

SUMMARY: EARLY GOVERNORS & EXPLORERS OF COLONIAL NSW
And their impact on the settlement of the South Coast
Part I: Phillip, Grose & Paterson (1788-1795)

By Tony Butz (presented to GDHS, 24th June 2017)

The settlement of NSW in the 18th century was heavily influenced by wars involving Britain, France and Spain, by immense interest in science and discovery, and by British naval and military rivalry.

BEFORE 1788: COOK & BANKS

- Cook had distinguished himself as a master cartographer in North America.
- Sponsored by Joseph Banks, his voyage in the *Endeavour* enabled mapping (“discovery”) of the east coast of Australia, and collection of plant and animal specimens never before seen in Europe.
- Cook was killed in Hawaii in 1779, on his third voyage; *Endeavour* lies in Newport Rhode Is. Harbour.
- American independence and the failure of colonies in Africa required British convicts to be relocated, on Banks’ and Matra’s advice, to NSW.

THE FIRST FLEET

- Captain Arthur Phillip was chosen to take 11 ships with 778 convicts to Botany Bay; after 2 years of frustrating dealings with the Colonial Office on manpower and supplies.
- Not only did he find Botany Bay unsuitable due to little fresh water and poor soil, but Comte de La Perouse arrived with two French ships on a research expedition, arousing suspicions of intent.
- Phillip and Hunter chose Port Jackson instead, and sent Lieut. King to claim Norfolk Island for the British as well.
- Capt. William Bligh faced mutiny on board the *Bounty*, near Tahiti, after staying in Van Diemen’s Land, where he mixed with the aborigines and planted fruit trees.

CAPTAIN ARTHUR PHILLIP (FIRST GOVERNOR OF NSW, 1788-1792)

- Phillip’s difficulties included: poor soil, unskilled labour, unco-operative marines, escaping convicts, aboriginal attacks, wreck of the *Sirius* on Norfolk Is., and delays of supply ships. The colony was starving.
- A satellite colony was established at Parramatta (Rose Hill) with James Ruse leading the farming.
- Lieut. Bowen, aboard the *Atlantic* in the Third Fleet, in 1791, entered and named Jervis Bay.
- Some *Bounty* mutineers and escaped convicts, William and Mary Bryant were captured in Timor. Many convicts escaped to the bush or stowed away on ships, trying to reach China.
- Phillip encouraged respect for aborigines, even after being speared; captured Arabanoo, Bennelong, Colebee and Yemmerrawannie to learn from them and have them negotiate with other aborigines.
- Phillip is remembered as one of the best and most brilliant of the early governors.
- After nearly 5 years in NSW, ill-health forced Phillip to return to England, with Bennelong and Yemmerawannie, Captain John Hunter and crew from the wrecked *Sirius*.

MAJOR FRANCIS GROSE (LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF NSW, 1792-1794) Seen as weak and vacillating, he enabled the NSW Corps to establish a monopoly on trade, illegally obtain land grants, impose a virtual military judicial system, and let the colony's morals degenerate. Settlers complained to London and demanded a replacement.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM PATERSON (LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF NSW, 1794-1795) A stand-in for 9 months, before Hunter's return, Paterson at least refused to be part of the corrupt rum trade, and recognised the need for exploration and expansion, including a way across the Blue Mountains, to find more pastureland. But the Rum Corps continued to grow in power.

Part II: Hunter, Bass & Flinders (presented to GDHS on 26th August, 2017)

CAPTAIN JOHN HUNTER (GOVERNOR OF NSW, 1795-1800)

- Hunter charted Sydney Harbour, Botany Bay and Broken Bay, with Phillip, before going back with him to England and returning with Bennelong, George Bass and Matthew Flinders.
- Hunter restored civil judicial power, encouraged free traders and settlers, and banned the distillation and trade in spirits by the NSW Corps, to try to curb the military monopoly. He encouraged exploration, especially around Newcastle and Wollongong after coal was found near both places.
- Bass and Flinders explored south of Sydney, including Lake Illawarra, Port Hacking and the south coast. They later circumnavigated Tasmania, proving it was an island. Flinders finished the coastline map of Australia and gave it that name, indicating New Holland and Terra Australis were part of one land mass.
- The wreck of the *Sydney Cove* in Bass Strait, in 1797, brought the first Europeans into the Gerringong area, and led to the discovery of coal at Coalcliff, the first description of a wombat and some exploration of the Shoalhaven River entrance.
- Bass disappeared at sea in 1803; Flinders was imprisoned, accused of spying, on Mauritius for nearly 7 years, with the British and French again at war, enabling Baudin to publish before him. Flinders died in 1814 in England, the day after the publishing of *A Voyage to Terra Australis*.
- Hunter's governorship was made more difficult with many Irish rebels being sent to NSW from 1796-1798, the NSW Corps still in control of trade, and a difficult John Macarthur who kept reporting him to London.
- Hunter took NSW from a penal settlement to a nearly self-sufficient colony, by continuing Governor Phillip's policies of convict emancipation, exploration and encouraging free settlers in farming and wool.

CONCLUSION

Although the South Coast and Illawarra were still to be opened to settlement, the decisions made by the earliest governors in the first twelve years of the colony gave Australia its name, and established the beginnings of the wheat, wool, cedar and coal industries. The entire coastline south of Sydney had been mapped, Lake Illawarra had been explored, Jervis Bay was seen as being of strategic importance and the different country around the south was ripe for new opportunities in industry and settlement.