

(Stage 2 British Colonisation of Australia)

### **Timeline 3: Timeline of incidents between British and Koori people on the first frontier**

**1788**

#### **January**

**18 January:** First ships arrive in Gamay. Governor Phillip avoids the large group of Gweagal people on the south shore and instead takes a boat to the north shore where there are six people watching.

When Phillip indicates that he needs water, they show him where to find it. Over the following days, Phillip's men sail all around the bay looking for a place to build their gaol.

**21 January:** Phillip sails in small boats to Caddi. As he sails north, Eora people along the coast tell him to go away.

**26 January:** The British raise their flag at Warrane. On the same day, Eora people stage the first resistance against the outsiders. Using spears and stones, Eora warriors attack the French on a beach at La Perouse. Several French are wounded, while 20 Koori people die in musket fire.

#### **February**

Before the British arrive there is no theft and it is safe for Koori people to leave their boats and equipment around the shore of the harbour. Now convicts and sailors begin to steal this equipment. Many convicts make money by selling stolen spears, shields, gum, fishing lines and other equipment to the ships' crews. There was a good market for these implements in London. Governor Phillip is unable to stop the theft.

There are Koori laws concerning the land, the waters, hunting, fishing and sharing. Governor Phillip does not find out about these laws. He orders his people to take fish from the harbour, and plants and animals from the land. He does not recognise that this is theft also.

After the first few days, Koori people refuse to enter the British camp.

The second report of active Koori resistance concerns the stoning and driving away of a boat attempting to land in the lower harbour. Judge Collins says this is in response to 'the ill conduct of a boat's crew belonging to one of the transports', but he does not say what the ill conduct is.

Some time later, Eora men land on Garden Island and take a shovel, a spade and a pick-axe. The marines fire at them, wounding them in the legs. There is a report that La Perouse has fired on the people of Botany Bay, because they 'frequently annoyed his people who were employed on shore'. No mention is made of the casualties.

Convicts are reported to have raped a number of Eora women.

Judge Collins writes:

*'In the course of this month several convicts came in from the woods; one in particular dangerously wounded with a spear, the others very much beaten and bruised by the natives ... All these people denied giving any provocation to the natives: it was, however, difficult to believe them.'*

On a trip to Broken Bay, Phillip is assisted on several occasions by the local people.

Returning from Broken Bay, Phillip notices that Eora people at Camp Cove avoid him. After a time, one man shows his injuries to Phillip, who believes they have been caused by convicts.

## **April**

Bradley reports that Koori people often fish from canoes in Sydney Cove, but still refuse to enter the camp.

**April 22-28:** Phillip travels through the country west of the harbour (to Burrumatta), finding good farmland and many signs of Dharuk life, including huts, campsites with the remains of meals, and trees with climbing notches.

**April 25:** On the western arm of Botany Bay, some Gamaygal people offer fire, water and a hut to officers who visit them.

**April 27:** Officers again visit Botany Bay and meet large family groups who are very friendly, share fish with them and remain near them through the night.

## **May**

**May 4:** Koori people on Sydney's harbour offer fish to British officers. In return the officers shave some of the men's beards. The Koori men advise the women to stay away from the officers.

**May 11:** Officers visiting Botany Bay report a large ceremonial gathering of people who are friendly towards them.

**May 11:** A boat crew reports meeting Koori people in the harbour who appear to be starving: *'They had not any fish with them, and ate the salt meat which our people gave them.'*

**May 18:** A boat crew visits two Koori groups down the harbour and finds one group without any food and another with only fern root.

**May 19:** The reports of Koori food shortages do not stop the British from fishing and hunting in their lands. Surgeon Worgan writes:

*'We sometimes put a bit of salt beef, or port, Brisket, a bottle of O be joyful in a napsack, throw it over our backs, take a hatchet, a brace of pistols and a musket, and away we go, scouring the woods.'*

**May 21:** Two convicts, Ayres and Burn, are attacked while collecting herbs. Ayres escapes with a spear in his thigh, Burn is not seen again.

After establishing that convicts have murdered one Aboriginal person and wounded several, Phillip promises to free any convict who can identify the offenders. No one comes forward.

**May 30:** The bodies of two convicts, Okey and Davis, who had been cutting rushes further up the harbour, are found. Okey has three spears in him, Davis appears to have been hit on the forehead. Phillip and his officers agree that the convicts must have provoked the attack by stealing a canoe.

**May 31:** Phillip takes 11 men to Botany Bay in search of the people who killed the rushcutters. Returning along the coast, he meets 200 armed men (and many women and children) who make signs for him to leave. However, when he approaches them, they lay down their weapons and allow his party to stay. They also show him where to find fresh water and indicate that a toadstool picked up by one of the British is bad to eat. A convict who has been straggling in this area later claims that this group had burnt the body of the convict murdered on May 21.

Following this meeting, Phillip issues an order that no party of less than six armed men is to go into the bush, 'on account of the natives being so numerous'.

Phillip writes that Koori:

*'dislike of the Europeans is probably increased by discovering that they intend to remain among them, and that they interfere with them in some of their best fishing places, which doubtless are, in their circumstances objects of very great importance'.*

He fails to realise that he has also forced the Cadigal people away from their land so that they become dependent on food from other groups.

## **June**

As winter comes, there are more reports of Eora people starving. Instead of stopping their large-scale fishing and hunting, the British, who are also short of food, compete more intensely with them. Governor Phillip offers extra rations to his people who hunt and fish. Captain Hunter writes:

*'The pot or spit received everything which we could catch or kit, and the common crow was relished ...'*

## **July**

**July 9:** An Eora party attacks and defeats the crew of a fishing boat, taking half of the catch. To prevent this in future it is ordered that a petty officer go in each fishing boat.

Phillip still believes that Koori people are peaceful:

*'Their behaviour convinces me that they will never be the first aggressors, though I have been fully satisfied that they revenge the smallest affront.'* But not all of his officers agree. Major Ross writes:

*'Tho' we have had little or no opportunity of coming at their real dispositions, yet I am by no means of opinion that they are that harmless, inoffensive race they have in general been represented to be ...'*

**July 24:** A convict reports seeing four Koori people dying in the bush 'who made signs for something to eat, as if they were perishing through hunger'. At Camp Cove, Bradley 'found a man and two children who appeared to be starving, we gave them salt beef which they eagerly took and ate immediately'.

An old man is found on the beach of one of the coves, almost starved to death. The British notice that fish are scarce during the cold weather. In response to a report of a convict killing a Koori man who had stolen his jacket, Governor Phillip promises a free pardon to any convict who identifies the murderer. No one comes forward.

Two convicts who later claim to be gathering vegetables near Botany Bay meet a group of Koori people who make signs for them to return to Warrane. When they run in separate directions, a man throws spears at them. One escapes unhurt, the other is injured in the head and chest, but manages to reach Sydney Cove.

### **August**

Collins writes: 'The natives continued to molest our people whenever they chanced to meet any of them straggling and unarmed ... About the middle of the month a convict fell in with a party of natives who stripped and beat him shockingly, and would have murdered him had they not heard the report of a musket, which alarming them, they ran away, leaving his clothes.'

**August 21:** A group of Koori men land near the observatory and, against some opposition, kill a goat and take it off in a canoe towards Long Cove. Some time later Kooris are reported to have killed another goat belonging to the governor.

Surgeon White writes: 'Whenever an opportunity offered, they have seldom failed to destroy whatever stock they could seize upon unobserved. They have been equally ready to attack the convicts upon every occasion which presents itself; and some of them have become victims to these savages.'

Tench writes:

*'Unabated animosity continued to prevail between the natives and us: in addition to the former losses, a soldier and several convicts suddenly disappeared, and were never afterwards heard of.'*

### **September**

Phillip notes that his people are taking most of the fish in the harbour and that many Aboriginal people seem to have left. On average, only 67 canoes, and 133 fishermen and women, are seen -- far fewer than first observed. He realises that his people are taking the food supplies of Eora people, but does nothing about it.

**Mid September:** A group of Koori men are prevented from taking sheep from near the observatory.

**September 25:** The crew of a British fishing boat reports that Koori people threw spears at them when they gave them small fish but refused to give a large fish they had caught.

**September 28:** In a letter to Lord Sydney, Phillip seems to change his views:

*'The natives, though very friendly whenever they are met by two or three people who are armed, still continue to attack any of the convicts when they meet them in the woods, and two or three have been lately wounded by them.'*

Phillip is very aware that Koori people want him to leave:

*on a visit to Manly 'we found about sixty of the natives, men women and children, with whom we stayed some hours; they were friendly, but, as I have ever found them, since they find we intend to remain, they appeared best pleased when we were leaving them.'*

Phillip is also beginning to plan the use of force against Aboriginal people:

*'I ... hope this summer to persuade a family to live with us, unless they attempt to burn our crops, of which I am apprehensive, for they certainly are not pleased with our remaining amongst them, as they see we deprive them of fish, which is almost their only support; but if they set fire to the corn, necessity will oblige me to drive them to a greater distance, though I can assure your Lordship that I shall never do it but with the greatest reluctance, and from absolute necessity.'*

## October

*'... a convict, having gone out with an armed party to procure vegetables at Botany Bay, straggled from them, and was killed by the natives.'*

**October 24:** Koori men throw spears at a convict near the camp. Phillip pursues them with an armed party and fires towards them in some bushes - *'it having now become absolutely necessary to compel them to keep at a greater distance from the settlement.'*

**October 30:** Phillip writes in an official dispatch:

*'The natives still refuse to come amongst us ... I now doubt whether it will be possible to get any of these people to remain with us, in order to get their language, without using force.'*

Bradley writes:

*'Latterly they have attacked almost every person who has met with them that has not had a musquet and have sometimes endeavoured to surprise some who had.'*

## November

The second invasion begins. After crop failure in Sydney Cove and on Garden Island, Phillip orders the clearing of land for farming at the head of the Parramatta River. He does not seek permission from the Burramattagal people, who own the land. He calls the land Rose Hill.

December

**December 31:** Phillip orders officers Ball and Johnston to kidnap two Koori men. Taking two boats of marines to Manly, they offer presents to people on the beach before rushing them and grabbing two men. One struggles into deep water and escapes, the other is roped to a boat, taken to Sydney Cove and kept prisoner. The other men throw spears but the British fire back with muskets before escaping.

At first called Manly and later by his real name Arabanoo, the hostage is handcuffed for five months and becomes a curiosity among the British. From time to time he is taken down the harbour to show his people that he is alive.

## 1789

Fewer incidents are reported by the British in the summer months. Causes of this may include: Arabanoo held as a hostage; greater availability of food in the summer; loss of population from starvation during the winter. (It is not known how many Koori people starved to death in the winter of 1788.)

Mid January: Koori men steal three jackets from a boat while convicts cut rushes. When the guard retaliates by taking their canoe, they spear him in the arm.

**March:** Eora people of Gamay defeat 16 convicts who try to steal their spears and fishing gear. One convict is killed and several are wounded. Phillip orders the survivors to be flogged in front of Arabanoo to demonstrate British justice. Arabanoo is horrified at this punishment.

**April:** Smallpox spreads from the British settlement out among the Eora and Guringai people. Tench writes:

*'An extraordinary calamity was now observed among the natives. Repeated accounts brought by our boats of finding bodies of the Indians in all the coves and inlets of the harbour.'*

Two men and two children with smallpox are brought to surgeon John White for treatment. The adults die but the children survive -- Nanbaree, a boy of about eight years ('Andrew White') and Boorong ('Abaroo'), a girl of about 13 years. Arabanoo nurses the children back to health but then catches smallpox himself and dies on 18 May. He is buried in Governor Phillip's garden.

Nanbaree goes to live with Surgeon White, Boorong with Rev. and Mrs Richard Johnson.

**June 6:** Phillip, on a visit to Pitt Water, finds a woman suffering from smallpox. Exploring Broken Bay, he then finds the entrance to the Derrubbin River (which he names the Hawkesbury) and rows up it for 30 kilometres.

**June 26:** Phillip returns to Broken Bay and sails up the Derrubbin for about 100 kilometres until stopped by a waterfall at the junction of the Grose, near Richmond Hill. Many of the people Phillip sees along the river banks suffer from smallpox. Strangely, no Europeans in the settlement at Sydney Cove catch the contagious disease. The only immigrant to die from it is a North American Indian, a sailor on the Supply. Smallpox is the greatest single attack on Koori people, killing at least half of the people in the Sydney region and totally destroying some

communities. The Cadigal people, on whose land Sydney was built, are reduced from 60 to three people.

After the smallpox, the survivors combine into new groups which the British refer to by their names for localities: the Botany Bay tribe, the Broken Bay tribe, the Kissing Point tribe (Ryde), the Womerah tribe (Rushcutters Bay).

**September:** British stores of butter run out. There are still no supplies from England.

**September:** After a long period of peace, Henry Hacking wounds several Koori men who had thrown a stone at him while hunting.

**November:** The first land grant is given to James Ruse at Rose Hill (Parramatta) -- 'the first free settler'.

**November 25:** After several unsuccessful attempts, Lt Bradley kidnaps two men at Manly. They are Bennelong of the Camaraigal people and Colbee of the Cadigal.

Taken to Sydney, the men are shackled by the legs and kept under guard in a hut. On 12 December they attempt to escape by chewing through the rope which holds their leg-irons. Colbee is successful, Bennelong is stopped. Over the following months he appears to enjoy the luxuries offered to him. By February he is accompanying Phillip on trips about the harbour.

**December:** The harvest at Rose Hill produces 200 bushels of wheat, 35 bushels of barley, and a small quantity of oats and Indian corn.

## 1790

**February:** A convict catching stingray on the river flats at Burrumatta has a disagreement with some Koori men who took his clothes.

**April:** The colony faces starvation. Phillip tells officers that 'saltmeat would be finished by 2 July, flour by 20 August, rice and peas by 1 October'. On 20 April the last of the peas are eaten. Afraid that the Eora and Guringai people will attack if they know about this, Phillip keeps it secret from Bennelong.

**May 3:** Bennelong escapes.

**June 3:** Lady Juliana, the first of the Second Fleet, arrives.

**June 17:** No longer facing starvation, Phillip writes that he is not worried about Aboriginal people attacking the settlement.

**September:** Collins writes:

*'Since the escape of Bennelong the native in May last, nothing had been heard of him, nor had anything worthy of notice occurred among the other natives.'*

**September 7:** Phillip is speared at Manly.

Phillip had gone to a whale feast at Manly in response to Bennelong's invitation. Not surprisingly, the Koori men were suspicious of Phillip and the marines, and stood ready to resist any further attacks. Unaware of the tense situation, Phillip walked through a group of armed men to speak to Bennelong and Colbee. He gave presents of a knife, food and other articles, but Bennelong demanded hatchets. Phillip promised to return in two days with some. In return he requested a fine barbed spear, but Bennelong placed it aside and handed him a throwing stick.

Though the atmosphere seemed to remain friendly, the armed men began to close in. Phillip retreated. As he did, Bennelong introduced several people. When Phillip approached, one of these people, who seemed frightened, picked up Bennelong's spear and threw it at Phillip, hitting him in the shoulder. Phillip and his crew rushed to their boats as other spears were thrown. No one else was injured and the incident ended once the British were back in their boats.

Fearing the wound might be fatal, Phillip returned to Sydney Cove and organised his papers before having the spear head removed. He recovered and decided not to retaliate for the spearing.

A week later, two Burramattagal people tell Lieutenant Dawes that the attacker was Wel-ee-ma-rin of Broken Bay. The Burramattagal men also complain about the number of white men who have settled on their land. In response, Governor Phillip immediately increases the number of soldiers stationed at Parramatta.

About a week after the spearing, Bennelong and others set up camp on the north shore, opposite the settlement, and arrange to have negotiations with some officers.

**September 15:** Bennelong meets the officers and is given the hatchet, wine and small feast which he had requested. When he finishes eating, he asks to be shaved. He says he has punished Wel-ee-ma-rin and will stay in his camp in the hope of meeting Phillip. He then discusses the issues he wants resolved, such as the return of stolen equipment.

The following day, the British return some of the stolen Koori equipment and offer part of a large fish catch.

**September 17:** Phillip takes a boat over to meet Bennelong, who refuses to visit Government House. This time Phillip decides not to take him by force but to let him come when ready.

Some days later, Bennelong visits the town, followed by the surviving Sydney Koori people, who begin to rely on it for their survival.

**October:** The colony has been visited by five supply ships and provided with food, equipment and a new military force, enabling the boundary of occupation to be expanded around Sydney and Parramatta. From this time on, the frontier of contact between Aboriginal people and the British shifts away from Sydney Cove.

**December 9:** Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal warrior, spears and fatally wounds Phillip's convict huntsman, McIntire. The killing is done in revenge for crimes that McIntire had committed against other Eora people.

**December 14:** Governor Phillip sends an expedition of soldiers to go out and kill 10 Eora men and capture two for public execution. The expedition is unsuccessful.

Over the following weeks, Phillip continues his new tough policy. When, on 28 December, Koori people steal potatoes and throw a fish-spear at a farmer, soldiers go out after them. That night they find a group of families camped together and fire into the camp, killing at least one man, Bangai.

A day or two later, Phillip accuses Bennelong of robbing two unarmed fishermen. Bennelong threatens to take revenge for the killing of Bangai.

## 1791

Phillip gives orders that all boats should carry arms and 'the natives were forbid ever going to the western point of the cove'. Any Koori people who take food are fired on.

With most of their own food sources taken, the Eora and Guringai people of Sydney Harbour come to rely on the settlement for survival. They choose certain houses to visit for food and clothing. In addition, female prostitution (rare up to then), in return for food, blankets and other goods, becomes common. Early in 1791, Bennelong and Colbee organise a corroboree for the Europeans. From this time on, these were frequent at Sydney Cove.

However, Bennelong refuses Phillip's offers to help local people to become farmers or adopt other British ways. His people choose to be fringe dwellers. They might depend on the settlement for food and clothing, but they continue their own way of life in the camps.

While inner-Sydney Koori people become fringe dwellers, Phillip pushes the invasion out into Dharuk land, west of Sydney.

**March 7:** Mrs Macarthur talks about helping Colbee's wife:

*'Since that time [ie the coming-in] the natives visit us every day, more or less, men, women and children; they come with great confidence, without spears or any other offensive weapon. A great many have taken up their abode entirely amongst us, and Bannylong and Coleby, with their wives, come in frequently.'*

*Mrs Coleby, whose name is Daringe, brought in a newborn female infant of hers for me to see about six weeks since. It was wrapped up in the soft bark of a tree, a specimen of which I have preserved. It is a kind of a mantle, not much known in England, I fancy. I ordered something for the poor woman to eat, and had her taken proper care of for some little while. When she first presented herself to me she appeared feeble and faint. She has since been regular in her visits. The child thrives remarkably well, and I discover a softness and gentleness of manners in Daringe truly interesting.'*

**1792**

**December 11:** Phillip sails for England, taking Bennelong and Yemmerrawanie.

Source:

Bulter, K, Cameron, K & Percival, B, The Myth of Terra Nullius, Invasion and Resistance - the early years, Board of Studies, 1995. (pp 85-105 reproduced.)