

Why Were the Penal Colonies all in Australia?

Garry Law

Penal Colony

– or why New Zealand did not have one



Or put another way why does Australia have this and we do not?

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

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National Heritage List

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List of Overseas Places of Historic Significance to Australia

Register of the National Estate

Australian Convict Sites



Road

UNESCO World Heritage List – 11 sites as an Australian collective cultural heritage listing.

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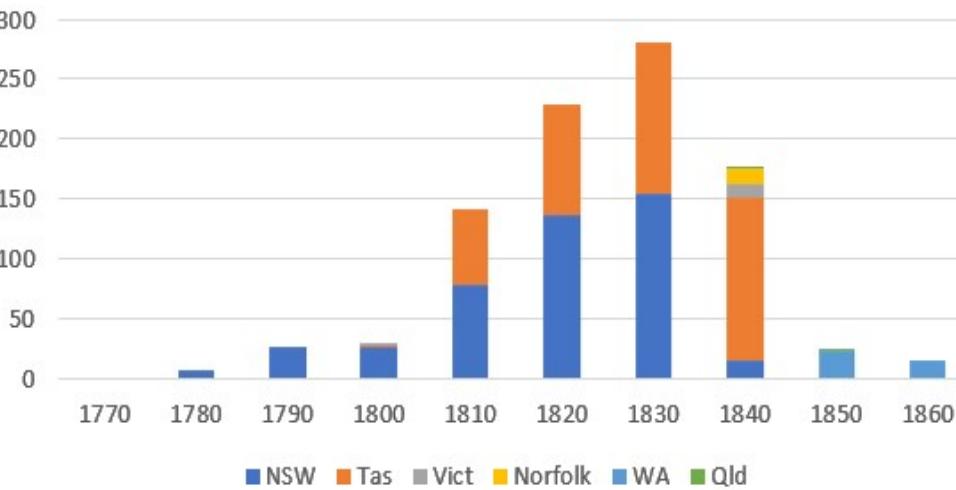
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Australian Convict Sites

Convict Ships to Australia Place of first arrival, by departure decade



What's missing in this picture?



Visitor	Visitors Lives lost	Deaths to Maori by in retaliation to visitor deaths	Deaths to Maori from visitor aggression
Tasman 1642	*	Probably	
Cook 1 1769	-	-	*
De Surville 1769	-	-	-
du Fresne 1772	*	*	-
Cook 2 1773	*	Probably	Probably
Cook 3 1777	-	-	-

Contact between Maori and visitors was violent – in both directions

First Fleet to Australia departed May 1787

11 Ships – Two Navy, Three storeships, Six with convicts - 600 males, 196 females

Tory departure from Plymouth starting the formal colonisation of NZ, 1839 – 42 years later

Some other dates:

- American Revolutionary War 1775–1783
- Dec 1787 Bounty departed to Tahiti
- Nov. 1790 Pandora departed to find Bounty mutineers
- British takeover of the Cape 1795
- Wars with France / Spain 1805-1815
- British ban on maritime slave trade 1807
- War with USA 1812-15
- British end of slave ownership 1833
- Government of India Act 1833 reduces East India Co power
- Indian mutiny 1857 ends EICo

First Concepts of Australian Settlement (esp. Lord Sydney and James Matra)

As a settlement for displaced loyalists from the American War of Independence

With naval Marines initial as a military force but with Tongan wives added - becoming permanent settlers

The convict colony idea took over, driven by necessity.

The Right Honourable
The Viscount Sydney
PC



Convict Settlement:

First Fleet departed 1787. Was no prior reconnaissance – earlier one to Africa found that proposed site was unsuitable and time had run out. Relied on Cook.

Arthur Phillip as commander of the First Fleet had directions to go to Botany Bay

He had doubts about it – was authorised to proceed to NZ: Thames or the Bay of Islands if necessary

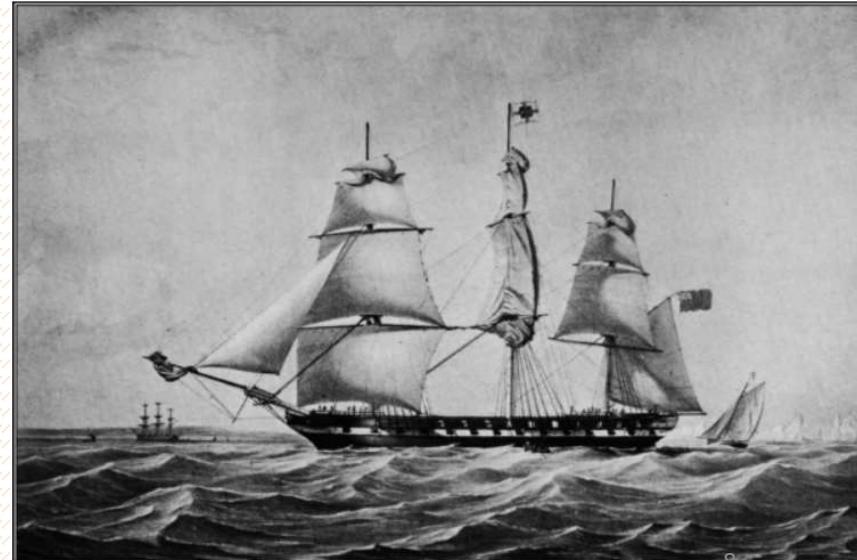
Cook had commended NZ for flax and timber resources for masts and spars, but also Norfolk Island

Phillip thought Botany Bay too exposed - wished to reconnoitre – entered Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour) - seen but not entered by Cook - and that decided it.

He was also under instructions to quickly release the three leased East India Co. owned transports.



Arthur Phillip



THE "SERINGAPATAM," EAST INDIAMAN, 1,000 TONS.



Phillip's Charge as Governor

Convict Settlement:

Phillip's attitude to NZ perhaps apparent in he considered transporting murders and buggers (his term) from NSW to New Zealand "to be eaten" by the New Zealanders

Potential for trade was much considered before the colonisation was decided

He had very specific instructions to settle uninhabited Norfolk Island

Within 3 weeks of the fleet's arrival at Sydney a ship despatched to Norfolk Island with flax dressers aboard.

He was also authorised to bring women from the islands to provide wives – but not by coercion.

It appears Phillip was personally opposed to the slave trade as a result of having experienced it.

He also conceived Australia transitioning away from being purely a penal colony

Strategic and Economic Goods of 1888

	Late 18 th C.	Opportunity Seen	Eventuality
Sails	Linen – from European flax, much from Russia, and Hemp	NZ "Flax" – Norfolk Is	-
Rope	Hemp mainly from Russia	-	NZ "Hemp" = Flax
Spars and masts	Pine – Baltic and North America	Norfolk Is pine	Kauri
Slaves	Africa	Friendly Islands (Tonga) – Women to balance male convicts	-

From NZ, by naval stores ships and commercial visits rather than colonisation (+ whaling, sealing)

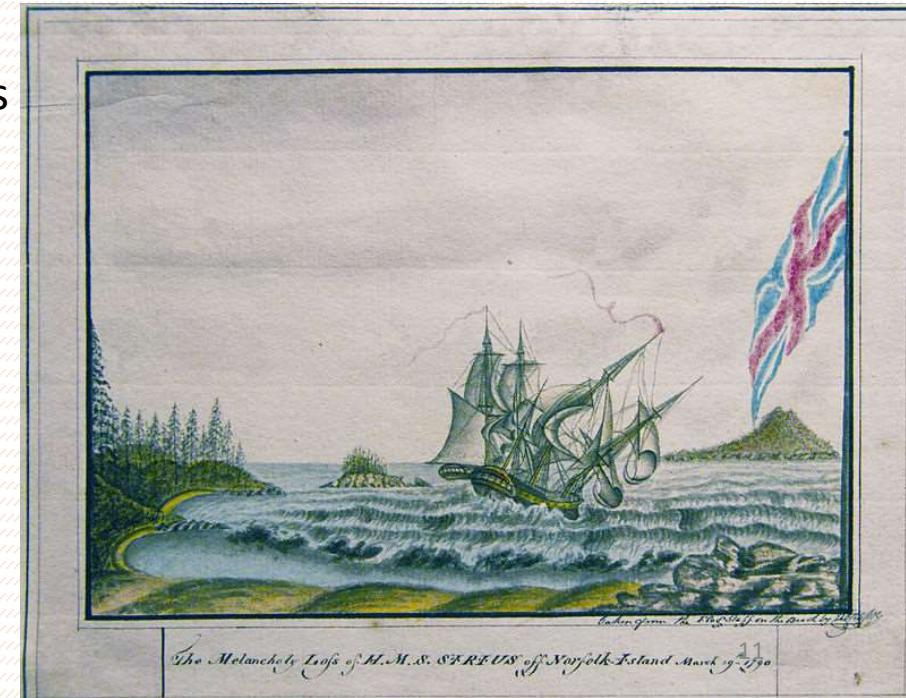
NZ avoided a penal settlement because:

- Sydney Harbour suitability meant NZ was not needed as a primary settlement

As a secondary settlement for timber and flax:

- Norfolk Island was uninhabited whereas NZ certainly was, by Maori very likely to resist
- French explorer Lapérouse was about and had stopped, but not landed, at Norfolk and might return there to establish a claim
- There was no reconnaissance to Norfolk so the unsuitability of the timber was not known and perhaps difficulty for large ship cargoes was underestimated
- They were seriously short of ships to have any change of plan.
- The fleet flagship Sirius was sent to the Cape for supplies and on return was wrecked at Norfolk Island, in March 1790.

The extra distance from Sydney to New Zealand is less than 400 km compared to Sydney to Norfolk.



Sydney and Norfolk Island

Sydney proved very difficult for growing crops – poor soils, more irregular rainfall than Britain, drying winds, needed new approaches rather than the traditional.

Starvation came close.

Norfolk Island with a maritime climate and volcanic soils was seen as the solution to provide Sydney.

By 1791 29% of the population was at Norfolk Island, partly because there was little food for them in Sydney.

But they could not find a way to process the flax, Norfolk pine made poor timber for masts and the ship access was very difficult.

Sydney and Norfolk Island 2

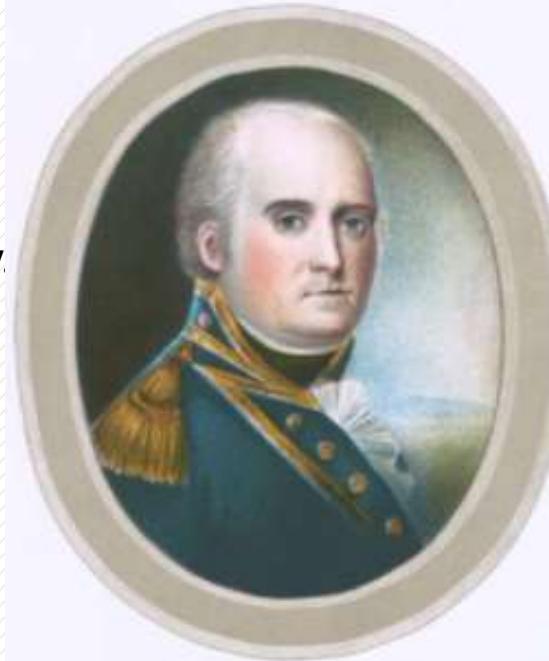
In 1793 the Norfolk Island commander Philip King sent a ship to Northland and captured Tuki-tahua from Oruru in Tokerau (Doubtless Bay), and Huru-kokoti, from the Cavilli Islands area to teach Norfolk residents to process flax. It failed.

King had ambitions to be governor of a separate New Zealand penal colony. Possibly invited by T and H. Drew up a plan but it was refused.

The Norfolk Island settlement was progressively abandoned in 1808 -1814 and re-established in 1825.

Became NSW governor in 1800

Under him in 1803 the first Van Diemen's Land (Tasmanian) convict settlement - with tragic consequences for the indigenous people. Was that a third time we avoided convict colonisation? Reputed that the settlement was to counter the French – currently at war & who had exploring expeditions about.



Contentions:

Confrontation by Maori with earlier explorers was a factor in there being no Penal Settlement in NZ

All three nations that sent exploratory voyages to NZ were involved in the slave trade

The absence of Penal Settlements in NZ avoided forceful land dispossession to that end

The later colonisation of New Zealand:

- Avoided the enrolment of Maori in slavery
- Accepted Maori Sovereignty – at least at 1840

Maori, through resistance to earlier visitors were less victims, than the setters of some conditions for the ultimate colonisation.



From 1788 to 1840 most European initiatives in New Zealand were initiated in Australia – but they excluded forceful dispossession, penal colonies or the co-option of Maori into a slave trade.

“... the integrated Maori and European settlements which emerged in the middle of the 1820s were an important venue for cultural innovations that helped shape New Zealand culture in ways that set it apart from Australia”
Ian Smith 2013



First Commercial Timber Voyage to NZ

Fancy – 1796

From Sydney to the Waihou (Thames) to harvest kahikatea so admired by Cook along the river banks

Commission from Bombay

Sepoys (Indian soldiers) aboard to protect the crew from Maori

Took 200 mast / spar sized timbers back to Sydney destined for the East India Company

Proved unsuitable – Kauri were later found much better

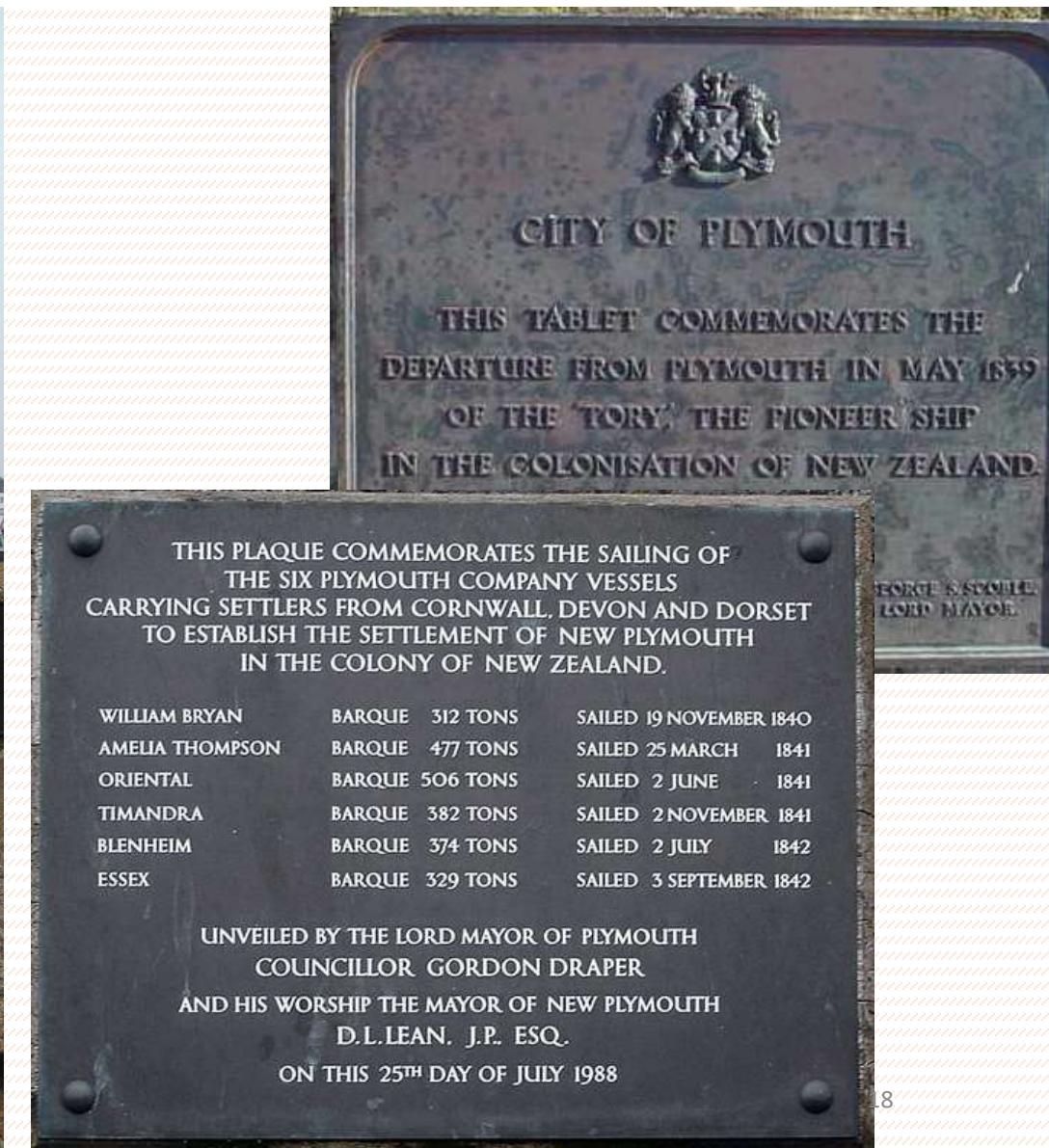
Waihou kahikatea all later sacrificed to make butter boxes.





Mayflower Steps, Plymouth







European male to female ratio in Australia

Despite shipping female convicts it was only when regular migration started that the situation was corrected.

End