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Arthur Phillip

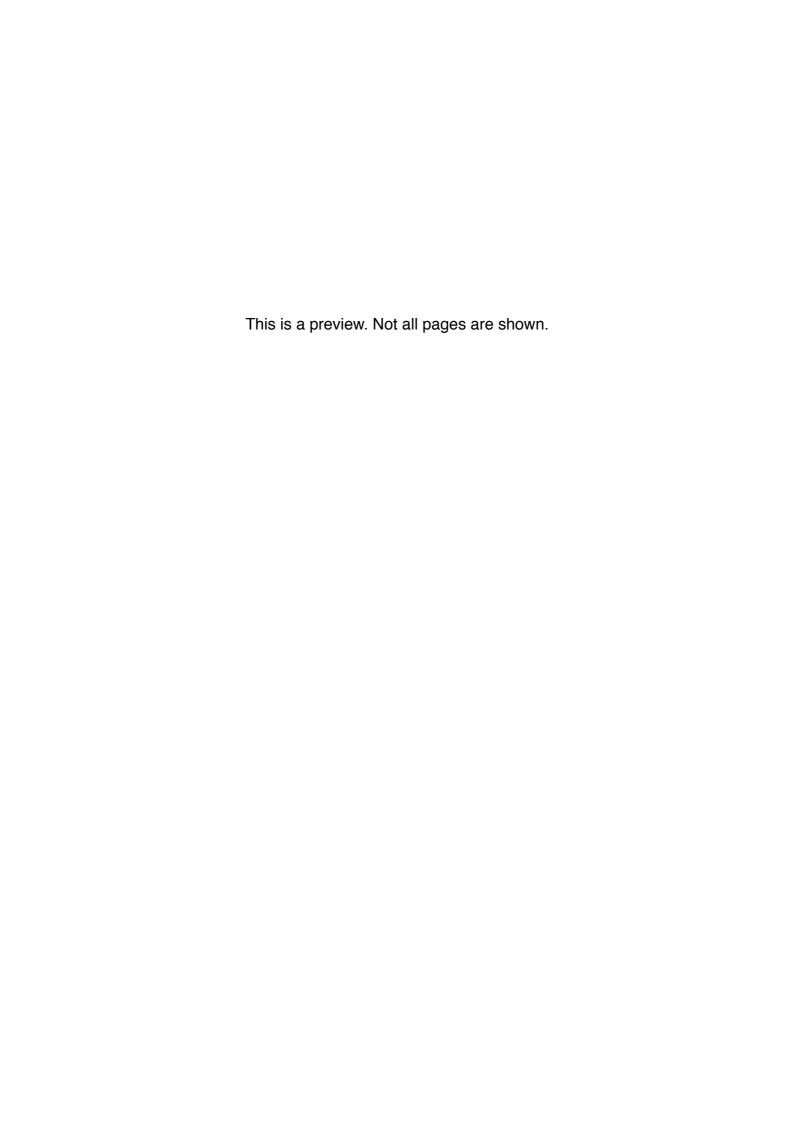(26 January 1788 – 10 December 1792)

Andrew Tink

In the history of the English-speaking people, Arthur Phillip's leadership role in the foundation of a convict colony, which in a little over a hundred years grew into a nation spanning a continent, is unique. Apart from the official record, however, surprisingly little is known about Phillip the man. He was always an outsider. Mystery surrounds even his death, which some have hinted was suicide.[1]

Early years

The son of Jacob Phillip, a German Jewish migrant and his English wife Elizabeth, Phillip was born in London on 11 October 1738. After spending two and a half years at Greenwich Hospital School which had originally been established to train the sons of poor seamen for a seafaring life, Phillip went to sea at the age of 15. Apprenticed to the master of the *Fortune*, he spent the summer of 1754 whaling in the Arctic.[2]

That same year, a clash between British and French troops in America's backwoods soon led to a world war between Britain, France and Spain. Before long, Phillip found himself among the lower ranks of HMS *Buckingham* and saw action against the French off the Mediterranean island of Minorca in 1756. However, the British Admiral, Byng, was accused of failing to fully engage his fleet, found guilty and shot. Referring to Byng's "downright cowardice", Phillip supported his execution. Later in the war, Phillip was aboard the *Stirling Castle* and in 1762 he participated in the capture of Havana, Spain's communication hub in the Americas. Although Phillip was promoted to Lieutenant and shared in the Havana prize money, he was stood down within weeks, following the declaration of a general peace.[3]

Although he retired in 1805, Phillip kept being nominally promoted, as was the custom, finally becoming an Admiral of the Blue three months before his death on 31 August 1814.[42]

Notes

1   Watson, F, *Historical Records of Australia* (*HRA*), vol I, Government Printer, Sydney, 1914, p xxv; Mackaness, G, *Admiral Arthur Phillip*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1929, pp 60, 138, 452-5.

2   Frost, A, *Arthur Phillip 1738-1814*, OUP, Melbourne, pp 2-23; Mackaness, p 463.

3   Anderson, F, *Crucible of War*, Faber and Faber, New York, 2000, pp xxv-7; Frost, pp 27-42; Mackaness, pp 4-7.

4   Mackaness, pp 8-11; Frost, pp 49-55.

5   Frost, pp 44, 60-3; Mackaness, pp 462-3; McIntyre, KG, *The Rebello Transcripts*, Souvenir Press, London, 1984, pp 26, 51.

6   McIntyre, pp 86, 138, 160; Frost, pp 82, 86-8; Mackaness, pp 17-18.

7   Mackaness, pp 19-26.

8   On 25 September 1782, the First Lord of the Admiralty had written to Townshend: "If you have nothing further for Captain Phillip we shall send him to his ship … The memo entrusted you with – relation to the Southern Expedition if it is to take place should come from you as the ships commands for the Admiralty to collect and order to fit for Secret Service". Although a bit confusing to the modern reader, this memo demonstrates the closeness of the relationship. John Blankett to Lord Shelburne, "Force proposed for an Expedition against Buenos Aires and to the South Seas conditionally", August 1782, Sydney Papers, Box X, William L Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Lord Keppel to Thomas Townshend, 25.9.1782, Sydney Papers, Box X.

9   Mackaness, pp 27, 34, 57.

10 *The Statutes at Large*, vol 14, Chapter 56, Sections VIII and X; Nepean's Secret Service Accounts, 11 November 1784, Sydney Papers, Clements Library.

11 Atkinson, A, *The Europeans in Australia*, vol I, OUP, Melbourne, 1998, pp 50-6; *Historical Records of NSW* (*HRNSW*), vol 1, pt 2, Government Printer, Sydney, 1892, p 14; Currey, J, *David Collins*, MUP, Melbourne, 2000, p 33.

12 *HRNSW*, pp 15, 22-3; Atkinson, pp 59-60.

13 Mackaness, pp 62-3; McIntyre, p 160.

14 Sydney to Treasury Commissioners, 22 December 1786, HO36/5; Currey, p 30; *HRNSW*, pp 50-4, 83; *HRA*, pxviii.

15 *HRNSW*, pp 89-90; Atkinson, p 63.

16 Fishburn's Log, ADM 51/4375; *HRNSW*, p 106; Eldershaw, MB, *Phillip of Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1977, pp 51, 59; Chisholm, AH, *Journal of a Voyage to NSW by John White*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1962, pp 66-7.

17 Mackaness, pp 95-6, 101, 424; Hughes, R, *The Fatal Shore*, Pan Books, London, 1988, Map of the Route of the First Fleet; Eldershaw, p 82; Frost, p 164; Flannery, T, *1788*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1996, pp 31-7.

18 Mackaness, p 105; Mulvaney, DJ, and White, JP, *Australians to 1788*, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987, pp 345-51.

19 Clark, CMH, *A History of Australia*, vol I, MUP, Melbourne, 1962, pp 76-7, 86-9; Mackaness, pp 121-5. Eldershaw, pp 107, 111, 115, 123; Currey, pp 51-2.

20 Flannery, pp 39, 50, 60; Mackaness, pp 139, 147, 149; Currey, p 55.

21 Atkinson, p 37; Mackaness, pp 141, 143-4; Eldershaw, p 109.

22   Mackaness, p 154; *HRNSW*, pp 126-7, 147; Gillen, M, *The Founders of Australia*, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1989, pp 427-9; *HRA*, p 98.

23   *Prince of Wales* Log, ADM 51/436; *HRA*, pp 171, 177.

24   Eldershaw, pp 109, 142, 150; Mackaness, p 195, 199; Currey, pp 53, 59, 69.

25   Mackaness, pp 201-2, 210-15, 220-1, 226, 231; *HRA*, p 57; Eldershaw, pp 153-6.

26   Mackaness, p 239; Eldershaw, pp 156, 159, 164, 169; Flannery, pp 121-5.

27   Mackaness, p 256; Frost, p 218; *HRA*, pp 171-2.

28   *HRA*, pp 25, 48, 66, 77.

29   Flannery, pp 93-4; Mackaness, p 140.

30   Mackaness, pp 189-90, 192, 200; Flannery, pp 97, 101-2; *HRA*, p 159.

31   Flannery, pp 117-19, 123; Mackaness, pp 231, 237, 258; *HRA*, p 296.

32   *HRNSW*, pp 230-1; Sydney to Admiralty Lords, 13.4.1789, ADM 1/4154; Grenville to Treasury Commissioners, 6.7.1789, HO 36/6; *HRA*, p 121; Ritchie, J, *The Wentworths Father and Son*, MUP, Melbourne, 1999, p 27; Eldershaw, p 171.

33   Flannery, pp 126, 131; Mackaness, pp 264-5, 271, 274-5; *HRNSW*, vol 2, p 768; Ritchie, p 40; *HRA*, pp 213, 248.

34   Eldershaw, p 205; Mackaness, pp 285-6.

35   Mackaness, pp 287-300, 303; Flannery, pp 134-53, 166-8; Eldershaw, pp 179-81, 312-16; Currey, pp 90-1.

36   *HRA*, p 262; Eldershaw, pp 186-9; Mackaness, pp 325-30.

37   Mackaness, pp 336-9, 353, 359; Eldershaw, p 195; *HRA*, pp 225, 272-3, 313.

38   Mackaness, pp 375-81; Currey, p 113.

39   Eldershaw, pp 207, 220-3; Mackaness, pp 390-9; *HRA*, pp 354-5.

40   *HRA*, p xxiv, 51; Mackaness, pp 401, 414.

41   Currey, p 116; Atkinson, p 155; Frost, pp 224, 232-3; Mackaness, pp 412-16.

42   Mackaness, pp 420, 428-9, 432.