

Western Australia or Swan River Colony



Western Australia Day - June 1st

WAGS Open Day - Thursday 6th June 2013 - 10:00 to 15:00 - Units 4/5/6 48 May St, Bayswater.

Get some first hand help on researching your ancestors throughout the world

Previously known as Foundation Day, Western Australia Day gives us a chance to pause and reflect on the founding of our state.

According to an item in *The Emigrant's Friend* published in London in 1848, the Swan River Colony was not a resounding success.

... "*History* - The first Colonists arrived at Swan River in 1829 - they found the country dreary and barren, for many miles inland, and the waters brackish. It was, however, too late to recede; they penetrated to a more fertile spot, and there established themselves on their own resources, without a house to receive them or a crop to support them."...

Download our pdf file and read the full article - [The Emigrant's Friend - Western Australia or Swan River Colony 502.36 KB](#)

An article in the *The West Australian* - Tuesday, 25 July 1905, pp3., quoted below, gives us further insight to the founding of Western Australia.

THE FOUNDING OF WEST AUSTRALIA

SETTLEMENT AT KING GEORGE'S SOUND

THE DESPATCH OF THE BRIG AMITY

TOMAHAWKS FOR THE NATIVES

The first practical step towards the founding of Western Australia was taken on March 1, 1826. On that date Lord Bathurst wrote from Downing street to Lieut. General Darling, at Port Jackson, apprising him that the sailing of two French ships on a voyage of discovery had led to the consideration of how far British possessions in the Australian seas might be prejudiced by any designs which the French might entertain of establishing them selves in that quarter. Partly in consequence of this, the despatch continued, it had been resolved to form an establishment at either Sharks Bay or King George's Sound, for it was necessary that the British projects in this direction should not be anticipated.

On October 10 of the same year Lieut. General Darling acknowledged receipt of the despatch.

His opinion of the localities mentioned was expressed in the following terms:

"I am very apprehensive that King George's Sound will be found totally unfit for the purpose even of a penal settlement. I have not been able to obtain any precise information respecting it, but the communication must, I understand, be at all times tedious and difficult, and during a part of the year will be hardly practicable. I shall, however, make arrangements as soon as possible for having it examined, and for taking possession of it. The communication with Sharks Bay would be still more difficult, and would be attended with a very serious expense.

"I am informed that the country around both Sharks Bay and King George's Sound is perfectly barren and destitute of vegetation. The French would, therefore, find it difficult to maintain themselves at either of these places, and I understand that the part of the coast about Sharks Bay is frequently under water."

On the fourth of the following month, or before Lieut. General Darling's communication had fairly left Australian precincts, the following instructions were despatched from the Colonial Secretary's office, Sydney, to Major Lockyer, of the 57th Regiment, stationed at that Settlement:

"Its being intended to establish a Settlement at King George's Sound, on the south-west coast of New Holland, I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to signify to you his commands to proceed thither on board of the Government brig Amity, now ready to receive you, with the detachment of troops placed under your command, and in fulfilling the intentions of Government you will be pleased to govern your self by the following instructions:-

"Besides the troops, the convicts and supplies intended for this service are embarked on board the Amity, which vessel will leave the port in company with His Majesty's ship Fly, under the command of Captain Wetherall, as soon as the necessary arrangements are completed. After arriving off Western Port, Captain Wetherall will either proceed with you to King George's Sound or send Lieut. Festing, of the Fly, with you, and you will lose no time in selecting, in conjunction with Captain Wetherall or, in his absence, with Lieut, Festing such a site as may be most eligible for a penal settlement, having due regard to a safe anchorage and a good supply of fresh water, with fertile soil in the neighbourhood, and such other conveniences as can be obtained.

"When the site is determined upon you will display the colours with which you are furnished for this purpose, cause the troops to fire a 'feu de joie,' and observe all other formalities which are usual on such an occasion.

"The soldiers and convicts are then to be employed in putting up huts for their accommodation, and for the reception of the stores, with all convenient expedition.

"When this is done, and the people and stores landed, you will despatch the Amity to this port, with a detail of your proceedings, an account of the place, with a sketch of the proposed settlement and neighbouring country, and a full report on all other matters worthy of attention, particularly such observations as you may consider useful in enabling the Government to decide upon the steps which it may be proper to take with respect to a more permanent establishment. To this end, you will keep a regular journal of your proceedings from the time of your embarkation, and transmit the original, or a copy, to me for His Excellency's information. You will also keep a register of the weather, with the state of the barometer and thermometer, which are supplied for this purpose.

"You will use every exertion to conciliate the natives, and with this view a supply of tomahawks and blankets is sent as presents for them.

"Copies of the indents of the convicts selected for this service are enclosed with lists of the provisions and stores. The strictest attention must be paid to the issue and care of the latter, and they must be duly accounted for.

"The convicts are to be allowed a proportion of tea and sugar daily, in addition to the common ration, according to the accompanying scale; but as Government has a right to their labour, no extra provisions will be allowed as a means of stimulating their exertions. It is, therefore, to be clearly understood that the allowance of tea, sugar, and tobacco will be considered only in the light of 'indulgences', and is not to be issued in the event of misconduct. A note of the period and the fault for which prisoners may be deprived of these articles must be made by the storekeeper opposite the names of the individuals, and reported from time to time."

"As soon as every necessary provision has been made for the comfort of the men and the security of the stores, you will proceed to explore the neighbouring country, so as to ascertain whether there are any rivers or other objects of importance; to examine the nature and quality of the soil, its fertility, and the purposes to which it may appear more immediately applicable with reference to the views of settlers.

"In the course of two months a vessel will be despatched from hence with additional supplies and by that opportunity you will return, provided you have established the settlement and made the necessary observations on the country in the neighbourhood. You will then leave the charge of the settlement with Captain Wakefield.

"Lieut. Governor Arthur, of Van Diemen's Land, has been apprised of the steps now being taken, and it is the wish of His Excellency that you inform the Lieut. Governor, by the first opportunity which may offer of the settlement having been established. Should you, from any unforeseen event, be in need of supplies which can more conveniently be furnished from Port Dalrymple than from this place, you will also, in that case, address yourself to the Commandant at that station, who will be instructed to communicate with you.

"It is very desirable that no time should be lost in ascertaining, as far as practicable, the natural productions of the country, in order that their utility for supplying the immediate wants of the settlement, or for the purposes of commerce, may be known. With this view a gardener is to embark on board of the Amity for the purpose of collecting and bringing by the return of that vessel a collection of the vegetable productions of King George's Sound, and His Excellency expects that you will cause every facility in your power to be afforded to him in the performance of this service.

"A collection of garden seeds and plants, of which a list is enclosed, is shipped under his care; and the Governor trusts that no time will be lost in preparing some ground for gardens, as well as for planting maize, of which you will observe that an ample supply is provided.

"His Excellency considers it almost unnecessary to call your particular attention to the care of the livestock, as you must be fully aware of the importance of such stock to a new settlement. A supply of horned cattle will be sent to you by the first opportunity, and on this subject I have only further to add that until the stock of the settlement be fully established, particular orders should be given to prohibit the killing of any breeding animals.

"The medical duties of the expedition and settlement are entrusted by His Excellency to Mr. Isaac Scott Nind, who has been furnished with the proper instructions by the Principal Surgeon, and who is to receive 7s. 6d. per diem and rations for himself and one servant from the date of his embarkation on board of the Amity.

"To keep His Excellency fully informed of the progress and exact state of the settlement, I have to request that by every opportunity that may offer you will transmit correct and methodical returns of the following descriptions, viz.:

(1) Return of deaths that have occurred, with the dates, and of the numbers actually on the spot distinguishing the healthy and the sick at the time of writing.

(2) Return of stock of various kinds, showing the increase and diminution.

(3) Return of land cleared, the quantity cultivated. etc.

(4) Return of all the buildings erected, or erecting, giving a plan and description of each, with as correct an estimate of their actual expense or the time they will require as circumstances will admit.

(5) Account of the provisions of all kinds on hand at the date of each despatch, with a note of the time to which each kind is calculated to be sufficient for the consumption of the settlement.

(6) Requisition for all kinds of stores required or likely to be wanted for the use of the settlement for six months.

"And I beg to suggest that the exactness of your correspondence will be much more easily preserved by numbering your letters in regular order. I purpose to observe the same rule in my communications to you, and accordingly this is marked No. 1, as being the commencement of the series.

"On leaving the settlement you will be pleased to deliver these instructions to your successor, together with all other papers relating to the service."

See the article in Trove here - [The West Australian - Tuesday, 25 July 1905, pp3.](#)