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Captain Arthur Phillip

The First Fleet was the group of ships that sailed from England to settle a new **colony** in New South Wales in the 18th century. Captain Arthur Phillip was chosen to lead the fleet and to be the **governor** of the colony.

A Navy Man

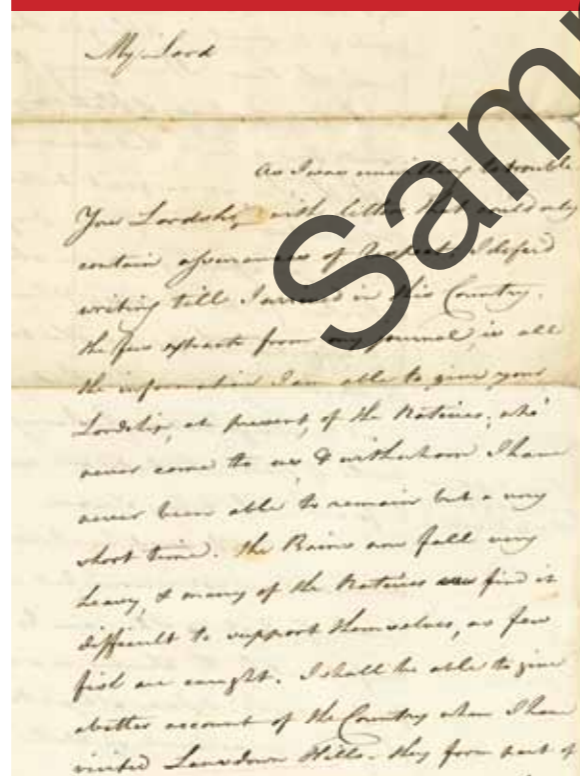
The English government had never attempted such a large resettlement before. Many people were surprised that the King of England, George III, and Lord Sydney, **Home Secretary** of the English government, chose Captain Phillip for such an important role. Phillip had a naval background, but he had never governed a colony.

Phillip was only 13 when he began his training with the navy. He fought in the Seven Years War against Spain and was made lieutenant. At the end of the war in 1763, he was **retired** on half-pay and began farming. In 1774–78, he served as captain with the Portuguese navy in a war against Spain. He returned to the English navy in 1778 and captained two other ships before being retired again on half-pay in 1784.

A Good Choice

In 1786, Phillip was chosen to lead the First Fleet and become governor of New South Wales. He was a kind-hearted man who was interested in the wellbeing of the convicts in his charge. He was also a careful planner, but not all of his plans worked out.

One of Arthur Phillip's letters to Lord Sydney about his arrival in NSW



This oil painting of Captain Arthur Phillip was painted by Francis Wheatley in 1786.

The Naming of a Country

A Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman, named Australia 'New Holland' in 1644, after his home country of Holland.

English explorer Captain James Cook claimed the east coast of Australia in 1770 and named it 'New South Wales'.

In 1805, Matthew Flinders, an English **navigator**, suggested the name 'Australia', which came from the Latin term 'Terra Australis', which means 'southern land'.

First Fleet Facts

- The First Fleet
- carried about 1500 people
 - sailed 24 000 kilometres
 - was made up of 11 small ships.

The First Fleet Ships

Eleven ships were **commissioned** to sail on the First Fleet. They were sailing ships, so they could only set sail if the weather conditions were right.

The Ships

The *Sirius* and the *Supply* were warships belonging to the Royal Navy. Captain Phillip sailed on the *Sirius*, which was the **flagship**. It was fitted with extra guns in case the new settlement needed **fortifications**.

Five **merchant ships** came from private owners. The *Alexander*, the *Charlotte*, the *Friendship*, the *Lady Penrhyn* and the *Scarborough* carried the convicts. A sixth ship, the *Prince of Wales*, was added to the fleet when the others became too crowded. It also carried **marines** and their families.

The *Borrowdale*, the *Fishburn* and the *Golden Grove* were the supply ships. They carried supplies, such as food, animals and tools.

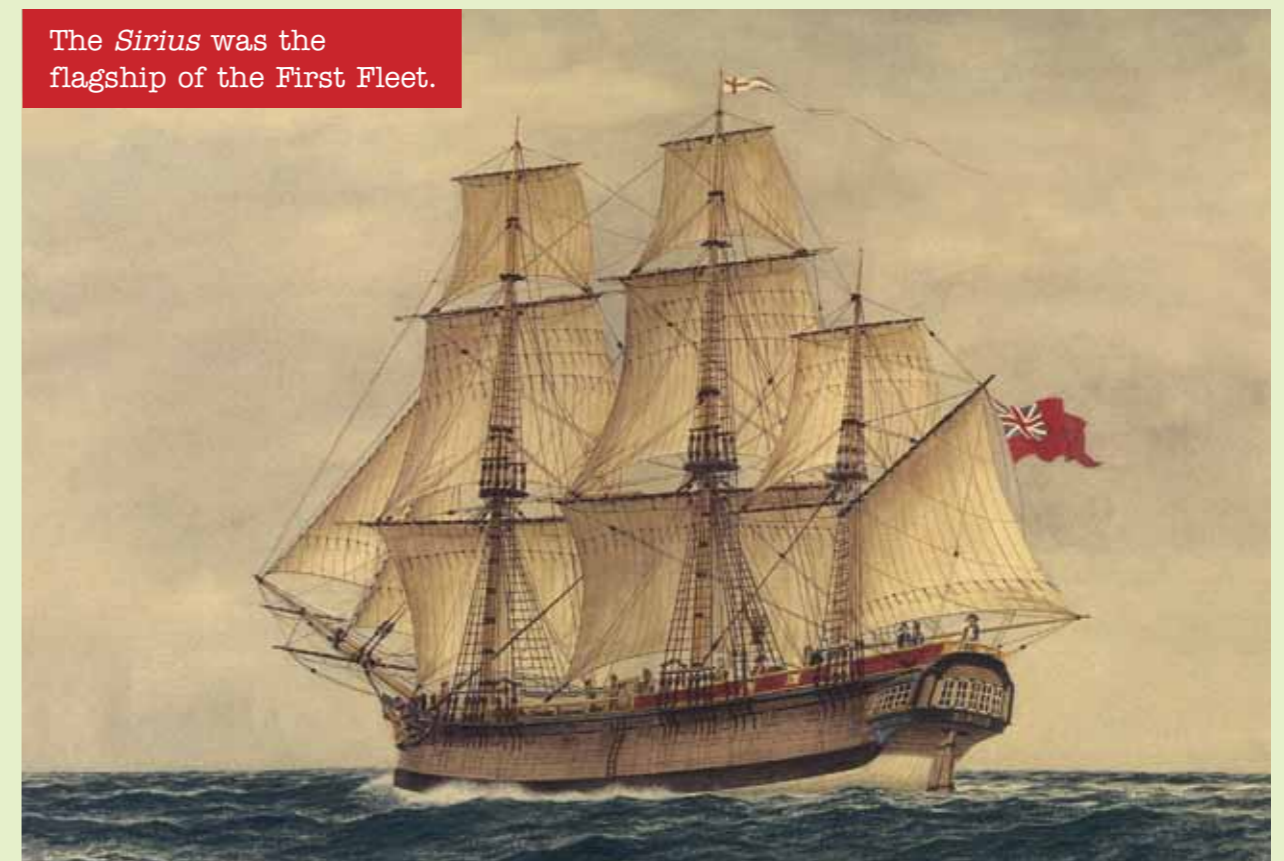
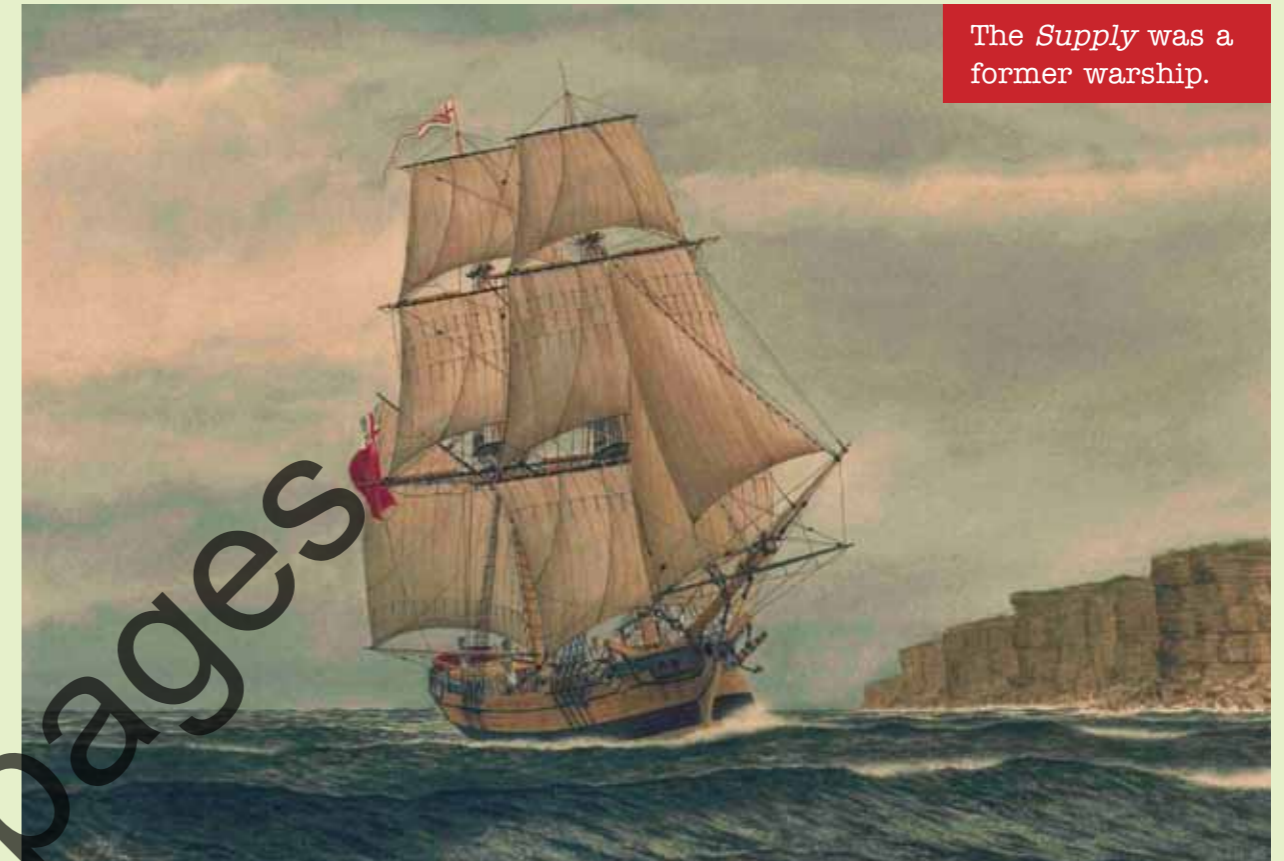
Ship Facts

None of the ships had been specially made to carry convicts. Cells had to be built to separate males and females. Pens were installed for the animals.

The ships were very small compared to the ships used today. The largest ship, the *Alexander*, was less than 40 metres long. It needed a crew of almost 100 people to sail it. The smallest ship was only 21 metres long and had a crew of about 30.

The Fastest

Captain Phillip discovered that not all the ships sailed well or at the same speed. The *Supply* was the fastest ship.



The First Fleet Passengers

The exact numbers of people on the First Fleet is not known, because the records that were kept have different numbers. It is thought there was a total of about 1500 people.

The Passengers

Six of the 11 ships carried about 780 convicts. These people had committed a variety of crimes, often stealing food or money, and their punishment was **transportation**.

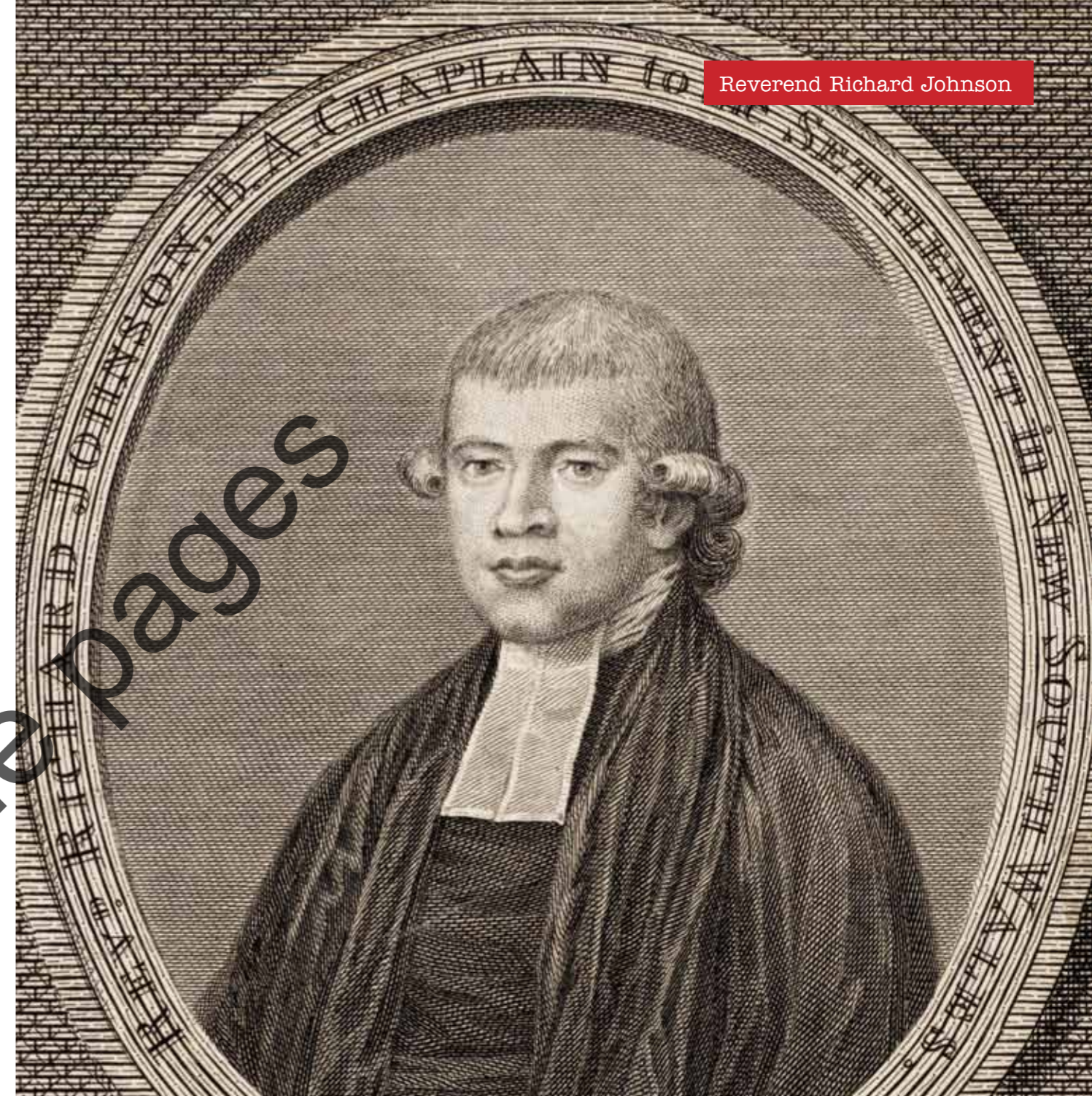
The approximate number of convicts, including the children of convicts, on board the ships is shown in the table below.

The three supply ships carried about 20 to 30 passengers each, as well as the crew. The *Prince of Wales* carried most of the families of the **marines**.

It was very expensive for the government to send 11 ships to the other side of the world. They wanted the ships to drop off the convicts in New Holland and get back to England as quickly as possible.

Convict Ships			
Ship	Male Convicts	Female Convicts	Children
<i>Alexander</i>	195	0	0
<i>Charlotte</i>	88	20	6
<i>Friendship</i>	76	21	0
<i>Lady Penrhyn</i>	0	101	12
<i>Prince of Wales</i>	1	49	3
<i>Scarborough</i>	208	0	0

Reverend Richard Johnson



Books on Board

Reverend Richard Johnson, from the Church of England, set sail on the First Fleet with his wife and a servant. He offered his religious services to people on board.

Reverend Johnson took 4200 books, including 100 Bibles and 100 *Books of Common Prayer* and 50 leaflets called 'Caution to Swearers'. In the 18th century, though, very few people could read and write, especially not convicts.

Getting the Convicts Ready

The convicts were moved from overcrowded jails all over England to the ships of the First Fleet.

Getting to the Ships

Some convicts were chained together on horse and carts and taken to the docks. Convicts on prison **hulks** were rowed down the river to where the ships were waiting. Prisoners from Newgate Prison were loaded onto the *Alexander* and the *Lady Penrhyn* and shipped to Portsmouth where the rest of the fleet was docked. By 16 March 1787, all 11 ships of the First Fleet were gathered at Portsmouth, but it would be another two months before they set sail.

A Long Time

Some convicts were on board the ships for more than a year before they touched land again.

On Board

Convicts were boarded onto the ships whether they were ill, frail or pregnant. Most were filthy dirty. They were chained and locked up below deck in freezing cold temperatures, with no heating or lighting. The convicts had very little clothing and were only given one blanket each.

By 15 April, 11 men on the *Alexander* and one woman on the *Lady Penrhyn* had died.

Captain Phillip was concerned about the convicts being locked up below deck for so long. He asked for, and was granted, permission to move the ships a few kilometres out to sea so the prisoners could go up on deck for fresh air.

Convicts were chained together to stop them running away.

