

THE ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY ESSAY
COMPETITION.

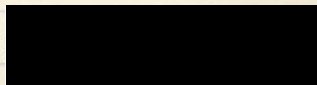
"C" alternative

1st Prize

Very mature

for a child
of 13

Timothy Paul Davis.

Born: 

Address: 4, Downfield Rd.,
Clifton,
Bristol, 8.
England.

School: Clifton College Preparatory School,

The Avenue,
Bristol 8.

Two Men I find of the greatest Interest
in the Story of our British Empire.

"Great lives never go out. They go on."

In the Greenwich Hospital there is a portrait, painted by Nathaniel Dance. The clothes are those of an eighteenth century naval officer, and there is no background to draw one's attention from the face, which would be interesting and arresting in any age. It is a lean face, with a well-modelled mouth and chin, a large, rather hooked nose, deep set eyes which are questioning, surmounted by eyebrows which are themselves arched quizzically up into a high lined forehead. It is the face of a man who, I think, was continually asking himself "why?" and "how?". It is a portrait of James Cook. Everyone knows that although other earlier voyagers saw and reported a new land in the South Pacific Ocean, it was this man who first surveyed the eastern coast of Australia.

His voyages of exploration are of course of the most tremendous importance and interest, for Australia to-day is one of the greatest wheat and wool producing nations of our Commonwealth; but it is James Cook himself who is so interesting to me. His very early life gives one no clue to his great destiny. He was not one of a great line of scholars or sailors. He served his apprenticeship to a Whitby ship-owner, who exported coal to the Baltic (the famous 'Endeavour' was a Whitby Collier!) and remained with him nine years, and then at the age of twenty-seven he entered the Royal Navy as an able seaman. I think his abilities were soon recognised, for he became a master to the ship "Solebay" only four years later, and very soon after that surveyed the Canadian Atlantic coast and the approaches to the St. Lawrence River. This part of his career is of the greatest fascination to me, for I like making maps and charts very much, and James Cook's were so accurate that they could be used to-day.

It was his curiosity which gave him his great opportunity—he made a report of a solar eclipse which he observed, and so it was as an astronomer that he was asked by the Admiralty and the Royal

Society to lead an expedition for researches in the South Pacific to observe the transit of Venus in 1769. This voyage and those he made in 1772-5 and 1776 are renowned, but it was on these voyages that he made a great discovery in another sphere. Any large expedition to-day sets out with all modern medical and scientific knowledge and apparatus to help it. Scurvy, that dreadful disease which made men's gums spongy so that their teeth dropped out, and which made the men listless and helpless, and eventually killed them, was Cook's real enemy on his long voyages, greater than storm or starvation. With no medical knowledge to help him, he realized that diet was the real problem; he overcame his crew's suspicions by example, and gave them as much fruit and vegetable food as possible. He firmly believed in giving them onions, lemons, and oranges, and laid in supplies of these at every port of call. He even experimented with a "marmalade of carrots." His reward was great: on his return to England after a voyage of a thousand days he had lost only one man out of a crew of a hundred and eighteen. James Cook, astronomer, explorer and Captain in His Majesty's Navy, not only conquered oceans - he conquered scurvy, the sailor's great enemy, and so enabled hundreds of colonists to make the twelve thousand mile journey to the new land with impunity.

James Cook. 1728-1779.

Arthur Phillip (1738-1814)

Reading on in the history of Australia, one meets another man, not so well known as Captain Cook perhaps, but I think a very remarkable man: Captain Arthur Phillip, the first Governor of New South Wales. His colonists were convicts, his colony was some twelve thousand miles from home. His land and resources were new, unexplored and untried, and all these were not the least of his difficulties. With no skilled labour, beginning from "scratch" as it were, he laid the foundations of a new country and a new nation.

Before the American War of Independence convicts were transported to America (about five hundred every year) but after 1783 of course this was no longer possible. It was at last decided to transport them to Australia - the law was very strict in England at this time, a man could be transported for life for a very small offence. In 1787 the first fleet sailed - eleven ships under the command of Captain Phillip, six of which carried convicts, and three stores. It is almost impossible to imagine the conditions under which the little fleet sailed, now in the twentieth century when air travel has made distant places so accessible; but Captain Phillip brought them safely to Botany Bay in January 1788. There he found sand and swamp and all vegetation burnt up by the scorching Summer sun. He sailed on Northwards, and inspecting the next inlet found "Port Jackson" (which he re-named Sydney Harbour) and described it as "the finest harbour in the world," and there he founded his first colony. His real difficulties now began. He had only twelve carpenters to build all the huts and houses needed to house all his "colonists." Supplies were low and he saw that he must begin farming soon, but only one man knew anything about it. Most of his cattle were lost (and were not found until six years later), sixty-nine of the seventy sheep died, and most of the seed brought from home had become spoiled and useless during the long voyage.

For years the little colony struggled against the most dreadful hardships, and Captain Phillip, acting entirely "under his own steam" (it took nine months to get a letter home to the British Government and an answer back again to Australia), made land grants, started government farms, administered justice, rationed food when necessary to troops and convicts alike - a commanding officer protested about this but the governor remarked that he knew that the rations were scanty: he was living on them himself. He decided about the building of roads, and the surveying of land, and for five years, until he became desperately ill, worked to keep his

little colony alive, for he felt the new land had a great future. Later, many convicts were freed, were granted land for farming, free people came from Britain, and the colony grew into the sturdy, resourceful, prosperous nation of to-day.

I am glad that I read on in the history of Australia, for the first Governor was, I am sure, a truly great man.

I used these three books in writing this essay:

"The Growth of the Empire," by Arthur Jose.

"The National Geographic Magazine,"

April, 1949.

"Australia," (Foot in Hand Series)

by Helen Madeley.
