

Cultural Advice: Please be advised and warned that some content within this book may be confronting or unsettling to our First Nations Peoples.

Content relating to the murder and massacres of First Nations Peoples is contained in this book. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are advised and warned that this work contains the names of Original First Nations People of the land who have passed away and are living in the dreaming.

This book also contains Men’s Business and Sorry Business.

FOREWORD

A Soldier, a Sailor and Arabanoo presents an engrossing and informative experience for readers wishing to know more about the true history of this country, particularly regarding the early stages of the British colony here.

The book is a work of fiction; however, the foundation of the story is based very closely on historical facts, which Peter has thoroughly researched.

Peter takes the reader on a journey through the early days of the Sydney colony, including the troubled relationship between the colony and native Australians, a dramatic sea voyage stricken by storms and scurvy and a deadly smallpox outbreak.

When reflecting on this nation's history, it's important to put truth-telling at the forefront of the narrative. While this book may be at times confronting for First Nations Australians, it diligently recalls significant historical events with accuracy.

Each of the key characters in this book puts forward an interesting perspective of the time, and there is a diverse range of them, including the morally conflicted marine Captain Watkin Tench, the master mariner Captain John Hunter, the gentle and trusting Arabanoo, the perpetually abrasive Major Robert Ross and the morally driven Lieutenant William Dawes.

To ensure the credibility of Arabanoo's version of the story, the author has relied on the input of highly respected First Nations Holders of Knowledge Aunty Tracie Howie and Aunty Trish Levett.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in expanding their knowledge of Australia's history. Historical knowledge and an

understanding of the wrongs of the past are essential to ensure we remain firmly on the path towards reconciliation.

The Hon. Linda Burney
Minister for Indigenous Australians
Canberra
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book is a work of fiction. It should not be considered anything else. It is, however, very factually based. Although I have read and referred to numerous other works and resources (listed in the references below) in writing this book, I have depended very heavily on the works of Captain Watkin Tench and the journal of Captain John Hunter. Readers will note I have provided numbered footnotes at the end of most chapters or sections of this book. These refer to the pages of the works on which I have based the particular piece of fiction that I have written. The reader will find that these refer almost exclusively to the works of Tench and Hunter, but there are also a few references to other works that I have relied on in particular chapters. My aim in doing so is to facilitate the reader's fact-checking on this fascinating period of our history, because I am very aware that the real interest and power in a historical story of this nature lies in its truth, not in anything a writer can invent.

When writing a book like this about the 'Colvasion' (colonisation/invasion) of this country, it is understandably very difficult to get inside the heads of eighteenth-century British marine and naval captains. The fact that we have at our disposal their written works does at least give us some insight into their characters, their thoughts and their actions. We also have various other primary source documents that reveal what other people thought of them at the time. I have therefore attempted to be as faithful as I can be in the way I have interpreted these historical characters.

In the case of Arabanoo, however, it has been much more difficult. Trying to get into the mind of an eighteenth-century Gamaragal

Warrior is virtually impossible for me. We have only what Tench, Hunter and others said about him.

I have therefore been greatly indebted to both Gundungurra Elder Aunty Trish Levett and Aunty Tracey Howie, Elder of the Garigal/Walkaloo clans, for their wonderful assistance. Their contribution has given much greater depth and perspective to the characters of Arabanoo and his colleagues and to their culture. In regard to the attitudes and conversations of the Original First Nations Peoples regarding the arrival of the First Fleet, I have relied largely on Muruwari descendant Jane Harrison's play, 'The Visitors'. This powerful play was extremely helpful in providing me with ideas about portraying the point of view of our First Nations Peoples.

Although all characters in this book are real historical figures, I do not pretend that I have provided accurate portrayals of their characters. In the case of many of the key figures, I have relied on what others have said about them or what they may have revealed in their own writings. In the case of minor characters, I have simply used their names when there is nothing on the historical record (that I could find, anyway) about their actions or characters. This is all the more reason to view this book as fiction. The one proviso to that is, of course, that all the significant events described in this book actually happened and these were the people involved.

I also apologise for any offence that may be caused by some of the language used in this book. As I am attempting to tell the story from the points of view of eighteenth-century men and women, I have used the language that they used. An example of this is the fact that in his books, Tench refers to Australia's First Nations People as 'Indians', an apparent hangover from his time in the Americas. I therefore have often used 'Indians' when Tench is speaking.

I believe that it is important to note here, however, that although some eighteenth-century sensibilities were different to ours today, there were a wide range of attitudes at that time, just as there are now. Just as there are racist or sexist and extreme political views held today,

so there were at that time. On the other hand, just as there are tolerant, enlightened people today, the same was the case in the eighteenth century. Just as we believe we live in an enlightened age, so did they in the eighteenth century. Numerous documents support that this was very much the case and included attitudes to race, slavery, women, etc. I hope you find this book shows some of the range of attitudes that existed at the time.

I hope you find it interesting and informative and enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed researching and writing it.

CHAPTER 1

SYDNEY COVE, DECEMBER 1790

Captain Watkin Tench strode across the small bridge over the Tank Stream, which divided the colony, and up the hill towards the governor's residence, wondering why on earth he had been summoned. He had been given no information whatsoever, other than being told the governor wanted to see him immediately. Although he enjoyed a good relationship with the governor, recent events in the colony made Tench quite nervous, and as he arrived at the Government House, the largest building in the new colony, he had a strong feeling that whatever the governor had to say to him, he wasn't going to like it.

When Tench entered Governor Arthur Phillip's office, he was sitting at his large oak desk, rubbing his balding head rather firmly. The lines on his face, a legacy of his years at sea, masked an expression that was a combination of anger, sadness and frustration. At first, he didn't look up as the thirty-two-year-old marine captain entered the room. Despite his immaculately tailored red uniform with its elaborate silver bullion epaulettes, bright magenta sash and smart pewter buttons, Tench looked anything but a British marine. His fine features, deep brown eyes and fair hair prematurely greying at the temples ensured he looked far more like a distinguished English gentleman than a hardened war veteran.

Tench stood in silence for a moment before he uttered an almost hesitant, 'Good morning, Excellency.'

'Oh, good morning, Captain,' murmured Phillip, motioning to the chair in front of his desk.

Tench sat in silence and immediately mopped the beads of sweat that had formed on his forehead as a result of the warmth of the morning, his heavy uniform and his brisk walk to the governor's residence.

'Captain, I'm afraid to say that with this tragic business with McIntyre, we simply have to respond, for I am advised the man will most certainly die as a result of his wounds... We can't just allow the natives to attack our people on every occasion we need to go into the bush.'

'Yes, Excellency,' Tench responded. He had quietly feared this was the reason for his summons.

'As this is a particularly sensitive and difficult matter, I wish to discuss it directly with you, without any of the other officers present.'

'Yes, sir. I appreciate that.'

'Well, you may not like what I have to say, but I have decided on the action we are to take, so I'll come straight to the point,' Phillip said bluntly.

Tench nodded before Phillip continued. 'As you know your way around the bushland areas here better than most, and I know I can trust you, I want you to lead a large party against the Bideegal tribe at Botany Bay...'

The governor paused, but Tench sat in silence, fearing what he may say next.

Phillip looked directly at Tench, leant forward on his oak desk and continued solemnly, 'You are to execute ten of them and bring their heads back to me. You will be provided with hatchets and bags for this purpose. You are to capture two of them and destroy all weapons of war that you can find, and in particular, you are to make every endeavour to capture or kill this Pemulwuy fellow.'

Phillip paused again while Tench continued to sit in stunned silence.

'You are not, however, to injure any women or children or destroy their huts. In exercising this duty, you are not to show any sign of amity or friendliness to lure them to you. Doing so would be an act of treachery and only develop a sense of mistrust amongst them that

would give them reason to distrust every future act of peace and friendship on our part. You are also not to speak to any of the natives who are known to us and with whom we usually communicate. Is that clear?’

‘Yes, sir.’ Tench nodded, but he shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

‘Now, Captain, I wish to explain why I believe it is necessary to adopt measures of such severity.’ Phillip had by this point stopped rubbing his own brow and had started stroking the head of his favourite greyhound, which sat beside him. The dog was pure white, except for a brindle patch on its left ear, and it had a particularly docile nature. Although Tench quite liked dogs, Phillip’s obsession with this particular greyhound had always irritated him, never more so than now. Here was Phillip, gently stroking the head of an animal while ordering him to go and kill human beings.

The irony was not lost on Tench, but again, he responded, ‘Yes, sir.’ He was a British marine, after all.

‘In the time we have been in this country, no less than seventeen of our people have been killed or wounded by the natives, and it is this Pemulwuy and this Bideegal tribe living on the north arm of Botany Bay who are the principal aggressors.’

Phillip paused yet again, but Tench said nothing. Totally oblivious to the fact that Tench’s silence did not mean consent, but rather was due to the disciplined captain nearly biting his tongue off, Phillip continued, ‘My observation of the natives is that they do not fear death individually, but they value the strength and security of their whole tribe. It is therefore essential that we strike a decisive blow against this tribe. We must convince them of our superiority and infuse in them a universal terror that will operate to prevent further mischief.’

Tench nodded hesitantly. ‘Yes, Excellency.’

‘Captain, although you say *Yes, Excellency*, your countenance reveals reluctance on your part. You don’t agree with me?’

Tench paused while he got his emotions under control, and

although his mind was racing, he spoke slowly and deliberately. ‘Well, Excellency, I understand McIntyre was hunting game for you and you had a lot of time for the man.’

‘Yes, I did, but my thoughts on him have nothing to do with the fact that we cannot just allow the natives to wantonly attack our people like that.’

‘I understand, sir, but my point is that many have the view that McIntyre may have brought this upon himself. You must know full well the accusations against the man.’

‘Enough,’ Phillip responded, raising his hand. ‘I don’t want to hear about that, and knowing the man as I do, I don’t believe any of them.’

Tench said nothing, and Phillip continued, ‘Captain, it is my belief that previous attacks by the natives have resulted from them receiving some injury from us, or from some misapprehension. But despite what you suggest, in this case, the reports I have clearly state McIntyre has been most wantonly attacked and that it was entirely unprovoked. I have questioned the sergeant and the two convicts who accompanied him at the time of this attack, and they all have the same short, simple account of the matter. Whatever the malicious rumours about his previous behaviour... to which, as I have said, I attach no credence anyway... there is no doubt that, on this occasion, he had put down his weapon before this Pemulwuy leapt onto a fallen log and speared him.’

Phillip and Tench again sat in silence briefly before Phillip continued, ‘You obviously still don’t agree with me, do you?’

‘I’m sorry, sir, but from my knowledge of the natives and the fear that those we know held of McIntyre, it seems apparent that it was a case of “payback”, which we are now aware is a key aspect of their system of law and justice. I believe a response like this is excessive in the extreme.’

Phillip looked directly at Tench. ‘Alright, I respect your views. What would you suggest is an appropriate action, given the situation in which we find ourselves? And before you provide me with your

answer, you should understand that I won't accept anything less than clear, decisive action.'

Tench pondered for a moment. As he did, he fidgeted with the white diagonal strap of his uniform, which crossed his chest down to his waist, where his sword hung. He ran his thumb and forefinger up and down the strap before replying, 'Well, sir, may I respectfully suggest that rather than immediately killing and beheading ten of them and capturing two, we may find that an alternative action could better achieve our objectives?'

'Go on.'

'What if we were to capture six of them and bring them back? Out of this number, we could then set aside a number for retaliation, and the others, having witnessed the fate of their comrades, could be released to advise their tribe of the punishment that awaits them should they offend again in such a manner.'

'Hmm. I see. Yes, there could be some benefits to that approach.' Phillip continued stroking the head of the greyhound. 'Alright, we'll capture six. If six cannot be taken, let this number be shot and beheaded. Should you find it possible to take that many, I will hang two and send the rest to Norfolk Island for a certain period, which will cause their countrymen to believe we have killed them secretly.'

Tench nodded. 'Yes, sir.'

'And, Captain, I wish to ensure you have more than sufficient men to accomplish your goals in this mission, so you are to take fifty, including three officers and two surgeons. Also, take Lieutenant Dawes and, to guide you, Sergeant Young, who was with McIntyre when he was speared.'

'Sir, that is all fine with me, but I am quite sure that Lieutenant Dawes will want no part of such a matter.'

'Well, that is unfortunate, but he is to go,' Phillip replied flatly.

Tench hesitated for a moment, but knowing full well how opposed his friend would be to such a mission, he ventured, 'Excellency, Lieutenant Dawes has particularly—'

Phillip cut him off and flew back, ‘He’s a marine, Captain. He doesn’t get to pick and choose what missions he undertakes.’ He paused. ‘And advise him that if he doesn’t accompany you, he will be court-martialled for disobeying a direct order.’

‘Oh! Yes, Excellency,’ replied a rather stunned Tench, who was becoming concerned that defending his friend was damaging his good relationship with Phillip, at least in the short term.

Phillip calmed down almost instantly and added, ‘So, Captain, given the fact you are a friend of Lieutenant Dawes, I would encourage you to persuade him to join you. The last thing this colony needs is an officer of Lieutenant Dawes’s stature and importance being court-martialled.’

‘I will most certainly do my best to persuade him.’ Tench got to his feet before adding, ‘And when would you wish us to leave, sir?’

‘As soon as you can organise the detachment.’

‘Yes, sir, I will. We will depart before dawn tomorrow.’

Ref. 1

Tench hurried down the hill, away from the governor’s residence, and through the streets of the young colony. His mind was again racing as he passed the motley collection of crude houses built of clay brick and wood, with thatched roofs and windows of woven sticks. He loathed the idea of such a mission, particularly as his friendship with some of the local tribespeople had grown to a level of genuine, mutual respect. Apart from that, the last thing he wanted to do was push Dawes into joining him when he knew his friend would be betraying his core beliefs to undertake such a mission.

He strode into the marines’ quarters, briefed Lieutenant Poulden on the mission and began organising the detachment. An hour later, he headed up the hill to the west. As the colony’s astronomer, engineer

and surveyor, Dawes had his own hut, which was somewhat larger and better-made than most, and it sat perched on the colony's highest point, some distance from the quarters shared by the rest of the marines. The point rose majestically above the blue waters of the harbour on a clear, sunny day such as this, and unlike so much of the natural bushland areas surrounding the diminutive colony below, it was not covered in tall trees. By contrast, it was covered in low, scrubby bushland, which allowed unimpeded vision of the spectacular views both up and down the harbour to the east and west. The few large trees that had been growing there had been felled to allow Dawes clear vision of the night sky.

'Will,' Tench called as he approached his friend's hut.

Dawes emerged from the hut, accompanied by an attractive young Aboriginal woman, Patyegerang, whose shy smile Tench always found most endearing. Dawes gently motioned for her to stay inside the hut before he walked towards Tench. Dawes, at just twenty-eight, had the look of an academic, which matched his gentle nature. He pushed his wavy dark hair away from his soft face as he approached Tench – his skin seemed to have endured the extended exposure to the sun and salt much better than most of his colleagues'. Unlike Tench, there was no sign of premature greying, nor did he wear sideburns, which were fashionable at the time. This was due less to a matter of personal choice than the fact that his kind face was almost hairless.

'Good morning, Watkin,' he said glumly, and immediately identifying the expression on Tench's face, he added, 'You're here to tell me about this massacre you've been ordered to undertake.'

'How did you know?'

'As you know well, news travels fast in this little colony, but before you ask, I am not going to have any part of it,' Dawes replied flatly.

'Before you adopt that position, you should be aware that I have managed to convince the governor to moderate our actions somewhat.'

'How, precisely?' questioned Dawes, with a hint of hope creeping

into his tone, as the two friends turned and began walking together towards the end of the point.

‘Well, he had originally determined that we were to take a detachment down to Botany Bay and murder ten of the native men, behead them and bring the heads back here.’

‘Yes. That’s what I’d heard.’

Tench responded, ‘I’ve convinced Phillip that we can achieve his objectives for the mission without such extreme and horrific actions.’

‘Go on.’

‘He has agreed that we are to capture six and bring them back here.’

‘And what shall happen to them then?’

‘Phillip says he will hang two and send the rest to Norfolk Island for a period.’

Dawes retorted, ‘That’s nearly as bad.’

‘Well, it’s nowhere near as extreme as murdering and beheading ten of them!’ Tench hesitated to tell Dawes what Phillip’s orders were if they couldn’t capture any.

‘We are supposed to be British marines, not a bunch of headhunters from some Pacific island,’ Dawes spat in disgust.

‘I did advise Phillip of your feelings on such matters, but he had no sympathy at all.’

‘I wouldn’t expect he would.’ Dawes looked at the ground, shaking his head.

‘Look, Will, I share your feelings, but if we do capture them and bring them back here, we can hopefully persuade him not to hang them. Besides, Phillip has threatened to have you court-martialled if you disobey a direct order.’

‘What?’ replied a stunned Dawes. ‘He wouldn’t dare do that over a matter of conscience like this... would he?’

‘I don’t really know, but I think it may be best if you don’t test him on the matter,’ Tench advised calmly.

‘I thought we wouldn’t have to put up with that sort of bullying behaviour since Phillip sent Major Ross to Norfolk Island.’

Tench smiled gently at his friend's agitation before replying, 'I just think we shouldn't ostracise Phillip over the matter at this stage.'

Dawes ignored the comment. His mind was elsewhere as he ran his fingers through his hair in frustration before replying, 'Watkin, I was talking to Patye about this just yesterday, and I asked her, *Why are the black men so angry with us white men? Why won't they come and talk to us?* And do you know what she said?'

'What?'

'She said, *They just want your people to go away...* That says it all, doesn't it? It's their country, their land. They just want us to go away and leave them alone, because when they retaliate to the abuses of a low-life like McIntyre, Phillip justifies murdering them.'

'I agree with you completely about McIntyre, but frustratingly, though, Phillip didn't want to hear anything about his reputation for murdering them and ill-using their women. When I tried to give him details about those accusations, he just told me he didn't want to hear any of it, as he simply didn't believe it of McIntyre.'

'How naïve can he be?' Dawes muttered. 'Anyway, the fact the man was such a despicable low-life is all the more reason my conscience will not allow me to go on such a mission.'

Tench hesitated and now stopped beside his colleague. He put one hand on Dawes's shoulder as the pair turned to each other. Tench looked closely at his friend as he thought of a different approach. 'Alright, I understand it is a matter of conscience, so why don't you go and discuss the matter with Reverend Johnson and find out if he sees any benefit in having yourself court-martialled?'

'Hmm.' Dawes nodded slowly. 'Perhaps I could do that, but I can't make you any promises.'

'Please do... Oh, and just be careful with Patye. She is wonderful, but I would hate for Phillip to ever find her here.'

'Phillip wants to know about their language and customs. That's what I'm doing.'

'He might not be convinced if he sees how attractive your teacher is.'

The two men smiled at each other and were about to turn away when Tench added, ‘Will, the last thing I want is to be undertaking this repugnant mission without you beside me, so please be there for me tomorrow morning.’

Ref. 2