***Read the following accounts that describe Captain Cook’s Landing in Botany Bay in 1770 and the settlement of NSW***

**Account 1 –**

**Edited from** <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/parks/KamayKurnellShortHistory.pdf>

A place of encounters A short history of Botany Bay National Park (Kurnell Section)

**A place of encounters**

Like many other locations where sailors from Europe on voyages of “discovery” stopped for a short time to replenish their ships and to “explore” new lands and peoples, Botany Bay was, and continues to be, a place of encounters.

It was here that the men on Captain Cook’s first voyage in the *Endeavour* first encountered the indigenous people of New Holland. For eight days between late April and early May 1770, Cook’s ship was anchored in the bay. Over the course of their stay, the members of the expedition were variously occupied: some were busy with preparations for the next leg of the journey, collecting water and cutting down trees for timber; others, including Captain Cook, explored and charted the bay; while the celebrated naturalists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, were so captivated by the novelty of the natural landscape that they made a vast collection of botanical specimens.

The indigenous people whose country Cook and his men traversed were the Gweagal. This was probably the first time the Gweagal had encountered visitors from the sea in a vessel larger than a canoe. In their responses to the sailors, they behaved in ways consistent with what is known about the protocols observed by indigenous people in other parts of the continent when strangers entered, without warning, another’s territory. This included shouting at and remonstrating with the strangers as well as displaying signs of strength and weaponry. At times, the locals simply went about their own business, fishing from their canoes, cooking shellfish on the shore, walking along the beach, appearing to ignore the strangers, although no doubt observing them closely. And on a few occasions, some groups of Gweagal men made an approach towards members of Cook’s expedition, before slowly retreating. In all of their responses to the strangers on their shore, the locals sought to deal with them in ways that would allow them “to affirm rights to land and resources” and “to defuse any potential conflict and hostility”.

For the week that the *Endeavour* was anchored in Botany Bay, relations between the voyagers and the Gweagal can be best described as distant. It seems clear that the potential for a close meeting between the two groups was compromised when Captain Cook, with what appears to have been impatience to get ashore, fired some shots as he and his men made their first landing. One shot wounded a local man in the leg. After this, Cook’s hope of making friendly contact with the locals was not realised. When the *Endeavour* eventually sailed, the possibility of such a meeting was lost forever.

**A place for living and working**

After the *Endeavour* sailed, the Gweagal people no doubt mulled over, and perhaps even incorporated into their ceremonies, the unprecedented event of the arrival of the strange ship in their bay. But it would be almost two decades before local indigenous people would begin to feel this encounter’s indirect effects, when the first eleven transports carrying British convicts arrived to establish a penal colony in 1788. The committee in England that selected Botany Bay as the site for a penal colony had drawn on the descriptions provided by Captain Cook in his journals, and the testimony of Joseph Banks and James Matra.

However, Botany Bay was rejected by Captain Phillip, the commander of the First Fleet, as a suitable site for the penal settlement. He chose Sydney Cove instead. As settlement concentrated around Sydney Harbour and radiated westwards, Botany Bay, particularly its southern shore, was only sparsely settled. This remained so for most of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth.

From 1815 until 1899, the southern shore passed through the hands of a series of leaseholders and landowners, including John Connell, James Birnie, the Laycock family and Thomas Holt. They successively used it for various enterprises, such as dairying, market gardening, and running cattle, although none were especially successful.

**Account 2**

**Edited from -** [**http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/history/history/**](http://www.aboriginalheritage.org/history/history/)

***The Occupants of the Land***

For thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans, northern Sydney was occupied by different Aboriginal clans.  Living primarily along the foreshores of the harbour, they fished and hunted in the waters and hinterlands of the area, and harvested food from the surrounding bush. Self-sufficient and harmonious, they had no need to travel far from their lands, since the resources about them were so abundant, and trade with other tribal groups was well established. Moving throughout their country in accordance with the seasons, people only needed to spend about 4-5 hours per day working to ensure their survival. With such a large amount of leisure time available, they developed a rich and complex ritual life – language, customs, spirituality and the law – the heart of which was connection to the land.

***European Discovery and Arrival***

The arrival of Lt James Cook in 1770 marked the beginning of the end for this ancient way of life. Cook’s voyage of exploration had sailed under instructions to take possession of the Southern Continent if it was uninhabited, or with the consent of the natives if it was occupied. Either way, it was to be taken. Upon his arrival, Lt Cook declared the land he called New South Wales to be the property of Britain’s King George III, and ignored the inconvenient fact that the land was already well populated. His failure to even attempt to gain the consent of the natives began the legal fiction that Australia was waste and unoccupied.

Cook was followed soon enough by the arrival of the First Fleet, in January of 1788, under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, whose mission was to establish a penal colony and take control of Terra Australia for settlement.

*We found the natives tolerably numerous as we advanced up the river, and even at the harbour’s mouth we had reason to conclude the country more populous than Mr Cook thought it. For on the Supply’s arrival in the [Botany] bay on the 18th of the month they assembled on the beach of the south shore to the number of not less than forty persons, shouting and making many uncouth signs and gestures. This appearance whetted curiosity to its utmost, but as prudence forbade a few people to venture wantonly among so great a number, and a party of only six men was observed on the north shore, the governor immediately proceeded to land on that side in order to take possession of this new territory and bring about an intercourse between its new and old masters. Watkin Tench, January 1788*

The first act of land ownership by Europeans came within four days of arrival when a group of men from the HMS Sirius went ashore to clear land to gain access to fresh water. By 26 January, the First Fleet had found its way to Sydney Cove and landed there on the harbour.

Disease and Devastation

Disease struck a fatal and extensive blow to the Aboriginal people, who until that point had been isolated for thousands of years from the diseases that had raged through Europe and Asia. They had no resistance to the deadly viruses carried by the sailors and convicts such as smallpox, syphilis and influenza. In less than a year, over half the indigenous population living in the Sydney Basin had died from smallpox. The region, once alive with a vibrant mix of Aboriginal clans, now fell silent.

*Every boat that went down the harbour found them lying dead on the beaches and in the caverns of the rocks… They were generally found with the remains of a small fire on each side of them and some water left within their reach. Lieutenant Fowell, 1789*

The colonists had destroyed within six months a way of life that had outlasted British history by tens of thousands of years, and the people soon realised that the trespassers were committed to nothing less than total occupation of the land.

To most settlers, the Aboriginal people were considered akin to kangaroos, dingoes and emus, strange fauna to be eradicated to make way for the development of farming and grazing.

*I have myself heard a man, educated, and a large proprietor of sheep and cattle, maintain that there was no more harm in shooting a native, than in shooting a wild dog. I have heard it maintained by others that it is the course of Providence, that blacks should disappear before the white, and the sooner the process was carried out the better, for all parties. I fear such opinions prevail to a great extent. Very recently in the presence of two clergymen, a man of education narrated, as a good thing, that he had been one of a party who had pursued the blacks, in consequence of cattle being rushed by them, and that he was sure that they shot upwards of a hundred. When expostulated with, he maintained that there was nothing wrong in it, that it was preposterous to suppose they had souls. In this opinion he was joined by another educated person present. Bishop Polding, 1845*

And though a guerrilla war had been mounted against the British during the early years of the colony, the eradication, for the most part, had been easy. Smallpox had destroyed over half the population and those not ravaged by disease were displaced when land was cleared for settlements and farms. Dispossessed of the land that had nourished them for so long, the Aboriginal people became dependent on white food and clothing. Alcohol, used as a means of trade by the British, served to further shatter traditional social and family structures.

European civilisation devastated, in what amounts to the blink of an eye, an incomparable and ancient people. Because the vast majority of clans living in the Sydney Basin were killed as a result of the 1788 invasion, the stories of the land have been lost forever. Much of what we do know about the northern Sydney clans must be gleaned from their archaeological remains. Middens, shelters, engravings and art remnants of indigenous life are prolific throughout the region, but no one remains to reveal their particular meanings or ancient significance. No one remains to bring the archaeology truly alive.