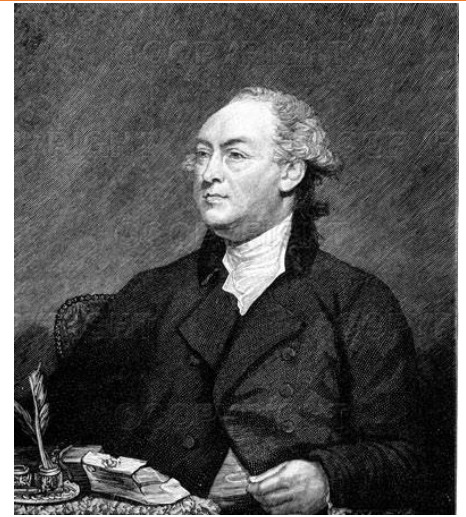


# Tommy Townshend

## Thomas Townshend - Lord Viscount Sydney

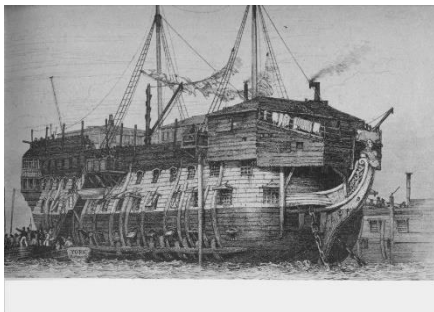
Thomas Townshend was born in Norfolk, England in 1733. He came from a privileged family background and was educated at Cambridge.

Tommy's grandfather and great uncle were well connected in British society and had great influence in politics, so it was no surprise that he followed this family interest and became a politician himself. By 1754, Tommy had successfully entered the **House of Commons** in the **British Parliament** at the very young age of 21 years old.



Over the next 25 years, Tommy rose through the ranks in parliament. He moved positions between **opposition** and **government**, spending most of the time in opposition which occurred during the years of war between Britain and the American colonies. Tommy married during this time and had twelve children; six sons and six daughters.

Tommy became **Home Secretary** in the **British cabinet** in 1782. In this role, he was responsible for managing **internal affairs** in England on matters regarding immigration and citizenship, as well as the relocation of British citizens to other parts of the world from 1782. The peace treaty with America stopped all convict transportation to that part of the world, which in turn caused the prison system in England to become unbearably overcrowded. Alternative arrangements had to be found and several options were considered, including sites in Africa. However, after trial and error to determine what would be most successful, the British cabinet accepted Tommy's recommendation for convict transportation to Botany Bay. He was given the responsibility of devising a plan to send convicts to Australia.



The year 1782 was a big year for Tommy, as he became leader of the **House of Commons** in the British parliament. In 1783, Tommy became **Baron Sydney of Chislehurst** and entered the **House of Lords** as **Lord Sydney**. Thomas Townshend chose **Sydney** as a name in honour of a distant relative who was beheaded in 1683, for promoting the idea that a king's power can be taken away if they didn't follow the will of the people. So, Tommy's family had history in fighting for democratic values long before he became a Lord.

In fact, Tommy had always felt the same need to advocate for all people to have **democratic rights**, regardless of their **status** in society. He believed everyone should have access to **fair justice**, particularly at a time when Britain needed relief from the many hulks that were anchored in waterways around London throughout the early to mid-1700s. Lord Sydney genuinely felt for the people who were kept in **dire** conditions in the prison system, and then condemned for transportation to **New Holland** to serve out their sentence in such a remote and harsh place.

Lord Sydney selected **Captain Arthur Phillip** in 1786 to be the first **governor** of the convict colony of NSW, after working with him on previous war campaigns in the Americas. Lord Sydney believed Phillip to be a highly organised person who could manage the complex task of setting up a penal colony in a challenging environment. He also believed Captain Phillip was a compassionate man and would establish the **rule of law** fairly. This was important for the new colony if it was to survive and flourish in the years ahead. After all, the colony was to mark the beginning of a new British society.

Lord Sydney gave Captain Phillip a **charter of justice** for the colony which established the first **legal system**. This was so the European citizens that were to inhabit the new land could enjoy all the rights and duties of English Law that the citizens had back home.

As Captain Arthur Phillip sailed the **First Fleet** into **Port Jackson** and landed on shore, he named the area **Sydney Cove** in honour of Lord Sydney. This was later to become the **city of Sydney**, the largest capital city in Australia today. The following year in 1789, Lord Sydney became **Viscount Sydney**.

Thomas Townshend died in 1800, aged 67.

❖ Discuss the meaning of terms highlighted in bold italics to help gain deeper understanding of this article.

❖ **PEERAGE** - noble ranks with hereditary titles

Use the information below to draw a branching tree showing the position of influence for each rank that existed in the ruling classes of Great Britain during the 1700s. Begin from the top to show the most important. Then beside each rank, investigate and include the title of female positions that match each rank:

- **BARON or LORD** - the master of a feudal manor
- **VISCOUNT** - a member of the peerage above a baron but below a count or earl
- **EARL (or COUNT)** - member of the nobility higher than a Lord
- **MARQUESS** - there was only one family to hold this title in England
- **DUKE** - lower ranks of royalty
- **PRINCE** - heir to the throne
- **KING** - ruler of a kingdom



❖ What is a Coat of Arms and what purpose did it serve throughout the course of history? Include in your explanation why nobility, royalty, and government bodies identified the importance of such emblems and crests, and do you believe this still applies today? Provide reasons for your answers.

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❖ Design your own **Coat of Arms**