My Note

There are three stories which I now tell, of the only contact I know from the natives themselves, of their first reaction to the White men who stepped on their shores in the South West of Western Australia in the 1820's.

The following note is from Flinders' Diary: Flinders landed 'at King George Sound' in December 1801. He remained there for four weeks, during which a thorough examination of the adjacent country was made.

December 12th 1801. Marks of the Country being inhabited were found everywhere but as yet there was nothing to indicate the presence of the Natives in our neighbourhood.

Many trees & Smokes being perceived at the head of the Harbour, Mr. Parry & other gentlemen directed their excursions that day & found with several of the Natives, who were shy, but not afraid.

One man with whom they had communication was admired for his manly behaviour & they gave him a bit which had been shot at a Jackal-head Koolie, but like the generality of People neither see nor this Country. They were told not to see the desert &

Communication with strangers is very early sign

Was made to our Gentlemen, to return from whence they had come.
Next morning we were greatly surprised by 2 Indians & afterwards by others beside our tents. They approached with caution. Mr. Purdie, assistant surgeon, going up unarmed, a communication was brought about.

Wednesday 23rd. Formed a party well armed & provisioned for 2 days in order to visit lakes behind West Cape Howe. walked N.W. of Prince's Royal Harbour, & thence into country which at a western direction — had not gone far when a native was seen running before us, soon after an old man, he was anxious for us not to go further — was not able to prevail, & accommodated him as far as to make a circuit round the shore where it seemed probable his family & friends were placed — The old man followed us, hallooing & giving information of our movements, & when a persuit was that he experienced neither fear nor surprise. Later we took to the effects of the decrease hills & re-erected swamps, & forced our way through thick bushes before reaching eastern lake. Then we retraced steps back to our tents.

On the 30th. docking & clearing of the ship was completed & sails repaired.
Only a limited number of Natives was seen, they were shy but not afraid, and during the stay of the "Suzakutejelar" no disturbances whatever occurred although they visited the tents daily. (Writing a few days before his departure from King George Sound. Hunter says:) Our friends, the Natives, continued to visit us, & the old men with several others being at the tents this morning I ordered the Marines on shore to exercise in their presence. The red coats & white cross belts were greatly admired, having some resemblance to their own manner of accoutrement, and the drum, but particularly the fife, excited their astonishment; but when they saw their beautiful red & white men, with their bright muskets, drawn up in a line, they absolutely screamed with delight; nor were their wild gestures & gestures to be silenced but by commencing the exercises, to which they paid the most earnest & silent attention. Several of them moved their hands voluntarily, according to the Mates'; and the old man placed himself at the end of a rank with a short staff in his hand, with his shoulders, presented, and walked, as did the Marines with their muskets, without I believe knowing what he did. Before firing, the natives were acquainted with what was going to take place.)
place, so that the ball is did not excite much terror.

The Natives women were kept out of sight, as they were appeared to think that there must be women on the ship, and a similar jealousy actuated the company of the Investigator.

The limits of observatory were already struck, and everything being ready on board, we took leave of the Natives and embarked with intention of running into the Sound this evening, but Change of Wind prevented it. So it was 3rd January 1802 in the afternoon, before we steered out of Portiers Royal Harbour.

Our frequent & amiable communications with the natives of this country had been mentioned. The women however were kept out of sight, with seeming jealousy. The belief that there must be women on the ship, induced 2 of the Natives to comply with our permission of getting into the boat to go on board - but their courage failing, they desired to be re-loaded, & made signs that the ship must go or leave to them.