



1788: Text Classics

Watkin Tench

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'I do not hesitate to declare that the natives of New South Wales possess a considerable portion of that acumen, or sharpness of intellect, which bespeaks genius.'

In 1788 Watkin Tench stepped ashore at Botany Bay with the First Fleet. This curious young captain of the marines was an effortless storyteller. His account of the infant colony, introduced by Tim Flannery, is the first classic of Australian literature.

On leaving England, Tench was commissioned by the publisher John Debrett of Piccadilly to write a book about his adventures. In fact he wrote two. *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* was published in 1789, and *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* in 1793. They are both included in full in this edition of *1788*.

Watkin Tench was born around 1758 in Chester, England. He joined the marine corps in 1776 and served in the American War of Independence before sailing to Botany Bay with the First Fleet. Tench returned to England in 1792. He stayed with the marine corps before retiring as a lieutenant-general in 1821. Tench died in 1833.

Tim Flannery is a bestselling writer, scientist and explorer. He has published over a dozen books, most recently *Among the Islands: Adventures in the Pacific*. In 2011 he was appointed chief commissioner of the Australian Climate Commission.

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'Tench will always remain the classic contemporary witness of our beginnings.' Les Murray

'Don't for a minute believe that Australian history is a bore. This is a marvellous read.' *Sun Herald*


'Tench's work is a stunning time machine: he takes us back to the promise and disaster at the beginning of our nation's story; and we stand at the edge of history, laughing and crying.' Chloe Hooper

'Tench is a most charming man of the Enlightenment, and his journal is similarly by far the most disarming and enthusiastic of the First Fleet journals. Where others damned the place, he showed curiosity.' Thomas Keneally

'I fell in love with Tench, as most of his readers do. He is a Boswell on the page: curious, ardent, gleefully self-mocking. He didn't fit my image of a stiff-lipped British imperialist at all.' Inga Clendinnen

'His record sparkles with precision, each word so apt.' Marcia Langton

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