
Port Jackson – Journal and letter Transcripts

**A Journal of a voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales and China in the Lady Penrhyn, Merchantman William Cropton Server, Commander by Arthur Bowes Smyth, Surgeon, Jan-Feb, 1788
Manuscript Safe 1/15**

Arthur Bowes Smyth (1750-1790), known as Bowes while in the colony, sailed with the First Fleet as Surgeon on board the Lady Penrhyn. He was responsible for the women convicts. Bowes Smyth took a great interest in natural history, collecting specimens and making drawings including the earliest extant illustration by a European of the emu. It is probably not the first sketch of an emu, as has sometimes been claimed; this may have been drawn by Lieutenant John Watts, also of the Lady Penrhyn, reproduced in Arthur Phillip's published account of the First Fleet and now lost. He returned to England on the Lady Penrhyn travelling via Lord Howe Island, Tahiti, China and St Helena. On Lord Howe Island he described or drew six of the islands birds. Three, including, the white gallinule, are now extinct, and a fourth is rare. Bowes Smyth arrived in England in August 1789. He died some months after his return and was buried on 31 March 1790 in Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Essex, where he had been born

Jany. 23d. This day the Governor return'd from exploring the Coast & determin'd to go to Port Jackson, abt. 5 miles distant from Botany Bay by land, but 10 or 12 by Sea. This is Certainly in the Opinion of everyone one of the finest Harbours in the World, not excepting that of Trincomalee in the East Indies, & was the adjacent Country fertile instead of being so barren as it is, it wd. exceed anything yet known. It abound with many capacious Bays & Coves for many miles up the Country & all these surrounded wt. rocks of Stone exactly similar to the Portland Stone, & which extends in ridges some miles up the Country. The Water close to the sides of these rocks in all the Coves is deep enough for a Line of Battle Ship to lye close –

We reached the mouth of Broken Bay, Port Jackson abt. 7 O'Clock p.m. & sail'd abt. 8 miles up to Sydney Cove, where the Settlement is made. As I have already endeavour'd to describe the appearance of the different Bays & Coves in this Harbour, I shall just observe here that there are many Islands in the center of most of the Coves wh. have a very Novel & Romantic appearance; the Soil & produce of all of them the same as mention'd of the other parts. The Ships many of them lye so near the shore that they might wt. ease be fasten'd by ropes to the trees instead of putting down their Anchors.

27th. This mornng. by day light a Long Boat full of Convicts from the Scarborough were set on Shore to assist in cutting down trees & clearing the ground &ca. -- The Thermometer at 74 -- Many Tents pitch'd this day on Shore. -- Upon our entering the Harbour mouth, we saw many Natives on

the top of the high rocks, none of them have appear'd since we anchor'd. No boats suffer'd to go out of the Cove, nor any Sailors to be on shore after sunset.

28th. Two boat loads more Convicts from the Scarborough & Vz the Marines landed. This day Lieuts. G. Johnstone & Wm. Collins took their leave of the Ship & pitched their Tents on Shore: very hot. The Governor has appointed several coves for the different Ships boats to go to, to haul their Seynes, upon first calling on board the Sirius to let them know the Boat is going & either the Master himself or one of the Mates must be in the boat -- in general the boats were very successful in catching a great number of fish of variety of sorts.

All the rock near the water are thick cover'd with oysters, wh. are very small but very finely flavour'd; they also adhere to the branches of the mangrove trees, I frequently brot. the branch of a tree thus loaded wt. oysters, on board. This day visited Capt. Campbell in his Marquee who presented me wt. some curious insects &: a Loriquette....

**Letter from Arthur Phillip to The Marquis of Lansdown, July 1788,
Manuscript MLMSS 7241**

Arthur Phillip was appointed first Governor of the colony of New South Wales on 12 October 1786. He was commander of the First Fleet which sailed from Spithead on 31 May 1787 and disembarked at Port Jackson, New South Wales, on 26 January 1788. In December 1792, Phillip returned to England, resigning his post as Governor on 23 July 1793. He died in 1814.

William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne and 2nd Earl of Shelburne, was a British politician. Both he and Phillip were associated with a group advocating free trade. In this four page letter signed by Arthur Phillip, Sydney Cove, 3 July 1788. Phillip informs the Marquis that he has named the Lansdowne (here spelt Lansdown) Hills after him, mentions the difficulty of settlement and describes the Aboriginal inhabitants. Phillip explains his reasons for preferring Port Jackson over Botany Bay. Port Jackson offered a water supply and a safe harbour: 'here a Thousand Sail of the Line may ride in the most perfect Security'.

Transcript

My Lord,

As I was unwilling to trouble Your Lordship with letters that could only contain assurances of respect, I defer'd writing till I arrived in this Country. the few extracts from my journal, is all the information I am able to give your Lordship, at present, of the Natives; who never come to us & with whom I have never been able to remain but a very short time. the Rains now fall very heavy, & many of the Natives find it difficult to support themselves, as few fish are caught. I shall be able to give a better account of the Country when I have visited Lansdown Hills - they form part of a Range of Mountains that appear to be fifty miles in land & on which I have in a late excursion seen Smoke; which, with my having traced the Natives thirty miles towards these Hills, leaves no doubt but that there are

Inhabitants in the interior parts of the Country. I thought these Hills worthy the Name I have giving them, and at the foot of which I flatter my self that I shall find a River, that communicates with the Sea, at no great distance from Port Jackson, which I have preferd to Botany bay as affording a more eligible Situation for the Colony, & being with out exception the finest Harbour in the World. my reason for thinking there must be a large River, is the having found pools of water which did not appear to be formed in the Rainy Season. the want of time prevented ye tracing them to their Source. The Woods by which we are surrounded are not removed but with a labour of which no Idea can be formed, & unfortunately the Timber is only fit for fire wood, & I was obliged to fix on this Spot, on account of Water which in the dry Season is scarce, as here are not any Runs of fresh water but what are drains from the Marshes, form'd in the Rainy Season. Botany bay, offerd no Security for large Ships, here a Thousand Sail of the Line may ride in the most perfect Security.

the clearing the ground will be a Work of time & it will be four Years at least, before this Colony will be able to support itself, & perhaps no Country in the World affords less assistance to first Settlers. still, My Lord, I think that perseverance will answer evry purpose proposed by Government, & that this Country will hereafter be a most Valuable acquisition to Great Brittain from its situation.

It has been my determination from the time I landed, never to fire on the Natives, but in a case of absolute necessity, & I have been so fortunate as to have avoided it hitherto. I think they deserve a better Character than what they will receive from Monsr. La Prouse, who was under the disagreeable necessity of

firing on them. I think better of them from having been more with them.

they do not in my opinion want personal Courage, they very readily place a confidence & are, I believe, strictly honest amongst themselves.

most of the Men wanting the Right front tooth in the Upper Jaw, & most of the Women wanting the first & second joints of the little finger of the left hand, are circumstances not observed in Capt. Cooks Voyage.

Your Lordship will I hope do me the justice to believe me fully sensible of the polite attention I receiv'd when leaving England, & permit me the honor of subscribing my self with the greatest Respect & esteem

My Lord

Your Lordships

Obliged & Most Obedient

Humble Servant

A Phillip

Sydney Cove

July 3d. 1788.