

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

Papers, 1814-39

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Allan Cunningham (1791-1839) was born in London and educated at a private school in Putney. In 1808 he took up a position at the Kew Herbarium as clerk to William Aiton, the Superintendent of the Royal Gardens. In 1814, on the recommendation of Sir Joseph Banks, he was appointed a botanical collector and along with James Bowie was sent to Rio de Janeiro. They spent two years collecting plants in Brazil and despatching them to the Royal Gardens at Kew.

Cunningham was then sent to New South Wales and he arrived in Sydney in December 1816. He rented a cottage in Parramatta and began his botanical searches in the vicinity of the town. In April 1817, at the suggestion of Governor Macquarie, he joined John Oxley and George Evans on their expedition west of the Blue Mountains. In five months he collected about 450 plant species. In December 1817 he became the naturalist on the cutter *Mermaid*, commanded by Lieutenant Phillip King, on the first of his surveying voyages to the northern and western coasts of Australia. Between 1819 and 1822 he accompanied King on three further voyages on the *Mermaid* and the *Bathurst*.

For the next eight years Cunningham made numerous journeys to many parts of New South Wales, including the Hunter Valley, Liverpool Plains, the Illawarra, Wellington Valley, the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay. He also visited New Zealand and Norfolk Island. He returned to England in 1831 and spent some time arranging his collections at the Kew Herbarium and writing papers for publication.

Cunningham's brother Richard was appointed colonial botanist in Sydney in 1832. Following his death in 1835, Alan Cunningham was offered the position and he returned to Sydney in 1837. He resigned after a few months and resumed the occupation of botanical collector. He spent several months in New Zealand in 1838. He hoped to join Captain John Wickham on HMS *Beagle*, but his health was steadily worsening. He died in Sydney.

British Museum (Natural History)

The natural history departments of the British Museum were physically separated from the rest of the Museum and transferred to a new building at South Kensington in 1881. They remained, however, a department of the British Museum until 1963, when the British Museum Act established it as independent body with its own trustees. Even then, it retained its old name and only in 1992, under the Museums and Galleries Act, was it changed to the Natural History Museum.

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British Museum (Natural History)

1. Miscellaneous papers

Cunningham (Parramatta) to Robert Brown, 16 July 1822: plants discovered on north-west coast of Australia; many may be the same as those discovered by Brown on the south coast; requests some observations by Brown on plants discovered for inclusion in narrative to be published by Capt. Phillip King; opening up of country west of Blue Mountains. (copy)

Catalogue of plants observed upon the shore of Australia during a voyage of survey upon its coast by Allan Cunningham: 2nd voyage, 11 May – 5 November 1819. (c. 60pp)

The catalogue lists plants at Port Macquarie, Hastings River, Rodd's Bay, Percy Islands, Cape Cleveland, Fitzroy Island, Snapper Island, Endeavour River, Cape Flinders, Sunday Island, Liverpool River, Port Keats, Cambridge Gulf, Adolphus Island, Vansittart Bay, Port Warrender and Timor.

Catalogue of plants observed upon the shore of Australia during a voyage of survey upon its coast by Allan Cunningham: 3rd voyage, 21 July - 13 October 1820. (36pp)

The catalogue lists plants at Port Bowen, Endeavour River, Lizard Island, Flinders Island, Booby Island, South Goulburn Island, Sims Island, Water Island, Montagu Sound, York Sound, Hunter River, Careening Bay and Prince Regent River.

Catalogue of plants observed upon the shore of Australia during a voyage of survey upon its coast by Allan Cunningham: 4th voyage, 10 June 1821 – 12 February 1822. (38pp)

The catalogue lists plants at the Percy Islands, Cape Grafton, Lizard Island, Cape Flinders, Sunday Island, Goulburn Island, Sims Island, Prince Regent River, Hanover Bay, King George's Sound, Oyster Harbour, Rottnest Island, Dirk Hartog's Island, Cygnet Bay and Point Cunningham.

Catalogue of plants observed on Australian coasts, 30 May 1819 – 12 February 1822. (55pp)

The catalogue lists plants at Rodd's Bay, Repulse Bay, Cape Cleveland, Rockingham Bay, Fitzroy Island, Snapper Island, Endeavour River, South Goulburn Island, Port Keats, Lacrosse Island, Cambridge Gulf, Vansittart Bay, Timor, Port Bowen, York Sound, Careening Bay, Bat Island, Brunswick Bay, Bustard Bay, King George's Sound, Rottnest Island, Dirk Hartog's Island and Cygnet Bay. There is an addendum at the end.

Cunningham (Sydney) to Robert Brown, 16 May 1839: activities since return to New South Wales in 1837; drought; work at Sydney Botanical Garden prevented him from making distant excursions; retirement from Garden; visit to New Zealand; collecting at Waimate and Bay of Islands; despatch of plants; his deteriorating health; plans to return to England in 1840; arrival of William Macleay. (copy)

A list of specimens of plants collected in the *Mermaid* 2nd voyage between the months of May and November 1819 by A. Cunningham. (5pp)

A list of specimens of plants collected on the verge of the colony of Port Jackson, and also in the interior during the months of September, October, November and December 1822. (16pp)

A list of specimens collected in the interior of New South Wales between April and July 1823. (2pp)

Specimens gathered during a tour upon the new route through the Blue Mountains recently discovered by Mr A. Bell, November – December 1823. (2pp)

A list of a few specimens of plants gathered in the progress of a tour through the counties of Camden and Argyle and the country south of Lake George, April 1824. (9pp)

References to some dried plants in bases at Nos. 6 and 7 being a specimen of the botany of New Zealand. Collected in the months of September, October, November and part of December 1826. (14pp)

List of specimens of plants collected chiefly during the progress of an excursion north from Liverpool Plains in 31½° and 150°E towards Moreton Bay in 27½° and 152° E in the winter months of 1827 by Allan Cunningham. (22pp)

2. JOURNALS, 1814-19

A journal of the proceedings of James Bowie and Allan Cunningham, His Majesty's Botanical Collectors, sent out to Rio de Janeiro etc. to collect plants for the Royal Gardens at Kew, October 1814 – 28 February 1815. (14pp)

Continuation of the Brazilian journal of Allan Cunningham, 1 March – 31 December 1815. (94pp)

Continuation of the journal of Allan Cunningham kept at Parramatta and its vicinity, 1 March – 2 April 1817. (7pp)

Journal of Allan Cunningham over the Western or Blue Mountains, 3 April – 30 November 1817, describing the journey from Parramatta to Bathurst, the expedition led by John Oxley from Bathurst to the Lachlan River marshes, and the return journey via the Wellington Valley and the Macquarie River. (91pp)

Continuation of the journal of Allan Cunningham, 1 December 1817 – 30 September 1818, kept on HM cutter *Mermaid* on a voyage from Port Jackson to King George's Sound, Exmouth Gulf, Dampier's Archipelago, Goulburn Island, Sims Island, Raffles Bay, Port Essington, Van Diemen's Gulf, Bathurst Island and Timor. (42pp)

Continuation of the journal of Allan Cunningham, 1 October – 31 December 1818, describing his journey to the Five Islands (Illawarra). (11pp)

Continuation of the journal of Allan Cunningham, 1 January – 31 March 1819, describing travels in Van Diemen's Land. (12pp)

3. LETTERS, 1817-19

Cunningham (Parramatta) to Sir Joseph Banks, 20 Sept. 1817: account of journey with John Oxley and George Evan westward from Bathurst to the Lachlan River; hopes of discovering its junction with Macquarie River; its diminution to a small rivulet; uniformly bad country; return journey; contrast of

Macquarie River with Lachlan River; about 400 specimens and seeds collected; Banks's instructions to Cunningham to join Lieut. Phillip King.

Cunningham (Coupang Bay, Timor) to Sir Joseph Banks, 9 June 1818: voyage of *Mermaid*; explorations around King George's Sound; Cunningham's garden; visit to Exmouth Gulf; most vegetation burnt up in extreme drought; plants discovered along northern coast; examination of Van Diemen's Gulf; plants discovered at Timor; hostility of Malays towards Australian Aborigines; procurement of supplies at Timor; no room for a plant cabin on *Mermaid*; assistance of Lieut. King.

Cunningham (Parramatta) to Sir Joseph Banks, 25 Sept. 1818: account of voyage on *Mermaid*; plants discovered; survey of Van Diemen's Gulf; palms discovered on north coast; impressions of Aborigines; return voyage; no sighting of French ships; reception by Governor Lachlan Macquarie.

Cunningham (Parramatta) to Sir Joseph Banks, 3 Oct. 1818: sends journal; plans to visit Five Islands on south coast.

Cunningham (Parramatta) to William Aiton, 15 Oct, 1818: provision of Government horse and cart; acknowledges stationery and other items, including *Prodromus* of Robert Brown; assistance of his brother Richard Cunningham; despatch of a box of specimens and seeds; planting of bulbs collected on voyage.

Cunningham (Sydney) to William Aiton, 12 Dec. 1818: two boxes forwarded on transport *Shipley*.

Cunningham (Parramatta) to Sir Joseph Banks, 19 Dec. 1818: plants and seeds collected at Five Islands; comparisons with plants collected by Robert Brown; preparations for voyage in *Mermaid* to Van Diemen's Land.

Cunningham (Parramatta) to William Aiton, 19 Dec. 1818: results of Cunningham's expedition to Brazil; collecting of plants for Royal Gardens; financial matters; difficult journey of John Oxley and his party along Macquarie River; encloses lists of specimens and seeds; impending voyages to Van Diemen's Land and northern coast.

Cunningham (Sydney) to William Aiton, 1 March 1819: four cases for Royal Garden sent on transport *Shipley*.

Cunningham (Sydney) to William Aiton, 29 March 1819: sends plants and seeds from Van Diemen's Land; assistance of Col. William Sorell; power of attorney; encloses lists of boxes 4-5.

Cunningham (Sydney) to Sir Joseph Banks, 29 March 1819: account of travels in Van Diemen's Land, including Macquarie Harbour; Huon pine; safe arrival of collections from Oxley's first westward journey; assistance of Governor Macquarie; collections of soldier Charles Frazer; objectives of Lieut. King's next voyage to north coast.

Cunningham (Sydney) to Sir Joseph Banks, 17 April 1819: journal to be sent to England on *Surry*; refitting of *Mermaid*; hopes of discovery of new flora on northern and western coasts.

Cunningham (Sydney) to William Aiton, 17 April 1819: refitting of *Mermaid*; hopes results of next voyage will be more interesting to geographers and naturalists.

Cunningham (off Port Macquarie) to Sir Joseph Banks, 21 May 1819: delay in departure of *Mermaid* from Sydney; survey of Port Macquarie and Hastings River; commencement of Cunningham's botanical collection; forests surrounding Port Macquarie; geology.

William T. Aiton (1766-1849) was director of the Royal Gardens at Kew from 1793 until 1841. Transcripts of the letters to Banks and Aiton can be found in A.E. Orchard and T.A. Orchard, *Allan Cunningham: letters of a botanist/explorer 1791-1839*, Canberra, 2015.

4. LISTS OF SEEDS AND SPECIMENS, 1816-22

List of specimens of ferns collected at Rio de Janeiro, 1816. (3pp)

Specimens collected at Rio de Janeiro, January 1816. (3pp)

Specimens collected at Rio de Janeiro, 1816. (4pp)

A list of specimens collected by James Bowie, 1816. (4pp)

A list of specimens contained in Bundles A1 – A3, n.d. (6pp)

Specimens collected by James Bowie, n.d. (1p)

Seed list, n.d. (4pp)

Seed list, HM frigate *Orpheus*, n.d. (4pp)

A list of seeds collected in Ceylon, 14 – 24 April 1817. (3pp)

A list of seeds collected in New South Wales, January – February 1817 (4pp)

A list of seeds collected in Western Australia, n.d. (7pp)

Specimens collected in New South Wales, January – February 1817. (8pp)

Specimens collected on a voyage of discovery on the north and north-west coasts of Australia on board HM cutter *Mermaid*, P.P. King, Lieut. and Commander, 1818. (28pp)

A list of specimens of plants that have been collected during the 4th voyage of survey of the east, north-west, west and south-west coasts of Terra Australia performed on board HMS *Bathurst*, 20 May 1821 – 25 April 1822, Parramatta, July 1822. (30pp)

A few general remarks on the vegetation of certain coasts of Terra Australia and more especially of its northern and western shores, July 1822. (29pp) Published as an appendix in Phillip P. King, *Narrative of a survey of the intertropical and western coasts of Australia performed between the years 1818 and 1822*, 2 vols., London, 1826.