funded through the collaborative doctoral award scheme of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, and supervised jointly by Royal Holloway University and the British Museum. A new collaborative doctoral award from October 2016 will focus on the topic of 'Picturing the antipodes: race, image and empire in 19th century Britain' using the pictorial

collections of the British Museum. A second Australian Research Council Linkage Grant on the subject of 'The relational museum and its objects', awarded in 2015, is enabling the British Museum, the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia to continue to further investigate UK collections and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. Other investigators in Australia have proposed several new projects.

The documentation and online publication of names of collectors, donors and sometimes individual makers provide opportunities for new historical understandings of ethnographic museum objects. For example, the association of objects made by Peter Mungett (Lallan Yering) in Pentridge Prison in the 1860s was made through linking up British Museum documentation and published Australian research (see Cahir and Clark 2009; Nugent 2015). Mungett had refused to enter a plea on the grounds he was not a British subject and argued he should be subject to the law of his own people. The objects he made were likely produced or even commissioned for the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1866 and possibly included in the 1867 Paris International Exposition before being acquired by the British Museum. Other objects in the British Museum derived from Haslar Naval Hospital in Portsmouth are likely associated with a Noongar man, Mokkare, who worked closely with naval surgeon Andrew Collie in the Albany region in the early 1830s (NMA 2015).

Apart from uncovering tangible evidence about the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, museum collections remain a rich source for further research. Knowing which institutions house objects from particular localities and collectors is a fundamental first step in this endeavour. While researchers in Australia have the benefit of being able to access online catalogues of major museums in the UK, much remains to be done for state museums in Australia to increase the accessibility of ethnographic collection data. Recent inquiries suggest that none of these museums have more than 10 per cent of their ethnographic collections online; some have none. University museums such as the Macleay Museum at The University of Sydney and the Anthropology Museum at The University of Queensland have the substantial

part of their collection records available; however, the extensive database of the Berndt Museum is not currently available. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders have a keen interest in knowing which institutions house objects from their areas and this would be greatly facilitated through provision online of data and images from often widely dispersed collections.

The 150th anniversary of the Aboriginal cricket tour of England will be marked in 2018. In commemorating this historic event, the Aboriginal objects at Exeter can now be added to the club at Lord's as tangible evidence of the lives of the cricketers and their remarkable feat. The accidental discovery of these objects at Exeter, whose significance had been forgotten for 150 years, is a reminder of the rich potential of museum collections both in Australia and in the UK for such historical research.

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NOTES

1. Australian Research Council Linkage Grant 2011–15, 'Engaging objects: Indigenous communities, museum collections and the representations of Indigenous histories', led by Howard Morphy.
2. For details and images, see the 'Collections' page of the RAMM website (www.rammuseum.org.uk/collections).
3. See the searchable 'Collection online' page of the British Museum website (www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx).

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