

EARLY DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT SOUTHERN LAND 250 YEARS BEFORE CAPTAIN COOK'S EPIC VOYAGE

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This presentation follows that given at EMAC05 held in Lyon, France during 2005. This presented evidence of early Portuguese presence around the eastern coastline of Australia during the early 1500's some 250 years prior to Captain James Cook's epic voyage of discovery. Previous evidence had been mainly in the form of early maps such as the Dauphine map of 1536 said to have been drafted in Dieppe. This and other maps are notoriously difficult to interpret and leave much in question. In addition there have been various claims of early discoveries around the coast in the form of buildings, keys, ships and various other artefacts. Again these claims are difficult to substantiate and in many cases have proved false.

The 2005 presentation discussed the thermoluminescence (TL) age determination of various pieces of early pottery discovered around the Australian coastline and claimed to be of Portuguese origin. This presentation refines that data and discusses the results of further dating of newly discovered, similar pottery, mainly trawled up off the south eastern coast of Australia. Much of this pottery appears to have been located in the same area off Gabo Island and is stylistically quite similar. The difficulties in making accurate age determinations upon pottery that has rested upon the seabed at considerable depth are also discussed.

The project discussed therefore attempts to use the presence of pottery found around the south eastern coast of Australia as a finite means of substantiating claims of early visits to the shores of the Great Southern Land.