

## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### A History of Freemasonry on Sydney's Lower North Shore

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Believe it or not, it all began with the IRISH, and as you would expect, the beginnings were a mixture of confusion, aggressiveness and a rugged spirit of independence.

The 46th Irish Regulars of his Majestys Army arrived in Australia, complete with its own Masonic Lodge, which held Charter No 227 for the Lodge of Social and Military Virtues under The Grand Lodge of Ireland, and the influence of this Lodge ties our Masonic beginnings very much to the Irish.

In 1803, there were, according to the records, 6 000 souls in the colony. A group of men, comprising several officers of his Majestys ships, together with some respectable inhabitants of Sydney Town, approached Governor King for permission to hold a Masonic Meeting.

The Governor for reasons which were not explained, refused their request, but they nevertheless held a meeting of a formal character without permission.

On the 22nd May 1803, the Governor took action and the records show that "A number of Masons meeting in the house of Sgt., Whittle, in Sydney, New South Wales, were arrested and after serious report, were discharged as having no wilful intention to disturb the peace."

Between 1788 and 22nd May 1803 much had happened in the colony and as our concern is with the Northern side of Port Jackson, let us examine those matters which relate to this area.

"The first white men to set foot on the northern shore of Port Jackson were Governor Arthur Philip and nine companions. It was the morning of 15th April 1788 and it was the beginning of a four-day exploratory journey through the rugged bushland from todays Manly Cove to French's Forest, St Ives, along the heavily timbered ridge to Turramurra, through Fox Valley as far as Thornleigh and West Pennant Hills.

The party, which included three marines, returned through Middle Harbour.

There were no convicts on this first mission. They and their overseers and guards would come later.

Who was the first Freemason to set foot on the North Shore?

Perhaps Wor. Bro. Thomas Lucas, a Past Master of the Lodge of Temperance in London, was one of the three marines who accompanied Governor Phillip or perhaps it was the First Fleet convict, Thomas Prior, who died in Sydney aged eighty seven and whose headstone was carved with Masonic symbols.

We will never know!"

Also in 1788, recorded contacts with the Northern Shores were made at Lane Cove as exploratory groups investigated the western reaches of the harbour and moved into the Lane Cove river.

Another such party ventured up the Middle Harbour, and in 1789 a foot party explored the wild northern hinterland of Port Jackson and reached Pittwater. One journal tells of people who

