

Thomas Harmsworth

(also Armsworth)

Parents James and Elizabeth Harmsworth of Bramdean, Hampshire

bd. 11 March 1759 at Bramdean

m. Alice Mansfield 25 January 1780 in Barkway

Moved Alice to Warnford 1780, Hampshire; served as a substitute member of the West Kent Militia, housed at Hilsea Barracks, Portsmouth 1778-1782

Joined the Royal Marine Corps unit specially constituted to accompany the First Fleet, as a Private. His wife Alice and children Ann and Thomas accompanied him.

Children:

- **Ann** b. Barkway between 10 November & 28 December 1780
- **Thomas** b. 6 March, bd. 7 March 1784 Warnford, Hampshire, d. 24 February 1788, NSW
- **John** b. 1 December 1787 at sea, on 'Prince of Wales'; d. 21 September 1860, Tasmania

d. 30 April 1788, Port Jackson, NSW

Ann married Private Samuel Marsden of the NSW Corps in 1800

James Scott *Remarks on a Passage to Botany Bay 1787-1792* Sydney 1963

Records "Thomas Harmsworth, son to Thomas Harmsworth a marine, died of a fever" 24 February 1788, and was buried 25 February 1788.

John Easty *Memorandum of the Transactions of a Voyage from England to Botany Bay 1787-1793* Sydney 1965

30 April 1788 "this morning, Thomas Armsworth departed this life of a fever and flux att the hospital. Left a wife and 2 small children."

(Also AO Reel 2125, Card 5, entry 112/180. AO = Archives Office, NSW)

Being a Member of the West Kent Militia

from Ian Beckett The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945, Manchester UP 1991

p65 The 1775 Act: revised the system to set up County militias totalling 32,000 men serving 3 year terms, with 20 training days annually between May & October. Men could seek exemptions & substitutions for a £10 fine.

p64 'Allowances would be paid from local rates to the families of militia men on service.' In 1762, men with 3+ children under 10 years were exempted from service. From 1786-96, all men with children were exempted.

p65 Substitutes/volunteers were not paid allowances until 1778. Each County submitted lists of eligible men 18-50 years old, annually. A quota was set, then subdivided by hundreds.

p66 Those who actually served were manual workers, young, usually single & illiterate. Most were substitutes. eg Buckinghamshire in 1759, exempted were 93% farmers, 86% tradesmen, 74% artisans, 58% labourers, 41% farm workers.

p67 'A proportion of substitutes invariably came from other counties from that for which they served. ...unemployed regulars [soldiers] were encouraged to take commissions in the militia, especially after 1778. ...training was still unlikely to yield more than a passing acquaintance with musketry & drill.'

p68 The Seven Years War with France: all counties' militias were embodied in 1778. 'Upon embodiment, militia received full army pay & allowances & were subject to the same nomadic existence as regulars, serving only occasionally in their own counties.' Many allowed men home in winter & harvest, & the government used them on public works. Common duties were guarding prisoners, & coast & smuggling watch.

p69 1775, the outbreak of hostilities with the American colonies; France joined this war in 1778, & Spain in 1799. The size of the militia was doubled until 1782. In August 1779, the French & Spanish fleets were massing to take Portsmouth, having entered the English Channel.

p70 This led to the creation of new companies of volunteer militias. The threat passed & the companies were disbanded in 1782, though in 1786 a militia consolidation bill & in 1792 a bill 'to encourage & legalise corps coming forward in the defence of towns & coastal areas' were passed.

p71 'Substitutes were now made liable to serve for the duration of any war for which the militia was embodied...'. Extension of service from 3 to 5 years, & training for only 2/3rds of the strength of each regiment annually, in peacetime.

Enlistment in the Marines

John Moore **The First Fleet Marines 1786-1792** UQP 1987

p. 7 The Marines were formed in the 1600s. They were de-commissioned then re-formed in 1755, with 20 companies at Portsmouth, 18 companies at Plymouth and 12 companies at Chatham. "The companies were numbered in rotation between the three divisions", No. 1 Chatham, No. 2 Portsmouth, No. 3 Plymouth. "Thereafter, a marine was known by the number of his parent company and this number always appeared after his name in official documents."

Usually, Private marines enlisted for life although discharge was allowed on payment of 10 guineas. Those who went to NSW, however, had the option of discharge after three years. Recruits were paid a 2 guinea bounty as an inducement to join. Daily pay rates in 1743, which included a food and clothing allowance, ranged from £1/6s/6d ...for a Major to 1'2d for a marine private. (\$2.65/12 cents). The marines were armed with the Brown Bess, a smooth bore flintlock musket, .75 calibre fitted with a triangular socket bayonet, generally similar to the weapon of soldiers well after Waterloo.

p.8 Uniform: red long-tailed doublet; white trousers; black head dress; black shoes and gaiters.

p.10 There was real bias against the Marines by the regular army. Major Ross was aware of the need for his group "to perform well to justify its selection" to accompany the First Fleet.

p. 12 "That a military organisation in a Britain of the 1780s should provide an educational service for the children of the lowest ranks was not only innovative, but indicated a social concern within the corps, for both its troops and its families' welfare. This also evidenced itself later when families were permitted to accompany the troops to Botany Bay, and by a concern for the discipline of members' children, about whom orders were issued ... 'children who want flogging [are] to be reported to the Adjutant'. Corps discipline was strengthened ...minor infractions [were entered] on regimental defaulter sheets [and filed in] ... 'The Black Book'."

p. 15 Following the end of the American War of Independence, between 1783 and 1793, many were demobbed, and only the 'stoutest, fittest and healthiest men', 5'6" (1.68 cm) or over and under 40, were retained. Company strength was reduced to 3 sergeants, 3 corporals, 2 drummers and 50 privates.

p. 22 On 18 August 1786, Lord Sydney proposed 3 companies for Australia – 180 men and a command staff of 15. They were 'to form a military establishment [in NSW] on shore for the dual purpose of preserving order and protecting the settlement against the natives. As many marines as possible were to be tradesmen such as carpenters, sawyers, smiths and potters.'

p. 26 Recruitment: in October 1786, volunteers were called for, for the First Fleet, and there was a huge and immediate response from men from all trades. A ballot was necessary. A high degree of fitness was demanded. '...at the time, a growing number of soldiers were unemployed tradesmen who had been made redundant by technological change.' p. 30 Many marines were already guarding convicts on the ships as they were assembled, many months before sailing.

p. 27 Families: Marines requested wives and children to accompany them; 28 wives and 17 children were given permission to go. p. 31 Phillip 'asked whether the wives of marines were to be victualled as supernumeraries, and he was told they would be victualled on the same scale as soldiers' wives

travelling on transports.’ p. 41 ‘Ross brought to notice the plight of children who, with their mothers, were accompanying their soldier fathers on the voyage. These children were not being rationed, but were required to exist on their parents’ ration, which was a complete ration for the father and half a ration for the mother.’ [HRNSW Vol. 1 pt 2, p.78] The problem was resolved when they were granted the same rations as laid down for military families on passage.

The Fleet set out on 12 May 1787. The Harmsworths were on the *Prince of Wales*.

p. 47 The Voyage: There was little sadness as the ships sailed. ‘That people could leave their native land with such little regret was a telling indictment of the harsh and unappealing lives that these people had led, to depart from which was felt to be more of a lucky escape than a heart-rending wrench.’

p. 54 15 June 1787 Tropic of Cancer crossed. ‘Sergeant Scott of the *Prince of Wales* records that the frivolity of the crossing – which included ducking, shaving and lathering with tar and grease – was restricted to the seamen because Lieutenant Maxwell would not permit his marines to take part.’ There were all sorts of minor misdemeanours by marines on the trip – drunken antics, fighting, petty falling out. p. 55 Pvte Ryan – 300 lashes for disobeying orders. Sgt Scott and his wife fell out with Sgt Hume and his wife. Sgt Kennedy went on a drunken rampage, jumped down a hatchway falling heavily on Sgt Scott’s wife who was 7 months’ pregnant. It ‘hurt her greatly’ but she later had a healthy daughter. P. 67 Both marines and convicts were moved from ship to ship to defuse situations. p. 60 Lt Maxwell was an alcoholic and there were complaints about his behaviour. p. 76 ‘When flour was expended on the *Prince of Wales* her marines were given beef in lieu; even so, Christmas day saw a reasonably traditional meal enjoyed: Sgt Scott’s dinner comprised pork, apple sauce, beef and plum pudding’ and 3 bottles of rum.

p. 75 The birth of a son: ‘the first days of December were days of fierce winds and a dreadful rolling swell. The further south both fleets sailed, the more intense the cold became, and frightful seas broke over them. ...It was into these tortuous conditions that John was born to Private and Mrs Harmsworth at 3.30am on 1 December [1787]. In spite of the uninviting physical circumstances surrounding his arrival, he did at least have the advantage of spending his early days on a clean ship, for the greatest service which the Marines did the First Fleet was to maintain strict shipboard cleanliness.’ Doctor Bowes describes this – airing berths; marines’ hammocks scrubbed every fortnight.

For John’s birth see James Scott <i>Remarks on a Passage to Botany Bay 1787-1792</i> Sydney 1963
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p. 85 Arrival: on 26 January the fleet moored in Botany Bay. One marine, one marine’s wife, a marine’s child and 40 convicts and 5 convicts’ children died on the voyage. In the move from Botany Bay to Port Jackson the *Prince of Wales* collided heavily with the *Friendship*, carrying away its jib boom.