

GOVERNOR ARTHUR PHILLIP

1786 - 1793

1

Arthur Phillip was the founding Governor of New South Wales 12 October 1786 - 23 July 1793. He established the first permanent European settlement in Australia.

Phillip had extensive skills and experience in commanding naval operations and was fluent in five languages. He was described by Lord Sydney as brave, honest, obedient, reliable, self-sacrificing, trustworthy, adventurous, and most importantly - resilient. Phillip's task was to establish a British penal settlement in Botany Bay. This is the site of the City of Sydney today.

Captain Phillip commanded the First Fleet, consisting of 11 ships carrying over 1450 convicts, soldiers, sailors, and free passengers. The arduous voyage lasted 8 months. On arrival in Botany Bay, 18 January 1788, Phillip surveyed the area. However, on 26 January, he relocated the fleet to Port Jackson after observing the scarcity of natural resources required to support a settlement, such as fresh water.

Governor Phillip was highly conscious of his responsibility for the survival of every person in the new colony. The Crown gave him complete authority to exercise power over all inhabitants and to establish British law. Phillip established civil and criminal courts to implement laws based on the rule of law, that administered justice and ensured the laws were applied equally and fairly.

Phillip's task seemed insurmountable as his authority was challenged by rebellious convicts and disobedience from officers of the Marines, and later the New South Wales Corps. He constantly battled against members of the Corps who assigned convict labour for personal gain over other immediate needs. Phillip was committed to the colony's success and worked hard to avoid friction between civil and military authorities. He believed in human rights and equality before the law, this included vowing never to allow slavery to take hold in the new society. Phillip had witnessed first hand the level of human suffering it had caused in other parts of the world.

The fledgling colony struggled to survive the harsh conditions and Phillip's skills and knowledge as a farmer, undoubtedly served the colony well through difficult times. Sending Lieutenant Philip Gidley-King to colonise Lord Howe Island also helped to successfully ward off famine.

Phillip endeavoured to develop positive relationships with the indigenous people. However, his actions of claiming land to build the new colony, without recognising indigenous ownership rights, was a major obstacle and he failed to establish peace between the settlers and the natives. Phillip based his actions on a British law called *terra nullius*.

Arthur Phillip returned to England 11 December 1792 due to poor health. He died at his home in Bathampton, England 1814.

Arthur Phillip was a Royal Navy Officer of the British Fleet, reaching the rank of Admiralty

Lord Sydney recognised Arthur Phillip's great skill and expertise, along with a shared interest in supporting the rule of law

RULE OF LAW is all about:

- protecting human rights and liberties
- creating laws that are fair and equally applied to everyone
- providing laws that will be followed and enforced
- making sure no one is above the law
- separation between law makers and the courts

Arthur Phillip operated as a spy for the British Government in France, 1785. He observed the preparations of Jean-Francois de Galaup comte de Laperoise to sail down and claim New Holland as French territory

Arthur Phillip was missing a front tooth, gaining him respect from the Aboriginal people as this was the same tooth that was knocked out during indigenous initiation ceremonies



Arthur Phillip is considered to be the father of modern Australia

He is commemorated in the Royal Botanical Gardens, Sydney NSW