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Sir Roger Carrick *Admiral Arthur Phillip RN, Founder & First Governor of Australia: A British View*

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Arthur Phillip by Francis Wheatley (1747-1801), oil on canvas, 1786
Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, NPG 1462.

Admiral Arthur Phillip RN, Founder & First Governor of Australia: A British View

Sir Roger Carrick

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This book is based on the Arthur Phillip Memorial Address given at St Mary Le Bow in January 2006, and on illustrated lectures given for the Britain-Australia Society at Marlborough College and the Guildhall, Bath, in 2006, and for the Australia-Britain Society in Sydney in 2007.

"Governor Phillip is a good Man,
remember me kindly to him."
Rear Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson to his wife, 17th April 1798

Royal Navy officer, Commodore of the First Fleet and First Governor of Australia, Arthur Phillip was described by a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Sir Anthony Eden (later

Lord Avon), as 'one of the most eminent men of the eighteenth century'. A recent Premier of New South Wales, Robert Carr, called Phillip the 'greatest ever Australian'.

Arthur Phillip was born in October 1738 in London, the son of Jacob Phillip, a language teacher who came from Frankfurt, and Elizabeth, née Breach, who had remarried after the death of her previous husband, John Herbert, a seaman.

The Naval and diplomatic appointment of Captain Arthur Phillip Royal Navy as Commander of the First Fleet and Governor-designate of New South Wales was made in 1786, the day after Phillip turned forty-eight. Arthur Phillip was not the most obvious choice. His origins were relatively humble. His appearance was un-prepossessing: a slight, stooped man, with long legs, but not much above five feet tall and with a prominent tooth missing. The *Dictionary of National Biography* tells us that by middle age the hardships of life at sea had shrivelled his body. A fellow officer described him thus: 'Well I remember his little figure, smothered up in his brown camlet coat'. Phillip had begun his career with no really good connections, which were vital in the eighteenth century. He did earn some friendship, admiration and a little patronage during his career, but in 1786 he had no great reputation for leadership. His appointment was much disputed.

Then there was the job. Captain Phillip planned to be, and was, a humane Governor who ran an enlightened regime; but even he would have been surprised at the more strident criticism in London of the transportation of convicts to Australia. One

Alexander Dalrymple in his 'Serious Admonition to the Public on the intended Thief Colony at Botany Bay' wrote that felons were now to be 'their own masters in a temperate climate, where they have every object of comfort for ambition before them'. The Whitehall Post, which Arthur Phillip must have read, put it in verse:

> Go to an island to take special charge,
> Much warmer than Britain, and ten times as large;
> No custom-house duty, no freightage to pay,
> And tax-free they'll live when at Botany Bay.

What bigotry! What ignorance! But, as one of Australia's great historians, Geoffrey Blainey, has explained, in the eighteenth century, Australia was more remote than the Himalayas or central Siberia.

We British persist in our attachment to distant diplomatic appointments. In the early twentieth century Hilaire Belloc wrote a poem, about and entitled Lord Lundy. Some seventy years later, when I took up the post in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of Deputy Head of Personnel Department, responsible for appointments, I found the poem's last six lines framed as a precept and guide and hung on my office wall. Those lines of Belloc read:

> Sir! You have disappointed us!
> We had intended you to be

The next Prime Minister but three:
The stocks were sold; the Press was squared:
The Middle Class was quite prepared.
But as it is! . . . My language fails!
Go out and govern New South Wales!

Young Arthur Phillip attended the Greenwich Naval Seamen's College; was bound apprentice aboard a whaler based in Greenland; joined the Royal Navy at 15 as a Midshipman; served with the notorious Admiral Byng; was sent on naval espionage assignments, and later on secondment to the Portuguese Navy; and was put on half pay, when he lived near Lyndhurst in the New Forest in Hampshire, and passed his time in farming and the magisterial and social occupations of an eighteenth-century country gentleman. All this contributed to the forming of this man for his Command and his Governorship, his finest and historic task.

Arthur Phillip was commended by his Greenwich Headmaster for his 'diplomacy and mildness' and for being 'reasonable, businesslike in . . . everything he undertakes, always seeking perfection'. The Portuguese Navy found him to be an officer 'most honourable and meritorious'. A report praised his 'judgement, integrity, tact and sometimes high-handed bravery'. Another Portuguese report, interesting for its view not only of Arthur Phillip, but for its perception of the British in general, records: 'One of the officers of the most distinct merit . . . As to his disposition, he is somewhat self-distrustful; but he is an officer

of education and principle, he gives way to reason, and does not, before doing so, fall into those exaggerated and unbearable excesses of temper which the majority of his fellow countrymen do.' The report on Phillip continued: 'He is clean handed; is an officer of truth and very brave; and is no flatterer, saying what he thinks, but without temper or want of respect'.

With the Portuguese, Arthur Phillip saw slavery; and he hated it. His first law in Australia was to give effect to his words 'there will never be any slavery in this land'. The Portuguese were the first to make land grants to convicts – after Phillip had requested them to do so. Here was a fine, self-made man, well equipped with much relevant and valuable experience, fine seamanship, administration, five or six foreign languages, sound and far-sighted judgement, and devotion to duty, to humanitarian values, and to high ideals. He had real courage, resolve, commitment, and sure vision. Arthur Phillip *should* have been the nation's obvious choice.

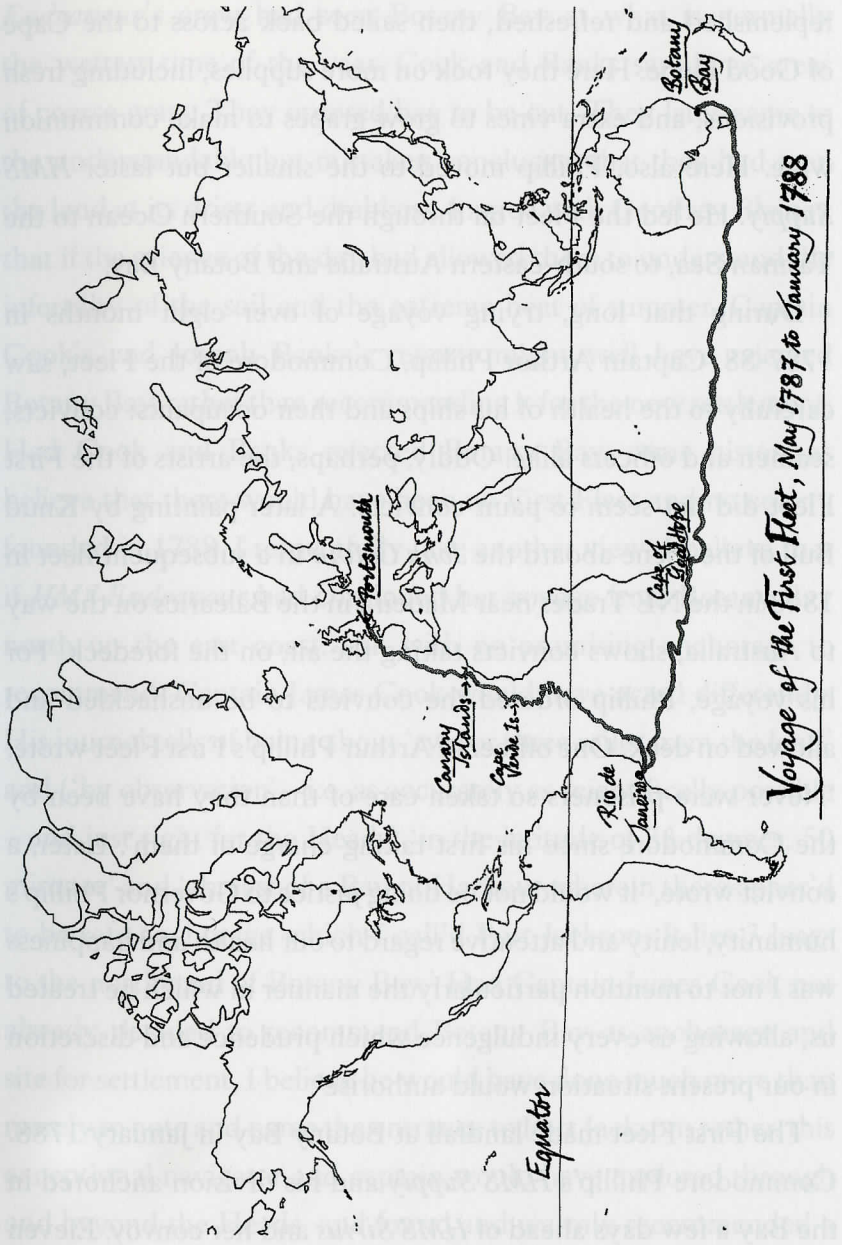
By the 1780s, Phillip knew a good deal about maintaining health aboard ships on long voyages. He also knew from experience that salient fact of colonial and international diplomacy: the devil lies in the detail. Phillip's extensive international and maritime experience also taught him practical politics. All these factors were useful in his long battle against Whitehall to secure for his Fleet the best available provisions, and orders. That battle is well detailed and explained in Alan Frost's *Botany Bay Mirages*.

In 1787, the year the MCC founded its headquarters at Lord's Cricket Ground, Captain Arthur Phillip kept the First

Fleet anchored off Portsmouth at Motherbank, Spithead for two months, while he argued in great detail with the Admiralty, the Home Office and the Treasury to ensure the Fleet was properly equipped; and that he would have sufficient powers, that his civil commission had the Great Seal; and that he would be plenipotentiary, specifically in that he could establish Courts Martial. That was unprecedented for a Royal Navy Captain in these circumstances. Once armed – with these powers, with his masterly seamanship, with his wise and extensive provisioning, including of limes, lemons and vegetables to ensure healthy and clean ships (a lesson he had learned in the West Indies), and with Kendall's chronometer;[1] Captain and Governor designate Arthur Phillip, aboard *HMS Sirius*, led the fleet of eleven ships, carrying a small group of civil officers, some 240 Marines (with a few wives and children) and some 760 convicts, 180 of them women – over a thousand souls in all. This was an unparalleled fleet voyage, and rather beyond the outer limits of the scientific and technical knowledge of the day. This was the very best of leadership, imagination, professionalism and management, including the right disciplines.

Phillip's First Fleet sailed 15,063 nautical miles to Botany Bay. During the voyage, via Tenerife, down and across the Atlantic to Rio de Janeiro – where, rather unlike Captain Cook earlier, Arthur Phillip was welcomed, having impressed the Governor there while serving with the Portuguese. The First Fleet,

[1] This was 'K1', a derivative or copy of 'H4', and kept by Phillip until his eventual return to London in 1793. It was later issued to Matthew Flinders, *inter alia*.



Map showing voyage of the First Fleet, May 1787 to January 1788.

replenished and refreshed, then sailed back across to the Cape of Good Hope. Here they took on more supplies, including fresh provisions, and extra vines to grow grapes to make communion wine. Here also, Phillip moved to the smaller but faster *HMS Supply*. He led the Fleet on through the Southern Ocean to the Tasman Sea, to south-eastern Australia and Botany Bay.

During that long, trying voyage of over eight months in 1787-88, Captain Arthur Phillip, Commodore of the Fleet, saw carefully to the health of his ships and their occupants: convicts, seamen and officers alike. Oddly, perhaps, the artists of the First Fleet did not seem to paint convicts. A later painting by Knud Bull of the scene aboard the *John Calvin* in a subsequent fleet in 1848 in the NE Trades near Madeira in the Balearics on the way to Australia, shows convicts taking the air, on the foredeck. For his voyage, Phillip ordered the convicts to be unshackled and allowed on deck. One officer of Arthur Phillip's First Fleet wrote, 'Never were prisoners so taken care of than they have been by the Commodore since his first taking charge of them'. Later, a convict wrote, 'it would not be doing justice to Governor Phillip's humanity, lenity and attentive regard to our health and happiness was I not to mention particularly the manner in which he treated us, allowing us every indulgence which prudence and discretion in our present situation would authorise'.

The First Fleet made landfall at Botany Bay in January 1788. Commodore Phillip's *HMS Supply* and his division anchored in the Bay a few days ahead of *HMS Sirius* and her convoy. Eleven years earlier, Captain Cook, botanist Joseph Banks, and *HMS*

Endeavour's crew had seen Botany Bay at what is normally the wettest time of the year. Cook and Banks saw large areas of coarse grass. They ordered hay to be cut. They later came to the understandable but mistaken conclusion that they had seen the land at its driest and drabbest. I agree with Geoffrey Blainey that if the science of the day had allowed them to understand the infertility of the soil and the extreme heat of summer, Captain Cook's and Joseph Banks's reports might well have rejected Botany Bay, rather than recommending it for the new settlement. Had Cook and Banks rejected Botany Bay, some historians believe that there would have been no First Fleet and no colony founded in 1788. I respectfully take another view: I believe that if *HMS Endeavour* had continued her voyage from Botany Bay north up the east coast, still with no promising anchorage to recommend, Captain James Cook would have acted differently. His journal tells of being about 'two or three miles from the land' and ('by observation' – i.e. as accurately as scientifically possible – and just right for the Heads) 'in the latitude of 33 degrees, 50 minutes' and 'abreast of a Bay or Harbour wherein there apper'd to be safe anchorage which I call'd Port Jackson. It lies 3 leags to the northward of Botany Bay.' Had Captain James Cook not already decided to recommend Botany Bay as anchorage and site for settlement, I believe he would have done much more than merely to note and name the entrance to Port Jackson: rather, this exceptional navigator and captain would have explored through and beyond the Heads, and found and warmly recommended a bay there, quite possibly that which Arthur Phillip was to name

Sydney Cove. In that case, the First Fleet would have sailed straight there and arrived earlier in January 1788; and England of the day would never have heard of Botany Bay.

At all events, on arrival in Botany Bay at a different time of the year, how right, intelligent and quick it was of Phillip to seek by water a deeper harbour by a more promising location for a new colony – at Sydney Cove in Port Jackson, which we now know as Sydney Harbour. Phillip named Sydney for Britain's then Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Thomas Townshend, Viscount Sydney, who was responsible in the British Government for the new colony.

A few yards from the southern shore of Sydney Cove, at a site now marked in Loftus Road by the Customs House, on 26th January 1788, Phillip led the Founding Ceremony. The flag was raised. Cheers were raised too, for His Majesty King George III. A volley was fired – both in celebration and, no doubt, as a message to the French explorer Le Comte de la Pérouse, who had arrived two days earlier on a voyage of discovery. The Frenchman soon left. There was some joy that warm January day in Sydney Cove, assuredly – the first Australia Day, if you will. Yet how very much greater were the obstacles, difficulties and hardships that now faced Governor Phillip, his official companions and the convicts: greater than perhaps they, and certainly anyone in England, could have realised.

Let's put that founding date, 'Australia Day', 1788, in a little context. The American Revolution had happened. The French Revolution was about to happen. Human Rights, then

called the Rights of Man, were being asserted; and both slavery and aristocratic privilege were under challenge in this Age of Enlightenment. The new philosophy argued that all men were potentially morally equal. Slavery and criminality should no longer be regarded as inherent from birth and immutable. Rather, Englishmen of the Enlightenment like Sydney and Phillip believed that those ills were conditioned by social circumstances and pressures, and were capable of change. The new colony was to be a place where young offenders could be sent for a second start in life. There would be a political and social experiment in the management of change: if it succeeded, the convicts would become new men and new women in a new world.

Despising as he did indeed slavery, and colonial societies based on fear, Arthur Phillip was keen in New South Wales to avoid executions so far as possible. Instead, he disciplined serious wrongdoers by exile to islands where they had to fend for themselves. The settlers aptly named one such rocky island in Sydney Harbour 'Pinchgut'. Now Fort Denison, unrecognisable as Pinchgut, it was fortified in the Crimean War in case of an attempted invasion by Russia. Phillip's policy and practice of exile were indeed, for their time, enlightened change. So was his policy of growing and nurturing the colony by positive reinforcement – by means of pardons, land grants, responsibility, marriage, and earned rewards.

So the gothic horrors of convict floggings, chain gangs, rape and violence, which we see on stage and in films and read of in novels, bear rather little resemblance to the truth of life in early

Colonial Australia. Convicts had virtually all the rights of free men on arrival in Australia. Their punishment was banishment from Britain, and precisely that: no more, no less. It was only the small recidivist percentage who re-offended that, later in the young colony's life, after Phillip's return to England, were flogged, chained or sent to places of secondary punishment like Port Arthur in Tasmania. That said, by our standards, and I'm sure by Arthur Phillip's, as he contemplated, now half a world away, reports from the New South Wales he had with much regret left, there were some excessive discipline and punishment in such places. Port Arthur is a ghostly place that should make any thinking Briton's flesh creep.

For the enlightened thinkers, then, jail was a conduit to freedom. Eventually, ex-convicts became Magistrates, lawyers and jurors. Some, the inspiration for Charles Dickens's Abel Magwitch, became millionaires. Among emancipists, Australians remember achievers such as James Ruse the farmer and Francis Greenway the architect, whom, not so incidentally, Arthur Phillip met in Clifton near Bristol in the summer of 1811, shortly before Governor Macquarie (to whom Phillip recommended the architect) was to employ Greenway to such handsome and lasting effect in Sydney.[2] There was William Redfern the doctor; and in business Mary Reiby and Samuel Terry – 'the Botany Bay Rothschild'; and there were many others.

[2] Greenway was a successful English West Country architect transported in 1812 for forgery.

But all this was a long way ahead, visionary material for Arthur Phillip and his new colony. For him, his officers, staff and convicts, the long, hard slog from 1788 to 1792 was epic. 'The labour of cultivation', as Phillip put it, was 'greater than I have known in any part of the world'. Crops were sown early in the first year. Some failed – because, as Phillip well knew, they had had to be planted at the wrong season. Consequently there were seriously short rations, of which a staple was a meagre portion of salt pork and rice. The best account of the First Fleet voyage and the first years of the new colony are to be found, in my view, in the fine writings of a remarkable young Marine Officer of Governor Phillip's party, Captain Watkin Tench. Of the rations, Watkin Tench wrote:

> The pork and rice had been brought with us from England. The pork had been salted between three and four years, and every grain of rice was a moving body, from the inhabitants lodged within it. We soon left off boiling the pork, as it had become so old and dry, that it shrunk one half in its dimensions when so dressed. Our usual method of cooking it was to cut off the daily morsel, and toast it on a fork before the fire, catching the drops which fell on a slice of bread, or in a saucer of rice.

Governor Phillip gave his private supplies to the general stocks and shared in the meagre rations and all the austerity measures. A few people died of hunger. Tough times breed crime, dissent and rebellion. There was a little of that in the first and second years, and Phillip dealt with it firmly and fairly. Some Marine Officers were hanged, for stealing food. In this enlightened new

colony, that decision for Arthur Phillip must have been a mind-wrenching and heart-rending one to make. Its deterrent effect must have been considerable.

Governor Arthur Phillip had many other hard decisions to take. Some much more directly concerned his second-in-command, his Lieutenant-Governor and Vice Admiralty Judge, Major Robert Ross, of the Marines (not then, Royal Marines, not until 1802). Phillip had cordial enough relations with Major Ross to begin with, though Ross was reportedly offended by Phillip not informing him of his intention to sail ahead from the Cape of Good Hope in *HMS Supply*. That may be explained by the fact that there were a number of orders to be kept secret by Phillip until after his last contact with the shore: to leave the Cape and sail eastwards was regarded by many as to leave the known world. On arrival in Australia, the rôle of the Marines accompanying the First Fleet was both to protect the settlement, and to preserve good order among the convicts. Major Ross insisted on his Marines performing the first of these duties only – the garrison duty. Phillip's restrained, even enlightened response was to command that to keep order, overseers of work parties should be appointed from within the ranks of the convicts themselves. This decision led to positive consequences for the development of the colony; but a negative consequence was the real resentment with which the Marines themselves reacted if challenged by the overseers when found out of bounds at night, especially if they were caught in the female convict quarters.

One (arguably more reasonable) cause of discontent among Marine officers was that they alone were excluded from the programme of land grants for other ranks, sailors and freed convicts. Governor Phillip removed this restriction, though probably due to the time needed to communicate with London, implementation was not immediate. At all events, Ross continued to seek every opportunity to obstruct rather than to support his superior the Governor. Phillip's forbearance was of no avail.

The underlying problem that caused relations between Phillip and Ross to deteriorate so badly was, I believe, that Major Ross, this strange, awkward, wilful officer, developed a passionate hatred for New South Wales and early colonial life. For Ross, this was a forbidding, strange land at the wrong side of the world, with no natural and sustaining fruits of its earth, with hopeless soil and poor quality timber near the settlement. Objective judgement deserted Ross. He wrote, 'Here is nature reversed upon itself', and went so far as to assert, 'Take my word for it; there is not a man in this place but that wishes to return [to England].' Ross became obsessive, his powers of proper leadership disappeared. Unsurprisingly, his officers became unhappy, quarrelsome and thoroughly discontented. At one time, five of Major Ross's own officers were under Court Martial. At another, Ross even fought a duel. He was indeed a most difficult and even dangerous man. Without Phillip's characteristic understanding and restraint, Ross could easily have suffered a far worse fate than Governor Phillip's eventual decision to send him, with some three hundred people, to take charge of the new settlement at Norfolk Island,

in succession to the excellent Lieutenant Philip Gidley King. Sadly, and despite the shining example of Arthur Phillip's enlightened régime, Ross imposed harsh martial law in beautiful but distant Norfolk Island, with cruel results of which no Briton could possibly be proud. It is sobering and saddening to visit that lovely place and to consider its history. Nowadays, however, it is a happy island, with some fine British expatriates among its Australian inhabitants.

Eventually, in 1791, the British Government decided to raise a military unit to replace the Marines: the New South Wales Corps. When the Corps arrived, some Marines took their discharge and stayed on as settlers. Others returned to Britain.

Throughout his service in New South Wales, Governor Phillip laboured hard, thoughtfully and imaginatively to better the conditions of life in the settlement. He explored – and found the fresh water rivers he named Hawkesbury and Nepean. He led experiments in growing and in hunting food. He led the colony in the study of the flora and fauna. In 1792, he had four kangaroos which slept beside the fire in his kitchen. Kangaroo was also found to be 'most excellent eating'. (This I warmly confirm: we used to serve it sometimes in the British Residence in Canberra, after a remarkably good English dry white wine with the preceding course, and a fine Barossa or Hunter Valley Cabernet Sauvignon with the kangaroo, which was roasted and accompanied by a sauce made from marmalade, or fresh blackcurrant. Brit and Aussie guests alike were surprised, but well satisfied, with both food and wine.)

One example of Arthur Phillip's foresight and imagination was that in November of his first year as Governor, he wrote to botanist Sir Joseph Banks, by then President of the Royal Society, as he frequently did, this time concerning deposits from the settlement at Sydney Cove of a white clay, for the production of porcelain. Joseph Banks sent on the samples he received to Josiah Wedgwood, who had trials made. Wedgwood replied to Banks the following spring saying that the clay was '. . . excellent material for pottery, and may certainly be the basis for a valuable manufacture for our infant colony there.' Josiah Wedgwood sent Banks medallions made from the pottery for his inspection as examples of what might be produced from the clay. The bas-relief design shows the figure of 'Hope encouraging Art and Labour under the influence of Peace, to pursue the employments necessary to give security and happiness to an infant settlement'. Arthur Phillip commented on the medallion: 'Wedgwood has shown the world that our Welch Clay is capable of receiving an elegant impression.' The medallion influenced the design of the first Great Seal of New South Wales, approved by King George III in 1790.

Phillip sent expeditions to Norfolk Island, where, as well as spruce pines for Royal Naval masts and spars (which, in practice, were not at all effective), and flax for canvas and cordage, edible seabirds and other food were found. Arthur Phillip sent convicts there – not for punishment, but (as the more objective historians conclude) for better nourishment, and to enable the rations to be shared among fewer people remaining in the settlement at

Sydney. The Royal Navy Frigate *HMS Guardian*, a First Fleet ship that had returned to London, was dispatched again from London for Sydney with half her guns removed to make room for the massive re-supplies Phillip had successfully sought. In the southern seas, an iceberg put paid to that relief. The cargo, nearly all of it, went overboard, and the Captain, Lieutenant Edward Riou, with a small remaining crew, struggled to sail the waterlogged and almost sunken ship back north-westwards some 2,400 miles on a necessarily eccentric course eventually to beach at Table Bay in today's South Africa. *HMS Sirius*, also sent for provisions, foundered just off Norfolk Island. Phillip dispatched other ships to buy supplies in China and Java. These were unpredictable missions. Only some succeeded.

In this state of deprivation, imagine the huge task of leadership of a disparately composed settlement, of nurturing an embryo colony. The Governor had been so wise to insist on those plenipotentiary powers, which amounted to a kind of autocracy. He used the powers with great care, meticulously and fairly, as ever, but also with a vision of the future whose foundation he was building so determinedly and against such fierce odds.

Given both Phillip's innate respect for humankind and his enlightened approach, it was to be expected that he strove to live amicably with the Aborigines. By the second year of the settlement, relations with the Aborigines had developed. Arthur Phillip also had a peculiar advantage: he lacked his right incisor, the evulsion of which, coincidentally, was a mark of initiation among the local Aborigines. Phillip instructed all the settlers to

treat the Aborigines with respect, and not to stress any cultural or intellectual difference or advantage. However, both groups inevitably encroached on each others' areas. The Aboriginal belief that livestock was common property was one problem. Another was that some convicts stole canoes and artefacts. There were some difficult passages, largely of misunderstanding between settlers and Aborigines. A few of these resulted in injury, including to Governor Arthur Phillip.

He would walk alone and unarmed among the Aborigines, and could communicate adequately with them. However, he nearly came to grief at Manly one day, when a confused elderly tribesman threw a spear at him with much force and some accuracy, and pierced him in the right side of the neck or shoulder. The barb protruded through the other side. There was an inevitable exchange of musket shot and spears. By one account (the Finers Stephens Innocent Report), Phillip would allow no retaliation, and the Aboriginal Chief, Bennelong, sent apologies. Bleeding profusely, the Governor headed for the boat, which must have been difficult and painful as the 10-foot long spear struck the ground behind him as he went. One of his officers, Henry Waterhouse, managed to break the shaft of the spear. Phillip made it to the boat, and, as the sailors rowed for Sydney Cove, made his will orally. Fortunately the weapon had missed vital vessels and structures; Arthur Phillip remained calm, and the spear was later skilfully removed by the Naval Surgeon, Dr William Balmain.

Despite the problems, some friendships with Aboriginals were made. Phillip took two of his Aboriginal friends back to England with him, where one of them, Bennelong, was presented to King George III. Altogether, however, as with so much else, slow – grindingly slow – progress was being made in constructing and developing this convict settlement in distant New South Wales. Imagine, then, the stroke of gubernatorial leadership which allowed, even ordered, that as part of the King's Birthday celebrations on the 4th of June, 1789, a play would be performed, by convicts. Watkin Tench again, in rather fine eighteenth-century prose:

> The anniversary of His Majesty's birth-day was celebrated, as heretofore, at the Government-House, with loyal festivity. In the evening, the play of 'The Recruiting Officer' was performed by a party of convicts, and honoured by the presence of his Excellency, and the officers of the garrison. That every opportunity of escape from the dreariness and dejection of our situation should be eagerly embraced will not be wondered at. The exhilarating effect of a splendid theatre is well known: and I am not ashamed to confess, that the proper distribution of three or four yards of stained paper, and a dozen farthing candles stuck around the mud walls of a convict-hut, failed not to diffuse general complacency on the countenances of sixty persons, of various descriptions, who were assembled to applaud the representation. Some of the actors acquitted themselves with great spirit, and received the praises of the audience: a prologue and an epilogue, written by one of the performers, were also spoken on the occasion; which, although not worth inserting here, contained some tolerable allusions to the situation of the parties, and the novelty of a stage-representation in New South Wales.

For once, I differ from Watkin Tench. I *do* think the prologue is 'worth inserting here'. For me it illustrates both the unquenchable sense of humour of expatriate Britons in trouble, and the optimism and spirit that Arthur Phillip engendered in the young colony: the spirit that would underlie and overlay the construction and development of the colony, and the spirit that persists to this day in modern Australia. It is a cheerily sardonic, now quintessentially Australian, 'can do' spirit. It mocks both authority and self.

So here is the brief 'Prologue for the Opening of the Playhouse at Sydney, New South Wales, Australia', spoken on 4th June 1789 by a convict before His Excellency Governor Phillip:

> From distant climes, o'er wide-spread seas we come,
> Though not with much éclat or beat of drum;
> True patriots all; for be it understood
> We left our country for our country's good.
> No private views disgraced our generous zeal,
> What urged our travels was our country's weal;
> And none will doubt but that our emigration
> Has prov'd most useful to the English nation.

Why was Arthur Phillip not more honoured by the English nation in his own time? As Alan Frost of La Trobe University concludes, 'no-one had previously done what he came to do'. Here was a senior naval officer who, against huge odds, successfully established a new colony of major national, and, later, international importance.

Governor Phillip shepherded, disciplined and drove New South Wales and its disparate people through awful agricultural,

economic, social and human hardships, many unforeseeable. He charted, steered and managed a bare and basic subsistence economy, often knocked back by near disaster, to real growth. He practised the precepts of the Enlightenment. He led and guided in an inspirational, visionary, selfless, exemplary fashion. In selecting Port Jackson, he judged professionally and very well. The tall, narrow heads provided more extensive hidden, fortifiable shelter than did Rio de Janeiro, with trees for naval timber, deep water channels, sound ground for anchoring and good fresh water. To a remarkable extent, Phillip foresaw the Sydney of the future. He designed and built a naval base. He planned avenues and streets as wide as in English towns, even though they were lined initially with meagre if just adequate huts. He chose the cove he named Sydney in part because, in his words, it had 'the best spring of water'. In a letter from Sydney Cove on 3rd July 1788 to Lord Lansdowne, Governor Arthur Phillip wrote of Sydney Harbour that 'here a Thousand Sail of the Line may ride in the most perfect Security'. Arthur Phillip was a prescient man, not given to exaggeration: the figure of a thousand, for example, is conservative.

Throughout his career, Phillip had suffered periodic bouts of sickness, and had never been in robust health. In New South Wales, he consistently drove himself to the utmost, way above and beyond the call of duty, to extraordinary achievements, but often in the face of and despite rather serious ill-health. His principal medical problem may have been caused by calcium deposits in his kidney and his urinary tract: a sailor's occupational

hazard of the day, due to the salt used so much to preserve foods. Whatever the cause of the often incapacitating pains in his right side, Arthur Phillip endured these patiently for well over a year after seeking permission from London to return to England to seek medical attention.

It was not until the end of 1792 that Arthur Phillip finally sailed for home. He arrived in England in May 1793, five years after he had led the First Fleet out from Spithead on its momentous and historic voyage. After years of privation, determination, discipline, dogged and decent leadership and the application of intelligence and scholarship to every detail, the ailing Governor Phillip left (only temporarily, he hoped) an infant colony of sound foundations and already of enormous and enlightened achievement. Arthur Phillip's single-minded and successful devotion to the conception, birth, nourishment, welfare and development of the colony and its people, and to the British national interest, surely marked him as a national treasure. Why did he not return to a hero's welcome?

In the late-eighteenth century, England had a lust for heroes; but for men of action and success in battle – as witness that greatest of such heroes in the decade following Phillip's return to England, Admiral Lord Nelson. Unlike Nelson, Arthur Phillip had no instinct for self-promotion or the spin side of politics. Unlike others, he named nothing in Australia after himself. He named much after his London chiefs; a good deal after his officers; and he named the district of Bennelong after his Aboriginal protégé. The Sydney Opera House now stands on Bennelong Point, and

The British debt to Arthur Phillip, also immense, is to a man who overcame unforeseen, unprecedented and extraordinary difficulties; and who founded, managed and began the sure development of a colony which, he soberly predicted in that same despatch to London from Sydney Cove of July 1788, 'will hereafter be a most valuable acquisition to Great Britain'. On the foundations he laid, his colony, logically and sensibly, via economic, legislative, exploratory and constitutional developments, became a united continent, a Federation, an independent country, a Commonwealth, a justly proud nation. In his prediction, Phillip was proved right. However, the accuracy of his prophecy depended crucially on his own vision, leadership, wisdom, common sense and determination, in the construction of the foundations of a colony, a country, modern New South Wales, modern Australia.

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In 1762, at the age of 24, after he had taken part in the capture of Martinique, the blockade of Cap François and the siege of Havana, Fourth Lieutenant Arthur Phillip sailed home on half pay, but with £130 in prize money from Havana. In July of the following year, 1763, he married Margaret Charlott Denison, a wealthy widow, who was prescient enough to have him sign a marriage contract that secured her wealth and property to herself. The couple lived first at Hampton Court, and then at Lyndhurst in the New Forest, where, as I mentioned, Phillip farmed. The marriage, however, failed, and they separated, formally and legally in 1769, when Phillip was but 28. There

were no children. Arthur Phillip was in debt to Margaret. It is no surprise that he later settled the debt.

Arthur Phillip's marital separation, 'for bed and board', as it was termed at the time, allowed later remarriage, but was, to an extent, frowned upon socially and officially, rather as, for a time, the later equivalent, divorce, was officially viewed with disfavour. Given the temper of the times (and notwithstanding the national adulation and preferment of Lord Nelson, whose history with ladies has rather more colour), that 'separation for bed and board' may provide another explanation for why Admiral Arthur Phillip was not more honoured in his day, and specifically, why he was not, at least, knighted.

Phillip arrived in England from Sydney in May 1793, a quarter of a century after his first marriage ended, and the year after his former wife died. In her will, Margaret released Arthur from any obligation entered into on marriage and on separation, and left him £100 – on the proviso that he did not challenge any other provision.

Admiral Phillip began to spend time recuperating in Bath and its Spa, living then at 3 South Parade. He knew Bath a little, having visited his aunts Emma and Fanny there as a boy. In May 1794, at the age of 55, he contracted in London a second, late but this time happy marriage, to Isabella Whitehead, the daughter of a cloth merchant, whom it seems he met when they both joined the Bath Circulating Library. She joined the Library the day after he did. Just over two hundred years ago, in 1806, Arthur Phillip bought for his wife and himself a house in Bath, No.19 Bennet

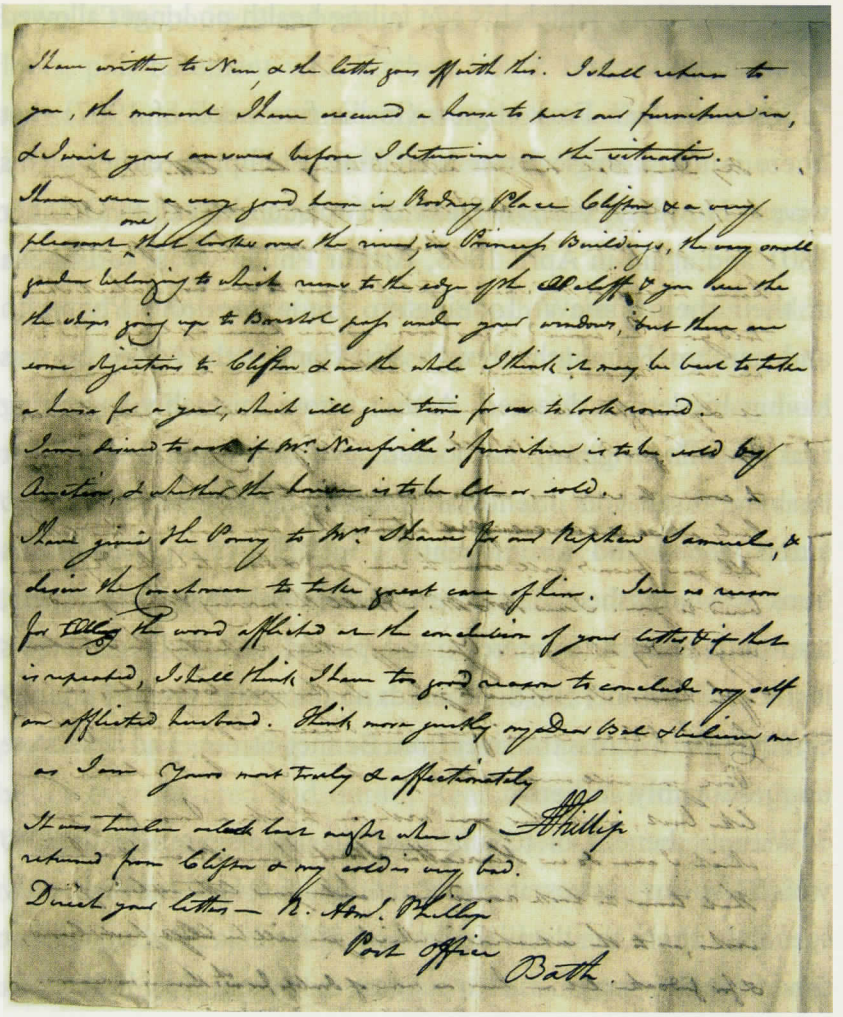
Street. (The house was built in 1744, on three very substantial floors, plus basement with kitchen, cellar, housekeeper's room and so on, and four servants' rooms in the attic. Described at the time as 'a Commodious and Gentlemanly Dwelling House', it cost Admiral Phillip £2,200). Living here, the Phillips took part in Bath Society.

Phillip did hope to return to New South Wales when his health was restored. He also had further Naval ambition. In the event, he was sent back to active service in the Navy, commanding several ships in the Mediterranean Fleet during the Napoleonic Wars, and conducting a delicate naval and diplomatic mission in Lisbon. In 1798 Phillip was appointed commander of the Hampshire Sea Fencibles, a maritime militia defensive against Napoleon. Later, Phillip became inspector of both the Impress Service and the whole national Sea Fencibles Force. These were probably disappointing, if senior, appointments for the ageing, but as ever devoted and dutiful Rear Admiral. Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, if not the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, valued the Sea Fencibles, and Arthur Phillip, travelling the length and breadth of the land, from London to Scotland, East Anglia and Kent to Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, made reforms and improvements in the Service for the good of the Royal Navy and the country. Yet this work was far from front line service, and unlikely to attract honours. Finally, Phillip's retirement in early 1805 was a rather unsatisfactory and disappointing business, perhaps in part because of a change of policy in London and in part due to Admiral Phillip's strong

sense of his duty, which his age failing health no longer allowed him to fulfill.

Professor Alan Frost regrets (in his fine book of 1987) that 'there is not a single letter from him [Phillip] to either of his wives'. However, we now know of two such letters. In October 1801 and again in April 1803, Arthur Phillip wrote to Isabella at their then home at Lymington. He wrote from Plymouth and perhaps Falmouth, though also from Bath, where he was having his letters directed. Arthur wrote miserably regretting that Isabella evidently harboured 'groundless ideas that your husband & all your friends are plotting against you'. The two letters were found fairly recently – in 1998, since Alan Frost's book was published. They were folded with two other papers, also of real historic interest, and placed in a lady's chamois leather glove under the floorboards of a house in Great Pulteney Street in Bath across the river from Bennet Street. The letters are unquestionably authentic.

Without benefit of having seen the letters from Isabella to which Arthur replies in such saddened terms, we can only speculate about the detail and causes of Isabella's distress at that time. It seems reasonable to suggest that there *may* have been some connection with the trauma of the search for a new house, and the forthcoming move, and possibly the enforced temporary separations occasioned by Admiral Phillip's duties. The present Governor of New South Wales, HE Professor Marie Bashir, a renowned academic and practitioner in psychiatry, thinks, importantly, that it is possible that Isabella may have been



Extract from Arthur Phillip's letter to his wife, Isabella, 24 April 1803, discovered in a house at Great Pulteney Street, Bath, in 1998.
Photograph: Sir Roger Carrick,
reproduced courtesy of Mr Tim R. Harris and family of Bath, England.

clinically depressed. It also seems possible that Isabella spent a little time, staying perhaps with a friend, or just lodging, in Great Pulteney Street while she looked at houses in Bath. If so, and having the letters with her, was she perhaps embarrassed – not wishing them to be found and read; and did she hide them under the floorboard? If so, whether she intended to retrieve them later, who can tell?

The present Governor's professional judgements and my speculation apart, however, I think I have lit upon a convincing explanation for much, perhaps all of Arthur's own particular disquiet and suffering one sad Sunday morning in April 1803, clearly evident in one of these letters. The Saturday night before, Arthur Phillip returned to Bath – by coach, I imagine – from a long journey to look at a house in Clifton, near Bristol. In his letter next morning he regrets that Isabella has not yet commented on houses in Bath – in the Upper Crescent, in Camden Place and in Green Park Place. He also implores his 'dear Bel' 'for God's sake let me hear no more of doubts for which there is no reason'. He ends with 'Think more justly, my Dear Bel & believe me as I am Yours most truly and affectionately'. Arthur then adds a revealing post script: 'It was twelve o'clock last night when I returned from Clifton, and my cold is very bad.' There you have it; and we men can more than readily understand and sympathise with him. The poor man clearly had the 'flu at the very least, and needed very tender loving care, not complaint ! The rather more objective evidence is equally clear that Arthur and Isabella lived a devoted

and happy life together in Bath in retirement, during which he was promoted to Vice-Admiral and finally to full Admiral.

Arthur Phillip lived until he was 75 – quite a good age for his period, and considering his intermittent but persistent ill-health. In his retirement in Bath, he was well regarded in Naval, scientific and Government circles. He saw Naval and other friends, including Philip Gidley King, whom Captain Arthur Phillip had first appointed Second Lieutenant in *HMS Sirius* in the First Fleet, and who had accompanied Governor Phillip ashore to Sydney Cove for the founding ceremony in January 1788. King was the first and an able Commandant of Norfolk Island, and, from 1800 to 1806, upon Arthur Phillip's recommendation, an enlightened Third Governor of New South Wales.

Admiral Arthur Phillip, First Governor, continued to work from Bath, and to lobby for and advise on issues affecting the young colony. He and Isabella enjoyed the friendship and esteem of people such as Sir Joseph and Lady Banks, Lord St Vincent and the Nelsons. Phillip acted as a personal adviser to many involved with New South Wales, and gave the Government in Whitehall rather more public advice – including on matters of re-supply, and stationing ships in Sydney. He became increasingly concerned by reports that society in the colony had become threatened – by rum. In his latter years in Bath, Admiral Phillip could be seen being wheeled to take the air in a Bath chair, for example in the Circus, at the western end of Bennet Street.

At home on the 31st of August 1814, now full Admiral Arthur Phillip was found dead – in the area in front of the basement of

19 Bennet Street, down below the present street level railings. We do not know the cause of death: both Arthur and Isabella Phillip died before the 1837 Registration Act, after the passage of which cause of death was included on the Death Certificate. Yet there were rumours that Admiral Phillip committed suicide. It certainly seems likely that he went out of the first floor window and tumbled two stories down to the basement.

I do not believe Phillip committed suicide. I have a number of reasons for this belief. The first is that for someone of honour, duty, and at least of the appearance of faith and the practice of religion, such as Phillip had consistently been since a boy; to commit the then crime of suicide would have been unthinkable.

The second reason is to do with the fact that Admiral Phillip suffered at any rate one debilitating stroke, in February 1808. According to Isabella ('his dear Bel'), he was 'very ill'. The stroke left him largely paralysed in the right side: hence the Bath chair for taking the air. Another fashionable and sensible way of taking the air in Bath in the 1800s was to sit at the first floor window in the afternoon. No. 19 Bennet Street is ideal for this purpose, since it faces almost due south. Arthur Phillip, the sailor, had ropes secured to the wall by the stairs to help him climb to the first floor of 19 Bennet Street. (Some say an iron rail was used.) In late August, the handsome, broad and tall first floor windows of Bennet Street's eighteenth-century Georgian town houses would have been raised wide open.

To test the conclusion I was beginning to form, I wanted to see how high above the floor the window sills are. Early one warm

morning, my wife and I walked slowly along Bennet Street, outside No 19, when we saw, standing at a nearby, first floor, tall, broad, curtain-less window, a singularly lovely young lady. I should add that she was clad but skimpily in a diaphanous, pellucid white chemise or nightdress. She presented an image of fresh, vernal and elegant beauty – marred only a little by the addition, seemingly glued to one ear, of a mobile telephone. As my wife quietly enjoined me not to look at this really very little marred beauty, I forbore to take photographs, but protested in a whisper that I was but engaged in objective historical research; whereupon this helpful young woman pulled a chair right up to her window, sat down slowly and arranged herself in a comely, decorative and helpful pose. It was as if she was saying 'I know what you want, and this will demonstrate it for you – look how low the window sill is: just about up to here – mid shin.' I was, of course, most grateful, noted the height of the sill, smiled my appreciation and withdrew – to the (relative) safety of my wife's side.

That memorable demonstration was sufficient, with other factors, to illustrate for me what may well have happened in Bennet Street that summer's afternoon in August 1814. As I see it, at the age of 75, having suffered one or more strokes, Admiral Arthur Phillip was resting that summer's day at the end of August in a relatively comfortable chair by the open, no doubt then unbarred window. Perhaps, if he had not already been in the first floor living quarters, he might, with or without a servant's or twelve-years-younger Isabella's help, have hauled

himself up – or down – a flight of stairs by the ropes. In the warm afternoon sun, Arthur Phillip may well have nodded off to sleep and fallen across the low sill and down two stories to his death. As an alternative explanation, it is also reasonable to suppose that the elderly Admiral may have had another stroke, which caused him to fall.

One of the alleged arguments used to support the scurrilous rumour of suicide is that Arthur Phillip was buried, not with a hero's fine funeral in Bath's Abbey Church, but in a small village outside Bath – as if in some lower state. To that I would say that there is good evidence that it was the height of good practice in these things at that time to be buried out of town – away from the then almost brash, rather starkly white new town of Bath, and in a gentle, peaceful country churchyard. Indeed, there is hardly a village churchyard in the countryside surrounding Bath that does not boast the grave of a distinguished and admired former resident of Bath. (Further, in 1814, there was very little if any space left in the tiny burial curtilage of the Abbey, which soon after bought land for a cemetery outside the town.)

Importantly too, the parish of Bathampton was well known to the Phillips. In his well-researched work on *Arthur Phillip: His Voyaging*, Alan Frost writes that during Admiral Phillip's mid-sixties, the years of his increasingly arduous travel and work as Inspector of the Impress and the Sea Fencibles, 'at least for some of this time, Mrs Phillip lived at Bathampton, on the eastern edge of Bath, where the couple had friends; and Phillip was able to spend a few weeks there in June and July 1804'. The Phillips

evidently knew the village well, frequently visiting friends in Bathampton Lane at Osborne House, which still exists. So St Nicholas Bathampton was a natural and no doubt happily made choice.

A final argument, to scotch the suicide rumour, is that Arthur Phillip was buried in consecrated ground; indeed in the porch of the Church of St Nicholas at Bathampton. In Victorian times, the porch was taken into the church as part of an extension. Later still, as part of the construction of the Australia Chapel, the Phillips' ledgerstone was moved just a little way farther inside the Church. So, while by the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Church's attitude to suicides was changing, it seems reasonable to suggest that the ecclesiastical authorities would have wished to be satisfied that the death was not suicide.

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I conclude, as others have concluded, that both Arthur and Isabella Phillip lie where they wished to lie, and in peace. I conclude also that they lie safe in the knowledge that as a matter of Christian doctrine, burial in consecrated ground is final and permanent. RIP – Requiescat In Pace.

Yet I learned late in 2006 that there had been a proposal – apparently a serious proposal – from an Australian, that the remains of Arthur Phillip should be exhumed and transported to New South Wales. The word actually used, rather than 'transported' is, incredibly – and inaccurately – 'repatriated'. The proposal is, of course, batty, and to my mind and that of many who have

heard of it, Australian and British, rather offensive, including to the memory of this great servant of both countries.

The Rector of Bathampton, the Reverend Paul Burden, has kindly let me know that the proposal is not new, something like it having been raised in the 1930s, and again once or twice later in the last century, including at the time of the 1988 Bicentenary of Australia. In November 2006, a team of four from Australian Channel Nine's *60 Minutes* programme visited England to do some filming in London and Bath. They conducted interviews with, among others, the Rector of Bathampton and the Chairman of the West Country Branch of the Britain-Australia Society, and they filmed in part of No. 19 Bennet Street Bath. They came on west to Exmoor, where my wife and I live, and filmed an interview for half an hour or so with me – as a former British High Commissioner to Australia, and perhaps because they had heard that I had given the 2006 annual Arthur Phillip Memorial address in the City of London. During the interview, the presenter, Liam Bartlett, told me that the proposal for 'repatriation' [sic], raised earlier, had been revived. I thought the proposal hard to credit, and unjustified on any reasonable grounds.

Channel Nine have, I think, not yet shown the segment they presumably edited from their filming. [But see the author's Post Scriptum below. Ed.] The Reverend Paul Burden has kindly sent me a copy of a 2003 report, commissioned by the Government of New South Wales, on the 'practicability of exhumation of the remains of Captain Arthur Phillip'. The report seems thorough, if arguably not comprehensive, in part because it is properly

confined, by instruction, to the practicability of exhumation rather than including the wider question of principle: whether the remains should be transferred to Australia. I think, following expert advice, that the report probably contains one or two technical inaccuracies in a matter of Church law. However, in its concluding two paragraphs, the report makes the following points:

> Arthur Phillip was certainly still sufficiently connected with Australia in his later years, and possessed of ample wealth, to have stipulated and received burial in Australia had he so desired. Bathampton continues to look after his grave in a most fitting manner, with an annual wreath-laying ceremony on [or near] 11th October, the date of Phillip's birth.

> Where an application is made ... to disinter a body ... there must be good reason ... the burden is on the petitioner to show that the presumed intention ... is to be disregarded or overborne ... Consequently it would seem *unlikely* [my italics] that permission would be given for the remains of Arthur Phillip ... to be exhumed from the grave he desired in his native country for reburial in Australia.

One Australian has reminded me of the Aboriginal belief that it is essential for the dead to lie in their own native country, and suggested that this should be another argument against this proposal. I do recall as High Commissioner being closely involved, including with Aboriginal leaders, in the debate that eventually resulted (I am glad to say) in exhumation and transfer to Western

Australia of the skull of Australian Aboriginal Noongar warrior Yagan previously buried in England.

The main question put to me by the *60 Minutes* presenter was that since the 'Poms' do not [sic] revere Arthur Phillip, and the 'Aussies' do, why should he not be 'returned' to Australia? Such, I believe, was not his wish. Arthur Phillip certainly became devoted, as the Governor, to New South Wales; but he was principally a British patriot, who was devoted to the establishment, against the odds, of a British colony – as he was devoted also to all the other causes he served so well at home and around the world, as a Royal Navy Officer, for Great Britain. He was doubtless proud of that whole lifetime of service to his nation, even if the establishment of New South Wales was his greatest and crowning achievement.

Arthur Phillip is annually honoured in a Commemorative Service, with its Arthur Phillip Memorial Address – in London originally at St Mildred, Bread Street, where Arthur Phillip was baptised, and since the Second World War, during which the church was destroyed, at St Mary Le Bow near the place of Arthur Phillip's birth and baptism. Phillip is also commemorated each year in a luncheon at a City of London Livery Hall, a service in Bathampton at St Nicholas, and a civic reception and lunch at the Guildhall in Bath. I understand that an organisation called the Women's Pioneer Society hold (or held) an annual commemoration at Phillip's memorial in Sydney, and a lunch. There used also to be a major annual service in Sydney. Sadly, no longer.

Vase commissioned in 2006 in tribute to Admiral Arthur Phillip, 200 years after he retired to Bath, for display in the Pump Room, Bath.
Photograph: Sir Roger Carrick,
reproduced with the permission of Heritage Services, Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Late in 2005, the West Country Branch of the Britain-Australia Society and generous donors added a second plaque to the wall of Arthur Phillip's house in Bath. The first plaque, erected in 1899 by the Bath Corporation, simply says:

> Here Lived Admiral Phillip – 1806-1814.

The new 2005 plaque speaks for itself:

> First Governor of Australia.

In 2006, to mark the bicentenary of Arthur Phillip retiring to Bath, a fine Tribute Vase was presented to the City of Bath by the West Country Branch of the Britain-Australia Society, the Australian High Commissioner, the Britain-Australia Bicentennial Trust, and Wedgwood, for display at the Pump Room in Bath, which the Phillips surely patronised and appreciated.

Also in 2006, the West Country Branch of the Britain-Australia Society conducted an Admiral Arthur Phillip Memorial Essay competition for young Britons. Two bright young sixth formers from the West Country won return air tickets to Australia.

In 2010, the West Country Branch of the Britain-Australia Society proposed a modern monument to Admiral Arthur Phillip, to be placed in a fine National Trust site at the Bath Assembly Rooms, just across from the Phillips's house, by 2014 – the Bicentenary of their taking up residence there. The Society also hoped to place a plaque in Westminster Abbey.

To say that Britain does not revere Arthur Phillip, or does not revere him enough, seems to be wide of the mark. And how right it is for both Britons and Australians to be properly cognizant of, and do honour to Australia's Founder and First Governor; this fine sailor, wise, determined and enlightened servant of his own nation and of Australia; this truly great Englishman, described in his biography in the archives at the Admiralty in London as 'Admiral Arthur Phillip, Scholar, Seaman and Gentleman, the man who founded the great city of Sydney and the Island Continent of Australia'.

Here is a very different quotation, which offers an interesting light on modern, successful Australia, whose domestic, foreign and economic policies have been admired around the world, and whose contribution to and influence upon the world's progress are significant and growing. The quotation is: 'The wines of New South Wales may perhaps, hereafter be sought with civility and become an indispensable part of the luxury of European tables.' Those words were written in 1788, the year before the French Revolution, by Governor Arthur Phillip.

Phillip's prediction that the colony he founded would become one of Great Britain's most valuable assets was proved right. I believe it is accurate to describe the ally the United Kingdom has today in modern Australia as still one of Great Britain's most valuable assets. I conclude that Governor and Admiral Arthur Phillip is a quiet hero – of the Royal Navy; of practical diplomacy; of the United Kingdom; and of Australia. It follows that it is right to salute and to pay tribute to Admiral Arthur

Phillip Royal Navy, Founder and First Governor of Australia, officer and Gentleman of England, for his extraordinary, selfless and successful pioneering endeavours; and for his inspiring, enduring and priceless legacy – to both countries.

Post Scriptum

It may be of some further interest that since the above paper was drafted, Channel Nine in Australia have broadcast their segment about Arthur Phillip in the programme *60 Minutes*. The transcript of the piece, labelled 'The Poms have Lost the Plot', featured one Geoffrey Robertson and his 'argument' that the United Kingdom has in some way 'lost' Admiral Arthur Phillip's remains.

Mr Robertson's other attacks have been dealt with in the paper, and the Channel Nine line of November 2006 that Arthur Phillip is insufficiently honoured in Great Britain seems to have faded with time, and perhaps with thought. However, Mr Robertson claims that the British 'simply don't rate him'; alleges that Arthur Phillip's remains are not where his ledgerstone indicates, nor where Australians have been led to believe that he now lies; and asserts 'we can't trust the English, the Church of England, the British, to look after our treasures'. All nonsense, of course.

60 Minutes claimed that *the Church* (my italics) 'called in its top authority on churchyard graves, a Dr Julian Litten, to look at the feasibility of raising Phillip's coffin'. Untrue. In the introduction to his report (the 2003 report referred to at page 37 above), Dr Litten records that he was approached by Privy Council Agents, following an instruction, 'at the request of Geoffrey Robertson QC by the Government of New South Wales, Australia for the purposes of investigating and obtaining expert opinion regarding the practicability of exhuming the remains...'.

It seems at the least likely (and in my view certain) that Arthur and Isabella Phillip's remains were buried within the 1750 porch; that when a new south aisle was added in 1882, the grave site was incorporated within the church itself; and that in 1974 the black marble ledgerstone may have been marginally re-aligned when the Australia chapel was in effect built around it. I understand, from conversations with the Rectors of Bathampton and St Mary Le Bow, that deep burial was the rule at the time both Arthur and Isabella were laid to rest, and that the shallow foundation work to form the Chapel in 1974 could not have revealed the bones of either. This is of comfort to most: as Dr Litten wrote in his report, 'The finality of Christian burial must be respected...'.

I suggest that Arthur Phillip is a revered treasure of both our nations, and that he is properly – and increasingly – honoured, certainly in the United Kingdom, and notably in Bathampton, in Bath, and in the City of his birth, London.

Requiescat in Pace

RJC

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Professor Geoffrey Blainey – *The Tyranny of Distance: how distance shaped Australia's history* (Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966) and other works.

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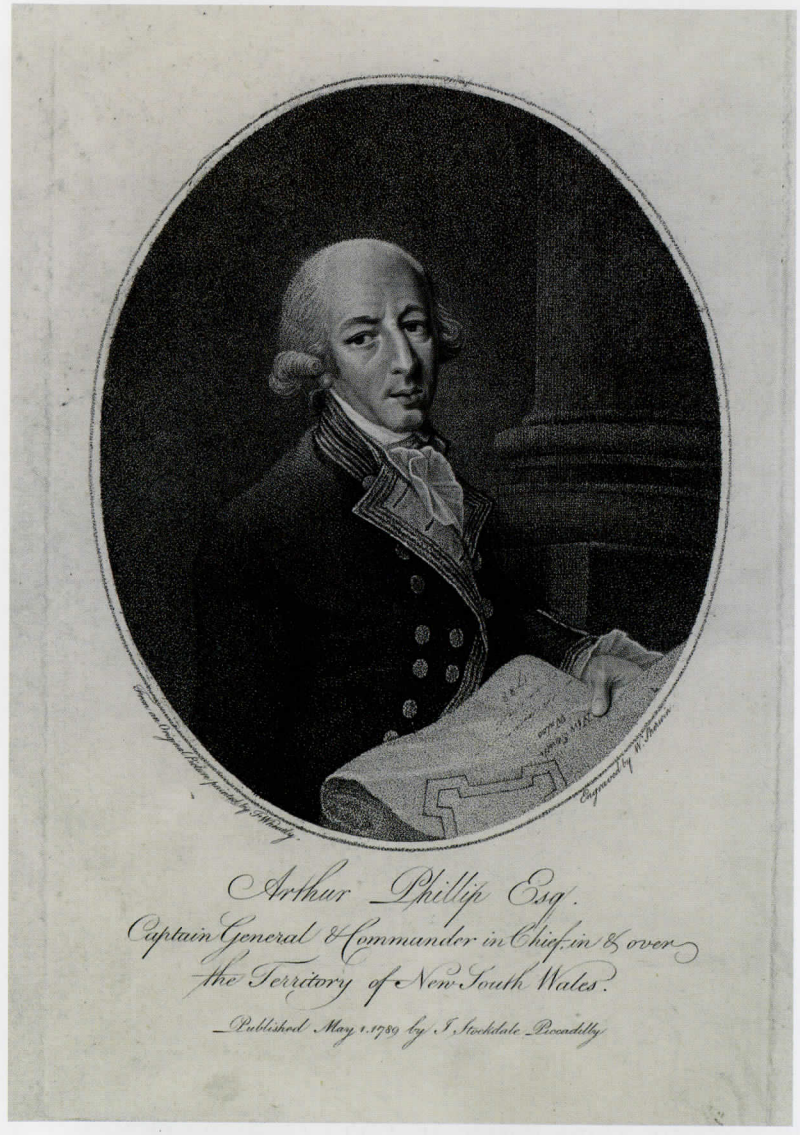

Arthur Phillip Esq., Captain General & Commander in Chief in & over the Territory of New South Wales, engraving by W. Sherwin from an original picture painted by F. Wheatley

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