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Introduction

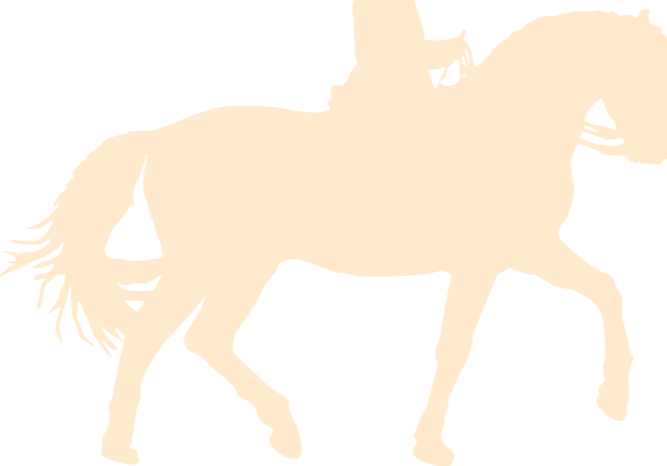
This series traces Australia's colonial history, from the very earliest of times when **Aboriginal peoples** and **Torres Strait Islanders** lived undisturbed on the Australian continent, to the arrival of the Europeans in 1788 to set up the first **colony**, to the turn of the century, when Australia became a unified nation and the colonies became states. Each book explores the history of a different colony, examining its **indigenous** people, European settlement, development and expansion, and the process of **federation** in the colony.

A Pivotal Moment in History

On 26 January 1788, a small fleet of British ships landed at Sydney Cove, establishing a permanent European settlement based on convict labour. Forces of change were unleashed by that relatively modest event that would reshape the continent.

From that moment, the devastation of the indigenous people began, laying waste to tens of thousands of years of culture. At the same time, the Europeans started carving out a life in this strange place. The trees kept their leaves, but shed their bark. The seasons were reversed. Animals hopped rather than ran. The soil was thin and easily exhausted. Still, these Europeans and the ones who came after them forced themselves onto this country permanently.

Over the years and decades that followed, the Europeans did what they could to tame the country and turn it into something they could call home. At the same time, the people living there came to think of themselves less as people from somewhere else who happened to be in Australia, and more as Australians.

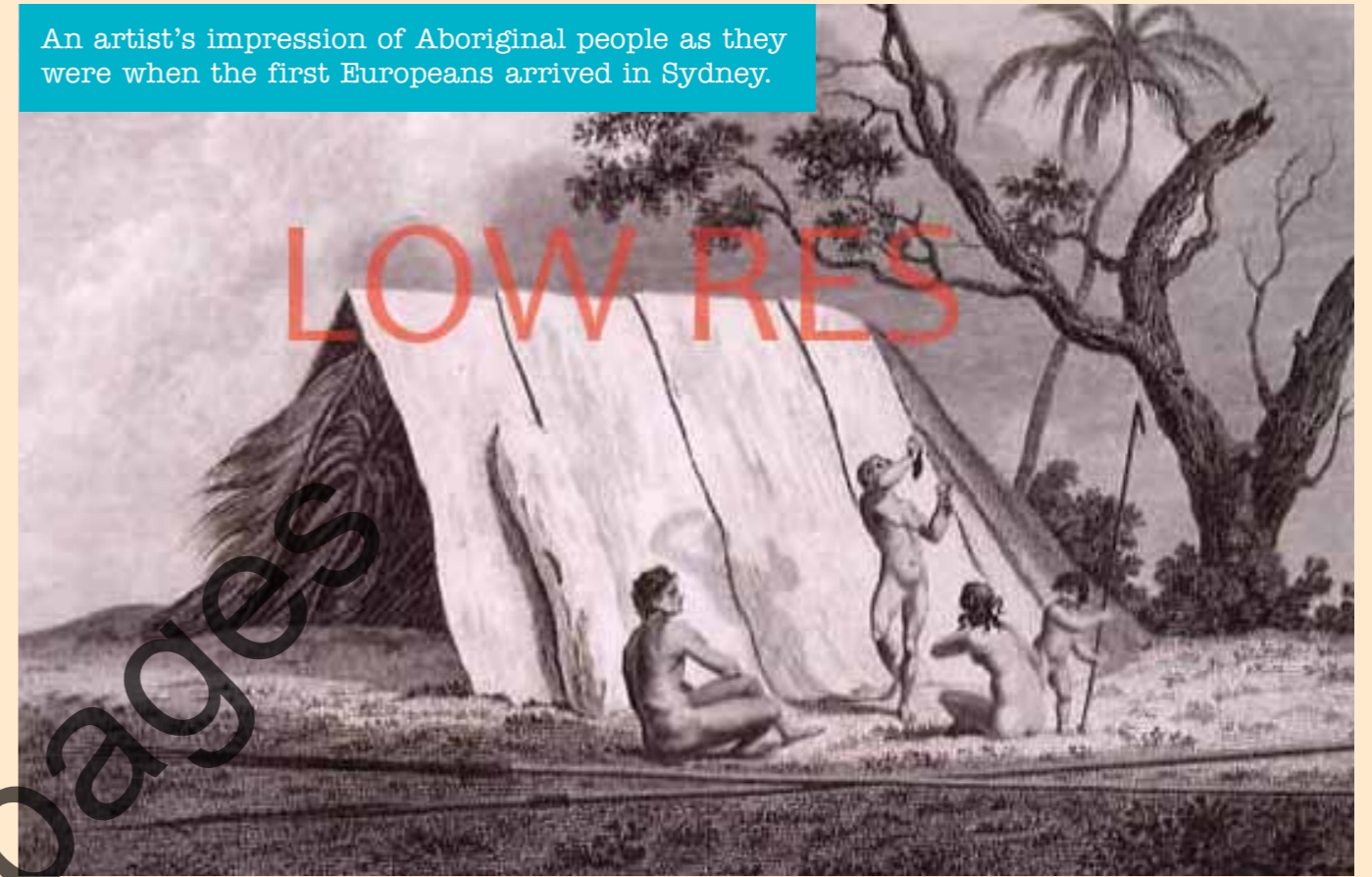


About this book

This book covers the colony of New South Wales from before the arrival of the First Fleet to Federation in 1901. You can read about:

- who the indigenous people were and how they lived
- when Europeans first arrived and what they did
- how Europeans spread across the colony
- the economic development of the colony
- how governance evolved into a representative democracy
- how New South Wales joined the other colonies to create an independent nation, the Commonwealth of Australia.

An artist's impression of Aboriginal people as they were when the first Europeans arrived in Sydney.



The First Fleet arrived in Sydney Cove in 1788.



Australia Before Europeans

The first human inhabitants of Australia were **Aboriginal peoples**, who came from South-East Asia tens of thousands of years ago. They, along with those who settled in the Torres Strait Islands, became the land's **indigenous** people. Their hunter-gatherer societies, some of which still exist today, are the oldest continuous societies on the planet.

The First Australians

No one knows exactly when people first arrived on the continent of Australia. Current estimates usually put it at about 60 000 years ago, although they range from 40 000 to 125 000 years. Even if it were only 40 000 years, that is still 180 times longer than Europeans have been on this continent.

Australia's indigenous people were generally nomadic hunter-gatherers. However, there was a wide variety of lifestyles. The **Torres Strait Islanders**, for example, were surrounded by water and lived a lifestyle based on the sea. Those people who lived in the heart of the desert lived an entirely different lifestyle. By the time Europeans arrived, the Aboriginal peoples, who numbered between 300 000 and one million, had spread across the continent and adapted to every kind of environment.

Sophisticated Societies

Aboriginal societies and cultures were rich and varied, emphasising kinship, oral history, spirituality and connection to ancestral lands. In the late 1700s, there were over 200 Aboriginal languages and hundreds more **dialects**, with intricate grammar and large vocabularies. Many people spoke several languages and dialects. It was not uncommon for a person's mother, father and partner all to speak different languages.

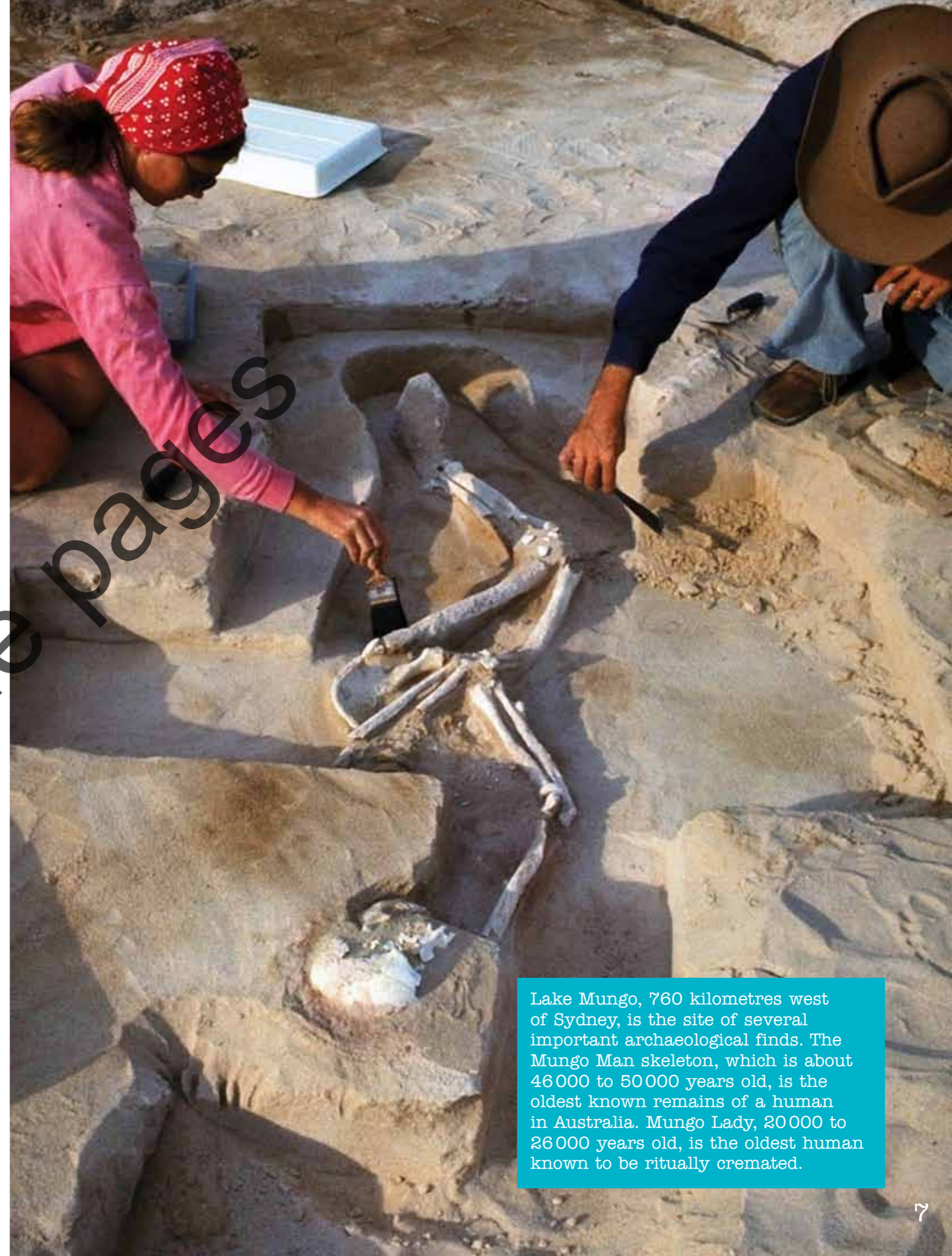
Aboriginal social groups were tied strongly to particular territories and rooted deeply in the Dreamtime. Their societies lived sustainably on the land and with each other for hundreds of generations.

The Dreamtime

The Dreamtime is a broad concept covering Aboriginal peoples' mythology and spiritual beliefs. It includes the time when mythic beings formed the land, plants and animals, and left behind rules of behaviour for people to follow.

Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

The term "Aboriginal peoples" refers mainly to the indigenous people of mainland Australia and Tasmania. The term "Torres Strait Islanders" refers to the indigenous people of the Torres Strait Islands in Far North Queensland.



Lake Mungo, 760 kilometres west of Sydney, is the site of several important archaeological finds. The Mungo Man skeleton, which is about 46 000 to 50 000 years old, is the oldest known remains of a human in Australia. Mungo Lady, 20 000 to 26 000 years old, is the oldest human known to be ritually cremated.

Aboriginal Peoples in New South Wales

Aboriginal peoples lived diverse lives across New South Wales for thousands of years. Some were coastal, such as the Cadigal and the Birrabirragal in what is now Sydney. Others had land-based lives, such as the Mulgoa and Gandangara people of the Southern Highlands, Penrith area and Blue Mountains.

A Variety of Bands and Groups

When Europeans arrived in 1788, the population of what is now New South Wales was at least 100 000. There were more than 70 languages and **dialects** across the area, with more than 30 Aboriginal bands or groups (which the Europeans called “tribes”) in the Greater Sydney area alone.

Lives of Hunting and Gathering

Like other Aboriginal peoples, those of New South Wales survived on the resources found where they lived. Some groups were nomadic, while others were more settled. Coastal groups such as the Cadigal ate a lot of fish and mussels, while inland groups ate more kangaroo and emu meat. They also ate plants such as yams and berries.

Much of Aboriginal life depended on where they lived. For example, the Guringai people, who lived between what is now Newcastle and Sydney, had access to abundant resources. This meant they did not have to travel much. They could provide for their needs with just four or five hours of work. This left plenty of time for lives that embraced ritual, language, connecting with spirit, and law.

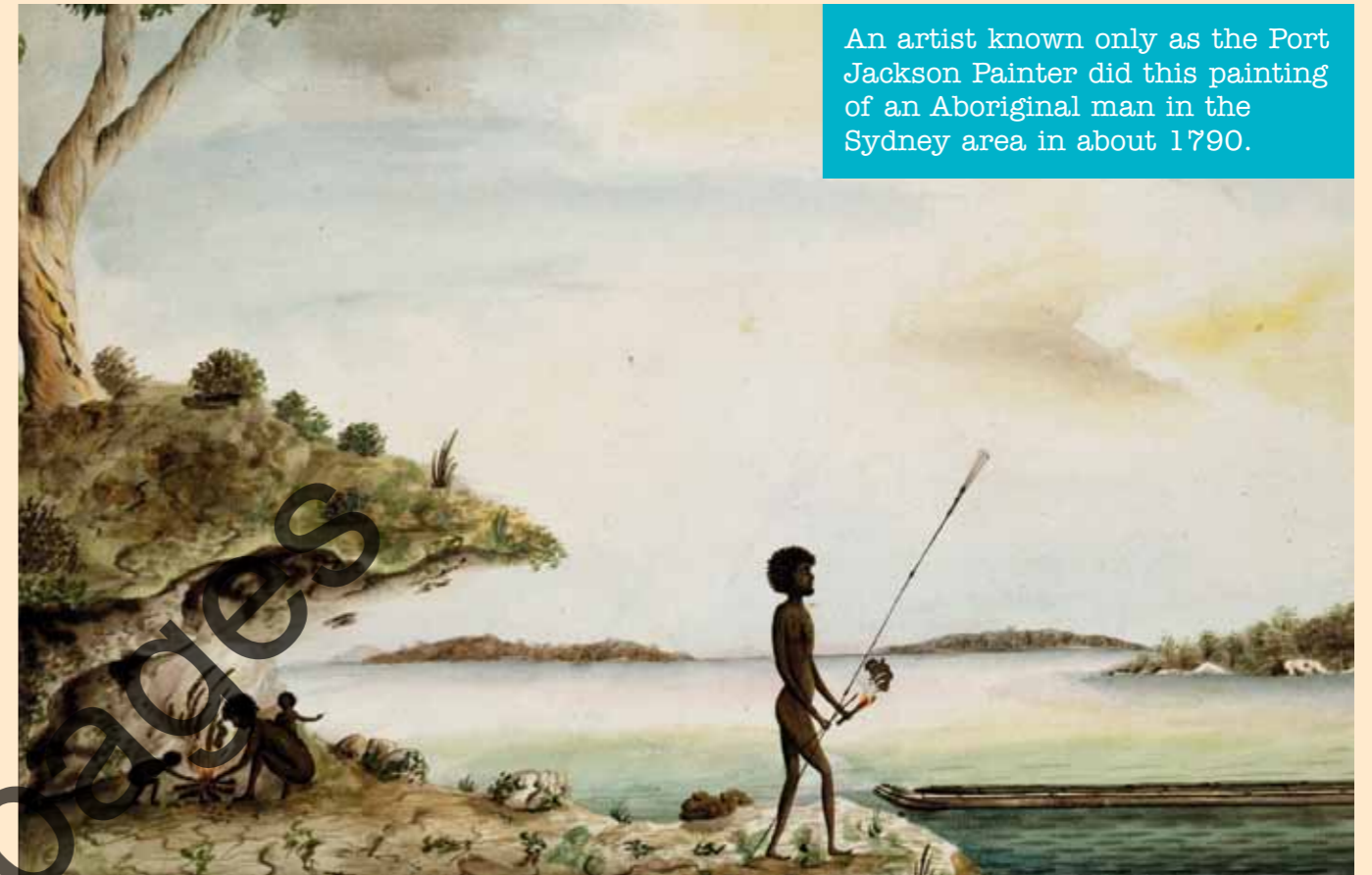
Fire-stick Farming

Some people say that Aboriginal peoples did not farm, but that is not strictly accurate. While they may not have grown rows of sown crops the way Europeans did, they used fire in a method called “fire-stick farming”.

Fire-stick farming involved deliberately burning areas of land in a controlled way. This had many effects. It kept paths clear, snakes at bay and stimulated fresh growth, which in turn attracted kangaroos and other meat sources. Fire was also used to preserve open woodlands, to recycle nutrients into the ground and to encourage the growth of particular kinds of edible plants. For Aboriginal peoples, fire was a tool they could use to shape the land to their needs—clearly a kind of farming.

Eora

The Aboriginal people of the Sydney area are often called the Eora. The term “Eora” means “here” or “of this place”, and was used by the people Aboriginal people of the area to describe themselves when Europeans came. The term was used broadly to refer to members of six different clans: Cadigal, Wangal, Burramattagal, Wallumattagal, Muru-ora-dial and Kameygal.



An artist known only as the Port Jackson Painter did this painting of an Aboriginal man in the Sydney area in about 1790.



In 1788, this was an artist's impression of Aboriginal peoples using fire sticks to hunt kangaroos.

First Europeans

In 1770, the explorer Captain James Cook raised the flag for King George III and thereby claimed the eastern part of Australia for England, calling it New South Wales. However, it was the arrival of the First Fleet in 1778, with the express purpose of creating a permanent settlement and penal colony, which signalled the beginning of New South Wales.

The First Fleet

A total of 1403 men, women and children left Portsmouth, England, on 13 May 1787, bound for Botany Bay, on the other side of the world. Just over half of them were convicts, sentenced to serve their jail terms in a new penal colony.

The eight-month journey was miserable. The conditions were cramped, movement was limited, and people were bored and afraid of the unknown. In January 1788, the fleet arrived at Botany Bay, as suggested by Cook. However, Captain Arthur Phillip, the colony's new governor, decided that Botany Bay was not an appropriate site for a settlement due to lack of fresh water and unsuitable soil. The ships moved north to Port Jackson, and the colony was proclaimed on 26 January 1788.

The New Colony

Life in the new colony was harsh for convicts and non-convicts alike. Food was scarce, disease and pests were plentiful and **Aboriginal peoples** were generally hostile. Few convicts knew how to farm or fish. While Cook had reported that the land was fertile, well watered and lush, it was, in fact, unsuitable for farming or grazing, and the weather was hot and dry.

The new arrivals were isolated from the rest of the world and inadequately provisioned for food, shelter or clothing. Tools broke or wore out. The local plants were unappetising. Hunting was limited. Resupply was months

away, and the limited rations meant that only so much work could be accomplished. By the time the Second Fleet arrived in June 1790, the situation was desperate, with the colony teetering on starvation. The Second Fleet brought additional sickly convicts, but also the supplies needed for survival.

By 1791, with more regular supply ships and better farming results due to a break in the drought, the colony began to expand.

Devastation by Disease

The arrival of Europeans was deadly for local Aboriginal peoples. The settlers brought unfamiliar diseases to which Aboriginal peoples had no immunity, such as colds, influenza and measles. Smallpox, or possibly chickenpox, wiped out half of Sydney's indigenous people in 1789 alone, and the community never recovered.

The Supplies

The supply ships were provisioned to enable the colony to survive for two years, after which time it was supposed to be self-sufficient. Provisions included nails, several kinds of axes and hoes, sheep, horses, goats, chickens, dogs, cats, clothing, tools, building materials, combs, shoes, a portable canvas house for the governor, bowls, trees, seeds, hammocks, beds, rum, brandy, hats, brick moulds and a piano.

Source: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~firstff/list.htm>

The People

| Date | Departed Portsmouth | Arrived Port Jackson |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Officials and passengers | 16 | 14 |
| Ships' crews | 324 | 269 |
| Marines | 247 | 245 |
| Marines' wives and children | 46 | 54 |
| Convicts (men) | 579 | 543 |
| Convicts (women) | 193 | 189 |
| Convicts' children | 14 | 18 |
| Total | 1403 | 1332 |

Source: <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/pol/timeline.pdf>

The Ships

The 11 ships of the First Fleet consisted of two naval ships—HMS *Sirius* and HMS *Supply*; six convict ships—*Alexander*, *Charlotte*, *Friendship*, *Lady Penrhyn*, *Prince of Wales* and *Scarborough*; and three supply ships—*Golden Grove*, *Fishburn* and *Borrowdale*.

The First Fleet arrives in New South Wales.

