

# 1808 – The arrest of Governor Bligh

## What we see in this image

This caricature records the culmination of events which began at around 6pm on 26 January 1808, when 4000 soldiers of the NSW Corps, under the command of Col. George Johnston, marched from their Barracks, along Bridge Street, to Government House, Sydney, with the intention of arresting Governor William Bligh. It took an hour and a half to find Bligh who had concealed himself, in full-dress naval uniform, upstairs in a servant's room, where he destroyed documents he did not want to fall into the hands of the mutineers. According to his enemies he was found hiding under a bed.

This image shows these events taking place in a bedroom and witnessed by three soldiers wearing the uniform of the NSW Corps; during the trial in London, Lieutenant William Minchin recalled that on entering the room there were already two or three soldiers there (Sergeant John Sutherland, Corporal Michael Marlborough and Private William Wilford) but that the Governor was standing up.

The soldier leaning down to drag Bligh out from under the bed can be ranked as a corporal by the pair of chevrons, point downwards (since 1802), on the upper arm of his red woollen jacket. The standing figure (far right) is clearly portrayed with a single epaulette on his right shoulder denoting the rank of Lieutenant. This is, therefore, most probably Lieut. William Minchin (1774?-1821). He also wears the top hat of an officer with black trousers tucked into tasselled 'hessian' boots, and carries a sword at his side.

The two soldiers wear tall, black cylindrical 'stovepipe' shakos with peaked visor and a brass regimental badge attached to the front. This type of shako was worn by British Army infantrymen from around 1799 until the end of the Peninsular War (1808-1814). The red and white side plume, or cockade, worn on the left side of the shako behind a black cloth rosette, enabled commanders to distinguish who was who on a battlefield; white at the top of the plume indicated 'Infantry' and red at the base 'English'. The men also wear white cross belts over their red woollen jackets, above grey trousers and low cut, flat black shoes, or pumps.

## **What we know about this image**

The 'Arrest of Governor Bligh' is an image of propaganda. Despite its being the only surviving visual account of these event, its content must be treated with some scepticism. The watercolour first came into the possession of the NSW Government in 1888, from the descendants of Lieutenant Colonel George Johnston, and was transferred to the Mitchell Library in 1934.

It is likely that this caricature is the one commissioned from an unknown artist by Sergeant Major Thomas Whittle (c.1764-1822), a NSW Corps soldier known to have participated in the Bligh's arrest on 26 January 1808, with Lieut. William Minchin (1774?-1821), who appears as the standing figure on the far RHS of this image. Sergeant Whittle is believed to have displayed this image in his house, enshrined between two candlesticks, a couple of days after the rebellion.

The genesis of the watercolour of Bligh's arrest appears to have been a dispute that blew up between Bligh and Whittle. According to contemporary newspapers accounts of the incident, it seems that Bligh had asked Whittle to remove his house because it stood in the way of town improvements. Whittle protested and Bligh angrily abused him. Possibly in the spirit of revenge, Whittle, who later gave evidence at the trial in

London as having seen the Governor just after his arrest, commissioned this drawing of Bligh being pulled by soldiers from under the bed.

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**1808 – The arrest of Governor Bligh**

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**Download Image**



**Creator**

To follow
<b>Inscription</b>
On back: 'Sketch of Bligh's / arrest by / Lieut. Minchin'; 'Govn Bligh' ; and 'Govn. Bligh under the Bed'
<b>Medium</b>
Watercolour
<b>Background</b>
Shows interior view of Government House, Sydney.
<b>Reference</b>
To follow

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## **1800 – View near Woolwich in Kent shewing [sic] the employment of the convicts from the hulks**

### **What we see in this image**

This print shows two prison hulks moored on the River Thames at Woolwich, near Kent, to the south east London. The hulks were usually anchored near dockyards, or garrisons, in order

to utilise the prisoners as a ready-made work force. Prisoners were routinely put to work for up to 10 to 12 hours per day. This scene shows a series of small boats at work on the river and, in the foreground, more convicts are engaged in hard labour on shore – shifting coal in wheelbarrows and pile driving (far right) – under the direction of overseers.

Despite being fitted with leg irons, the prisoners seem to wear ordinary clothing items (short jackets, waistcoats, breeches, shoes, stockings and tricorne hats) rather than standard issues of 'convict apparel' (grey jacket, waistcoat, knee-breeches, long stockings, striped shirt, checked handkerchief, thick shoes, and sheep-skin cap), though any actual uniformity in dress could be masked by the hand-colouring of this print.

There are also several better-dressed figures in this scene including several men who wear long-tailed coats, and it is interesting to note the presence of two women on the far left. Both females wear a fashionable style of garment known as a 'polonaise' which was popular from the third quarter of the 18th century (ca.1770). It was a type of over gown with tapes sewn inside to enable the skirt to be drawn up at the back, over an underskirt, creating an attractive, bunched-up effect. This picturesque style was often worn, as shown in this print, with a forward-tilted, shallow-crowned, flat straw 'bergère'-style (French for shepherdess) hat.

## **What we know about this image**

Between 1776 and 1802 decommissioned ships, or hulks, were fitted out as temporary floating prisons to house male prisoners awaiting transportation to overseas penal settlements following cessation of British convict transportation to the American Colonies. All English prison hulks were operated by private ship owners under contract to the British government. After sentencing, prisoners were dispatched to a 'receiving' hulk, where they were inspected

and cleansed before going on to a convict hulks. There they were assigned to a mess (food ration) group and allocated to a work gang while they waited transportation. Some convicts could pass their entire sentence (up to seven years) in the hulks waiting for a ship to transport them overseas.

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**1800 – View near Woolwich in Kent shewing [sic] the employment of the convicts from the hulks**

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**Download Image**





<b>Creator</b>
Bowles & Carver
<b>Inscription</b>
LRHS: 'London: Printed for Bowles & Carver' LLHS: 'No. 69 St Paul's Church Yard'
<b>Medium</b>
Hand-coloured Engraving
<b>Background</b>
View of ship yard
<b>Reference</b>
To follow

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**1799 – Philip Gidley and Anna Josepha King, and their children Elizabeth, Anna Maria and Phillip Parker**

## **What we see in this image**

This group portrait shows members of the King family in a relaxed domestic setting, seated companionably around a table and posed to reinforce traditional gender roles- the elder daughter assists her mother with the care of a younger child while the father imparts knowledge to his son.

Captain King (far right) wears a British Royal Naval uniform (pattern 1795-1812) comprised of a blue wool double-breasted, brass buttoned dress frock coat for a captain (under three years seniority) edged in gold lace with a stand collar, button-back lapels and epaulettes at the shoulder, the sleeves with 'mariners' cuffs trimmed with a single row of gold lace to denote rank, worn with a single-breasted waistcoat, over a linen shirt with a high collar, frilled cuffs and a white cravat, and knee breeches in white wool with ribbed stockings. His white hair is possibly powdered and tied-back.

Mrs King (far left) wears a full-skirted, long-sleeved white muslin morning dress with a wrap over front, edged with a narrow flounce, forming a V-shaped neckline and tied at the waist over a high-necked white muslin 'chemisette', or undershirt. Her bandeau headdress is tied around her natural curls and she wears fingerless mittens.

Anna (aged 6) and Elizabeth (aged 2) wear day dresses of white muslin with low necklines, high waists and short, puffed sleeves; the younger daughter also wears a [straw] cap trimmed with a red sash. Phillip Parker King (aged 8) wears a brass-buttoned, blue wool jacket over a white double-breasted vest and a linen shirt with a wide flat collar trimmed with a narrow flounce.

## **What we know about this image**

Philip Gidley King (1758-1808), his wife Anna Josepha (1765-1844) and daughter Elizabeth (1797-1856), then their youngest child, left England for NSW in 1799. Captain P.G.



King had received his post-captain's commission on 5/12/1798, and was appointed third Governor of NSW (1800-1806). The King family were not reunited with their two elder children, Anna Maria (1793-1852) and Phillip Parker (1791-1856), until 1807. It seems to have been common practice for officers departing for overseas service to have a portrait made, though family portraits like this one are less common. Robert Dighton (c.1752-1814) was an English portrait painter, printmaker and caricaturist who was regularly commissioned to paint portraits for military families.

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**1799 – Philip Gidley and Anna Josepha King, and  
their children Elizabeth, Anna Maria and Phillip  
Parker**

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<b>Creator</b>
To follow
<b>Inscription</b>
To follow
<b>Medium</b>
To follow
<b>Background</b>
To follow
<b>Reference</b>
To follow

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**1799 – Colonel William**

# Paterson

## What we see in this image

This left facing,  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile portrait shows William Paterson in the uniform of a Lieutenant Colonel in the New South Wales Corps. At this time all British infantry wore red woollen jackets, and the practice of distinguishing regiments by different coloured facings had been in general use since the early 18th century.

Officers' jackets, as shown in this  $\frac{1}{2}$  length portrait, were made of a bright scarlet cloth, well-tailored and close fitting, often padded to exaggerate the outline. The jacket of the New South Wales Corps uniform was brass-buttoned and double-breasted, with button-back lapels, dark mustard yellow facings and stand collar, the tasselled silver epaulettes at the shoulder denoting rank, worn with a white cross belt with the regimental insignia on the cross-plate, over a white linen shirt and black neckcloth.

## What we know about this image

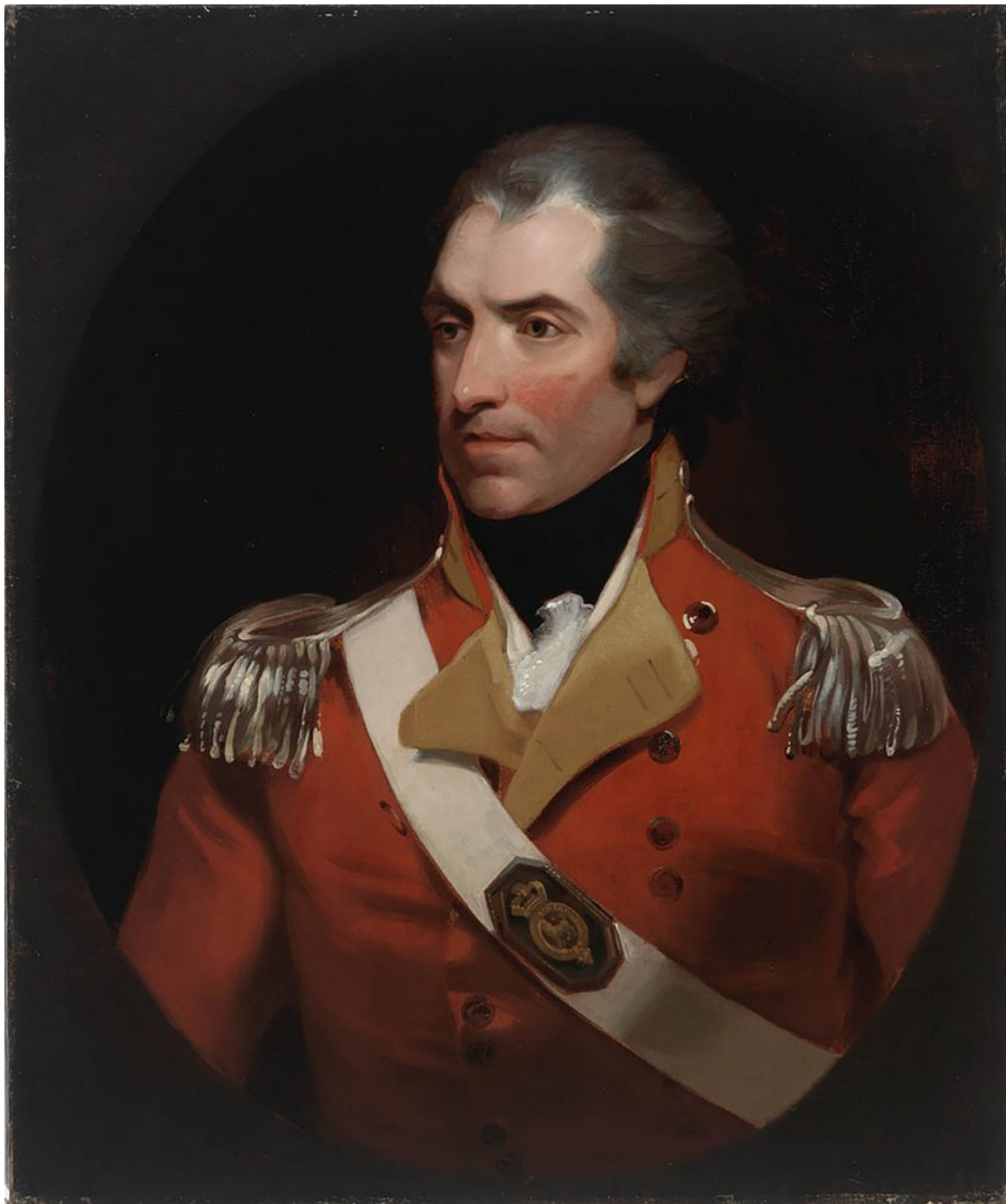
Captain William Paterson (1755-1810) arrived in Sydney with his wife Elizabeth (1770-1839) in October 1791. From 1793, the couple lived in England for three years, where Paterson was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1789. Just prior to their return to New South Wales in 1799, the Patersons sat of their portraits by William Owen (1769-1825), one of Britain's most eminent painters and known for his portraits of society figures.

On 1 January 1809, after the deposition of Governor William Bligh in the 'Rum Rebellion' (26 January 1809), the New South Wales Corps selected Paterson to act as interim Governor of New South until the arrival of Governor Lachlan Macquarie in

late 1809. Paterson left Sydney for England on 12 May 1810, but died at sea a few weeks later on board HMS Dromedary off Cape Horn.

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**1799 – Colonel William Paterson**

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<b>Creator</b>
Owen, William (1769-1825)
<b>Inscription</b>
No signature visible
<b>Medium</b>
Oil Painting
<b>Background</b>
Subject is posed in military uniform with curtain drapery on RHS
<b>Reference</b>
To follow