



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Bro. CAPTAIN JOHN PIPER (1769 - 1851)

The Colony of New South Wales was just four years old when John Piper, at the age of 19 years, first set foot on Australian soil. For the next 59 years he was to be closely identified with its development.

Born at Maybole in Ayrshire, he was the son of Dr Hugh Piper. There is evidence that the Pipers were a military family and it was probably due to the influence of his uncle (also named John), that young John Piper was appointed an Ensign in the New South Wales Corps on 20 April 1791.

In 1788, Governor Phillip had brought with him in the First Fleet a detachment of marines known as the Marine Corps. As a garrison they rendered valuable service in assisting to found the Colony and in implementing its first laws.

They were replaced in 1790 by detachments of the New South Wales Corps, a military regiment which had been specially recruited by Major Francis Grose in England for service in Botany Bay by which name the colony was then known.

The Commandant of the regiment, Major Grose, did not arrive in the colony until 1792. He arrived aboard the ship, *Pitt* and was accompanied by 200 officers and men among whom was Ensign John Piper. Also on board were 300 male and 50 female convicts. In that year, the population of New South Wales was only 3,000 and on Norfolk Island there were about 1,000 inhabitants.

On 14 February 1788, the *Supply* under the command of Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, sailed from Sydney for Norfolk Island for the purpose of settling the island. They arrived there on 29 February but it was to be five days before a suitable place could be found to land their provisions. Lieutenant Ball returned to Sydney on 19 March and reported a safe landing and the establishment of the little settlement on the island.

Little did he know it then but John Piper was to play an important role in the administration of Norfolk Island in years to come.

Piper was first acquainted with the colony of New South Wales as a penal settlement, but he was to witness its emergence, especially under the administration of the Governor, Bro. Lachlan Macquarie, into a free and prosperous country. He was also to watch the growth of Freemasonry from isolated instances of activity to its establishment in 1820 as an organised body under constitutional authority.

There is extant documentary evidence of isolated instances of Masonic activity in Sydney as early as 1797, and other evidence strongly points to a Masonic Lodge having been formed on Norfolk Island about the year 1792, the year of Piper's

