

The Spearing of Governor Phillip at Collins Cove (now Manly Cove), 7th September, 1790.

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Following the beaching of a whale at Collins Cove (now Manly Cove), Governor Phillip was speared there on 7th September, 1790.

*A description as to how the whale came to beach itself was given by **David Collins**, the judge advocate:*

“About the latter end of this month [ie July 1790] a spermaceti whale was seen in the harbour, and some boats from the transports went after it with harpoons; but, from the ignorance of the people in the use of them, the fish escaped unhurt. In a few days afterwards word was received that a punt belonging to Lieutenant Poulden had been pursued by a whale and upset, by which accident young Mr Ferguson (a midshipman of the *Sirius*) and two soldiers were unfortunately drowned. The soldiers, with another of their companions, who saved his life by swimming, had been down the harbour fishing, and, calling at the Look-out, took in Mr Ferguson, who had sat up all the preceding night to write to his father, Captain James Ferguson, lieutenant-governor of Greenwich hospital, and was now bringing his letters to Sydney for the purpose of sending them by the *Justinian*.

Mr Ferguson was a steady well-disposed young man, and the service, in all probability, by this extraordinary accident, lost a good officer...

The body of one of the unfortunate people who were drowned at the latter end of July last with Mr Ferguson was found about the close of this month [ie August 1790] washed on shore in Rose Bay, and very much disfigured. The whale

which occasioned this accident, we were informed, had never found its way out of the harbour, but, getting on shore in Manly Bay, was killed by the natives, and was the cause of numbers of them being at this time assembled to partake of the repasts which it afforded them.”

Collins, who was present at the spearing, gave the following account. He referred to Mr White and some other gentlemen being landed in the lower part of the harbour as they were going on an excursion towards Broken Bay:

“September. Since the escape of Bennillong the native in May last, nothing had been heard of him, nor had any thing worthy of notice occurred among the other natives. In the beginning of this month, however, they were brought forward again by a circumstance which seemed at first to threaten the colony with a loss that must have been for some time severely felt; but which was succeeded by an opening of that amicable intercourse with these people which the governor had always laboured to establish, and which was at last purchased by a most unpleasant accident to himself, and at the risk of his life.

The governor, who had uniformly directed every undertaking in person since the formation of the colony, went down in the morning of the 7th to the south head, accompanied by Captain Collins and Lieutenant Waterhouse, to give some instructions to the people employed in erecting a column at that place. As he was returning to the settlement, he received information, by a boat which had landed Mr White and some other gentlemen in the lower part of the harbour (they were going on an excursion towards Broken Bay) that Bennillong had been seen there by Mr White, and had sent the governor as a present a piece of the whale which was then lying in the wash of the surf on the beach. Anxious to see him again, the governor, after taking some arms from the party at the Look-out, which he thought the more requisite in this visit as he heard the cove was full of natives, went down and landed at the place where the whale was lying. Here he not only saw Bennillong, but Cole-be also, who had made his escape from the governor’s house a few days after his capture. At first his excellency trusted himself alone with these people; but the few months Bennillong had been away had so altered his person, that the governor, until joined by Mr Collins and Mr Waterhouse, did not perfectly recollect his old acquaintance. Bennillong had been always much attached to Mr Collins, and testified with much warmth his satisfaction at seeing him again. Several articles of wearing apparel were now given to him and his companions (taken for that purpose from the people in the boat, who, all but one man, remained on their oars to be ready in case of any accident), and a promise was exacted from the governor by Bennillong to return in two days with more, and also with some hatchets or tomahawks. The cove was full of natives allured by the attractions of a whale feast; and it being remarked during the conference that the twenty or thirty which appeared were drawing themselves into a circle round the governor and his small unarmed party (for that was literally and most inexcusably the situation) the governor proposed retiring to the boat by degrees; but Bennillong, who had presented to him several natives by name, pointed out one, whom the governor, thinking to take particular notice of, stepped forward to

meet, holding out both his hands toward him. The savage not understanding this civility, and perhaps thinking that he was going to seize him as a prisoner, lifted a spear from the grass with his foot, and fixing it on his throwing-stick, in an instant darted it at the governor. The spear entered a little above the collar bone, and had been discharged with such force, that the barb of it came through on the other side. Several other spears were thrown, but happily no further mischief was effected. The spear was with difficulty broken by Lieutenant Waterhouse, and while the governor was leading down to the boat the people landed with the arms, but of four muskets which they brought on shore one only could be fired.

The boat had five miles to row before it reached the settlement; but the people in her exerting themselves to the utmost, the governor was landed and in his house in something less than two hours. The spear was extracted with much skill by Mr Balmain, one of the assistant-surgeons of the hospital, who immediately pronounced the wound not mortal. An armed party was dispatched that evening toward Broken Bay for Mr White, the principal surgeon, who returned the following day, and reported that in the cove where the whale lay they saw several natives; but being armed nothing had happened.

No other motive could be assigned for this conduct in the savage, than the supposed apprehension that he was about to be seized by the governor, which the circumstances of his advancing toward him with his hands held out might create. But it certainly would not have happened had the precaution of taking even a single musket on shore been attended to. The governor had always placed too great a confidence in these people, under an idea that the sight of fire arms would deter them from approaching; he had now, however, been taught a lesson which it might be presumed he would never forget.

This accident gave cause to the opening of a communication between the natives of this country and the settlement, which, although attended with such an unpromising beginning, it was hoped would be followed with good consequences.

A few days after the accident, Bennillong, who certainly had not any culpable share in the transaction, came with his wife and some of his companions to a cove on the north shore not far from the settlement, where, by means of Boorong, the female who lived in the clergyman's house, an interview was effected between the natives and some officers, Mr White, Mr Palmer, and others, who at some personal risk went over with her.

At this time the name of the man who had wounded the governor was first known, Wil-le-me-ring; and Bennillong made many attempts to fix a belief that he had beaten him severely for the aggression. Bennillong declared that he should wait in that situation for some days, and hoped that the governor would be able, before the expiration of them, to visit him. On the tenth day after he had received the wound, his excellency was so far recovered as to go to the place, accompanied by several officers all armed, where he saw Bennillong and his companions. Bennillong then repeated his assurances of his having, in conjunction with his friend Cole-be, severely beaten Wil-le-me-ring; and added that his throwing the spear at the governor was entirely the effect of his fears, and done from the impulse of self-preservation.

The day before the governor's visit, the fishing boats had the greatest success which had yet been met with; near four thousand of a fish, named by us, from its shape only, the salmon, being taken at two hauls of the seine. Each fish weighed on average about five pounds; they were issued to this settlement, and to that at Rose Hill; and thirty or forty were sent as a conciliating present to Bennillong and his party on the north shore.

These circumstances, and the visit to the natives, in which it was endeavoured to convince them that no animosity was retained on account of the late accident, nor resentment harboured against any but the actual perpetrator of the fact, created a variety in the conversation of the day; and those who were desirous of acquiring the language were glad of the opportunity which the recently opened intercourse seemed to promise them."

Lieutenant Henry Waterhouse, who was also present at the spearing, describes the event in detail. He clearly refers to the location as Collins Cove (now Manly Cove):

From Henry Waterhouse: "An Account of Governor Phillip being wounded in September 1790 at New South Wales".

"On Tuesday September 7th I went down to the look out with the Governor & Capt Collins, where the Governor marked out a place to build a Columne as a mark for ships coming from Sea, & was returning when the boat that was returning from landing a party going part of the way to broken bay made signals to speak with us; on our going to her the Coxswain inform'd the Governor that Mr White had had a long conference with Benalong & Colby, that they had inquir'd for everybody they knew particularly for the Governor, that he had sent him a piece of Whale & said he would come up if the Governor would go down for him; in consequence of which the Governor went immediately down to the look out got everything he thought would be acceptable to them & four musquets, & immediately went to Collins Cove where they had been seen. On our way there we found we could make only two of the Musquets go off, which we loaded as well as a Pistol the Governor got at the look out. When we got to Collins Cove we saw a number of Nativs assembled round a fire opposite a Whale that had been thrown on shore. The Governor stood up and asked in the Nativ language were Benalong was he answer'd in the same he was there, he then told him he was the Governor his Father which name he had desired to go by when living with him. The Governor after desiring Capt Collins & myself to remain by the Boat & to have the Musquets ready he stepped out & avanc'd up the beach with his hands & arms spread open, they did not seem much inclin'd to come down, however he persever'd & follow'd them into the woods till out of our sight & had a parley with some of them; one of which repeatedly called him Father & Governor, in consequence of which & having shook hands with him the Goveror returned to the boat, & desir'd one of the men to bring some wine beef & bread up, that had been brought for the purpose & a jacket or two & went back to them. On his holding up the bottle one of them call'd out wine & repeated several English

words; two of them came forward & receiv'd the things & one of them drank a little wine, he likewise gave them some knives. In a short time he came down again to the boat & told Capt Collins what he had done but that Benelong of Colby was not there & asked Capt Collins if he would walk up with him, but desired me to remain by the boat, they then went up. I frequently heard a Man on the right hand side call out Benalong & told him of something either what we were doing in the Boat or something he had observ'd as we kept the Boat afloat on her oars. Shortly afterwards the Man that was with them came down and said Benalong & Colby were there, that Benalong had enquir'd for me & wish'd to see me, & that the Governor desir'd I would come up, which I immediately did. On my getting on the bank I perceiv'd a number of Nativs on each side except two with whome the Governor & Capt Collins seem'd in earnest conversation. I went up to them but did not know Benalong again until he was pointed out to me. I then recollected him very well shook hands with him & Colby, he had two jackets on him given by the governor & Capt Collins Colby had one in his hand. After asking Benalong several questions alluding to circumstances that had happened while he lived with us, which he perfectly understood, to one of which he took me round the neck and kissed, Colby came & Shook my hand again & asked me several questions beg'd me to put the Jacket on for him which I did. Benalong on the Governors going up had a remarkable good spear which the Governor asked him for but he either would or could not understand him but took it & lay'd it down in the grass. During all which time perfect harmony subsisted. The Nativs now seem'd closing round us which the Governor took notice of, & said he thought we had better retreat as they had formed a crescent with us in the center; there were then 19 armed men near us & more in great numbers that we could not see. The Governor then assured Benalong he would return in two days & bring with him the close he used to wear & two hatchets (which they are remarkably fond of) one for Colby & one for himself, with which he seemd much pleased & often repeated it that it should not be forgot. Just as we were going Benalong pointed out & named several Nativs that were near, one in particular to whome the Governor presented his hand & advanced towards him, at which he seem'd frighten'd & seis'd the spear Benalong had laid in the grass, fixed his throwing stick & immediately threw it with astonishing violent, all those that were near made off with the greatest precipitation. The spear enter'd the Governo's right shoulder just above the Colar bone & went through about 3 inches just behind the shoulder blade colose to the Back bone. I immediately concluded the Governor was killed as it appear'd to me much lower than it really was, & suppos'd there was not a chance for anyone of us to escape, & turn'd round to run for the beach as I perceived Capt Collins running that way & calling to the boats crew to bring the Musquets up, the Governor also attempted to run holding the spear with both hands to keep the end off the ground but owing to the length the end took the ground & stoped him short. (I suppose it could not be less than 12 feet long.) He then begged me for Gods sake to haul the spear out which I immediately stoped to do, & was in the act of doing it when I recollected I should only haul the barb into his flesh again, which was in inch long. I then determined on breaking it off & bent it down for that purpose, but owing to its length could not

effect it. I then bent it upwards but could not break it owing to the toughness of the wood, just at this instant another spear came & just grazed the skin off between the Thumb and forefinger of my right hand, I must own it frighten'd me a good deal & I believe added to my exertions, for the next sudden jerk I gave it it broke short off. Spears were then flying very thick one of which I perceiv'd fall just at Capt Collins feet as he was calling to the boats crew. The Governor attempted to pull the pistol out of his pocket, but I told him the spears were flying so quick that if he stoped he certainly would be spear'd again, however he got the pistol out & fir'd it from the Idea that their seeing we had fire arms would deter them from throughing any more spears, which I believe had the desir'd effect as we all got safe down to the beach, before which time the Boats crew had got between us and the Natives & fir'd a Musquet the only one that could be got off. With the help of a seaman I lifted the Governor into the Boat as he was very faint Capt Collins immediately follow'd with the Boats crew & put off. I supported the Governor in my Arms all the way up during which time he was perfectly collected but conscious that a few hours must fix the period of his existence supposing the spear had gone through much lowere than it really did & that suffocation must follow the taking the spear out. We got up within two hours to Sydney when the Surgeons were immediately sent for & Mr Balmain attended with his instruments. On his examining the wound the Governor desir'd him candidly to tell him how many hours he had to settle his affairs not to deceive him as he was not afraid to meet his fate let it be whatever it would but on the contrary ready. But Mr Balmain made us all happy by confidently assuring the Governor he did not apprehend any fatal consequences from the wound. The spear was then extracted & in six weeks he was able to go about again."

Governor Arthur Phillip did not mention the spearing incident in his official dispatches, but he did refer to sending instalments of his journal on at least two occasions (for example, see Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, volume 1, p265). The present whereabouts of his journal is unknown, but it did contain Phillip's account of his spearing and, written in the third person, it was published by Stockdale in 1793 in the same volume as John Hunter's Historical journal of the transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island. This volume was reprinted in 1968 under the title An historical journal of events at Sydney and at sea, 1787-1792.

"In the morning of the 7th of September, Governor Phillip went down the harbour to fix on a spot for raising a brick column, which might point out the entrance to ships which were unacquainted with the coast, as the flag-staff could not be seen by vessels until they drew very near the land, and was also liable to be blown down.

A rising ground at the distance of a cable's length from the south head was chosen, and the stone necessary for the base of the column being already cut, that work was immediately begun, and the party were returning to Sydney, when the governor was informed by some officers, who had landed in Manly-Bay, and who were going on a shooting excursion, that they had seen Bannelong, a native

who had ran away from the settlement, and who had enquired after all his friends, and received several presents. It seems Bannelong and Colebe, another native who had escaped from the settlement, with near two hundred others, were assembled in Manly-Bay to feast on a dead whale which was lying on the beach. Bannelong sent a large piece of it to the governor, as a present, which the sailors had in the boat: he was very glad to see those he knew of the party, particularly a native boy named Nanbarre, but seemed afraid of being re-taken, and would not permit any one to come so near as to lay their hands on him.

As Governor Phillip had always been desirous of meeting with this man, and had sought an opportunity from the day he left his house, he returned to the look-out and, collecting every little thing which was likely to please him, went to the spot where he had been seen. Several natives appeared on the beach as the governor's boat rowed into the bay, but on its nearer approach they retired amongst the trees.

It had ever been the governor's opinion, and what he had observed of these people confirmed it, that the best means of obtaining the confidence of a native was by example, and by placing confidence in him. With this purpose, he left the judge-advocate and lieutenant Waterhouse, who had accompanied him in the boat, and landed himself, followed only by a seaman who had some beef and bread, with a few other articles which he was desirous of giving to such of the natives as might join him. After calling repeatedly on his old acquaintance by all his names, he was answered by a native who appeared with several others at a distance, and as he increased his distance from the boat, the native approached nearer, and took a number of little presents, on their being laid down at the distance of a few paces; but he would not come near the governor, although in answer to the question – 'where was Bannelong?' he repeatedly said he was the man. This, however, could not be believed, as he was so much altered. At length a bottle was held up, and on his being asked what it was, in his own language, he answered, 'the King'; for as he had always heard his Majesty's health drank in the first glass after dinner at the governor's table, and had been made to repeat the word before he drank his own glass of wine, he supposed the liquor was named 'the King'; and though he afterwards knew it was called wine, yet he would frequently call it King.

This convinced the governor that it could be no other than Bannelong, and every method was tried to entice him to come near, but he always retired on their approaching him nearer than he wished, so that they were presently out of sight of the boat, though at no great distance from it; but on eight or ten of the natives placing themselves in a situation to prevent Bannelong being carried off, had it been attempted, he came up, together with Colebe, and held out his hand; but he was so changed, and appeared so poor and miserable, that even then there was a doubt whether he were the man, though Colebe was well known.

After some conversation, Governor Phillip went down to the beach, and the two officers came on shore. The boat's crew, with the arms, were still in the boat, for as the natives kept the position they had taken, which shewed they were under some apprehensions, he was afraid of alarming them. Bannelong appeared glad to see his old acquaintances; he was very cheerful, and

repeatedly shook hands with them, asking for hatchets and cloaths, which were promised to be brought him in two days. He pointed to a small fire which was burning near them, and said he should sleep there the two nights until the governor's return. Knives, hats, and various other articles were given to him and Colebe; and the latter, laughing, shewed them that he had got the iron from his leg by which he had been secured when at the settlement. He also seemed glad to see his former acquaintances, and made himself very merry at the manner of his friend Bannelong's getting away from Sydney, by laying his head on his hand, shutting his eyes, and saying, 'Governor nangorar' (asleep) and imitating the manner in which his companion had un off.

The governor and his party now began to retire towards the beach, when they were joined by a stout, corpulent native who had been for some time standing at a small distance; he approached them under strong marks of fear, but this soon subsided on his being treated in a friendly manner, and he became very conversable. He shewed them a wound he had received in his back with a spear. Bannelong also was desirous of shewing that he had been wounded in various parts of the body since he left the settlement; one of his wounds was made by a spear which went through his left arm, and was pretty well healed, but another dangerous one over the left eye was not in so good a state. These wounds, he said, were received at Botany-Bay.

After a pretty long conversation, our party were going away, but they were detained by Bannelong, who was still solicitous to talk about the hatchets and cloaths he was to have sent him in two days, and a native who had been standing for some time at the distance of twenty or thirty yards, was pointed out by him in a manner which shewed he wished him to be taken notice of. On this, the governor advanced towards him, and on the man's making signs that he should not come near, and appearing to be afraid, he threw his sword down, still advancing towards him, at the same time opening his hands to shew that he had no arms.

In the course of this interview, they had stopped near a spear which was lying on the grass, and which Bannelong took up; it was longer than common, and appeared to be a very curious one, being barbed and pointed with hard wood. This exciting Governor Phillip's curiosity, he asked Bannelong for it; but instead of complying with this request he took it where the stranger was standing, threw it down, and taking a common short spear from a native, who, with several others, stood at some distance behind him, he presented that and a club to the governor, which gave reason to suppose that the spear which had been asked for did not belong to him.

As Governor Phillip advanced towards the man whose fears he wished to remove, he took up the spear in question, and fixing it in a throwing-stick, appeared to stand on his defence; but as there was no reason to suppose he would throw it without the least provocation, and when he was so near those with whom our party was on such friendly terms, the governor made a sign for him to lay it down, and continued to approach him, at the same time repeating the words – *weree, weree*, which the natives use when they wish any thing not to be done that displeases them.

Notwithstanding this, the native, stepping back with his right leg, threw the spear with great violence, and it struck against Governor Phillip's collar bone, close to which it entered, and the barb came out close to the third vertebrae of the back. Immediately after throwing the spear, the native ran off, as did Bannelong and Colebe, with those that were standing to the right and left: and the latter, in their retreat, threw several spears, which, however, did no farther mischief.

As bringing any arms on shore would probably have prevented an interview taking place, the musquets had been left in the boat; but the governor having a pistol in his pocket, he discharged it as he went down the beach, as several of the natives stopped at no great distance, and the cockswain coming up at the same instant, fired a musquet, though there was no reason to apprehend the natives meant to molest them any farther.

The conduct of this savage may be supposed to do away with any idea that had been formed of the natives not abusing a confidence placed in them; and yet there is no great reason to draw that inference from the accident just mentioned; for Phillip was a stranger, and might fear their taking him away, as they had carried off others; against which he might not think their numbers a sufficient security. Besides, he had not joined the party, nor probably thought the friendship which subsisted between them and others of a different tribe any way binding on him; for it is supposed the different tribes and in every respect perfectly independent of each other. This man had stood for some time peaceably and quietly, and the governor was certainly more in his power before he went to call the officers out of the boat than at the time the spear was thrown. It is therefore most likely that the action proceeded from a momentary impulse of fear. But the behaviour of Bannelong on this occasion is not so easily to be accounted for. He never attempted to interfere when the man took the spear up, or said a single word to prevent him from throwing it; he possibly did not think the spear would be thrown, and the whole was but the business of a moment.

A few minutes before this affair happened, nineteen of the natives had been counted round our party, and the position they took shewed their judgment. On the ground where Bannelong and Colebe joined them, the trees stood at the distance of forty or fifty feet from each other, and had the natives kept together shelter might have been found from their spears behind a tree; but whilst four of them remained in front, at the distance of forty yards, four or five others placed themselves on the right, and the same number on the left, at about the same distance. Others again were planted between them and the beach, at the distance of ten or fifteen yards, which rendered it impossible either to carry off their companions or to gain shelter from their spears, if hostilities commenced; and though these people do not always keep their spears in their hands, they are seldom without their throwing-sticks, and generally have a spear lying near them in the grass, which they move with their feet as they change their ground. However, it is not likely that this disposition was made with any bad intention, but merely as a security for Bannelong and Colebe. Indeed, these men directed the manoeuvre, and waited till it was made, before they came near enough to shake hands.

It may naturally be supposed that many would be desirous of punishing what was generally deemed an act of treachery, but Governor Phillip did not see the transaction in that light, and as soon as he arrived at Sydney he gave the necessary directions to prevent any of the natives being fired on, unless they were the aggressors, by throwing spears; and, in order to prevent the party who were out on a shooting excursion from meeting with an attack of a similar nature, an officer and some soldiers were sent after them. They returned the next day, and coming by the place where the accident happened, some of the natives appeared on an eminence. On their being asked who had wounded the governor, they named a man, or a tribe, who resided to the northward. The boy Nanbarre was their interpreter, and he said the man's name was Caregal, and that he lived at, or near, Broken-Bay. Nanbarre was also directed to enquire after Bannelong and Colebe, and those to whom the question was put pointed to some people at a distance.

One of these natives threw a spear to an officer who asked for it, and this he did in such a manner that very particularly marked the care he took it should not fall near any person.

It may be thought remarkable that, after what had happened, the natives should appear in the sight of seventeen armed men; and, what was more extraordinary, the cockswains of the two boats which lay at anchor all night near the beach, with several soldiers in them, said that after the party they landed were gone off, the natives returned, made up some fires, and slept there all night; but, as the officer who went to bring home the party that were out a shooting found, by the marks on the sand, when he was returning the next morning, that he had been followed by three men and a dog, it is probable that they had others looking out likewise, and had the boats approached the beach in the night, they would have immediately fled into the woods.

It was Governor Phillip's intention, as soon as he should be able to go out, to endeavour to find Bannelong, and, if possible, to have the man given up who wounded him, or some of his tribe; not with a view of inflicting any punishment, but of detaining one or more of these people till they understood each other's language.

Some days after this affair, as several officers were going down the harbour, they saw some natives, and amongst them Bannelong and his wife. On this, the boat's head was put to the rocks, and he came down, shook hands with several of the party, and enquired if the governor was dead. They told him no; on which he promised to come and see him; said he had beat the man who wounded him, and whose name he told them was Wil-le-me-ring, of the tribe of Kay-yee-my, the place where the governor was wounded."

Dr John Harris came to New South Wales with the Second Fleet. He was a member of the party which landed in present Manly Cove, intending to spend four or five days exploring the country towards Broken Bay. From his account it is clear that the natives were feasting on the dead whale at the same place where the party landed.

“We are and have been much troubled with the Natives Killing and Wounding our people when they meet them singly in the woods or without arms many instances of the like has occurd lately, the most remarkable instance was that of the Governour being pierced through with a barbed spear in a place call Manley Cove but he soon recoverd. The Spear entered above the Clavicle and came through behind the Shoulder – The Circumstances were as follows...

Some time after our arrival here we formd a party to Explore the parts to the Northward towards Broken Bay for 4 or 5 D. The party consist of Capt Nepean Mr White Surgeon Lieut Abbot & your Hume. Servt. With a small party of men – Some days previous to our outset a Whale had by some means or other entered the Harbour and was chas'd by the Boats one of which it upset and Drown'd a Mid in Two Men however it was so much Hurt Hert that it had run itself ashore in Manley Cove which was the place we were to be landed at from Sydney on our outset on our entering this Bay we saw a Pary of Natives to the ammt. Of 200 which is rather extraordinary & soon after the Whale – it seems they had collected to eat it out (?) on our nearer approach to them we spoke to them by means of a little Boy which Mr White has Naturalizd and among the rest appeard thir 2 former acquaintances that had made their Escape who Enquird earnestly for the Governour the one had got his Iron off by some means or other but how God knows. They gave us several pieces of the Whale Bone as presents for the Govrnour & express'd much wish to see him. The Governr. Had that day come down to the Lookout. We landed and pursued our rout without molestation from them after having given them what Cloathing we could spare which they seem'd anxious to have. We also desired the Boat to call at the Lookout on her way back home and tell the Govr what had hap'd on hearing wh. He imprudently wint over without a party of Soldiers with him accomp'd. Only by the Jud[g]e Lt Waterhouse & Boats Crew with a couple of Mu. Which were in Bad order and haven landed amongst them and went too far from the boat some one or other of thim impressd either by fear or resentment at His former Conduct to there Companions hove the Spear which pierced him as before mentiond nor would any of our Arms go off (execution) till they had all run off as the Weapon had went through the Barb was sawn of and extracted easily & heald by the first intention a large party of Marines with an Officer was despatch'd after us and as we had not got above 12 Miles the Came to our Encampment in the Night and we returned the next day without any material occurance (as this matter will make some noise in the Newspapers you may rely on this acct. as genuine – it is something singular that these Savages tho the own a Chief seems to be under no kind of Awe with regard to passion before him, and tho they were Convinced that you was their real Friend if by any means you should affront them they would instantly put you to death...”

Captain John Hunter and Lieutenant William Bradley were not present at the spearing incident, but both gave accounts in their journals. As they are both based on Waterhouse's account, they will not be repeated here.

***Captain Watkin Tench** gave the following account, which gives the impression that he was present, when he was not. His account is interesting*

because, apparently by talking with people who were present, he was able to include extra details.

“July 1790. This month marked by nothing worth communicating except a melancholy accident which befel a young gentleman of amiable character, one of the midshipmen lately belonging to the Sirius, and two marines. He was in a small boat, with three marines, in the harbour, when a whale was seen near them. Sensible of their danger, they used every effort to avoid the cause of it, by rowing in a contrary direction from that which the fish seemed to take; but the monster suddenly arose close to them, and nearly filled the boat with water. By exerting themselves, they baled her out and again steered from it. For some time it was not seen, and they conceived themselves safe, when, rising immediately under the boat, it lifted her to the height of many yards on its back, whence slipping off, she dropped as from a precipice, and immediately filled and sunk. The midshipman and one of the marines were sucked into the vortex which the whale had made, and disappeared at once. The two other marines swam for the nearest shore; but one only reached it, to recount the fate of his companions...

The tremendous monster, who had occasioned the unhappy catastrophe just recorded, was fated to be the cause of farther mischief to us.

September 1790, On the 7th instant, Captain Nepean, of the New South Wales corps, and Mr White, accompanied by little Nanbaree, and a party of men, went in a boat to Manly Cove, intending to land there, and walk on to Broken Bay. On drawing near the shore, a dead whale, in the most disgusting state of putrefaction, was seen lying on the beach, and at least two hundred Indians surrounding it, broiling the flesh on different fires, and feasting on it with the most extravagant marks of greediness and rapture. As the boat continued to approach, they were observed to fall into confusion, and to pick up their spears; on which our people lay upon their oars: and Nanbaree stepping forward, harangued them for some time assuring them that we were friends. Mr White now called for Baneelon; who, on hearing his name, came forth, and entered into conversation. He was greatly emaciated, and so far disfigured by a long beard, that our people not without difficulty recognized their old acquaintance. His answering in broken English, and inquiring for the governor, however, soon corrected their doubts. He seemed quite friendly. And soon after Colbee came up, pointing to his leg, to shew that he had freed himself from the fetter which was upon him when he had escaped from us.

When Baneelon was told that the governor was not far off, he expressed great joy, and declared that he would immediately go in search of him; and if he found him not, would follow him to Sydney. ‘Have you brought any hatchets with you?’ cried he. Unluckily they had not any which they chose to spare; but two or three shirts, some handkerchiefs, knives, and other trifles, were given to them, and seemed to satisfy. Baneelon, willing to instruct his countrymen, tried to put on a shirt, but managed it so awkwardly, that a man of the name of McEntire, the governor’s gamekeeper, was directed by Mr White to assist him. This man, who was well known to him, he positively forbade to approach, eyeing him ferociously,

and with every mark of horror and resentment. He was in consequence left to himself, and the conversation proceeded as before. The length of his beard seemed to annoy him much, and he expressed eager wishes to be shaved, asking repeatedly for a razor. A pair of scissors was given to him, and he shewed he had not forgotten how to use such an instrument, for he forthwith began to clip his hair with it.

During this time, the women and children, to the number of more than fifty, stood at a distance, and refused all invitations, which could be conveyed by signs and gestures, to approach nearer. 'Which of them is your old favourite, Bar-an-gar-oo, of whom you used to speak so often?' – 'Oh,' said he, 'she is become the wife of Colbee! But I have got Bul-la Mur-ee Dee-in [two large women] to compensate for her loss.'

September 1790. It was observed that he had received two wounds, in addition to his former numerous ones, since he had left us; one of them from a spear, which had passed through the fleshy part of his arm; and the other displayed itself in a large scar above his left eye. They were both healed, and probably were acquired in the conflict wherein he had asserted his pretensions to the two ladies.

Nanbaree, all this while, though he continued to interrogate his countrymen, and to interpret on both sides, shewed little desire to return to their society, and stuck very close to his new friends. On being asked the cause of their present meeting, Baneelon pointed to the whale, which stunk immoderately; and Colbee made signals, that it was common among them to eat until the stomach was so overladen as to occasion sickness.

Their demand of hatchets being re-iterated, notwithstanding our refusal; they were asked why they had not brought with them some of their own? They excused themselves by saying, that on an occasion of the present sort, they always left them at home, and cut up the whale with the shell which is affixed to the end of the throwing stick.

Our party now thought it time to proceed on their original expedition, and having taken leave of their sable friends, rowed to some distance, where they landed, and set out for Broken Bay, ordering the coxswain of the boat, in which they had come down, to go immediately and acquaint the governor of all that had passed. When the natives saw that the boat was about to depart, they crowded around her, and brought down, by way of present, three or four great junks of the whale, and put them on board of her; the largest of which, Baneelon expressly requested might be offered, in his name, to the governor.

It happened that his excellency had this day gone to a landmark, which was building on the South-head, near the flag-staff, to serve as a direction to ships at sea; and the boat met him on his return to Sydney. Immediately on receiving the intelligence, he hastened back to the South-head, and having procured all the fire-arms which could be mustered there, consisting of four muskets and a pistol, set out, attended by Mr Collins and lieutenant Waterhouse of the navy.

September 1790. When the boat reached Manly Cove, the natives were found still busily employed around the whale. As they expressed not any consternation on seeing us row to the beach, governor Phillip stepped out

unarmed, and attended by one seaman only, and called for Baneelon, who appeared, but, notwithstanding his former eagerness, would not suffer the other to approach him for several minutes. Gradually, however, he warmed into friendship and frankness, and presently after Colbee came up. They discoursed for some time, Baneelon expressing pleasure to see his old acquaintance, and inquiring by name for every person whom he could recollect at Sydney; and among others for a French cook, one of the governor's servants, whom he had constantly made the butt of his ridicule, by mimicking his voice, gait, and other peculiarities, all of which he again went through with his wonted exactness and drollery. He asked also particularly for a lady from whom he had once ventured to snatch a kiss; and on being told that she was well, by way of proving that the token was fresh in his remembrance, he kissed lieutenant Waterhouse, and laughed aloud. On his wounds being noticed, he coldly said, that he had received them at Botany Bay, but went no farther into their history.

September 1790. Hatchets still continued to be called for with redoubled eagerness, which rather surprised us, as formerly they had always been accepted with indifference. But Baneelon had probably demonstrated to them their superiority over those of their own manufacturing. To appease their importunity, the governor gave them a knife, some bread, pork, and other articles; and promised that in two days he would return hither, and bring with him hatchets to be distributed among them, which appeared to diffuse general satisfaction.

Baneelon's love of wine has been mentioned; and the governor, to try whether it still subsisted, uncorked a bottle, and poured out a glass of it, which the other drank off with his former marks of relish and good humour, giving for a toast, as he had been taught, 'the King'.

Our party now advanced from the beach; but perceiving many of the Indians filing off to the right and left, so as in some measure to surround them, they retreated gently to their old situation, which produced neither alarm or offence; the others by degrees also resumed their former position. A very fine barbed spear of uncommon size being seen by the governor, he asked for it. But Baneelon, instead of complying with the request, took it away, and laid it at some distance, and brought back a throwing-stick, which he presented to his excellency.

Matters had proceeded in this friendly train for more than half an hour, when a native, with a spear in his hand, came forward, and stopped at the distance of between twenty and thirty yards from the place where the governor, Mr Collins, lieutenant Waterhouse, and a seaman stood. His excellency held out his hand, and called to him, advancing towards him at the same time, Mr Collins following close behind. He appeared to be a man of middle age, short of stature, sturdy, and well set, seemingly a stranger, and but little acquainted with Baneelon and Colbee. The nearer the governor approached, the greater became the terror and agitation of the Indian. To remove his fear, governor Phillip threw down a dirk, which he wore at his side. The other, alarmed at the rattle of the dirk, and

probably misconstruing the action, instantly fixed his lance in his throwing-stick¹. To retreat, his excellency now thought would be more dangerous than to advance. He therefore cried out to the man, Weè-ree, Weè-ree, (Bad; you are doing wrong) displaying at the same time, every token of amity and confidence. The words had, however, hardly gone forth, when the Indian, stepping back with one foot, aimed his lance with such force and dexterity, that striking² the governor's right shoulder, just above the collar-bone, the point glancing downward, came out at his back, having made a wound of many inches long. The man was observed to keep his eye steadily fixed on the lance until it struck its object, when he directly dashed into the woods and was seen no more.

Instant confusion on both sides took place; Baneelon and Colbee disappeared; and several spears were thrown from different quarters, though without effect. Our party retreated as fast as they could, calling to those who were left in the boat, to hasten up with fire-arms. A situation more distressing than that of the governor, during the time that this lasted, cannot readily be conceived:- the pole of the spear, not less than ten feet in length, sticking out before him, and impeding his flight, the butt frequently striking the ground, and lacerating the wound. In vain did Mr Waterhouse try to break it; and the barb, which appeared on the other side, forbade extraction, until that could be performed. At length it was broken, and his excellency reached the boat, by which time the seamen with the musquets had got up, and were endeavouring to fire them, but only one would go off, and there is no room to believe that it was attended with any execution.

When the governor got home, the wound was examined: it had bled a good deal in the boat, and it was doubtful whether the subclavian artery might not be divided. On moving the spear, it was found, however, that it might be safely extracted, which was accordingly performed.

Apprehension for the safety of the party who had gone to Broken Bay, now took place. Lieutenant Long, with a detachment of marines, was immediately sent to escort them back, lest any ambush might be laid by the natives to cut them off. When Mr Long reached Manly Cove, the sun had set; however, he pursued his way in the dark, scrambling over rocks and thickets, as well as he could, until two o'clock on the following morning, when he overtook them at a place where they halted to sleep, about half-way between the two harbours.

At day-break they all returned, and were surprised to find tracks in the sand of the feet of the Indians, almost the whole way from the place where they had slept to the Cove. By this it should seem as if these last had secretly followed them, probably with hostile intentions; but on discovering their strength, and that they were on their guard, had abandoned their design.

On reaching Manly Cove, three Indians were observed standing on a rock, with whom they entered into conversation. The Indians informed them, that the man who had wounded the governor, belonged to a tribe residing at Broken Bay,

¹ Such preparation is equal to what cocking a gun, and directing it at its object, would be with us. To launch the spear, or to touch the trigger, only remains. [Tench's footnote.]

² His excellency described the shock to me as similar to a violent blow, with such energy was the weapon thrown. [Tench's footnote.]

and they asked them for a spear, which they immediately gave. The boat's crew said that Baneelon and Colbee had just departed, after a friendly intercourse: like the others, they had pretended highly to disapprove the conduct of the man who had thrown the spear, vowing to execute vengeance upon him.

September 1790. From this time, until the 14th, no communication passed between the natives and us. On that day, the chaplain and lieutenant Dawes, having Abaroo with them in a boat, learned from two Indians that Wil-ee-ma-rin was the name of the person who had wounded the governor. These two people inquired kindly how his excellency did, and seemed pleased to hear that he was likely to recover."

***Jacob Nagle**, a seaman on the *Sirius*, wrote the following account of the spearing incident from memory, more than forty years after the event. No doctor was in fact present in the boat.*

"In one of these excursions the Governor had nearly lost his life on the North Branch. A spear that was hove from the natives went through his right breast and came out behind. The doctor not having materials with him to stop the blood, dare not take the spear out, but cut it off, and it remained in him till we pulled the boat to Sidney Cove with all our might. The Governor bore it with the greatest patience, and as the doctor rought according to his directions, he made his will and settled his affairs, not expecting to live, while we ware pulling him up in the boat. As soon as we arrived, the doct'r drew the spear out of his body and stoped the blod. Though it was unexpected, the Govenor recovered."

***Lieutenant Daniel Southwell** mentioned the spearing briefly:*

"Apropos! That date [September 7] is the anniversary of the governor's misfortune of the year 1790, when he was spear'd by a native in Manly Bay, in a manner which savours much of imprudence next to folly. Bennalon, as I said in my letters, had made his escape, and this was the first interview since that incident. It, however very near fatal, proved by no means so, as he soon recover'd.

***Sergeant James Scott** gave his description thus:*

"7th Tuesday. His Excellency the Governor. Was Wounded Desperitly by a Native throughing a Spere at. him, it Struck him a Little below the Shoulder and Peirced Quite though & 4 or 5 Inches. the opposet. Side, His Excellency Was Down at Manly Cove, & Spaking to two Natives Which, he formerly had in his Possession. (but Made there Escape) he had Gave them Some Mate & Bread together With a Bottel of Wine, Cloaths &c & While he turned his head Round to Spake to one of the Men With him. to Keep a Strick Eye on the Rest of the Natives As there Was a Great Number in All, he receved the Wound, the Governor Immeditly fired a Pistole At. the Person he Supposed, hove the Spere, he was Immeditly taken Down to the Boat, & brought Home; As Mr White the

Principal Surgon Went. that Morning on an Expedition. Mr Belmane, Assisten Surgon. took the Spere Out. & Dressed. the Wound; The Governor Remains in Great Agonies but. it is thought, he Will Recover it. though at the Same time his Excellency is Highly Scurbutick;-“

General Interpretation.

(For location see portion of Captain John Hunter’s Chart of Port Jackson, 1788.)

The accounts of the spearing incident given by those who were present, and others, speak for themselves.

It will be observed from Captain John Hunter’s Chart of Port Jackson, 1788, which he signed personally, that Manly Cove was then located near present North Harbour Reserve, and Collins Cove was located near present Manly Wharf. When Lieutenant Waterhouse referred to the original Collins Cove, he was in fact talking about present Manly Cove. However, because of the popularity of the name “Manly”, other reporters of the spearing, at the time, referred to the location as being Manly Bay or Manly Cove. The name Collins Cove therefore was already being replaced with the names Manly bay or Manly Cove, by common usage.

Surgeon White, Lieutenant Abbot, Surgeon Harris, Captain Nepean, Nanbaree (an Aboriginal boy) and a small party of men were landed at present Manly Cove (then Collins Cove) with the intention of going part of the way to Broken Bay. Excursions of this nature followed the well known Aboriginal path to Broken Bay which began not far from the ferry wharf in present Manly Cove.

Evidence, obtainable from the First Fleet records and a contemporary letter written by Dr John Harris, shows that Surgeon White’s land excursion towards Broken Bay began at present Manly Cove, and that Governor Phillip was speared at present Manly Cove also.

Some further comments regarding the location of Phillip’s spearing

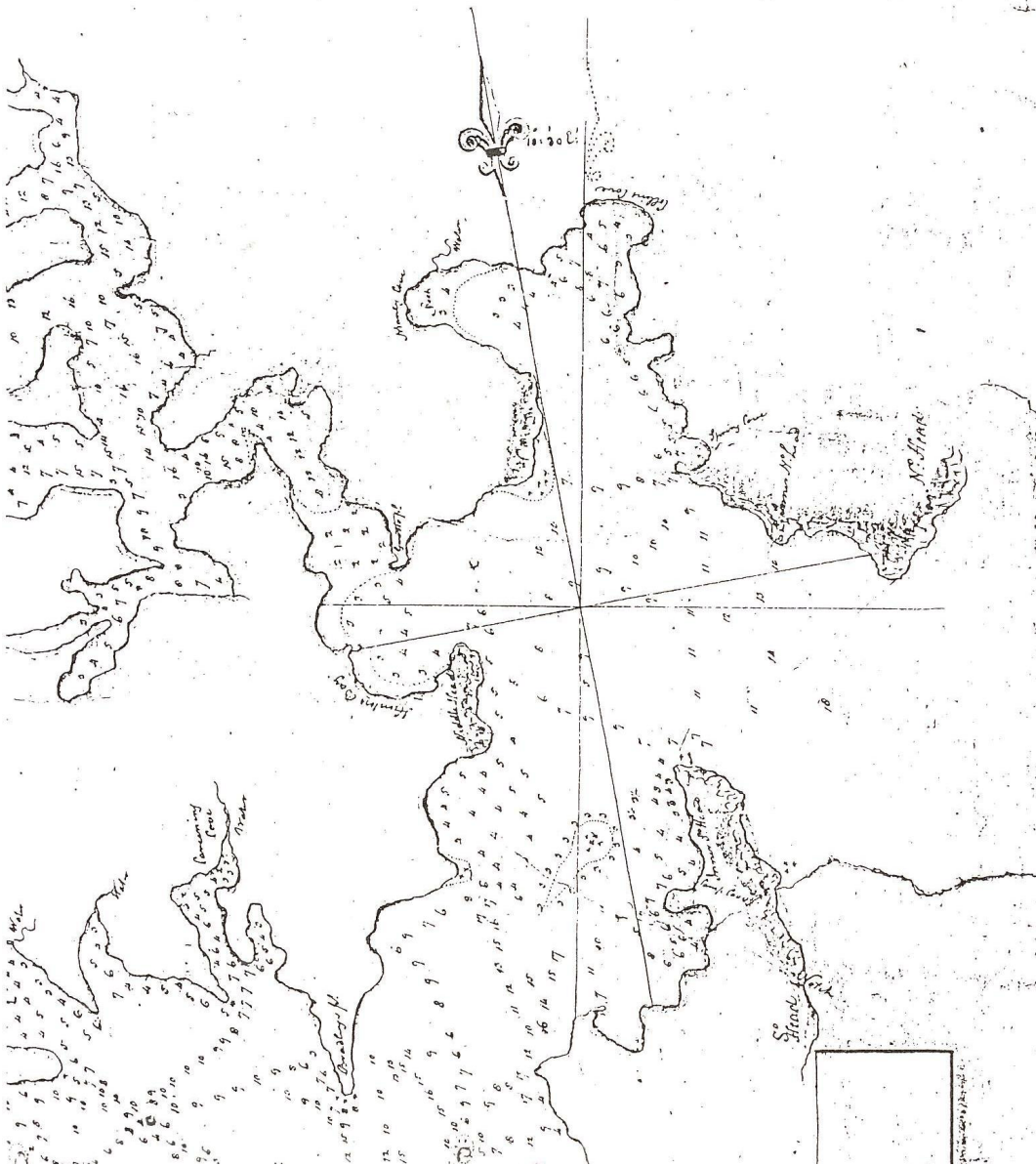
In an article published in 1922, entitled ‘The Story of Manly’, the author Mr Charles H Bertie, the Librarian of the City of Sydney Public Library, wrote, “In September, 1790, a dead whale was stranded in Manly Cove, and the natives gathered for a feast.” Mr Bertie went on to describe the spearing incident, and then stated, “The Cove provided a convenient starting point for exploration.” It will be noted that Mr Bertie was writing before the formation in 1924 of the Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society.

A copy of the 1788 Chart of Port Jackson by Captain John Hunter, the original of which is held by the Admiralty in England, was acquired by the Mitchell Library in 1930 from the Henderson collection.

A cairn commemorating the spearing of Governor Phillip was erected by the Manly, Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society at present Collins Beach on

23rd September, 1933. However, the evidence does not support present Collins Beach as being the location where Governor Phillip was speared on 7th September, 1790.

Portion of "Chart of Port Jackson, surveyed in 1788 by J. Hunter Captain of His Majesty's Ship Sirius"



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Map

Hunter, John *Chart of Port Jackson* surveyed in 1788 by J Hunter, Captain of His Majesty's Ship *Sirius*. (Signed by Hunter). Original held by the British Admiralty; copy held by the Mitchell Library. Mitchell Library no M2 811.15/1788/7.

Illustration

[Port Jackson Painter]: "The Governor making the best of his way to the Boat after being wounded with the spear sticking in his Shoulder." Original held by the Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History); copy in Frost, Alan: *Arthur Phillip, 1738-1814: his voyaging*. Melbourne; Oxford University Press, 1987.

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