

THE  
 HISTORY  
 OF  
 BOTANY - BAY,  
 AND PARTICULARLY  
 PORT - JACKSON,

WHERE  
 The Convicts from this Country are sent,  
 and the British Settlement formed.

WITH  
 An Account of the Manners and Customs  
 of the Inhabitants, and of the Climate  
 and Soil of that Country.

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*Collected from authentic Authors  
 and original Papers.*

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FALKIRK:

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
BOTANY - BAY.

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*A particular description of Van Diemen's  
Land, south extremity of New Holland.*

VAN DIEMEN's Land was so named by Tasman, who first discovered it in the year 1642.; from that time it escaped all further notice by European navigators, till Captain Furneaux touched at it in March 1773. In the year 1776, Captain Cook, whose professional skill in navigation had never been equaled by any in this kingdom, was called upon, in consequence of an order of his present majesty, for making discoveries in the southern Hemisphere, by which he accomplished a very important purpose, in ascertaining that immense tract in the southern clime, called New Holland, to be an island, which had ever before been supposed to be continental.

This great and extensive island, being the largest in the known world, extends from Van Diemen's land, in the south-west to C. F. De Witt's land, no less than two thousand four hundred English miles; and from north

to south, not less than two thousand, three hundred; so that instead of an island, the claim of New Holland, to be called a continent, will be indisputable.

The whole of the island went first by the name of New Holland, but is now applied to the north and west parts of the country, the eastern part, called New South Wales, was taken possession of, in his Majesty's name, by Captain Cook, and now forms a part of the British Dominions, a colony being lately formed there, chiefly of the convicts sentenced to transportation.

The inhabitants of this part of New Holland have little of that wild or fierce appearance common to the people of this island; but, on the contrary, seem mild and cheerful, without reserve or jealousy to strangers.— This, however, may arise from their having little to lose or care for. With respect to personal activity or genius, little can be said of either. They do not seem to possess the first in any remarkable degree; and, as for the last, they have, to appearance, less than the half-animated inhabitants of Terra del Fuego, who have not invention sufficient to make cloathing for defending themselves from the rigour of their climate, though furnished with materials. It must be owned, however, that they are masters of some contrivance, in the manner of cutting their arms and bodies in lines of different lengths and

directions, which are raised considerably above the skin; so that it is difficult to guess the method they use in executing this embroidery of their persons. Their colour is a dull black like that of the Negroes. It should seem also that they sometimes heighten their black colour, by smutting their bodies, as a mark was left behind on any clean substance, such as white paper, when they handle it. Their hair is perfectly woolly; and it is clotted or divided into small parcels, like that of the Hottentots, with the use of some sort of grease, mixed with a red paint or ochre, which they smear in great abundance over their heads. Their noses, though not flat, are broad and full. The lower part of the face projects considerably; so that a line let fall from the forehead, would cut off a much larger proportion than in the Europeans. Their eyes are of a middling size, with the whites less clear than in us; and though not remarkably quick or piercing they are such as give a frank, cheerful cast to the whole countenance. Their teeth are broad, but not equal, nor well set: and, either from nature, or from dirt, not of so true a white as is usual among people of a black colour. Their mouths are rather wide; and this appearance seems heightened, by wearing their beards long, and clotted with paint, in the same manner as the hair on their heads. Their bellies project considerably, which may

be owing to the want of compression in that part which most nations use more or less.

The females wear a kangaroo skin, in the same shape as it comes from the animal, tied over the shoulders, and round the waist. But its only use seemed to be to support their children, when carried on their backs; for it did not cover those parts which most nations conceal, they being, in all other respects as naked as the men, that, though their hair was of the same texture and colour, some of them had their heads completely shorn or shaved. In others this operation had been performed only on one side of the head, while the rest of them had all the upper part of the head shorn close, leaving a circle of hair all round, somewhat like the tonsure of the Romish ecclesiastics. Some of the gentlemen paid their addresses, and made liberal offers of presents which were rejected with great disdain; whether from a sense of virtue, or the fear of displeasing their men, could not be determined. That this gallantry was not very agreeable to the latter is certain; for an elderly man as soon as he observed it, ordered all the women and children to retire, which they obeyed; though some shewed a little reluctance.

The inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land have some wretched constructions of sticks, covered with bark; but these seemed only to have been erected for temporary purposes; and many of the largest trees were converted

into comfortable habitations: these had their trunks hollowed out, by fire, to the height of six or seven feet: they have an hearth of clay in the middle, and room for four or five persons to sit round it. At the same time these shelters are durable; for they take care to leave one side of the tree sound, which is sufficient to keep it growing as luxuriantly as those which remained untouched.

Captain Cook visited various parts of the southern extremity, previous to his sailing in with the spot under immediate consideration; and standing to the northward, he discovered a bay, which he afterwards called Botany-Bay from the great number of plants collected at this place. It is situated on the eastern coast of New Holland, denominated by that navigator, New South Wales, in the latitude of 34 degrees south, longitude 208 deg. 37 min. west. It is well sheltered from all winds, which induced him to anchor there. He sent an officer to sound the entrance; who reported on his return, that, in a cove, a little within the harbour, some of the natives came down to the beach and invited him to land, by many signs and words, of which he knew not the meaning. All of them were armed with long pikes, and a wooden weapon, shaped somewhat like a scymeter, which was two feet and a half long. The Indians, who had not followed the boat, seeing the ship approach, used many threatening gestures, and brandished their weapons.

As Botany-Bay is not many leagues distant from Port Jackson, and the natives are exactly the same in their dispositions, manners, customs, &c as also the animal and vegetable productions. and the climate and soil varying but in a small degree, we shall therefore copiously describe them under the head of Port Jackson, as related by the new colonists who had more time to observe, and more leisure to digest, these particulars, than the first discoverers.

*Commencement of the Colony.*

GOVERNOR PHILIPS had with him, when he sailed from England, 558 male convicts, and 220 females, amounting, in all, to 778; also a few horses, cows, sheep, hogs, fowls, and several other animals necessary for the settlements.

As Botany Bay was the spot destined for the planting a new colony in this part of the globe, the fleet fitted out by Government, for the expedition, sailed from England in March 1787; and having in the course of their voyage, touched at Teneriff, Rio de Janeiro in the Brazils, and the Cape of Good Hope, reached and anchored in the Bay on the 20th of January 1788, after a passage of thirty-six weeks, in which a most arduous undertaking was effected with more success, and less loss, than hardly ever attended a fleet in such a predicament.

Previous to the settlement on the spot under immediate consideration, an expedition up the Bay was deemed expedient, in order to explore the nature of the country, and select a place for carrying into execution their plan and design. None being discovered that appeared very convenient for the purpose, the governor and the lieutenant-governor proceeded in a boat to examine an opening, to which Captain Cook had given the name of Port-Jackson, presuming that good anchorage might be found within it. Nor did they search in vain, for such was their account of the harbour, and the advantages attending the place, upon their return, that a resolution was formed of evacuating Botany-Bay the ensuing morning.

The passage from Botany-Bay to Port-Jackson was both speedy and pleasant. Having passed between the capes which forms its entrance, the fleet arrived at Port-Jackson, one of the finest and most extensive harbours 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 the governor 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. Trincomale, 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 in Europe: During a run up the harbour, of about four miles, in a westerly direction, a luxuriant prospect presented itself on the shore, covered with trees to the water's edge, among which many of the Indians were frequently seen; till the fleet arrived at a small snug cove to the southward, on the banks of which the plan of operations were destined to commence. On their arrival the natives appeared tolerably numerous, from whence they had reason to conclude the country more populous than Captain Cook thought it, as they were assembled on the beach, to the south shore, to the number of not less than forty persons, shouting, and making many uncouth signs and gestures. As the boat, in which were the governor, some officers, and attendants, rowed up the harbour, close to the land, for some distance, the Indians kept pace with her on the beach. When signs were made of a want of water, the natives directly comprehended the meaning, and pointed to a spot where it could be procured; on which the boat was immediately pushed in, and a landing took place.— The Indians, though timorous, shewed no signs of resentment at our people's going on shore; and, when an interview commenced

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seemed highly entertained with their new acquaintance, from whom they accepted of a looking-glass, some beads, and other toys.

The following circumstances, related by the author of the narrative before-mentioned, are inserted in his own words, as it is presumed they will conduce both to entertainment and information.

“ When I went with a party to the south side of the harbour, and had scarcely landed five minutes, we were met by a dozen of Indians, naked, 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, and at the same time baring his bosom, and shewing the whiteness of his skin. On his cloths 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 desired the boy not to be afraid, and introduced him to the acquaintance of this uncouth

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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, the conclusion verified I gave no offence to the old gentleman.— Indeed, it was putting ourselves on a par with them; as I had observed, from the first, that some youths of their own, though considerably older than the one with us, were kept back by the grown people. Several more now came up, to whom we made various presents; but our toys seemed not to be regarded as very valuable, nor would they, for a long time, make any returns for them; though, before we parted, a large club with a head almost sufficient to sell an ox, was obtained in exchange for a looking-glass. These people seemed at a loss to know (probably from our want of beards) of what sex we were; which having understood, they burst into the most immoderate fits of laughter, talking to each other, at the same time, with such rapidity and vociferation, as I had never before heard. After nearly an hour's conversation, by signs and gestures, they repeated the word *whurra* several times, which signifies Be-gone, and walked away from us to the head of the Bay."

The adventurers, in the late expedition, had several more interviews with the natives which ended in so friendly a manner, that hopes were entertained of bringing about a connection with them. The first object of our people was to win their affection, and the next to convince them of our superiority. To this purpose an officer, one day, prevailed on one of them to place a target, made of bark, against a tree, which he fired at with a pistol, at the distance of some paces. The Indians, though terrified at the report, did not run away; but their astonishment exceeded their alarm, on looking at the shield which the ball had perforated. As this produced a little shyness, the officer, to dissipate their fears, and remove their jealousy, whistled the air of *Marlbrouk*, with which they appeared highly charmed, and imitated him with equal pleasure and readiness.

After the governor had arrived at Sydney Cove, and had erected temporary huts, where ever they could get places clear of trees and bushes, they began to clear the ground, and lines are traced out for the principal streets of an intended town, to be terminated by the governor's house, the main guard, and the criminal court. In some parts of this space temporary barracks were first erected, but no permanent buildings will be suffered to be placed, except in conformity to the plan laid down. The principal streets are

two hundred feet wide; the ground proposed for them to the southward, is nearly level, and an excellent situation for building on. And when grants of land are made, every house is to have an allotment of sixty feet in front, and one hundred and fifty in depth. These regulations will preserve uniformity in the buildings, and a free circulation of air at all times.

We cannot omit to relate the following ludicrous adventure. Some of the officers one day met a native, an old man, in the woods. He had a beard of a considerable length, which his new acquaintance gave him to understand, by signals, they would rid him of, if he pleased; stroaking their chins, and shewing him the smoothness of them at the same time. — At length the old Indian consented; and one of the officers, taking a penknife from his pocket, and making the best substitute for leather, he could find, performed the operation with great success, and, as it proved, much to the liking of the old man, who, in a few days after, reposed a confidence in our people, of which they had hitherto known no example, by paddling along-side one of the ships in his canoe, and pointing to his beard. Various arts were ineffectually tried to induce him to enter the ship; but, as he continued to decline the invitation, a barber was sent down into the boat along-side

the canoc, from whence, leaning over the gunwale, he complied with the wish of the old beau, to his infinite satisfaction. In addition to the consequences expected from this dawning of cordiality, it afforded proof, that the beard is considered by these people as an incumbrance than a mark of dignity.

The necessary previous business having been transacted, upon an appointed day, the commissions were read, and possession was taken of the settlement in form. The marine battalion being drawn up, and the convicts assembled on the occasion, his majesty's commission was read, appointing his Excellency Arthur Philip, Esq; Governor and Captain General in and over the territory of New South Wales, and its dependencies, together with the Acts of Parliament for establishing trial by law within the same; and the patents under the great seal of Great Britain, for holding civil and criminal courts of judicature, by which all cases of life and death, as well as matters of property, were to be decided.

It was found necessary to enforce the rigour of the law, in order to restrain the violation of public security. A set of desperate and hardened miscreants leagued themselves for the purposes of depredation; and, as is generally the case, had insinuation enough to entice others, less versed in iniquity, to become instrumental in carrying it on.

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On the 2d of March, 1788. governor Philip went with a long boat to examine a bay about eight miles to the north of Port Jackson, called Broken Bay; the first night they slept in the boats, as the natives, tho' friendly, seemed to be very numerous. Next day they examined the land, and found it much higher than at Port-Jackson. Great trees were seen growing to the summits of the mountains, which appeared accessible only to birds.— In this excursion, some interviews with the natives took place. Several women came down to the beach with the men; one of these, a young woman, was very talkative and cheerful. This was a singular instance, as the women appear less cheerful than the men, and appear to be under great awe and subjection. They certainly are not treated with much tenderness, as they are often seen in the canoes, fishing, with young children at the breast. The lively young lady, the second day stood up in her canoe, and gave a song, which was far from being unpleasant. The men very readily assisted the English in making a fire, and behaved in the most friendly manner. It was now first observed by the governor, that many of the women had lost two joints from the little finger of the left hand; as these appeared to be all married women, he, at first, conjectured, that privation to be a part of the marriage-ceremony; but we afterwards found young

girls, of five or six years of age, wanting these two joints, and several married women whose fingers were all perfect. Pater-son, in his travels through Africa, says, he met with a tribe of Hottentots, all of whom wanted a joint of the little finger; the reason they gave, was, that it was a cure for a certain disease, to which they were sub-ject when young.

When the plan of the settlement was first projected, it was apprehended, that the stores sent from England, together with the produce of the country, would be sufficient for the support of the people, till they should receive a further supply; but the eatable vegetable productions being scarce, the animal productions not abounding in that degree as was imagined, and the fisheries proving unsuccessful, they were, in consequence, reduced to an allowance of two ounces of meat a-day; and fresh provisions became scarcer than in a blockaded town. The little live-stock, which, at so much expence, and with so many difficulties, had been brought on shore, prudence forbade the use of; and fish, which, for a short time, had been tolerably plenty, were now scarce, and had it not been for a stray kangaroo, which now and then fell in the way, they would, in general, have had no fresh food. No wonder then that the scurvy began its usual ravages, and extended its baneful influence



through all descriptions of persons, particularly as the vegetable productions of the country neither abound nor are efficacious in the removal of this disease. Many other calamitous circumstances combined to aggravate their distress; and amongst others, the whole stock of black cattle, consisting of five cows and a bull, had strayed into the woods, and notwithstanding the most diligent search, could not be found. But, at length, they were happily relieved by the arrival of a fleet from England with ample supplies; and from the last accounts transmitted since that time, it appears, that the produce of the country being more abundant in consequence of a better knowledge being obtained of its resources, and the fisheries proving more successful, they are now in a more comfortable situation; and their future prospects are more promising, as is evident from the last accounts, which were conveyed by Governor Philip to Lord Sydney, who caused them to be laid before the House of Commons; and which we shall here transcribe; as they tend to shew the present state of the colony, and, no doubt, prove acceptable to the reader.

“ Sydney-cove, Feb. 12. 1790. I had the honour of informing your Lordship, that a settlement was intended to be made at a place I named Rose-hill. At the head of this harbour there is a creek, which, at half

flood, has water for large boats to go three miles up; and one mile higher the water is fresh, and the soil good. A very industrious man, whom I brought from England, is employed there at present and has under his direction one hundred convicts, who are employed in clearing and cultivating the ground. A barn, granary, and other necessary buildings are erected; and twenty-seven acres of corn promise a good crop. The soil is good; and the country, for 20 miles to the westward, as far as I have examined, lies well for cultivation: but then the labour of clearing the ground is very great; and I have seen none that can be cultivated without cutting down the timber, except some few particular spots, which, from their situation, lying at a distance from either of the harbours, can be of no advantage to us at present: and, I presume, the meadows, mentioned in Captain Cook's voyage, were seen from the high grounds about Botany-Bay, and from whence they appear well to the eye, but, when examined, are found to be marshes, the drainings of which would be a waste of time, and not to be attempted by the first settlers. At Sydney-Cove all the officers are in good huts, and the men in barracks: and, although many unforeseen difficulties have been met with, I believe there is not an individual, from the governor to the private soldier, whose situation

is not more eligible at this time, than he had reason to expect it could be in the course of the three years station; and it is the same with the convicts; and those who have been in any ways industrious, have vegetables in plenty. The buildings now carrying on are of brick and stone. The house intended for myself was to consist of only three rooms; but, having a good foundation, has been enlarged, contains six rooms, and is so well built, that I presume it will stand for a great number of years. The stores have been lately over-run with rats; and they are equally numerous in the gardens, where they do considerable damage; and, as the spoils in the stores could only be known by removing all the provisions, that being done, many casks of flour and rice were found to be damaged, or totally destroyed. The loss in these two articles by the rats, since landing, has been more than 1200 weight.

“No robbery has been committed, for some time; and the convicts, in general, have behaved better than I ever expected. Only two convicts have suffered death last year. Four were executed the first year.

“As near two years have now passed since we first landed in this country, some judgment may be formed of the climate; and I believe a finer or more healthy climate is not to be found in any part of the world. Of 1032 people, who were landed, many of

whom were worn out by old age, the scurvy, and various disorders, only 72 have died in 21 months; and by the surgeon's return, it appears that 26 of those died from disorders of long standing; and which, it is more than probable, would have carried them off much sooner in England: 59 children have been born in the above time. In December the corn at Rose-hill was got in: The corn was exceedingly good; about 200 bushels of wheat and sixty of barley, with a small quantity of flax Indian-corn, and oats; all which is preserved for seed. Here I beg leave to observe to your Lordship, that if settlers are sent out, and the convicts divided amongst them, this settlement will very shortly maintain itself; but without which, this country cannot be cultivated to any advantage. At present I have only one person (who has about 100 convict under his direction) who is employed in cultivating the ground for the public benefit, and he has returned the quantity of corn above-mentioned into the public store. The officers have not raised sufficient to support the little live-stock they have. Some ground I have had for cultivation will return about 40 bushels of wheat; so that the produce of the labour of the convicts employed in cultivation, has been very short of what might have been expected, and which I take the liberty of pointing out to your Lordship in this place, to show as fully as possible, the

ate of this colony, and the necessity of the convicts being employed by those who have an interest in their labour. The numbers employed in cultivation will be increased as the necessary buildings are finished but which will be a work of time; for there are numbers in this settlement who do nothing towards their own support, except those employed for the public.

“ In order to get a right knowledge of the country round the settlement, frequent excursions have been made since the ships sailed in November 1788; soon after which, I went to Botany Bay, and the five days spent in that harbour, confirmed me in the opinion I had first formed of it, that it afforded no eligible situation for fixing the settlement, and was a bad harbour, not affording good security for ships against the easterly winds, which frequently blow very hard in the winter: and which has been further proved by Captain Hunter, and the first lieutenant of the Sirius, who went to survey the Bay.

“ After having been several times with the boats at Broken-bay, in order to examine the different branches in that harbour, a river was found; but the want of provisions obliged us to return without being able to trace it to its source, which has since been done; and in the 16 days we were then out, all those branches which had any depth of water, were traced as far as the boats could

proceed. The breadth of this river, named the Hawkesbury, is from 300 to 800 feet; and it appears, from the soundings we had, to be navigable, for the largest merchant-ships, to the foot of Richmond-hill; but as the water, near the head of the river, sometimes rises, after very heavy rains, thirty feet above its common level, it would not be safe for ships to go so far up; but 15 or 20 miles below Richmond-hill, they would lie in fresh water, and perfectly safe. I speak of Richmond-hill as being the head of the river, it there growing very shallow, and dividing into two branches. The high rocky country which forms Botany-bay, is lost as you proceed up the Hawkesbury; and the banks of the river are there covered with timber; the soil is rich light mould; and judging from the little we saw of the country, I should suppose it good land to a very considerable extent. The other branches of fresh water are shoals, but probably run many miles further into the country than we could trace them in our boats. On these rivers we saw great numbers of wild ducks. and some black swans: and on the banks of the Hawkesbury several decoys were set to catch quails.

Governor Philip had now determined to return by land to Port-Jackson; and as he went keeping near the sea-coast he discovered a great number of the natives assembled at the mouth of a cave, the party was within

ten yards of them before they were perceiv-  
 ed, and the governor had hardly time to  
 make his people halt before numbers appear-  
 ed in arms: the man who seemed to take the  
 lead, made signs for the English to retire; but  
 seeing the governor approach alone unarmed  
 and in a friendly manner, he gave his spear  
 away, and met him with perfect confidence;  
 and in less than 3 minutes, the English party  
 found themselves surrounded by 212 men;  
 but nothing appeared of treachery in the in-  
 habitants, or taking any advantage of supe-  
 riority of numbers. The moment the friend-  
 ship was accepted, they laid down their spears  
 and stone-hatchets, and joined the party in a  
 most amicable manner: numbers of women  
 and children remained at a distance, but were  
 brought down by the men to receive some  
 presents, which were given them. And when  
 they saw that the English were going towards  
 the next cove, one of them, an old man made  
 signs that he might be allowed to go first: he  
 ascended the hill, calling out, holding up his  
 hands, to the natives, that those with him  
 were friends. The Governor saw about 40  
 men there, and from the parties he had seen  
 in Botany-bay, Port-Jackson, and Broken-  
 bay, the inhabitants could not exceed 1500;  
 and the country inhabited no less than fifty  
 miles from the sea.

“ The natives of New Holland seem to  
 have no great aversion to the new settlers;

and with respect to the advantages the mother country may derive from the establishment of the colony, if intended only as a receptacle for convicts, this place stands unequalled, from the situation, extent, and nature of the country; but in a commercial view, its importance will not be great, as the New Zealand hemp, of which sanguine expectations were formed, is not a native of the soil, and an adjacent island, where an assurance was entertained of finding it, has it not.

Persons induced to emigrate hither, are recommended, before they quit England, to provide all their wearing apparel for themselves, family and servants; their furniture, tools of every kind, and implements of husbandry, among which a plough need not be included, the hoe being used, as they will touch at no place where these articles can be purchased to advantage.

F I N I S.

