

A Colony of Convicts

The following information has been taken from <https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/> Documenting a Democracy 'Governor Phillip's Instructions 25 April 1787'

The British explorer Captain James Cook landed in Australia in 1770 and claimed it as a British territory. Six years after James Cook landed at Botany Bay and gave the territory its English name of 'New South Wales', the American colonies declared their independence and war with Britain began. Access to America for the transportation of convicts ceased and overcrowding in British gaols soon raised official concerns.

In 1779, Joseph Banks, the botanist who had travelled with Cook to New South Wales, suggested Australia as an alternative place for transportation. The advantages of trade with Asia and the Pacific were also raised, alongside the opportunity New South Wales offered as a new home for the American Loyalists who had supported Britain in the War of Independence. Eventually the Government settled on Botany Bay as the site for a colony. Secretary of State, Lord Sydney, chose Captain Arthur Phillip of the Royal Navy to lead the fleet and be the first governor.

The process of colonisation began in 1788. A fleet of 11 ships, containing 736 convicts, some British troops and a governor set up the first colony of New South Wales in Sydney Cove.

Prior to his departure for New South Wales, Phillip received his Instructions from King George III, with the advice of his 'Privy Council'. The first Instructions included Phillip's Commission as Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales. The Instructions advised Phillip about managing the convicts, granting and cultivating the land, and exploring the country. The Aborigines' lives and livelihoods were to be protected and friendly relations with them encouraged, but the Instructions make no mention of protecting or even recognising their lands. It was assumed that Australia was *terra nullius*, that is, land belonging to no one. This assumption shaped land law and occupation for more than 200 years.

Although they were instructed to establish themselves at Botany Bay, Phillip was separately authorised to choose any other appropriate neighbouring territory. The First Fleet set out from Portsmouth on 13 May 1787 and arrived at Botany Bay on 18 January 1788.



They quickly found the location unsuitable. Fresh water was inadequate, and the anchorages were too open in the wide bays, so they moved on to the waters of Port Jackson. The First Fleet settled at Sydney Cove on January 26, this day would become 'Australia Day'.

Penal Colonies Established Across Australia

The following list of sites and resources highlight convict beginnings in Australia, and represent changing attitudes towards crime, punishment and the treatment of prisoners throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. They reveal the broad range of institutions, structures and systems experienced by convicts in Australia between 1788 and 1880.

Colony	State	Time
Kingston and Arthur's Vale	Norfolk Island	1788 - 1855
Parramatta	New South Wales	1790 - 1856
Cockatoo Island	New South Wales	1839 - 1869
Sydney Cove	New South Wales	1788 - 1840
Moreton Bay	Queensland	1824
Port Arthur	Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)	1833 - 1877
Sullivan's Cove - Hobart	Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)	1828 - 1856
Tasman Peninsula	Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)	1833 – 1840s
Maria Island	Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)	1825 - 1832
Longford	Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)	1820 – 1850s
	Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land)	
King George's Sound	Western Australia	1826 - 1832
Swan River Colony	Western Australia	1850 - 1868
Fremantle	Western Australia	1850s

TASK

Choose one site (or state area) and research facts to write an information report. Include the reasons why this site was chosen and what contributions the convicts made to the community and local environment.

'My Place'

https://myplace.edu.au/teaching_activities/1878_-_before_time/1788_1/episode_landing_24.html

Sydney Living Museums

<https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/convict-sydney/australian-convict-sites-world-heritage>

<https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/convict-sydney/convicts-colony>