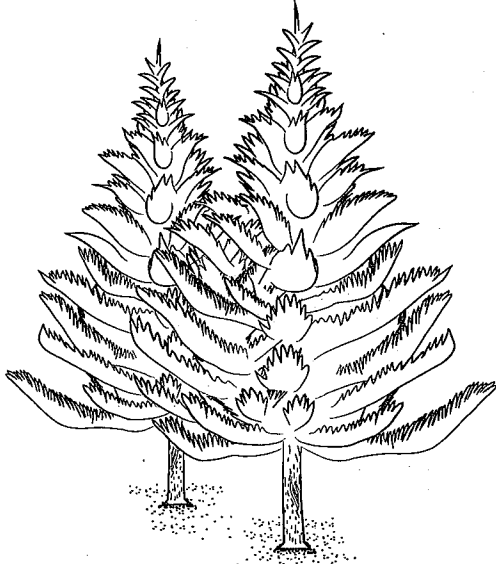


# Why Norfolk Island? - 1



In 1788, only six weeks after the first colony was established in NSW, a smaller one was set up on Norfolk Island about 1600 kilometres to the north-east. There were a number of reasons for doing this.

Captain Cook, who had been to the island and named it in 1774, reported that giant pine trees grew there and flax as well. The British were fighting the American War of Independence (1775–1783) at that time, so they were very interested in these natural resources. Wood was needed for the masts and flax for the sails of their warships.

Also, they knew that a French captain, La Perouse, had been there the year before with two ships. He hadn't been able to land because the waves were too big and rough, but they feared the French could return and claim the island.

Another very important reason was that Cook had reported that grain grew well on Norfolk Island. They hoped they could grow food there to help feed people in Sydney.

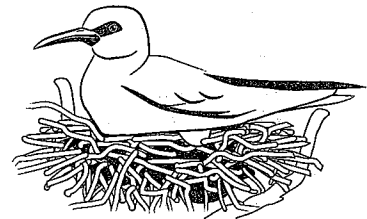
Lieutenant King and his small party of 21 people, including convicts and settlers, were told to hurry and in only eight days they were ready to sail to Norfolk Island on HMS *Supply*. They were at the island for five days before they were able to find a place to land. The lack of a safe harbour continued to make transportation of produce difficult.

King landed at Sydney Bay and established a settlement. More soldiers and convicts were sent to the island to help with establishing the settlement

and in producing crops of bananas, oranges, sugar cane, rice, wheat, barley, pumpkins, turnips, lettuce, leeks, celery and parsley. Roads and buildings were constructed and more land was cleared. Hopes were high as crops were harvested and the settlement became a tiny township.

However, things were not going so well in NSW. Food was scarce and they were facing starvation. It was decided to send 300 people, mainly convicts and marines, to Norfolk Island so they wouldn't need to feed them. They arrived in 1790 on HMS *Sirius*, the flagship of the colonial fleet, and HMS *Supply*. Unfortunately, *Sirius* smashed into reefs. No lives were lost but most of the supplies were.

With about 500 people now on the island to feed, they had a real problem. They were saved from starvation by the annual arrival of thousands of petrels. Between 2000 and 3000 of these seabirds were killed each night; their eggs were eaten too.



Norfolk Island was a long way from NSW, they were not producing enough food, it was costing a lot to keep and it didn't have a good harbour, so it was decided to close it. The first group left for Van Diemen's Land in 1805 and the last in 1814. Buildings and animals were then destroyed to discourage any other country from settling on the island.

A second settlement was established on Norfolk Island in 1825. It was a cruel convict prison for the worst prisoners from NSW. There were no women or settlers allowed and only government ships could land on the island. Prisoners were often lashed with a cat o' nine-tails. This miserable place closed in 1854.

A third settlement happened two years later. The island was given to the 194 people from Pitcairn Island after it became impossible for them to continue living on their small island.

## Why Norfolk Island? - 2

1. Read the Norfolk Island events listed below and number them in the order in which they occurred. You will need to refer to the text on the previous page and to think carefully about when these things happened.

- *La Perouse sails around the island trying to find somewhere to land.*
- *HMS Sirius smashes onto one of the reefs surrounding the island.*
- *Pitcairn Island people arrive.*
- *Lieutenant King sails around the island for five days trying to land.*
- *Captain Cook visits the island.*
- *Sydney's worst prisoners are sent to the island.*
- *Convicts leave the island and move to Van Diemen's Land.*

2. (a) What were the political reasons for the first settlement on Norfolk Island?

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(b) Explain some of the economic reasons for the first settlement.

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3. (a) Explain why the arrival of the 300 people from HMS *Sirius* caused such a problem.

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(b) How was this problem solved?

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Governor Phillip was appalled when HMS *Sirius*, the flagship of the First Fleet, was wrecked on Norfolk Island in 1790. This important ship had saved the colony from starvation by making the perilous journey to Cape Town the previous year, returning with much-needed supplies.