



Sydney Cove Snapshot

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Sydney Cove 1808 by Lewin

The first step in the colonisation of the continent which was later named **Australia**, took place in **London** in 1785. It was initiated by the *Secretary of State for the Colonies*, **Thomas Townsend**, **Lord Sydney**.

Lord Sydney adopted the recommendation of **Captain James Cook** (1728 - 1779), who sighted the east coast of **Australia** in 1770, that an **English** settlement be established in **New South Wales**.

When **England** lost its colonies in 1788 after the *American War of Independence*, it needed some



Captain Arthur Phillip 1787

other place to send the many convicts that were being held in hulks in the *river Thames*.

Orders-in-Council for establishing a settlement in **New South Wales** were set up on 6 December 1785. Command of the expedition was

given to **Captain Arthur Phillip** (1738 - 1814).

The First Fleet rendezvous at **Isle of Wight**. **Captain Phillip** as commodore of the squadron, hoisted his flag on *H.M.S. Sirius*, and weighed anchor at daybreak on 13th May 1787, setting sail for **New South Wales**.

The First Fleet comprised the frigate *H.M.S. Sirius*, 540 tons, 20 guns, 160 men, commanded by **Captain John Hunter**. The *Sirius* was 30 meters long, 10 meters wide and had a depth of 4 meters. The main mast stood 32 meters above the deck. Its best speed with a favourable wind was 10 knots.

H.M.S. Supply, armed tender brig was the fastest in the fleet, 8 guns, 55 men, commanded by **Lieutenant Henry Lighbird Ball**.

Golden Grove, store ship with *Fishburn*, store ship and *Borrowdale*, store ship.

Scarborough, transport, carrying 1 captain, 33 marines, 208 male convicts.

Lady Penrhyn, transport, carrying 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 3 privates and 102 female convicts;

Friendship, transport, 1 captain, 44 marines and privates, 77 male and 20 female convicts.

Charlotte, transport, 1 captain, 43 men, 88 male and 20 female convicts.

Prince of Wales, transport, 2 lieutenants, 30 marines and 50 female convicts.

The *Alexander*, was the largest convict transport of 450 tons. Her master was **Duncan SinClare** with 2 lieutenants, 35 marines and 213 male convicts.

The total number of persons who embarked in the first fleet on that fateful Sunday was:

Civil officers	10
Marines including officers	212
Wives (28) and children (17) of above	45
Other free persons	81
Male convicts	504
Female convicts	192
TOTAL	1,044

The *Supply* sighted the coast of **New South Wales** on 3 January 1788 and anchored in **Botany Bay** on 18 January 1788. The *Sirius* with the remainder of the convoy arrived on 20th January 1788. **The number of persons landed was 1,030. That meant only 14 persons died on the eight month voyage (1.3%) which was very low by the standards of the day.**

There was no fresh water at **Botany Bay** and it was considered to be exposed to bad weather. **Governor Phillip**, together with **Captain Hunter** and several other officers, therefore set out in whale boats for a bay to the north, mentioned by **Captain Cook**, called **Broken Bay**.

They entered a place on the way marked "**Port Jackson**" and selected a cove "*about half-a-mile in length and a quarter-of-a-mile across the entrance*" situated six miles inside this harbour, as a place for the new settlement.

In honour of **Lord Sydney**, the **Governor** named it **Sydney Cove** on 22 January 1788



The following day while sailing back to **Botany Bay**, on a point of land on the north side of **Port Jackson**, **Phillip** noticed the *confident and manly behaviour* of the natives at the water's edge. So he named it **Manly Cove**.

In one of history's more amazing coincidences, **2 French frigates** under the command of **Comte de Laperouse (1741-1788)**, sailed into **Botany Bay** on **24 January 1788**, while the **English** were relocating.

The **French** were treated courteously by the **English** and fortunately some of **Laperouse** letters and document were given to the **English** and eventually sent back to **Paris** via **London**.

Laperouse sailed from **Botany Bay** on 10 March 1788 for **New Caledonia** and **Santa Cruz** islands. ***They were never seen again.***

Governor Phillip in the *Supply* and the rest of the fleet quit **Botany Bay** and sailed into **Port Jackson** on 25th January 1788.



Sydney Cove 26 Jan 1788

The colony of **New South Wales** was formally taken possession in the name of the **King of England** by **Governor Arthur Phillip** on **26 January 1788**. British colours were hoisted on **Dawes Point**.

The **Governor** and principal officers assembled and drank the **King's** health and success to the new colony.

It is not recorded what the local **aboriginals** thought of all this

Three of the transports *Lady Penrhyn*, *Scarborough* and *Charlotte* left for **China** to load tea for the **East India Company**. The *Supply* also sailed for **Lord Howe Island** on 6 May 1788.

The new colony ran low on food and rationing was enforced. The *Sirius* was despatched to the **Cape of Good Hope** on 30 September 1788 for supplies.

The *Sirius* returned with four months provisions on 9 May 1789, which led to great rejoicing in the colony. ***Unfortunately the Sirius was later wrecked on Norfolk Island in 1790.***

The *Supply* was then sent to **Batavia (Jakarta)** under the command of **Lieutenant Ball** for provisions on 17 April 1790.

The store ship *Justinian* from **England** arrived on 20 June 1790 with a timely supply of provisions.



Sydney Cove 1788

The Second Fleet convoyed by the 44 gun *Gorgon* arrived in **Sydney Cove** on 21 September 1791 with 1,695 male and 68 female convicts.

198 (10.1%) died on the passage. A further 480 were sick from scurvy, dysentery and fever. **Treatment of the convicts on this expedition was a disgrace.** They were abused and exploited by private ship owners.

The Settlement was placed on full rations after many months of privation on July 1792, after the arrival of the *Atlantic* from **Calcutta** with a much needed cargo of rice and other provisions.

Approximately 80,000 convicts were transported to New South Wales between 1788 and 1842. 85% were male with 15% female.

Two thirds (66%) of the convicts were literate - a much higher percentage than the free immigrants (58%). Almost two thirds were English - along with a small number of Scots and Welsh, with the remaining one third Irish.

Most were ordinary working class men and women. **The majority were first offenders** with 75% convicted of petty larceny or receiving stolen goods.



Note: The writer's direct ancestor on his mother's side, **William Nash**, a private in the marines in **Captain Shea's company**, came to Australia in the First Fleet on board the *Alexander*