

A TRIBUTE TO OUR FIRST FLEETERS ON AUSTRALIA DAY
BY
MARGARET BARLOW

Today I want to pay tribute to a very special group of people. It's good to see you all here to celebrate Australia Day 2017. Each time we meet at this lovely spot on the Swan River, relax in the sunshine, feast on a tasty breakfast, and enjoy the company of our fellow Swan River Chapter members their families and friends I am very pleased to be here.

This special day on our calendar is the anniversary of 26th January 229 years ago when our ancestors arrived on the eastern shore of this country after an epic and dangerous journey taking (252 days) over eight months.

No doubt we have all read or heard about the crimes, trials and sentences of the convicts and I have recently learnt of the inspiring stories of some of your ancestors. Many death sentences were commuted to transportation. Some convicts were held for years in deplorable conditions on overflowing Prison Hulks moored on the Thames river and others were on the ships for months before sailing.

Most of these folk had never been on a ship let alone at sea so they suffered terribly with sea sickness, other illnesses, deprivation plus fear and trepidation of the unknown.

Miraculously all eleven ships arrived with just a relatively small loss of life. On board were naval personnel, sailors, marines and free settlers with families plus the convicts.

What greeted them upon their arrival at Port Jackson?

As they were the first arrivals nothing but bushland as far as the eye could see. I imagine their emotions would have been very mixed. RELIEF at setting foot on land again, ANXIETY at what at what lie ahead of them and probably HOPE that a fresh new start was possible.

Under the governorship of Captain Arthur Phillip, the tenacity of the First Fleeters and those who followed, the colony grew and prospered resulting in what we enjoy today.

I can't even begin to understand what the lives of these pioneers was really like but what I can do is admire, give thanks and honour them in particular our ancestors of the Swan River Chapter members:

**JANE LANGLEY, THOMAS CHIPP, THOMAS LUCAS, ANTHONY ROPE,
ELIZABETH PULLEY, NATHANIEL LUCAS, OLIVIA GASCOIGNE, JOHN GRIFFITHS,
JOHN MARTIN, JOHN RANDELL, EDWARD GARTH, SUSANNAH GOUGH,
JACOB BELLETT, ELLEN FRASER, WILLIAM BAKER, SUSANNAH HUFFNELL,
ELLEN WAINWRIGHT, FREDERICK MEREDITH, EDWARD MILES, ANN FORBES,
JAMES RUSE, JAMES WHITE, MATHEW EVERINGHAM, PETER HIBBS,
WILLIAM BRICE, JAMES WALBOURNE, SOPHIA LEWIS, WILLIAM TUNKS,
THOMAS JAMIESON, EDWARD WHITTON.**

In the words of the Fellowship of First Fleeters

*“To live on in the hearts and minds of
descendants is never to die”*