

# HMS *Supply* model

In May 1787 HMS *Supply* left England as the smallest, oldest, and fastest of the 11 ships in the First Fleet under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip who became the first governor of NSW. As one of the two naval vessels in the fleet, *Supply* and HMS *Sirius* stayed in NSW to serve the needs of the new colony. With the wrecking of the *Sirius* at Norfolk Island in 1790 and the failure of the second fleet, HMS *Supply* was all that stood between the new colony in Sydney Cove and starvation.

## Some Facts about HMS *Supply*:

Name:	HMS <i>Supply</i>
Launched:	1759
Decommissioned:	1792
Type:	yard craft (1759-86) armed tender (1786-92)
Burden:	168 tons <sup>2</sup>
Length overall:	79 ft 4 inches (24.2m)
Beam:	22ft 6 inches (6.9 m)
Complement:	14 as a yard craft 55 as an armed tender
Armament:	as a yard craft 4 x 3 pounder + 6 x ½ pounder swivel guns as an armed tender 4 x 3 pounder + 4 x 12 pounder guns

## HMS *Supply* model at the Museum

One of the two ships models in our museum is an excellent model of HMS *Supply*.

### Model details

Scale: 1:40



Image 1: HMS *Supply* by Frank Allen<sup>1</sup>

The First Fleet left England on the 13 May 1787. The fleet consisted of two naval ships, six convict transports and three storeships to carry the supplies necessary for the voyage and to establish the first settlement in Australia. On board the ships were a total of about 1500 people with at least 775 convicts. This small fleet landed on 20 January 1788, initially in Botany Bay. They soon realised the impracticality of this location as a settlement and moved to a better location, Sydney Cove.

The two naval vessels were HMS *Sirius* the flagship of the fleet and the armed tender HMB *Supply*. They stayed with the new colony. *Supply* was a brig of 168 tons burden and the smallest, oldest, and fastest ship in the fleet.

HMS *Supply* made a total of 11 voyages from Sydney Cove in the colonies first three years starting with a trip to Norfolk Island on 14 February led by Phillip Gidley King to start a settlement there, discovering Lord Howe Island and Ball's Pyramid on the way. There were more voyages to take supplies to Norfolk Island and catch turtles on Lord Howe Island (supposedly as a cure for scurvy) until 5 March 1790, when she left with the *Sirius* to deliver convicts to Norfolk. The *Sirius* was meant to go on to China to procure supplies but was wrecked on a reef at Norfolk on 19 March leaving the small *Supply* as the only ocean-going vessel in the colony and solely responsible

for importing supplies. In April 1890 the *Supply* sailed for Batavia (now Jakarta in Indonesia) to obtain eight months' provisions. She returned to Sydney in October followed later by a chartered Dutch transport ship with the necessary supplies. There were more trips to Norfolk Island including bringing back the stranded crew of the *Sirius* in 1791. The rigors of being the colonies sole ocean-going ship took its toll with the worn out *Supply* returning to England with a kangaroo on board for King George III.

HMS *Supply* was sold at auction in 1792, renamed the *Thomas and Nancy* and became a collier on the Thames.

#### References:

- Painting of HMS *Supply* by maritime artist Frank Allen,  
<https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/ships/hms-supply/>
- Burden is the carrying capacity or volume of a ship in tons where 1 ton = 100 cubic feet. The weight of a ship, also in tons is called the displacement.
- Morgan D. 2015, Dictionary of Sydney entry for HMS *Supply*  
[https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/hms\\_supply](https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/hms_supply)