

southward. We steered alongshore NNE and at noon we were by observation in the latitude of 33° 50' S about two or three miles from the land and abreast of a bay or harbour wherein there appeared to be safe anchorage which I called Port Jackson.[†]

PHILIP GIDLEY KING

A Great Shout of Admiration

The First Fleet, eleven vessels in all carrying around 1500 people, commanded by Governor Arthur Phillip, arrived in Botany Bay in January 1788, thirty-six weeks after its departure from Portsmouth. Phillip was intent on establishing a convict colony in the place Cook had so amply praised. As the English officers explored the bay their meetings with the Eora people were frequent, but few were as curious as this one recorded by the plain-spoken Lieutenant Philip Gidley King, a twenty-nine-year-old Cornishman.

King was struck by 'the ridiculous figure we must appear to those poor creatures, who were perfectly naked'; and when the Aborigines seemed uncertain about whether the clean-shaven Europeans were men or women he didn't hesitate to order one of his company to give them the ocular proof. And so, as Robert Hughes put it, 'the first white cock was flashed on an Australian beach'. The identity of the exhibitor who received a 'great shout of admiration' remains unknown.

[†]In fact latitude 32° 52' S.

A GREAT SHOUT OF ADMIRATION

20 January 1788—At ten o'clock the governor, lieutenant-governor and Captain Hunter went over to the south side of ye bay, a little within Point Sutherland, and I was ordered, with Lieutenant Dawes of the marines, to explore all ye south side of ye bay, and trace the two inlets on the south side as high as possible.

I ran up the southern shore till I rounded — Point, off which lies a long shoal, which is in many places quite dry at low water. We ran up the first inlet about a mile, when we came to the head of it. I returned down again and crossed over to a point; which from what happened there I gave it the name of Lance Point.

Perceiving that it was the highest hill hereabout, I imagined it was probable that we should find some good water there. On landing I ascended the hill, and found ye soil an exceeding fine black mould, with some excellent timber trees and very rich grass. Arrived at ye top of the hill, we perceived a red fox-dog, and soon after discovered a number of ye natives, who hollered and made signs for us to return to our boats. Having only three marines with me and Lieutenant Dawes, I advanced before them unarmed, presenting some beads and ribbands. Two of the natives advanced armed, but would not come close to me. I then dropped ye beads and baize which I held out for them and retreated.

They took it up, and bound the baize about their head. They then in a very vociferous manner desired us to be gone, and one of them threw a lance wide of us to show how far they could do execution. The distance it was thrown was as near as I could guess about forty yards, and when he took it out of the ground where it struck it required an exertion to pull it out. As I took this for a menace that more would be thrown at us if we did not retreat, and being unwilling to fire amongst them, there being twelve of them, I retreated, walking backwards till I came to the brow of the hill where I halted and again offered them presents, which they refused.

On descending the hill they showed themselves on the top of it, and were ten times more vociferous, and very soon after a lance

was thrown amongst us, on which I ordered one of the marines to fire with powder only, when they ran off with great precipitation. I embarked, and Governor Phillip joined me from the south side of ye bay, where he had found ye natives very sociable and friendly. We relanded on Lance Point, and ye same body of natives appeared, brandishing their lances and defying us. However, we rowed close in shore, and ye governor disembarked with some presents, which one of them came and received.

Thus peace was re-established, much to the satisfaction of all parties. They came round ye boats, and many little things were given them, but that they wanted most was ye greatcoats and clothing, but hats was more particularised by them, their admiration of which they expressed by very loud shouts whenever one of us pulled our hats off. When they found us so very friendly, they ran up to the man who had thrown the lance and made very significant signs of their displeasure at his conduct by pointing all their lances at him and looking at us, intimating that they only waited our orders to kill him. However, we made signs for them to desist, and made the culprit a present of some beads &c...

I gave two of them a glass of wine, which they no sooner tasted than they spit it out. We asked them the names of a number of articles, which they told us, and repeated our words, and had already learnt so much English as to express their want for anything by putting their finger on it, gently looking me in the face, and saying 'No?' I must do them the justice to say that I believe them to be conscientiously honest. When they found we were not disposed to part with any more things, they entered into conversation with us, which was very fully interpreted by very plain signs.

They wanted to know of what sex we were, which they explained by pointing where it was distinguishable, as they took us for women, not having our beards grown. I ordered one of the people to undeceive them in this particular, when they made a great shout of admiration, and pointing to the shore, which was but ten

yards from us, we saw a great number of women and girls, with infant children on their shoulders, make their appearance on the beach, all *in puris naturalibus*—*pas même la feuille de figueur*.[†] Those natives who were round the boats made signs for us to go to them, and made us understand that their persons were at our service.

However, I declined this mark of their hospitality, but showed a handkerchief, which I offered to one of the women. Pointing her out, she immediately put her child down and came alongside ye boat and suffered me to apply the handkerchief where Eve did ye fig leaf. The natives then set up another very great shout and my female visitor returned on shore. As ye evening was coming on fast, and we were twelve miles from ye fleet, it was time to return. We wished the natives *good bi wi ye*, which they repeated. We got on board about midnight, when we found the governor preparing to go the next morning at daybreak in some longboats to explore Broken Bay and Port Jackson.

WATKIN TENCH

The Little Boy and the Old Gentleman

Lieutenant Watkin Tench was as wide-eyed as a puppy at the novelties that Botany Bay had to offer. Hailed as 'the most cultivated mind in the colony' he seems to have been an eternal optimist and everybody's favourite. He was particularly fascinated by the Eora, several of whom were to become close friends. We see him here with a child in hand—and who but Tench would have thought of giving the lad a walk on the beach?—as he meets his first 'Indian'. The convicts, meanwhile, remained cooped up on the fleet.

[†] Naked—not even a fig leaf.

21 January 1788—I went with a party to the south side of the harbour and had scarcely landed five minutes when we were met by a dozen Indians, naked as at the moment of their birth, walking along the beach. Eager to come to a conference, and yet afraid of giving offence, we advanced with caution towards them. Nor would they, at first, approach nearer to us than the distance of some paces. Both parties were armed, yet an attack seemed as unlikely on their part as we knew it to be on our own.

I had at this time a little boy, of not more than seven years of age, in my hand. The child seemed to attract their attention very much, for they frequently pointed to him and spoke to each other; and as he was not frightened I advanced with him towards them, at the same time baring his bosom and showing the whiteness of the skin. On the clothes being removed they gave a loud exclamation and one of the party, an old man with a long beard, hideously ugly, came close to us. I bade my little charge not to be afraid and introduced him to the acquaintance of this uncouth personage. The Indian, with great gentleness, laid his hand on the child's hat and afterwards felt his clothes, muttering to himself all the while. I found it necessary, however, by this time to send away the child, as such a close connection rather alarmed him, and in this, as the conclusion verified, I gave no offence to the old gentleman.

JOHN WHITE

The Finest Harbour in the Universe

On 21 January Governor Phillip left Botany Bay to explore the hitherto unknown Port Jackson. Whatever his expectation about what he would find, he and his

officers were amazed by the harbour they discovered, and Phillip at once determined to move the settlement there. Five days later the entire fleet set out for its new home. John White, chief surgeon to the colony, decided no praise was too high for Sydney Harbour. The work of building the new town began at once.

Phillip's decision meant that, apart from the First Fleeters, no convicts were ever sent to Botany Bay. The popularity of the name in ballads and poems is due to the enormous impact the departure of the First Fleet had on the public imagination.

26 January 1788—At ten o'clock the *Sirius*, with all the ships, weighed, and in the evening anchored in Port Jackson, with a few trifling damages done to some of them, who had run foul of each other in working out of Botany Bay.

Port Jackson I believe to be, without exception, the finest and most extensive harbour in the universe, and at the same time the most secure, being safe from all the winds that blow. It is divided into a great number of coves, to which his Excellency has given different names. That on which the town is to be built is called Sydney Cove. It is one of the smallest in the harbour, but the most convenient, as ships of the greatest burden can with ease go into it and heave out close to the shore. Trincomalé, acknowledged to be one of the best harbours in the world, is by no means to be compared to it.[†] In a word, Port Jackson would afford sufficient and safe anchorage for all the navies of Europe.

The *Supply* had arrived the day before, and the governor, with every person that could be spared from the ship, were on shore, clearing the ground for the encampment. In the evening, when all the ships had anchored, the English colours were displayed; and at

[†] Trincomalé: on the east coast of Sri Lanka.

the foot of the flagstaff his Majesty's health, and success to the settlement, was drank by the governor, many of the principal officers, and private men who were present upon the occasion.

27 January—A number of convicts from the different transports were landed to assist in clearing the ground for the encampment. His Excellency marked the outlines and, as much as possible to prevent irregularity and to keep the convicts from straggling, the provost-marshal, aided by the patrol, had orders to take into custody all convicts that should be found without the lines, and to leave them in charge of the main or quarter guard.

The boats sent this day to fish were successful. Some of the natives came into the little bay or cove where the seine was hauled, and behaved very friendly. Indeed they carried their civility so far, although a people that appeared to be averse to work, as to assist in dragging it ashore. For this kind office they were liberally rewarded with fish, which seemed to please them and give general satisfaction.

RALPH CLARK

Without You I Cannot Live

When Lieutenant Ralph Clark sailed with the First Fleet he left behind a beautiful young wife Betsey Alicia, and an infant son he affectionately called Ralphie. He had sought permission to bring his family with him, but Phillip refused. Clark was consigned to travel to Botany Bay on the *Friendship*, a vessel full of whores and other convict women. Surrounded by 'debauchery', Clark carried a locket with him that enclosed an image of his darling wife, and this he kissed each morning until he feared that constant use would wear it out. He then restricted himself to kissing it on Sundays.

WITHOUT YOU I CANNOT LIVE

The journal Clark kept is one of early Sydney's great documents: intimate, spontaneous and revelatory, it gives a glimpse of the fears and desires that were amplified by this new and strange place. His headlong, slapdash expression has all the immediacy of living speech. Here, in a rare moment of happiness, we find him enchanted with the site for the new settlement.

Sunday 27 January 1788—Kist your dear Pictour as Usual on this day and read the lessons for the day...Sent the men belonging to Capt. Tench Company on board the *Charlotte* to be landed from ther—dinned by myself all the rest dinned out—I am Quite charmed with the place—oh that if you was only here and our dear Boy my Alicia I Should not wish to come home if the place agreed with our health but without you I would not Stay if it was the best place under the face of heaven no that I would not my dear Beloved wife for without you I cannot live. The Tents look a prety amonst the Trees—I hope to be on Shore to morrow if Please good

Munday 28—Got up early this morning and Sent all the Convicts on Shore except them that were Sick—thank God that they are all out of the Ship hope in God that I will have nothing to doe with them any more—at 10 Debarkt with all the Marines and there Baggage Except my own—I never Saw So much confusion in all the course of my life as there was in the three compys. disembark—after I had Pitchd it twice but thank God I Slept very well but reather cold.

JOHN WHITE

True Camp Dysentery

With the disembarkation of the male convicts, Surgeon White was kept busy from the first. If it was not dysentery, scurvy or the pox that demanded his attention, it was flayed backs and autopsies. He was to see more 'pitiable objects' over the coming months than he could have imagined.

29 January 1788—A convenient place for the cattle being found, the few that remained were landed. The frame and materials for the governor's house, constructed by Smith in St George's Fields, were likewise sent on shore, and some preparations made for erecting it.

This day Captain Hunter and Lieutenant Bradley began to take a survey of the harbour. In the course of the last week, all the marines, their wives and children, together with all the convicts, male and female, were landed. The laboratory and sick tents were erected, and, I am sorry to say, were soon filled with patients afflicted with the true camp dysentery and the scurvy. More pitiable objects were perhaps never seen. Not a comfort or convenience could be got for them, besides the very few we had with us.

His Excellency, seeing the state these poor objects were in, ordered a piece of ground to be enclosed, for the purpose of raising vegetables for them. The seeds that were sown upon this occasion, on first appearing above ground, looked promising and well, but soon after withered away, which was not indeed extraordinary, as they were not sown at a proper season of the year.

The sick have increased since our landing to such a degree that a spot for a general hospital has been marked out and artificers already employed on it. A proper spot, contiguous to the hospital, has been chosen, to raise such vegetables as can be produced at this season of the year; and where a permanent garden for the use of the hospital is to be established.

WILLIAM BRADLEY

The Ladies Kept Their Distance

Surveying the harbour, William Bradley, first lieutenant on the *Sirius*, had some rare opportunities to observe the Aborigines as they lived before European contact altered their ways. Perhaps with tales of the maidens of Tahiti in mind, he seems to have been particularly interested in the Eora women, who alas were too well chaperoned for the liking of the young sailor.

Tuesday 29 January 1788—Landed on a point forming the NW or middle branch to which we were followed by several of the natives along the rocks, having only their sticks which they use in throwing the lance with them. A man followed at some distance with a bundle of lances; they pointed with their sticks to the best landing place and met us in the most cheerful manner, shouting and dancing. The women kept at a distance near the man with the spears.

This mark of attention to the women, in showing us that although they met us unarmed they had arms ready to protect

them, increased my favourable opinion of them very much. Some of these people having pieces of tape and other things tied about them, we concluded them to be some of those people whom the governor had met here before. These people mixed with ours and all hands danced together. From here we went to Grotto Point, moored the boats for the night and made a tent fore and aft the longboat, in which we all slept.

A.M. Went over to Shell Cove and left this branch, taking it as reported by those who examined it when the boats first came into this harbour. As we left this branch we met several canoes with one man in each of them; they had so much confidence in us as to come close alongside our boats. After fixing the place of the rock and extent of the shoalwater round it we went into the north arm.

As we were going in to the first cove on the east side called Spring Cove, we were joined by three canoes with one man in each. They hauled their canoes up and met us on the beach leaving their spears in the canoes. We were soon joined by a dozen of these and found three amongst them with tinkers &c. hanging about them that had been given to them a week before by the governor on his first visit to this place. Our people and these mixed together and were quite sociable, dancing and otherwise amusing them. One of our people combed their hair with which they were much pleased; several women appeared at a distance, but we could not prevail on the men to bring them near us.

We had here an opportunity of examining their canoes and weapons: the canoe is made of the bark taken off a large tree of the length they want to make the canoe, which is gathered up at each end and secured by a lashing of strong vine which runs amongst the underbrush. One was secured by a small line.

They fix spreaders in the inside; the paddles are about two feet long, in shape like a pudding stirrer; these they use one in each hand and go along very fast sitting with their legs under them and their bodies erect and although they do not use

outriggers I have seen them paddle through a large surf without over-setting or taking in more water than if rowing in smooth water. From their construction they are apt to leak when any weight is in them; the man nearest that point of the canoe, where the water lies, heaves it out behind him with a piece of wood in the hollow of his hand, still keeping his body erect as when rowing.

They are by far the worst canoes I ever saw or heard of. I have seen some so small as eight feet long and others twice that length. In these canoes they will stand up to strike fish, at which they seem expert. The lances which they had here with them were one sort about twelve feet in length with four barbed prongs made of bone and fastened on to the prong by a stiff gum. These four prongs are secured to the stick and spread equally, about a foot in length; a smaller one of the same kind and one with a single stick barbed at and above the point. The long spears are indented at the end, for to receive a peg which is fixed on a stick two or three feet long and which they apply to throw the lance any considerable distance. The other end of this stick has a sharp hard shell fixed on it which serves for opening shellfish, getting them off the rocks and various other purposes.

The governor's plan with respect to the natives was, if possible, to cultivate an acquaintance with them without their having an idea of our great superiority over them, that their confidence and friendship might be more firmly fixed. We could not persuade any of them to go away in the boat with us.

Having occasion to measure another base line we landed at the upper part of the north arm for that purpose. While we were about it two of the natives came down, seemed pleased to meet us and much astonished at what we were doing. These people passed on to the place where our fire was and mixed with our people; they were neither of them armed. Soon after and as we were going along the beach a man and a very old woman met us. They stopped with us a short time and then walked on to the place our

people were at—this was the first woman that came among us.

She appeared feeble with old age, very dark and ugly; we could not from her judge what the younger ones might be, but we could now some hopes that by the old woman coming to us that the others who we saw on the beach close by the woods would allow us an interview. As we approached them they ran away and as soon as we retired they showed themselves again and had a party of very stout armed men near them. We used many entreaties without effect. The ladies still kept their distance.

When we had done what we had to do, we returned to the boat leaving two of the officers on shore with the people who were cooking, that nothing improper might be done by them as we had now many of the natives assembled about us and armed and several more coming along the beach. Two muskets were handed to our people on shore and the other arms kept ready in the longboat. These people all came among us and laid their lances down on the beach. The old woman made herself very comfortable and was with us from our first meeting with her. She and her companions expressed a wish to know whether we were men or women. These people wanted everything from us not give them anything, in hopes of bringing the women among us by keeping what articles we had to give them and signified to the men that we would give all to the women if they would come from the woods where they were sitting looking at us.

Wednesday 30 January, P.M.—This scheme at last succeeded, for as we left the beach to dine in the boats, which lay close to, the women came, having a party of armed men with them who had each a green bough in his hand which they waved as they advanced. They came near us and sat down amongst our other visitors. The party of armed men stood by them and never laid down their spears.

We made signs to them that if they would stay we would bring them ashore some things which we showed to them. We took

THE LADIES KEPT THEIR DISTANCE

every precaution to prevent improprieties being committed by ordering the people out of the small boat, and Captain Hunter and the three officers went in her from the longboat to go on shore, leaving the muskets in the longboat loaded in case there might be occasion to use them.

As we approached the shore the women retired, on which we immediately put back to the longboat making the same signs as we had done before. An old man then called to the women and the greatest part of them returned and came to the old man who walked close down to the waterside as we approached. The armed men with the boughs posted themselves together just by and every one of the men now took up their spears and kept them poised ready for throwing, standing close to the edge of the beach and rocks. When the boat landed, the old man came to the side of her and wanted the things which we had held out to the women to take to them; which we refused and signified to them that we must give the things to the women ourselves.

The old man, finding us determined, spoke to the women and one of them came in to the water to the side of the boat. We ornamented this naked beauty with strings of beads and buttons round her neck, arms and wrists. She appeared rather frightened although she affected a laugh and seemed pleased with her presents. When she retired several of the other women came to the side of the boat, attended by the old man. We ornamented these the same as the first: some came without fear, others trembling and laughing, hesitating before they would come and some just near enough to reach the things. Two of them could not be persuaded to come within two or three yards of the boat—to those we threw some things and gave the old man some for them.

The whole of this time the men who kept their lances ready were silent and attentive to what was doing. Two men were placed on a separate rock we supposed to keep a lookout upon the longboat. After having disposed of our trifling presents we went off to

the longboat. As soon as we put off the men held their spears carelessly and began shouting, laughing and dancing. We counted seventy-two besides women and children: this was more than twice the number ever yet seen together before, either in this harbour or Botany Bay.

The men we met with here were in general stout and well-limbed. The women excepting the very old woman, were young and in general shorter than the men; very straight-limbed and well featured, their voice a pleasing softness, they were all entirely naked, old and young. The men had their beards long and very bushy; their hair hangs about their heads clotted with dirt and vermin. Some of them had the teeth of some animal and pieces of bone stuck in their hair with gum. They are so dirty that it is hard to tell the real colour of their hides, which I think is nearly black. Their noses somewhat flat and all those that we noticed had a hole bored, through which they sometimes put a stick or small bone but of all this party only one wore it.

Most of these men had lost one of the fore teeth and their skins are much scarred, not like those commonly seen from wounds, this as well the lop of a particular tooth is a custom observed amongst them that we cannot yet learn the reason for. They walk very upright and very much with their hands behind them.

RALPH CLARK

What a Terrible Night

Sydney's violent summer storms traumatised Ralph Clark. He was the only First Fleet diarist to record his dreams, and his dear Alicia appeared in most of them, in the role of lover or hussy or both. Here she allows herself to be seduced by a certain Kempster, of whom

history records nothing else but that he was Alicia's imaginary lover and a haunter of dockyards.

Thursday 31 January 1788—what a Terrible night it was last of thunder lighting and Rain—was obliged to get out of my tent with nothing on but my shirt to Slacking the tent Poles—dreamt of You my dear Sweet woman and that I was in bed with you and that I dreamt also that I was very Angry with You and that I wanted to run Kempster throu for a Breach of Friendship—remarkably hott have nothing to Sleep but a Poor Tent and a little grass to Sleep on...

Friday 1 February—...in all the course of my life I never Slept worse my dear wife than I did [last] night—what with the hard cold ground Spiders ants and every vermin that you can think of was crawling over me I was glad when the morning came—my poor Poutch was my Pillow—dreamt that I was in the dockyard and that a Gentleman a stranger told me that the things that I Saw were Kempsters which he had bought as a Saile—went out with my Gun and Kild only one Parrot—they are the most beautiful birds that I ever Saw—when it is please god that I am to Return to you my dear woman I will bring Some of them home for you.

ARTHUR BOWES SMYTH

The Tempest Came On

While the male convicts were put ashore at the first opportunity, it was the best part of two weeks before Phillip gave the order for the women to disembark. There were 189 of them out of a total of 732 convicts. Many arrived on the *Lady Penbryn*, the vessel on which