

## Leaving for Port Jackson; the First Fleet's abandonment of Botany Bay

### Introduction

On the morning of 28 April 1770<sup>1</sup>, James Cook and his crew sailed into Botany Bay in the bark *Endeavour*, becoming the first Europeans to set foot on the east coast of Australia (Cook, 1955, 304-312). The event itself had negligible impact on the environment or on the peoples that occupied the territory. Its broader consequences, however, were massive. Perhaps the most significant of these was that the area was recommended as the site of the colony that Britain hoped to establish, *inter alia*, to house its overflowing gaol population<sup>2</sup>, making Botany Bay the focus of the great colonial experiment that led to the transformation of New Holland into the modern continent-state of Australia.

Eighteen years later, therefore, on 18-20 January 1788, the ships of the First Fleet sailed into the Bay laden with the personnel and infrastructure necessary to establish the new colony. After four days' reconnaissance, however, Captain Arthur Phillip, the new Governor, concluded that that not only did the shallow open bay offer inadequate protection for moored vessels, but that the area was incapable of supporting the thousand or more members of the First Fleet (Phillip, 1789, 45-47). Phillip's objections focussed largely on the absence of adequate fresh water and the damp and swampy nature of the landscape (Phillip, 1789, 45-47). However, during those first few days at Botany Bay, his officers repeatedly noted an additional obstacle to settlement, the sandy and infertile nature of the soil:

'... we set out to observe the country, which, on inspection, rather disappointed our hopes, being invariably sandy and unpromising for the purpose of cultivation ...' Tench (1789, 57).

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<sup>1</sup> Strictly 29 April if we adjust for the fact that Cook had previously crossed and recrossed the International Date Line.

<sup>2</sup> It is clear that New South Wales was always intended to be more than just a dumping ground for Britain's overcrowded gaols. Some of the debate about the multiple aims of the enterprise is summarised by Frost (1994; 2011).

'The Soil to a great depth is nothing but a black sand ...' (Bowes Smyth, 1799, 57).

'Clearing the Ground on the S side of the Bay ... the whole depth of it was little else but sand, & swamps all round.' (Bradley, 1969, 61).

'... the Land is very Sandy there [sic] is no Soil for 4 or 5 feet down ...' (Easty, 1965, 92).

'The soil was nothing but sand ...' (King, 1790, 114) and '... the Country is nothing but sand & bogs, with little or no fresh water.' (King, 1790, 120-121).

'The wood is bad, the soil light, poor, and sandy, nor has it anything to recommend it.' (White to Skill, 1790, 507).

Phillip promptly decamped in three small boats to investigate alternative locations to the north (King, 1790, 129). Hunter (1793, 42-43) reported that their destination was Broken Bay, an inlet noted by Cook during his journey along the coast in 1770, but King (1790, 129) and White (1790, 115) also mentioned Port Jackson, the entrance to which had also been reported by Cook, and it is possible that Phillip had several options in mind based on Cook's reports.

Four leagues to the north, the party examined an unpromising entrance between high perpendicular cliffs. Once inside, they entered a large landlocked harbour decked by a series of protected coves in which, in Phillip's oft-quoted phrase, '... a thousand sail of the line might ride in perfect security.' (Phillip, 1789, 47). This was Port Jackson. The group split and spent three days investigating its inlets and coves (Phillip, 1789, 47). '[P]reference was given to one which had the finest spring of water, and in which ships can anchor so close to the shore, that at very small expence [sic] quays may be constructed at which the largest vessels may unload.' (Phillip, 1789, 47-48). Close at hand were areas of promising soil (Phillip, 1789, 64). The party returned to Botany Bay in the afternoon of 23 January, whereupon Phillip announced the departure of the fleet to Port Jackson, where the fledgling settlement of Sydney town was established on 26 January 1788.

William Bradley, First Lieutenant of HMS *Sirius*, who had remained in Botany Bay with the rest of the fleet, summarised Phillip's arguments:

'The Governor with the boats returned from the N. ward, having discovered Port Jackson to be an exceeding fine Harbour with many Coves all forming Inner Harbours, the Soil far preferable to that at Botany Bay & in some parts a good Soil & well supplied with water.' (Bradley, 1969, 63).

### **Criticisms of Cook**

Contemporary commentators and later historians have consistently regarded this episode as a failure on the part of Cook, expressing with degrees of either bemusement or contempt the discrepancy between his assessment of the potential of Botany Bay and the reality of what existed on the ground. Phillip (1789, 52) himself concluded:

'The appearance of the place is picturesque and pleasing, and the ample harvest it afforded, of botanical acquisitions, made it interesting to the botanical gentlemen ...; but something more essential than beauty of appearance, and more necessary than philosophical riches, must be sought in a place where the permanent residence of multitudes is to be established.'

Captain Watkin Tench of the Marines, one of the most notable of the First Fleet chroniclers, was particularly scathing and lost no opportunity of criticising Cook's assessment of the landscape:

'Of the natural meadows which Mr. Cook mentions near Botany Bay, we can give no account ...' (Tench, 1789, 120).

'The soil of every part of the peninsula [at the head of Botany Bay], which we had traversed, is shallow and sandy, and its productions meagre and wretched. When forced to quit the sand, we were condemned to drag through morasses, or to clamber over rocks, unrefreshed by streams, and unmarked by diversity.' (Tench, 1793, 97-98).

'We had passed through the country, which the discoverers of Botany Bay extol as *'some of the finest meadows in the world'*. These meadows, instead of grass, are covered with high coarse rushes, growing in a rotten spongy bog, into which we were plunged knee-deep at every step.' (Tench, 1793, 101-102).

John White, the Surgeon-General, agreed:

'The fine meadows talked of in Captain Cook's voyage I could never see, though I took some pains to find them out; nor have I ever heard of a person that has seen any parts resembling them.' (While, 1790, 116).

Modern historians have been only too keen to follow the same line:

'... when those in authority in the Home Government were casting about for a site for the convict settlement the vision of "the finest meadows in the world" must have acted like a magnet in attraction. If this be so, we can permit ourselves to say that Australia was colonized under a perversion.' (Bertie, 1924, 266-267).

'Reading his [Banks'] journal, we get the impression that he thought Botany Bay to be a very good place for botanists, and a very bad place for colonists. And, if he thought that, he thought right.' (Wood, 1933, 92).

'He [Cook] spent only a few days at Botany Bay, saw meadows that did not exist and failed to note that the water supply was inadequate.' (Fletcher, 1990, 3).

'... Arthur Phillip, commander of the First Fleet and first governor of the colony of New South Wales, found Cook's description of Botany Bay so inaccurate he had to transfer the settlement to Sydney Cove ...' (Carter, 1987, 1).

'Captain Arthur Phillip (1738-1814), commodore of the fleet and the colony's first governor, realised as soon as he arrived in Botany Bay that it was not the

benign - even welcoming - environment that Cook had described in 1770 ...'  
(Boon, 2017, 263).

'As is well known, the spot [Botany Bay] proved wholly unfit for British settlement, forcing swift relocation to Warrane (Sydney Cove).' (Fitzpatrick, 2018, 19).

One explanation offered for the divergence between Cook's assessment of the resources of the Bay and that of the First Fleet is that it reflects the differences in the seasons when each set of observations was made: late April-early May in the case of Cook and mid-summer in the case of the First Fleet (Brooke and Brandon, 2005, 48; Frost, 2011, 200). Others have interpreted the discrepancies as a product of secular climatic shifts such as those associated with El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). Boon (2017, 263), for example, suggested that Cook saw Botany Bay during a La Niña period, when conditions along the east coast are typically wetter than normal. Yet, according to Gergis *et al.* (2009, 95), very strong La Niña conditions also prevailed in Sydney in 1788, an assessment that Gergis *et al.* (2010) and Gergis (2018, 28) have extended to the whole of the period 1788-1790. Notwithstanding this, it is worth pointing out that Gergis *et al.* (2009, 96) have drawn attention to the weak statistical relationship between ENSO indices and Sydney's local climate. In the light of this, it is unclear how far the ENSO debate takes us.

Others (Bertie, 1924, 266-268; Cameron-Ash, 2018, 166, 207-208) have suggested that the divergence between the interpretations of Cook and those of the First Fleet is a product of the inventive text of Dr John Hawkesworth (1773), who was responsible for collating the journals of the *Endeavour* expedition and producing a story retold in the voice of Cook. For over a century, Hawkesworth's was the only version of Cook's narrative that was available and was the primary source for the officers of the First Fleet. Cook was on his second voyage when it was published and, by his own account, was aghast upon reading Hawkesworth's text:

'It was not less mortifying to me when I first read it, which was not till I arrived now at the Cape of Good Hope; for I never had the perusal of the Manuscript nor did I ever hear the whole of it read in the mode it was written,

notwithstanding what Dr Hawkesworth has said to the Contrary in the Interduction ... How these things came to be thus misrepresented [sic], I can not say, as they came not from me ...' (Cook, 1961, 661-662).

Thus, Hawkesworth's (1793, 501) reference to '... some of the finest meadows in the world ...' may be contrasted with Cook's (1955, 309) '... as fine meadow as ever was seen.' The differences seem slight, however, and it is difficult to see that the replacement of Hawkesworth's text by Cook's actual words would have changed by much the expectations of the First Fleet.

### **Phillip's decision and its justification**

Phillip's decision to shift the settlement, thereby relocating what was to become the founding city of the new nation, has clearly been proven right by history.

Nevertheless, a careful assessment reveals the inadequate foundations upon which much of his argument was based. One concern was that the moorings in the main part of the Bay were inadequate. But both Tench and King considered at the time that sheltered conditions suitable for mooring large numbers of vessels existed along the lower reaches of the George's River. In January 1788, for example Tench (1789, 52) related that '... for many miles up the S.W. arm [the George's River], is a haven, equal in every respect to any hitherto known, and in which any number of ships might anchor, secured from all winds.'

Meanwhile, on 20 January, whilst the Fleet was still moored in the Bay and before Phillip had left to investigate Port Jackson, Lieutenants King and Dawes were ordered to investigate the southwest side of the Bay. King (1790, 124) reported that:

'Towards the head of the harbour there is a flatt reaches right across with a Channell of 18 feet at high water above which there are some large lagoons of very deep water which run a great way up.'

The following day, the pair explored the river further:

'Above the bar which lies at the S.W. extremity of the Bay are a vast number of deep coves & large lagoons, in some of which we found 9 fathom water In most

of these coves a first rate ship might lye along side the rocks with which every part of the shore is lined except at the head of some of the Coves ...' (King, 1790, 130).

This picture is confirmed by John Hunter (1793, 161), who admitted that, until he had surveyed the Bay in September 1789, he had believed there to be '... an easy channel over the flats into the west [George's] river ...'. He also recognised that '[t]his river in some parts has good depth, and that near and within its entrance ...'.

In other words, although Hunter's 1789 survey appeared to confirm'... that it is not possible to lie land locked with a ship in any part of it [the Bay]; you will always be exposed to the large sea which tumbles in here with an easterly wind.' (Hunter, 1793 162), this was not known until 18 months after the decision had been made to shift the fleet to Port Jackson.

Secondly, one of the purported attractions of Sydney Cove, and one of the justifications for choosing Port Jackson over Botany Bay, was its fine supply of water. This came principally from the stream that drained into the Cove from swamps located to the west of the present site of Hyde Park (Aird, 1961, 6 opp.). Unfortunately, this turned out to be less adequate and less reliable than Phillip had hoped. By February 1791, Hunter reported that

'... all the streams from which we were formerly supplied, except a small drain at the head of Sydney-Cove, were entirely dried up, so great has been the drought; a circumstance, which from the very intense heat of the summer, I think it probable we shall be very frequently subject to.' (Hunter, 1793, 203).

In the light of this, it is ironic that the water that was to support the city until late in the nineteenth century was obtained from the Botany Basin: from the Mill Stream, which drains to the north shore of Botany Bay, and from the groundwater-supported Lachlan Swamps in present-day Centennial Park. Both sources had been denounced and ignored by the officers of the First Fleet in their rush to abandon Botany Bay. Yet, so large and so reliable were these supplies that, by 1815, the wily and wealthy emancipist, Simeon Lord, had dammed the Mill Stream to drive the first in a series of

mills that was eventually to support a proto-industrial enclave on the shores of the Bay (Lord, 1815).

By 1825, some of the water needed to supplement Sydney's reserves was being manhandled in barrels from the Lachlan and Botany Swamps over the watershed between Botany Bay and Port Jackson (Anon., 1925, 218), and by November 1826, it was proposed that '... the only rational way of getting Sydney plentifully supplied with water, would be to get possession of that large body of fresh water belonging to Mr. Lord, at Botany.' (Anon., 1826, 3). The ignominy was compounded in 1837, when John Busby completed a bore to divert water across the divide from the Lachlan Swamps to Sydney, and from 1849 onwards, when a series of increasingly complex systems were used to dam the Mill Creek and to pump its water across the watershed (Thorpe, 1953; Aird, 1961).

A third criticism of Botany Bay concerned its swampy nature. It is undoubtedly true that coastal and groundwater-supported swamplands may be found across the Basin (Gale and Wales, 2022, 2). Yet most of the terrestrial landscape forms an aeolian dune field interspersed with outcrops of the underlying bedrock. The deposits of which the dunes are composed are highly permeable (Bish *et al.*, 2000, Appendix A) and surface water is non-existent across the landscape except where groundwater intersects the land surface. The highly-skewed assessment of the swamplands by the officers of the First Fleet appears to have blinded them to the realities of the environment as a whole, whilst overlooking their importance as reliable and permanent water reservoirs, sources that were to maintain the new city of Sydney throughout much of the nineteenth century.

The final nail in the coffin of the Botany Basin was its sandy and infertile soil. The soils around parts of the harbour, by contrast, were thought to be 'promising' and Phillip was keen to begin cultivation as soon as any hands could be spared (Phillip, 1789, 64). The reality is that the soils around Sydney Cove consist largely of thin,



skeletal types developed on the weathering products of the nutrient-poor Hawkesbury Sandstone (Chapman and Murphy, 1989, 67).<sup>3</sup>

It was quickly realised that Sydney Cove offered little hope of supporting agriculture. As early as mid-1788, Tench (1789, 107) wrote that:

'... the ground we had turned up and planted with garden seeds, either from the nature of the soil, or, which is more probable, the lateness of the season, yielded but a scanty and insufficient supply of what we stood so greatly in need of.'

Despite this, Tench was confident about the prospects for cultivation. He noted:

'The nature of the soil is various. That immediately round Sydney Cove is sandy, with here and there a stratum of clay. From the sand we have yet been able to draw very little; but there seems no reason to doubt, that many large tracts of land around us will bring to perfection whatever shall be sown **in** them.' (Tench, 1789, 120).

This optimism was misplaced (Collins, 1798, 51, 167). The Government Farm, which occupied part of the future site of the Botanic Gardens and the Domain, and the officers' plots, such as that of Johnston at Cockle Bay, were largely abandoned (Tench, 1793, 3) and, by July 1791, Collins (1798, 167) noted that to raise even a cabbage after the first crop in the land about Sydney, 'manure was absolutely requisite'.

The difficulties were met by traveling 20 km upstream and relocating the colony's farming onto the Ashfield Shale-based soils found at Rose Hill (Tench, 1789, 148; 1793, 6). These lands sustained and kept from starvation the colony in its first decades (Tench, 1793, 75-81, 142-157, 162). Indeed, so important did these soils become that for a time the outpost became the principal settlement of the polity, with

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<sup>3</sup> The small patch of Ashfield Shale on the ridgetop that forms the modern Hyde Park seems to have been ignored.

Sydney no more than a depot for stores containing '... a few old scattered huts, and some sterile gardens ...' (Tench, 1793, 158-159).

Although many similarly unpromising soils were found throughout the Botany Basin, patches of better soil around the Bay had been discovered and presumably dismissed within a few days of the arrival of the fleet<sup>4</sup>. More importantly, the soils of the despised swamps, within easy walking distance of Sydney, were of such quality that they were able to support grazing and cultivation through the whole of the 19th century. Indeed, even before the end of the 18th century, the Chaplain of the settlement, the Reverend Richard Johnson, 'the best farmer in the country' according to Tench (1793, 75), was running livestock and cultivating vineyards and orchards along the Cook's River at Canterbury Vale (Cable, 1967, Muir, c. 1978, 1). This in an area denounced by Watkin Tench (1793, 97) as unfit for agriculture. These lands remained significant for market gardening and dairying until at least the early 20th century (Hanson, 1892, 362; Tyrrell, 2018, 77). Elsewhere, market gardening began in the 1830s at Veterans' Swamp and other swamplands throughout modern-day Botany (Jervis and Flack, 1938, 65-67).

Belatedly, in December 1788, Phillip spent five days examining Botany Bay and its various inlets (Collins, 1798, 48). By this stage he had already travelled north to Broken Bay and west to Rose Hill. He left no account of his trip, although Collins (1798, 48) reported that he returned satisfied that no part was suitable for settlement. This is perhaps unsurprising. By this stage, he was committed to the decisions he had made and he is unlikely to have publicly admitted any errors of judgement in locating the colony's centre of operations.

### **Why did Phillip abandon Botany Bay?**

This all leaves unanswered a critical question. Why did Phillip decide so precipitously to shift the headquarters of the new colony to Port Jackson? Botany Bay was the first

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<sup>4</sup> In the southwest part of the Bay, King (1790, 131) reported that 'In some small spots I found a tolerable good soil, it was black and very sandy ...'. In an alternative draft of his journal, he also reported finding '... yesoil an exceeding fine black mold, with some excellent Timber Trees & very rich grass ...' (King, 1792, 77). Tench [1789, 52] also noted that the country adjacent to the George's River '... far exceeds in richness of soil that about Cape Banks and Point Solander ...', though he acknowledged the scarcity of freshwater thereabouts.

choice of the British government and its directive was backed by the on-ground experience of Sir Joseph Banks, who effectively acted as the unofficial minister for Australian affairs to the government. Yet, within four days of his arrival, Phillip had transferred the focus of his interest north, ignoring reliable water resources such as the Mill Stream, which it is difficult to imagine that he overlooked, and failing to explore the George's River, which at first sight, at least, potentially offered safe moorings.

One factor subsequently used to justify the move was the poor soils of the Botany Basin. Yet the soils of Sydney Cove were no more suited for cultivation than most of those of the Bay. More importantly, the Bay possessed areas of fertile soil that almost certainly would have supported the colony through the early years of famine that almost doomed the entire project to failure.

The answer may lie in Cameron-Ash's (2018) argument that Phillip was aware of the existence, the strategic potential and the defensibility of Port Jackson because it had been seen 18 years earlier by Cook. The most compelling support for this thesis comes from the memorandum written to the Home Department by Phillip in March 1787, immediately before he left with the First Fleet:

'It must be left to me to fix at Botany Bay, if I find it a proper place; if not, to go to a port a few leagues to the northward, where there appears to be a good harbour and several islands.' (Barton, 1889, 46).

Barton (1889, 46) suggested that the port to the northward was Port Stephens, but given that this lies 35 leagues and two days' sailing distant and that Phillip had explicitly noted his intention of exploring Port Jackson when he reconnoitred north from Botany Bay (Phillip, 1789, 46), this seems unlikely. Frost offered a more likely explanation:

'Phillip's reference to islands in Port Jackson is puzzling, for neither Cook nor Banks mentions them in his journal of the *Endeavour's* voyage. We can only assume that those on board her noticed more than Cook and Banks recorded,

and that Phillip had access to this additional information.' (Frost, 1987, 296, n. 3).<sup>5</sup>

Some support for this interpretation comes from Phillip's decision, a fortnight after the First Fleet had left Cape Town, to proceed to Botany Bay ahead of the rest of the Fleet with the four fastest ships and with those convicts with skills in blacksmithing and carpentry (Phillip, 1789, 41-42; Tench, 1789, 42; Hunter, 1793, 32). This would have given him time to explore alternative locations for the colony. That that this was his intent is clear from Lieutenant King's (1790, 90) comment at the time that:

'... the Governor hopes to arrive at the places of our Destination (Botany Bay) time enough before the rest of the Fleet, to determine whether that, is a proper place for the Settlement to be fixed at, & if not, it is his intention to Examine Port Jackson & the other ports to the Northward ...'.

In the event, the rest of the fleet arrived at Botany Bay within a few days of Phillip and he was unable to put this plan into action.

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<sup>5</sup> Undermining this thesis is Phillip's comment that:

'Port Jackson was not visited or explored by Captain Cook; it was seen only at the distance of between two or three miles from the coast ...' (Phillip, 1789, 62).

This appears only in the published version of Phillip's journal and no corresponding statement may be found in the reports that Phillip sent back to the government. John Stockdale, Phillip's publisher, oversaw the publication of the monograph. Part of his role was to edit Phillip's reports for clarity and to place Phillip's text within a broader context for his anticipated readership (Johnson, 2014). It is possible, therefore, that the note about Cook and Port Jackson was interpolated by Stockdale for just this purpose, and that he included information on the distance offshore ('... we were between two and three miles distant from the land ...') from the only report of Cook's voyage available at that time, that of Hawkesworth (1773, 507). Since Stockdale's text was based on Phillip's official papers, which the government had passed onto him (Stockdale, 1789), it is difficult to see how otherwise this phrase might have originated.

Stockdale would have seen amendments of this sort as part of his editorial role. Indeed, there is good evidence from elsewhere in Phillip's journal that Stockdale freely modified the work to accord with public expectations. We are told, for example, that the 'views' in the text were 'drawn on the spot' by First Fleet officers and others. There is no evidence, however, that the plates depicting indigenous peoples originated from any of them (Johnson, 2014, 406), the man responsible almost certainly being the British maritime artist, Robert Cleveley, who never set foot in Australia (Smith, 1960, 128; Johnson, 2014, 410).

It is clear from Phillip's subsequent communications with London that he recognised the inadequacies of Port Jackson. Thus;

'I make no doubt but some good situations will be found that have water, which I have never yet been able to find, either in Botany Bay or in this harbour, but in very small streams.' (Phillip to Sydney, 1788, 19).

He was also well aware of the potential of Botany Bay:

'... 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 draining of which would be a work of time, and not to be attempted by the first settlers.' (Phillip to Sydney, 1790, 143).

Nevertheless, he chose to ignore the Bay and its soils in order to take up the strategically far more desirable site of Port Jackson. This despite its considerable drawbacks from the viewpoint of supporting the settlement. Yet his decision makes sense if we interpret the First Fleet not as an exercise in transporting convicts or in colonising a new continent (though undoubtedly both roles were important), but as a strategic project to establish a naval depot in the South Seas. It is likely that Port Jackson's major role may have been conceived not as the foundation stone of colonisation, but as a base for refitting and watering shipping, as a refuge from enemy forces, as a safe and defensible anchorage accessible in all weathers and as a trading and whaling station (Dallas, 1952, 5-6). Such a role conforms with developing government policies that envisaged a massive expansion of Britain's global trading network and the strengthening of Britain's resources in the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Frost, 2011, 130-156), a role made explicit during the debate preceding the departure of the First Fleet (Frost, 2011, 187-188). During the second half of the 18th century, the wealth and power of nations depended on foreign trade, which itself was founded on the possession of strategic harbours for safe refuge, for assembling convoys and for attacking enemy shipping (Dallas, 1952, 5). The establishment of the colony may thus be linked with the possibility of trade with China, the northwest American coast and South America, and with whaling and

sealing in the Pacific and Southern Oceans (Dallas, 1952, 6-7). In this context, the disadvantages of Port Jackson as a basis for colonisation may be regarded as of minimal importance.

### **Conclusions**

Within days of sailing into Botany Bay with the First Fleet to establish the new colony of New South Wales, the Governor, Arthur Phillip, had shifted the entire enterprise to Port Jackson, 20 km by sea to the north. His justification was that the Bay offered inadequate protection for shipping, poor supplies of water, a damp and swampy environment and infertile soils. Yet much of this argument is hard to justify. Phillip failed to explore the George's River, which, at first sight, at least, offered potentially safe moorings, whilst the lands of the harbour were no more suited to cultivation than most of those of the Bay. By contrast, the fertile soils of the Bay's despised swamplands were able to support intensive grazing and cultivation, and did so throughout the whole of the 19th century. Meanwhile, the failure of the vaunted water supply at Sydney Cove forced the nascent city to turn to the copious and reliable resources of the Botany Basin, which sustained it through most of the 19th century.

Why, therefore, did Phillip decide so precipitously (and apparently without a careful assessment of the resources offered by the home government's destination of choice) to shift the headquarters of the new colony? The answer seems to be that he was already aware of the existence and strategic potential of Port Jackson because it had been seen by Cook 18 years earlier. Phillip clearly recognised the inadequacies of Port Jackson as a foundation settlement. His move makes sense, however, if we interpret the First Fleet not as an exercise in transporting convicts or in colonising a new continent, both of which would have required access to reliable environmental resources, but as a strategic project to establish a naval depot in the South Seas. Port Jackson's major role may thus have been conceived not as the foundation stone of colonisation, but as a base for refitting and watering shipping, as a military refuge, as a safe, defensible and accessible anchorage, as a trading base and a whaling station. The establishment of the colony may thus be linked with opportunities for trade with China, the northwest American coast and South America, and for whaling and sealing in the Pacific and Southern Oceans. In this context, the disadvantages of Port

Jackson as the embryo of a colonial enterprise may be regarded as of minimal importance.

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