

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

JAMES CRAIG

Diary, 1873-77

Reel M978

**Central Library
High Street
Paisley
Renfrewshire Scotland**

**National Library of Australia
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Filmed: 1978

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Whitelaw Craig (1849-1880), the son of an engineer, was born in Paisley, near Glasgow. He always had a strong interest in natural history and built up a substantial collection of entomological, ornithological and zoological specimens. He was apprenticed as an engineer with his father's works. In 1873, however, his health declined. On medical advice, he spent the winter in the south of France and later in the year he sailed to Australia, where he lived for two years. After his return, his health continued to decline and he made another trip to Pau, in France, in 1879. He died the following year at the age of 31.

A large part of Craig's scientific collections were presented to the museum attached to the Paisley Free Library. In 1908 his brother A.F. Craig edited his 1874-77 diary and it was published, together with photographs and drawings, under the title *Diary of a Naturalist* (Paisley, J. & R. Parlane, 1908).

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Diary, 23 September 1873 – 7 February 1877 (282pp)

The first part of the diary records a collecting trip to southern France, leaving Paisley, Scotland, in September 1873 (check) and visiting Bordeaux, Pau, Biarritz and Cauterets, returning to Paisley in August 1874. It mostly describes his excursions catching butterflies, moths and other insects, frogs, birds and reptiles.

The major part of the diary records Craig's visit to Australia, his voyage from Greenock to Williamstown on the *Ben Cruachan* (29 Aug.-14 Nov. 1874), collecting in the Dromana district, visits to Healesville (March 1875) and Ballarat (April 1875), a short visit to Sydney and Parramatta, his arrival in Brisbane (10 June 1875), collecting in the Sandgate district, his move to 'The Gap', a property near Warwick, in the Darling Downs (Jan. 1876), his return to Sydney (Nov. 1876), and the voyage back to Britain on the *Ben Cruachan* (12 Nov. 1876-7 Feb. 1877).

The diaries contain very little about Craig's personal life but deal very largely with his zoological, ornithological and botanical activities and his growing interest in the Australian Aborigines. They refer to his shooting and collecting birds, snakes, lizards, koalas, kangaroos, kangaroo rats, possums, platypi, ants, butterflies, and plants. Craig records meetings in Brisbane with the ornithologist Silvester Diggles and the naturalist Charles Coxen (Jan. 1876).

Craig visited an Aboriginal settlement at Healesville, near Melbourne, in March 1875, and his interest in the languages, arts and social organisation of Australian Aborigines became a major preoccupation when he was living in Brisbane and the Darling Downs. In Jan. 1876 he met the Lutheran missionary J.G. Hausmann (1811-1901) and talked about his experiences in working with Aborigines since his arrival in Moreton Bay in 1838. Craig had many meetings and conversations with Aborigines, including 'King Sandy', made notes about their weapons and tools, and recorded their vocabularies. He also dealt with Aboriginal-settler relations and the murders of Aborigines.

The entries in the later part of the diary tend to be more detailed than in the earlier part. They contain a number of small sketches.