

The Women in Arthur Phillip's Life

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Arthur Phillip, first Governor of New South Wales, 1788-1792, was married twice. Neither of these women ever came to Australia. A third woman sailed with Phillip on HMS *Sirius* in 1787 and her relationship with him has been the subject of speculation. The stories of these three individuals are the focus of this article.

Arthur Phillip was born near St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London on 11 October 1738 to a German immigrant mariner and ship's steward and his English wife. His parents were lower middle-class people, but a naval captain relative of his mother helped secure the young Phillip a place at Greenwich Hospital's naval school and a commission as a naval lieutenant in 1761. The young officer saw action against the French in the Caribbean the following year, but the end of the war in February 1763 took away any chance of extra financial gain available to officers from a share of 'prize money' from the sale of captured ships and their contents. Many were forced to cool their heels on shore receiving half pay.

Phillip was ambitious, highly intelligent, fluent in four or five languages, and no doubt already aspired to the high life he would later enjoy in London and Bath. Sensitive about his rise from humble origins, Phillip (or his mother) was later to allow false or misleading stories to gain currency, wildly upgrading the humble status of his mother's first husband and portraying his obscure father as a fashionable language tutor.

Margaret Charlotte Tibbott

'A woman of fortune being used to the handling of money, spends it judiciously.'

Dr Samuel Johnson¹

Arthur Phillip's first wife was Welsh, an appropriate nationality for the first wife of the first governor of New South Wales. On 19 July 1763, at St Augustine's Watling Street, London, Mrs Margaret Charlotte Denison, née Tibbott, married the future governor and admiral, who was then a bachelor of 24. Often known as Charlotte, she was an affluent childless widow of 42, 17 years older than her new husband.²

Born in the parish of Llanbryn-mair in Montgomeryshire (Powys), a Welsh-speaking upland area of mid-west Wales, she was baptised there on 23 June 1721 as Margaret, the daughter of William and Elizabeth Tybotts (née Gwin).³ The surname Tibbott/Tybotts may be of Norman origin while Gwin (or Gwyn) is a native Welsh name.

Most of Charlotte's immediate male forebears and relatives appear to have been yeoman farmers or tradesmen descended from families living in the area for centuries. In her youth the parish was known for the growth of dissenting sects, later known as Congregationalists and Calvinistic Methodists. One of the most prominent of their ministers was Richard Tibbott (1719-1795) from the same parish, who was probably a distant cousin.⁴ Margaret's parents were more conventional, choosing to baptise their children in the established Church of England.

Much of the land in her home parish was owned by the Williams-Wynn baronets, based some 75km to the north-east at Wynnstay, their stately home, near Wrexham. They were nicknamed the Princes of Wales owing to their great wealth and descent from early medieval Welsh monarchs. Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, (1692-1749) was a strong supporter of the Tory party and Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite rising of 1745. The baronet's son and namesake (1749-1789) was a leading patron of the arts. One of his protégés was the Chester-born First Fleet officer of marines, Watkin Tench, who spent part of his youth in Wales.

Nothing is known of Charlotte's early life except that she learned to read and write and that her parents baptised her younger sister Mary (born 1724) at Carno, 9km from Llanbryn-mair. At some point between her teens and her thirties Charlotte moved to Staines, a small market town on the Thames, about 32km west of London. There, on 14 August 1759, aged 38, she married John Denison, a 46-year-old widower from the City. The Anglican minister James Witherstone's wife Sarah and Maria Witherstone were the witnesses.

John Denison, the son of a clothier, was born in Leeds, Yorkshire in 1712. He traded as a haberdasher and merchant with his partner Peter Contencin, based in a shop, warehouse and counting house in King Street, just off Cheapside in the centre of the City of London.⁵ His brother Sir Thomas Denison was a prominent judge in the Court of King's Bench in London.

As a bachelor of 42 John Denison had married Frances Spillett, a spinster of 38, in 1755 (though they misleadingly claimed to be respectively aged 'upwards of' 30 and 25 on their marriage licence). Frances, the heiress of a wealthy London linen draper, died childless the following year, leaving Denison a valuable country estate, the Manor of Heffleton (Hethfelton) in the parish of East Stoke, Dorset.

Fronting the river Frome, the property returned a rental income of £140 per annum on a 99-year lease to the White family, due to expire on Lady Day 1797. When advertised for sale in 1792 it was described as comprising a total of 969 acres including arable land, orchard, pasture, coppice, wood and heathland on its hilly

upper reaches.⁶ The tenant, Stephen White, died in 1775 and was described as a gentleman of Heffleton House on Heffleton Farm. His widow and children continued the lease. It was four miles from the market town of Wareham, five from the sea, 11 from the county town of Dorchester and 118 from London.⁷ The nearby manor of Woolbridge, once owned by the Turberville family, was to be the inspiration for Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as Angel Clare's 'Wellbridge'.

Denison signed his will the week after he married Charlotte in 1759, expressing the hope that his 'beloved wife' would bear children, but he died aged 47 at Lambeth 10 months later, leaving Charlotte a childless widow entitled to enjoy the profits of his estate for life, including invested funds, the Dorset property and a house and land in rural Lambeth, south of the river.⁸ The minister at his local City church conducted a burial service on 14 June 1760 and his body was conveyed to Staines, Middlesex for burial in a vault.

How the widowed Charlotte met Arthur Phillip is unknown. She was living at Lambeth at the time of their marriage in 1763 and her younger sister Mrs Mary Thomas (born 1724) witnessed the wedding, giving her address as Lambeth. Mary was widowed with a young son David Thomas to support and had probably come to live with her sister. Two days before the wedding Charlotte conveyed the messuage, tenement and farm at Heffleton to her sister for a year in what was undoubtedly part of the marriage settlement arrangements.⁹

Charlotte was a shrewd, practical and cautious individual. Like many women of means, she took legal advice to negotiate a series of pre-nuptial legal agreements with her fiancé, known as a marriage settlement. It served to protect a wife's financial interests against the legal control automatically given to husbands over their wives' finances. The settlement document was signed the day before the wedding by Arthur Phillip, Charlotte and her sister. The settlement stipulated that Phillip must agree to the continuation of the payment of an annuity of £30 per annum to her sister Mary. The marriage settlement also mandated a second annuity of £20 per annum on similar terms to be paid to Charlotte's companion, Mrs Anna Maria Cane. The annuities may have been intended to support his wife's sister and companion in their own lodgings rather than continuing to live with Charlotte.

In August 1764 the widowed Mary married Robert Lloyd of Carnarvon, Wales, at St Margaret's Westminster. Her sister Mrs Elizabeth Charles witnessed the wedding. All three Tibbott sisters were able to sign their names. Considering their early 18th century beginnings in an obscure Welsh village, their literacy and mobility is striking. The annuities were to be paid to both Mary and Anna Maria during the marriage and after Charlotte's death, if Phillip survived her. If he failed to make the payments he was liable to enforceable financial penalties of £500 in both cases.¹⁰

Biographers of Phillip have incorrectly stated that Charlotte's fortune totalled £120,000. This was based on a misreading of her marriage settlement, which mentions that at the time of her marriage she held:

... the right &c £58 p annum interest & share in an annuity of £120,000 for 98 years from 8th June 1763 transferable at the Bank of England and dividends now due and hereafter to grow due for the same.

This was a share in a long-term investment fund providing her with an annuity of £58 a year. She did not possess in any way ownership of the whole fund (which in 21st century terms would make her a multi-millionaire) but was simply one of a number of investors who had 'shares' in a long-term investment fund paying the annuity. Charlotte was a rich woman, but was not by any means fabulously wealthy.¹¹

The newly married couple moved to the country, renting a farmhouse and land called 'Vernals', near Lyndhurst, Hampshire. Here Phillip expanded their holdings and presided over the estate as a gentleman farmer, taking an active role in parish affairs and serving as Overseer of the Poor in 1768.

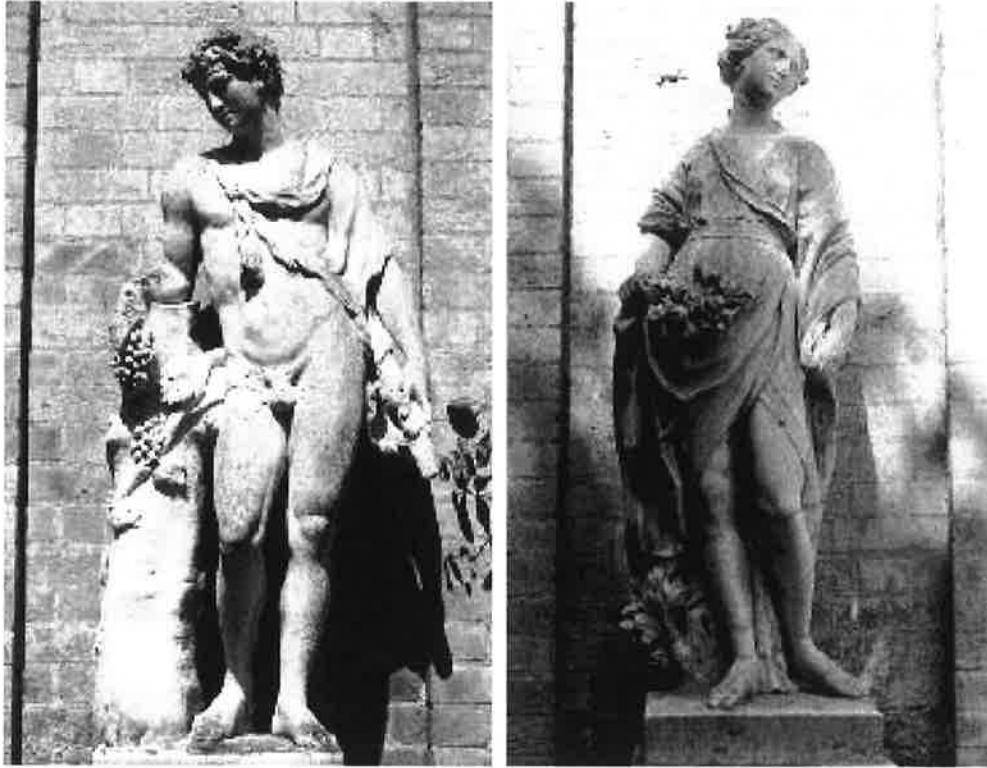
The couple's relationship had collapsed by 1769. Their decision to end the marriage was confirmed by deeds of separation signed on 22 April 1769 by Charlotte, Phillip, Captain Michael Everitt of the Navy (his mother's cousin) and Samuel Barnesley (the latter, described as a Gentleman, was chamber keeper at the Treasury Department in Whitehall).¹² The document stated that the couple had been lately living apart and that Charlotte was residing at Hampton Court, in the Thames-side area adjacent to Hampton Court Palace, west of London. Phillip agreed she would be secure in the possession of her properties, plate, chair (probably meaning a small horse-drawn vehicle), horses, furniture, jewels, diamonds, watches, rings and ornaments.¹³

Charlotte moved back to Lambeth on London's southern outskirts, almost certainly occupying the house she owned in which her first husband had died in 1760. In 1777 she advertised this rural residence for sale:

Mrs Charlotte Phillip. Her household furniture and farm stock was offered for auction at her house, Walcot Place opposite Walnut Tree Walk, Lambeth.¹⁴

Included in the sale were stone figures of Bacchus and Flora by the sculptor Peter Scheemakers. Walnut Tree Walk, 3km south-west of St Paul's Cathedral, retains the same name in modern Lambeth SE11. Walcot Place is now known as Kennington Lane, allowing the location of the house to be traced with reasonable precision at the junction of these streets in what became a built-up area in following decades.

By September 1774 Charlotte had moved across the Thames to a well-located



Stone figures of Bacchus and Flora by the Flemish sculptor Peter Scheemakers (1691-1781) at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, believed to be those formerly owned by Charlotte Phillip and sold in 1777 as part of the sale of her residence at Walcot Place. (Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 licence and the GNU Free Documentation Licence)

house in [St] Margaret Street, opposite St Margaret's Church, Westminster, between Parliament and the Abbey. The Heffleton property in Dorset was leased, but it appears that she and her family and friends may have visited it regularly to shoot and consume game, at least during the 1770s when they assumed the right to shoot and fish on the manor (rights later reassigned to their tenant). Although commonly known as Heffleton Farm, it was officially designated as a manor and her ownership of it gave her the title 'Lady of the Manor of Haffleton', retaining rights to its game to herself rather than her gentleman tenant.

The Dorset quarter sessions for 13 November 1772 record that 'Margarett Charlotte Phillip Lady of the Manor of Hethelton [Hethfelton] otherwise Haffelton' had appointed John Dorey the Younger of East Stoke to be her gamekeeper:

... to look after take care of and preserve the Game and to kill such Game there for her sole use as she shall from time to time direct giving and granting unto her said game keeper all lawful power and authority requisite and necessary for effecting the Premises from time to time during her free will and pleasure.¹⁵

By the time another gamekeeper was appointed in 1774 she was sharing the lordship of the manor with her sister Mary and brother-in-law Robert Lloyd, Gentleman, who lived on the other side of the City in Ayliffe Street, Goodmans Fields, near the Tower of London. The new gamekeeper was described as their menial servant, Joseph Goodwin the Younger of Wareham, who was authorised to kill hares, pheasants, partridges and fish on the manor for their sole use and benefit and to:

... take and seize all such Guns Bows Greyhounds Setting Dogs Lurchers and other Dogs Ferrets Trammells Lowbells Hayes and other Netts Harepipes Snares Gins and other Engines for the taking killing and destroying Conies Hares Pheasants Partridges Fish and other Game.¹⁶

In August 1776 the appointment of a new gamekeeper was recorded, with Charlotte described as a resident of Lambeth, while the Lloyds had moved to Stroud in Gloucestershire.¹⁷ Around the early 1780s Charlotte was living a few blocks west of Margaret Street in Queen Street (now Old Queen Street) Westminster, near St James' Park. By 1785 she had moved to Gloucester, which had a busy port on the Severn River where her brother-in-law Robert Lloyd was a civil servant stationed as a 'supervisor of the duties of excise'.¹⁸

The last stage of her life was spent back in north-west Wales in the small market town of Bala, Llanycil Parish, Merionethshire (Gwynedd), on the picturesque shores of Lake Bala ('Llyn Tegid' in Welsh, the largest lake in Wales). The Williams-Wynns and their aristocratic friends regularly fished from pristine streams nearby and shot birds on its 'wild moors and heathy mountains'.¹⁹ The Lloyds had moved there as well, probably because Robert had retired from his civil service position. Charlotte and Anna Maria Cane may have been living with the Lloyd family in both Gloucester and Bala, or else they rented their own lodgings.

In her will signed at Gloucester on 21 December 1785 Charlotte appointed as trustees her brother-in-law Robert Lloyd and his stepson (her nephew) David Thomas, a watchmaker living at Alcester in Warwickshire. Lloyd was her executor. They were to sell all her freehold estates to fund a total of £5540 in legacies to family and friends. These included a sum of £1000 to be invested, the income paid to Mary Thomas, and to be passed to her heirs. A sum of £2000 was to be invested to provide a life income to 'Mrs Anna Maria Cane widow now living with me' and after her death the funds would be inherited by specified relatives of Charlotte. Anna Maria was also to receive an additional bequest of £100 'together with all my wearing apparel, household goods, plate, linen and china'.

The 1785 will directed that Mrs Thomas and Mrs Cane were to return the 1763 annuity bond documents to Phillip which would release him from the obligation to pay the annuities after her death and forgive any debts he owed to his wife or her estate in what seems to have been a matrix of business dealings:

... it being my express will and desire that the said Arthur Phillip shall be absolutely freed and discharged from the payment thereof [and her executors and trustees should not] call him to an account for the application or misapplication [of any funds he had received from the estate].²⁰

It seems as the legal husband, Phillip's signature was still required to effect the legacies, so the will provided an incentive for his cooperation. Charlotte left him a bequest of £100 which was to be forfeited if he mounted a legal challenge to the will.

In April 1790 Phillip wrote to Evan Nepean that he was anxious to return to England to settle his affairs, having sailed for New South Wales in 1787:

Mrs Phillip was supposed to be dying when I left England, and whoever the estate goes to some steps should be taken to secure the payment of two annuities for which I gave security, and for which it is probable no provision will be made.²¹

All three of Charlotte's brothers had remained in Llanbrynmair, their birthplace. She was survived by her sister Mary and her brother Abraham (born 1719, known as Abram) and his wife Ann. Abram died in 1797, described as a farmer, signing his will with an X mark.²²

Charlotte had left her rustic brothers behind to live the high life in London, but chose to spend her last years in her native Welsh mountains and remembered them in her will. Her surviving siblings, nephews and nieces were to be her residuary heirs after Mrs Cane's death. Her brothers Edward Tibbott (born 1712) and William Tibbott (born 1717) and sister Mrs Elizabeth Charles (born 1714) had died prior to the signing of the will in 1785. A number of friends received bequests, mostly from Lambeth, Kennington and Westminster, including Mrs Elizabeth Friggleton, washerwoman, who was married to a watchman on Westminster Bridge. There was initially only a partial grant of probate on her estate for technical legal complications connected to property inherited from John Denison's first wife.

Probably the biggest asset was Heffleton Manor and Farm. Robert Lloyd advertised it for sale in the months following Charlotte's death, offering to show plans to prospective buyers while he was staying at the Red Lion Inn, Wareham. The 99-year lease was due to expire in 1797 and the improved land was expected to attract £550 a year in rent, a big increase on the old rental of £140 which must have benefited the vendors, who now allowed the tenant an unlimited right of common in the surrounding hills.²³

Like the Bennet family in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the rent increase was beyond the capacity of the tenants to pay. The manor was sold to a wealthy buyer in 1796 and mortgaged for £4000 in 1803. The purchaser, Dr Andrew Bain of Curzon Street, London, was Physician Extraordinary to the Prince Regent in 1809. He expanded the manorial estate with adjoining purchased lands and built a



*Charlotte Phillip's grave in Llanycil Churchyard, fronting Lake Bala in north-west Wales, where she spent her last years. Her companion Anna Maria Cane shares the vault.
(Photograph by Nerys Siddall, Centre Manager and Education Officer, Mary Jones Visitor Centre, Bala, April 2019)*

mansion, which was destroyed by fire in the 1920s but still exists in a reconstructed form as Hethfelton House, a venue for weddings. Later Bain served alongside Arthur Phillip's old friend Sir Evan Nepean as a sheriff of the County of Dorset and succeeded him as High Sheriff. Nepean's country seat 'Loders' was on the other side of Dorchester.²⁴

Charlotte died at Bala on 3 August 1792, aged 71, four months before Phillip left New South Wales to return to England. She was buried in a substantial vault in Llanycil Churchyard, fronting the lake, a mile from Bala. Anna Maria was buried with her. The inscription on their tomb states:

Here lieth the Remains of
Mrs Margt Charlott Phillip
Wife of Governor Phillip of *Botany Bay*
Departed this life Augt ye 3d 1792 aged 70
Here also lieth the Remains of
*Mrs Cane her Companion*²⁵

The two women had remained remarkably close for at least three decades. The date of Anna Maria's death is not given on Charlotte's tomb. Her burial record appears to be missing from the Llanycil parish register. The minister noted in 1796 that the parish clerk had lost the list of burials in recent years and as a result some names may be missing. Those entered at this period were 'as correct as his memory would serve him'.

Nothing is known of her origins or the identity of her husband, Mr Cane, whose surname suggests Irish Catholic origins. She remains an enigma. But she must have been much more to Charlotte than a mere servant or paid companion. The provision for her in the marriage settlement of 1763, making her the largest beneficiary of the will, the bequest of personal possessions and the inscription of her name and status as companion on the tomb are all signs of an unusually close friendship.

No personal correspondence has survived to shed light on the dynamics of the marriage and the causes of Charlotte's separation from Phillip. As with the marriage settlement, it seems to have been handled in a relatively amicable, pragmatic and businesslike manner, managed by lawyers without litigation.

She had married relatively late, but Charlotte had qualities, skills and abilities that allowed her to transcend provincial origins and setbacks to join the wealthy and successful trade elite of London and as the Lady of a Dorset Manor. She maintained and consolidated her position as an independent woman separated from her husband, remaining fiercely loyal and generous to her family and friends, and particularly to her companion. She and her family were proud enough of her marriage to Phillip to have his name and title inscribed on her tomb. Husband and wife had one thing in common: the role of an outsider who succeeded against the odds in a society obsessed with class, rank, degree and privilege.

Deborah Brooks

After his separation from Charlotte in 1769 Arthur Phillip remained unmarried for 24 years. He travelled in France, served on secondment as a captain in the Portuguese Navy and returned to the British Navy in 1778, and in 1782 assumed command on HMS *Europe*. In the same year the ship's boatswain's mate, Thomas Brooks, joined the crew after being convicted of theft and pardoned. As the ship departed for India Phillip allowed his 'wife' Deborah Brooks, to sail with him. Deborah was in reality Mrs Dionysia Whitson, who had left her husband, a carpenter in Plymouth, to live with Brooks.²⁶

The ship's bachelor boatswain, Edward Spain, developed a grudge against Mr and Mrs Brooks (aged in their mid-30s) and Captain Phillip, then aged 44. In his memoir penned decades later, Spain claimed Phillip tried to promote Brooks over his head because he was enamoured with Deborah. Spain described her as Brooks' 'fancy woman' and 'concubine'.²⁷ There is no other evidence that Phillip was in a relationship with Deborah. He did, however, arrange for Brooks to sail with him on the First Fleet as boatswain of HMS *Sirius* and again allowed Deborah to come on the voyage. In the colony Brooks spent long periods away at sea on *Sirius* and was stranded on Norfolk Island for 11 months when the ship sank there in March 1790.

On 29 June 1789 the *Hampshire Chronicle* published a letter from 'an officer's wife, of one of his Majesty's ships at New South Wales, to her Acquaintance at Gosport, received last week'. The letter was addressed to Mrs W and signed Mary B. The author of the letter was undoubtedly Deborah Brooks, the only free woman on *Sirius*. Mary was either a nickname she used, or else was intended to disguise her identity because of her irregular de facto relationship with Brooks. She had her own hut close to the Rev Richard Johnson and his wife and to the Governor, but was not living in Phillip's household. The letter provides a rare and little-known woman's perspective on the first year of the settlement. Assuming the published version had not been edited, the style indicates she was well educated and sophisticated:

I have taken this opportunity of letting you know that I am well, sincerely hoping yourself and family are the same. Our ships is gone to the Cape of Good Hope, in order to bring a fresh supply to the Colony, as we now begin to grow short of flour, and other articles; my husband sailed in her the first of October, and is not expected back till March or April. I am rather dull without him, but having got two fine children under my care, they help to pass a melancholy hour away; their mother died on our passage, and the goodness of our worthy Governor has taken them into his charge, that they may not go to ruin among the abandoned set that are here; of our own sex it is impossible to describe how bad they are, I hope the men begin to reform a little now, having had six executed, and a number severely punished, so that it will be a warning to the remainder.

The natives are rather troublesome, having killed several of our people and convicts. We treat them with great civility as yet, trying if possible to naturalise them without



*A distinguished naval career: Arthur Phillip by Francis Wheatley, oil on canvas, 1786.
(Postcard, National Portrait Gallery, London. RAHS Manuscript Collection)*

violence. They are much afraid of our fire arms, and watch for those who are unarmed, and murder them in a very brutish manner. They are shy of coming nigh the town, but are often seen at the different farms we have got for a mile or two round the town. As to the country it will in a few years be fine; but it requires a great time for cultivation, being very woody, having large timber trees as thick as they can stand, but little underwood. I have got my little farm, with poultry and a few hogs, and a nice little garden, which begins now to supply me with vegetables. We have been badly situated for fresh provisions but are now coming about, as almost every one has been endeavouring to raise as much as will supply themselves.

The Governor at his first landing, sent Lieut King with some officers, soldiers, and convicts, to Norfolk Island (a small place about as big as the Isle of Wight) and last month a ship was sent to them, from whom we received very favourable accounts of the place, having on it the finest fir for making masts and yards that was ever seen, some trees being fifty feet in circumference, and one hundred and twenty feet high before they come to a limb; so that in all probability, in time we shall be able to build ships in this part of the world, flax plant is also very plentiful at that Island. At one season of the year it is exceeding bad landing, on which account have had the misfortune to lose a midshipman and two freemen, by a boat's oversetting, in which also were some convicts, but they were saved; the loss of three freemen to this Colony, is very capital, as there are so few here. I live near the Governor, and within call of his centinels, so that I am perfectly safe from thieves. The only correspondence I have here is the chaplain's wife, who I find to be an exceeding agreeable lady, and who resides near me. I have communicated to you as many particulars as at present occur to me, but must not omit observing that our Colony is very fruitful, as I am informed there are upwards of sixty of the women convicts at this time pregnant, and a number lately delivered.²⁸

As soon as Brooks returned to Sydney from Norfolk Island he and Deborah sailed for London, where they married in 1792 and lived happily until his death while on active naval service in 1802. Whether there was any foundation to Spain's allegation that she was some kind of mistress to Phillip remained unproven. However, as a boatswain's wife she may have performed some household management functions for Phillip and she may have continued in this role in the colony, though living in her own household and not in Government House.²⁹

Isabella Whitehead

Phillip returned to London in 1793. With Charlotte dead, he was free to marry again. He was resident in the prosperous West End parish of Marylebone when he married Isabella Whitehead of Bath in St Marylebone Church of England on 8 May 1794. They probably met through her brother Richard Whitehead, a Navy commander.³⁰

Descended from an armigerous Lancashire family of gentry and baptised in Blackburn in January 1751, Isabella was marrying for the first time at the age of 43. She was the daughter of Richard Whitehead, a prosperous cloth merchant who later moved to Preston. Like many wealthy people of the time, Whitehead retired to Bath,

a famous health spa, and was buried in the village of Weston just outside the city on 25 September 1794, about four months after his daughter's wedding. A newspaper reported that he had died at Bath 'greatly and deservedly lamented', having served as sheriff for Lancashire in 1759 'and for many years as an active, able, and upright magistrate'. For Phillip, a well-connected wife with a family coat of arms was a step up the social ladder. Her brother-in-law was William Cunliffe Shawe, Whig MP for Preston and a protégé of the Earl of Derby, and her brother Thomas was a Cambridge educated clergyman.³¹

From 1793 Phillip served as captain of several warships. In August 1795 Arthur and Isabella Phillip were announced as arriving at Bath. From 1798 he held various posts, managing Britain's naval militia invasion defences. Isabella probably continued to reside in Bath for much of the time. In September 1796 he was working in London while she was at their rented Bath lodgings at No 62 Great Pulteney Street, one of Bath's grandest streets.

In 1998 workmen renovating No 68 Great Pulteney Street found the remains of a woman's chamois glove containing three folded letters and the handwritten words of a song from Charles Dibden's comic opera *The Islanders* (1780) about a Spanish governor going to found a colony who is shipwrecked with his colonists among indigenous people in America. In the song, 'Poor Orro tink of Yanko dear', a native American sings to her lover in pidgin English. Two of the letters were from Phillip to his wife, sent in 1801 and 1803, and unmistakably in his handwriting. The petite glove appears to have been either accidentally dropped or deliberately hidden in a gap between the floorboards, where it remained for nearly two centuries. The third letter dated 19 April 1803 is from Philippa Shawe, the stepmother of Isabella's nephew, expressing effusive thanks for Phillip's gift of a pony to her son.³²

The two letters reveal Phillip in a highly personal and human light, suggesting a degree of marital bickering but also deep affection on Phillip's part. He wrote from Plymouth on 4 October 1801 that he was:

... truly sorry indeed to find that you persist in groundless ideas, that your husband and all your friends are plotting against your happiness, ideas which make you miserable as well as myself ... your letters are painful to read, and I no longer press you to write them to me, unless you can write in a different language ... [your letters are] filled with charges which only exist in your own imagination, or which is nearly the same thing, from words made use of by your friends, to which no meaning was annexed. Your friends still love you, & respect you, but you drive them from you, by your unjust suspicions. God bless you, my dear Bel, & make you think more justly of your affectionate husband. A Phillip

The letter was addressed to Isabella at their home in Lymington, a small port town in Hampshire about 14km south of the Lyndhurst area where Phillip had lived with his first wife.³³ In the second letter, dated 24 April 1803, he wrote from Bath to Isabella

(still at Lymington) about their imminent move to Bath, sending her a list of properties he had inspected. They were planning to rent for a year before buying a house:

Let your letter explain your wishes, as to the situation in which you will best be pleased, and for godsake let me hear no more of doubts for which there is no reason ... I see no reason for ... the word afflicted at the conclusion of your letter & if that is repeated, I shall think I have too good reason to conclude myself an afflicted husband. Think more justly my Dear Bel.

Horatio Nelson had a high regard for Phillip, describing him as 'a good man'. In 1798 he had recommended to his wife Fanny that she visit Phillip and his wife in London. Fanny began a friendship with the couple that lasted beyond the breakdown of her marriage to Nelson. In October 1805, while Nelson's body lay in state in London before his funeral, Fanny was staying with the Phillips in Bath.³⁴

Around 1804-05 the Phillips lived in Bathampton House, a comfortable semi-rural gentleman's residence just outside Bath on the edge of the village of Bathampton. Possibly another property rented while they hunted for a house to buy, it was described as set in six acres (2.4 hectares) featuring a coach house and stable, garden, lawn, shrubberies, rookery and fine pasture.

By October 1806 the couple had decided to buy a terrace house in an urban setting in Bath proper. As part of the move, they advertised what seems to be a substantial proportion of the contents of Bathampton House, including paintings and furniture, much of it 'almost new'. Why they would sell much of their furniture at this point is unclear. The town house may have been too small to accommodate the contents of a larger house in the country or else they may have decided to redecorate and refurnish the newly acquired property. The sale advertisement reflects the couple's opulent, high Georgian lifestyle and musical interests:

... real Nanquin Table-China, curious old ditto, fine cut and plain Glass, Forte-Piano, two fine-toned Violins, large Convex Mirror, brilliant lustrous capital Register stove grate 3 feet 7 wide, excellent large sized Smoke-Jack, quantity of Wine bottles, and other valuable effects ... The Furniture comprehends drawing-room suit of three pair of blue satin pale-red window-curtains and cornices, with chairs and sofa to correspond, very tasteful gilt and Japanned chairs; extra large dome and various other bedsteads and hangings; good bedding; sound mahogany articles modern side-board, with brass rod, pedestals and vases; claw, dinner, loo, card, and Pembroke tables; secretary, wardrobe, drawers, parlour chairs, &c. pier and dressing glasses, Brussels and Scotch carpets, kitchen utensils.³⁵

In November 1806 the Phillips purchased a fashionable terrace house at No 19 Bennett Street, Bath (a few doors from the Assembly Rooms) for £2200, 29 years into a 99-year lease.³⁶ The house was to be Phillip's home until his death there eight years later in 1814. Isabella died there on 4 March 1823, described as aged 70 (but

actually 72), eight years after her husband. She was buried with him at St Nicholas' Church at Bathampton a week later. Their choice of the village as their place of burial was probably linked to their former residence there.³⁷



The house at No 19 Bennett Street, Bath, purchased in 1806, was Phillip's home until his death there in 1814. Isabella died there in 1823. (Photograph by D. Hope Johnston, by special permission, 1932. RAHS Manuscript Collection)

Isabella's personal estate included £4800 in bank funds bequeathed to her siblings, nephews, nieces and their children. In her will, dated 4 October 1822, she asked to be buried with her husband in a simple, inexpensive manner, adding an unusually meticulous request:

It is my particular wish and request that I may not have a shroud put on me or be more moved than what may be necessary to put me on [ie put on me] a clean night cap then to be wra[p]ped in the sheet I die in and so put into my coffin but first I would have clean linen or towels put at the bottom of my coffin and the same put over me when my body is placed in my coffin.

She bequeathed to her nephew, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Whitehead,

... the silver teapot which has the Cole and Whitehead arms engraved on the side ... this teapot having been upwards of a hundred years in my late Father's family I hope my late husband's residuary legatees will not object to receiving the valuation in money in lieu of the teapot.

She left a large sum to her brother Richard Whitehead to be controlled by her executor with the proviso that 'if my brother should get into debt or leave his family for any other than laudable and honourable motives' he would forfeit the legacy. The Whiteheads seem to have been a fractious family and the will ended with a warning that:

... if any of my legatees express themselves not satisfied with the legacies I have left them it is my will and desire that they forfeit their legacy to Mrs Mary Neate and Miss Chapman now of Edgar Buildings and Miss Hill now of 16 Great Pultney Street.³⁸

Mrs Neate and Miss Chapman were family friends. William Neate Chapman was a protégé of Phillip who served as secretary to Governor Philip Gidley King in New South Wales. The family papers, particularly the diaries of Miss Fanny Chapman for 1807-1812, provide rare glimpses of the Phillips' social life in Bath, although they do not cover the later period when Arthur Phillip and his wife died. She was almost certainly the Miss Chapman mentioned in the will. She had been an important support to the Phillips after his stroke and while recovering in April 1808 he was 'extremely affected' when she came to visit and burst into tears ('He cried violently and kissed my hand two or three times').³⁹

The Bath house and its contents for sale by auction appeared within a month of Isabella's death:

THAT Commodious and Gentlemanly DWELLING-HOUSE, centrally and fashionably situate near the Upper Assembly Rooms, Bath, and being 19, BENNET-STREET ... Comprising, the ground floor, good entrance-hall, dining-parlour 18 feet 17, breakfast-room feet 18 feet by 15 feet 6, water-closet, stone staircase, and Garden. A suite of 3 drawing-rooms communicating, 23 feet by 18, 15 feet 8 by 14 feet, and

15 feet 8 by 8 feet 6. Two best chambers, and dressing rooms, on the attic story; and four good Servants' rooms above. The offices in the basement are well arranged, and consist a large kitchen, scullery adjoining, housekeeper's room, butler's pantry, wine and beer cellars, coal-vaults, and all necessary offices. — The premises are most substantially built, and excellent repair; are held for the remainder of term of 99 years from 1777, subject to a small ground-rent.⁴⁰

The contents of the house included 30 dozen bottles of choice sherry, madeira and port aged from 15 to 35 years, a small library of books, paintings and prints, furniture 'of Botany-Bay Cabinet Manufacture' and a laundaulet vehicle. If Isabella had been a vice-regal wife in Australia, this may be regarded as a model for the household she would have managed.

Member RAHS

Notes

- 1 James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol 3, William Pickering, London, 1826, p 3 (Google Books).
- 2 London Metropolitan Archives, London, England; Church of England Parish Registers, Marriages and Banns, 1754-1931, ref: P69/AUG/A/01/Ms 8875/1, digitised online by Ancestry.com.
- 3 Baptism digitised online by www.findmypast.co.uk.
- 4 'Richard Tibbott (1719-1795)', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, digitised online at: <http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-TIBB-OTT-1719.html>
- 5 *London Gazette*, 7 October 1755, no 9518, p 4.
- 6 *St James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (London), 22-24 November 1792 (Gale/BL newspapers: 17th-18th century Burney collection); *View of the Agriculture of Middlesex: with observations on the means of its improvement, and several essays on agriculture in general*, G. and W. Nicol, 1807, p 82 (Google Books); Letter from Elizabeth Ann Browne, Stratford to Stephen White, Heffleton Farm, Dorset History Centre, D-1167A/4/3.
- 7 PCC will 1775, Stephen White, 29 March 1775, Heffleton Farm, Dorset, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858, PROB 11; Piece: 1006, digitised online at Ancestry.com.
- 8 Will of John Denison, Merchant of King Street Cheapside, City of London, 10 June 1760 (TNA ref: PROB 11/856), Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Wills, 1384-1858, Ancestry.com.
- 9 Lease for a year (bargain and sale) of messuage, tenement and farm at Heffleton, Margaret Charlotte Denison of Lambeth, widow, to Mary Thomas of Lambeth, widow, 17 July 1763, Dorset History Centre.
- 10 Settlement release, 1 July 1763, Margaret Charlotte Denison of Lambeth, widow, and Arthur Phillip of London, to Mary Thomas of Lambeth, widow, on the intended marriage between Arthur Phillip and Margaret Charlotte Denison, Dorset History Centre, D-847/40.
- 11 Margaret Phillip, Probate Act Books, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, UK National Archives PROB 8/185; Margaret Charlotte Phillip legal documents, 1792, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter ML, SLNSW), MLMSS 4566/Folder 1X; Last will and testament of Margaret Charlotte Phillip, wife of Captain Arthur Phillip, RN, with probate, marriage settlements and separation agreement, 21 December 1785-6 October 1792, ML, SLNSW, B1143 (microfilm CY 2057, frames 106-21). These documents were located by Herbert J. Rumsey who donated copies to the Mitchell Library.

- 12 'Died ... In his 95th year, Mr Samuel Barnsley, the Treasury-office', *Bury and Norwich Post*, 6 August 1794, p 2.
- 13 Last will and testament of Margaret Charlotte Phillip, wife of Captain Arthur Phillip, RN, with probate, marriage settlements and separation agreement, 21 December 1785-6 October 1792, ML, SLNSW, B1143 (microfilm CY 2057, frames 106-21).
- 14 *Daily Advertiser* (London), 3 October 1777, British Library, British newspapers 1600-1950, Gale database.
- 15 Dorset Quarter Sessions Order Books 1772-1783, 13 November 1772, QSM 1/10, Dorset History Centre, digitised online at Ancestry.com.
- 16 Dorset Quarter Sessions, Quarter Sessions Minutes, sub-fonds Q/S/M/1 and Q/S/M/2, QSM 1/10, Dorset History Centre, digitised online at Ancestry.com.
- 17 Dorset Quarter Sessions, Quarter Sessions Minutes, sub-fonds Q/S/M/1 and Q/S/M/2. QSM 1/10, Dorset History Centre, digitised online at Ancestry.com.
- 18 These addresses are all given in her will dated 1785.
- 19 *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales Comprising the Several Counties, Cities, Boroughs, Corporate and Market Towns, Parishes, Chapelries, and Townships, with Historical and Statistical Descriptions*, vol 1, S. Lewis, 1840 (Google Books).
- 20 Last will and testament of Margaret Charlotte Phillip, wife of Captain Arthur Phillip, RN, with probate, marriage settlements and separation agreement, 21 December 1785-6 October 1792, ML, SLNSW, B1143 (microfilm: CY 2057, frames 106-21).
- 21 *Historical Records of Australia*, series I, vol 1, p 172.
- 22 Prerogative Court of Canterbury Will Registers, Abram Tibbott, 15 May 1797 Llanbupunair [Llanbrynmair], Montgomeryshire, Wales, PROB 11; Piece: 1291, digitised online at Ancestry.com.
- 23 Schedule of deeds and papers relating to estate at Hefflcton, belonging to Andrew Bain and delivered to Messrs Loggen & Welch against mortgages of the estate for £4000, 1579-1803. Dorset History Centre, D-847/45.
- 24 'Andrew Bain, MD of Curzon-street, be one of his Royal Highnesses Physicians Extraordinary', *Kentish Gazette*, 27 October 1809, p 3 (BNA); *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 15 November 1821, p 3 [sheriffs for the year 1822, including Bain and Sir Evan Nepean of Loders, bart]; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 26 May 1859, p 20; *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 8 October 1804, p 2; 'Country houses with character', *Country Life*, 5 September 2013: <http://www.countrylife.co.uk/property/country-houses-for-sale-and-property-news/country-houses-with-character-5637>.
- 25 Herbert J. Rumsey, 'Governor Phillip's Wife', *Australian Genealogist*, vol 2, pt 12, October 1938, pp 189-99, vol 3, pt 1, January 1939; unfortunately Rumsey's important piece of research was missed by all Phillip's subsequent biographers; for 1763 marriage: Guildhall, St Augustine Watling Street, Register of marriages and banns, 1754-1774, P69/AUG/A/01/Ms 8875/1.
- 26 1777 marriage: John Whitson/Dionysia Bartlett: Devon Marriages – Transcripts, Devon Family History Society, www.findmypast.co.uk.
- 27 Edward Spain, Reminiscences, 1774-1802, ML, SLNSW, C 266 (Safe), microfilm CY 1403.
- 28 *Hampshire Chronicle*, 29 June 1789, p 4, British Newspaper Archive www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.
- 29 1792 marriage licence and marriage: Thomas Brooks/Dionysia Whitson: Faculty Office Marriage Licence Allegations 1701-1850; Westminster Marriages – Transcripts, Westminster Archives, www.findmypast.co.uk; Prerogative Court of Canterbury, will of Thomas Brooks, Boatswain of His Majesty's Ship *Trusty*, 31 March 1802, TNA PROB 11/1371/49, Dionysia Brooks, widow of

- Thomas Brooks, boatswain Royal Navy who died 18 February 1802. Includes extract from Parish Register, married 7 June 1792, papers submitted to the Charity for the Relief of Officers' Widows.
- 30 Phillip-Whitehead 1794 marriage: London Metropolitan Archives, London, England, Church of England Parish Registers, 1754-1931, Reference Number: p89/mry1/176, digitised on Ancestry.com, London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1931; Richard Whitehead was one of the marriage witnesses in 1794 (he could have been either her father or brother); 'Died ... On the 25th ult., in King-street, Lancaster, aged 74, Richard Whitehead, Esq, Commander, Royal Navy, youngest son of the late Richard Whitehead, Esq, of Preston, formerly High Sheriff for this county', *Blackburn Standard*, 1 March 1837, p 3.
- 31 Isabella Phillip's PCC will 1823 confirms her in-law relationship; William Cunliffe Shawe in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*, R. Thorne (ed), 1986, online at: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org>, accessed 11 December 2017; Rev Thomas Whitehead (1746-1812), Clergy of the Church of England Database, db.theclergydatabase.org.uk. The will of Isabella's father Richard Whitehead (died 1794) has not been traced but the size of the bequests in her own will suggests that she had inherited substantial funds from him.
- 32 Phillip to Sir Joseph Banks, 7 September 1796, *Banks Papers*, series 37, ML, SLNSW, digitised on www.sl.nsw.gov.au, ref a1901127. The letters found under the floorboards are now held by the Bath and North East Somerset Record Office, Bath. They are quoted in Lyn M Fergusson, *Arthur Phillip: the man 1738-1814*, Sid Harta, Glen Waverley Vic, 2009, pp 186-7.
- 33 An item published online by Lyndhurst Parish Council (accessed 12 December 2017) states: 'By 1798 the Phillips were leasing a house from Dr Nike at the corner of Ashley Lane and the High Street. The house was rebuilt and is now a shoe shop. A blue plaque commemorating the Arthur Phillip connection was unveiled in Ashley Lane by Dame Marie Bashir [NSW Governor] in July 2014.' <http://www.lyndhurstparishcouncil.org.uk/the-new-forest-and-australia-connections/>
- 34 *Derby Mercury*, 14 November 1805, p 2; Nelson to Fanny, 7 April 1798, quoted in Alan Frost, *Arthur Phillip 1738-1814, his voyaging*, Oxford University Press, 1987, p 260; Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: the life and achievement of Horatio Nelson*, Allen Lane, London, 2005, p 263, recording a dinner hosted by Evan Nepean, First Secretary of the Board of Admiralty, in March 1798 attended by, inter alia, Phillip, Nelson, Admiral Lord Keith and Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, Comptroller of the Navy.
- 35 *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 23 October 1806, p 3, for sale of items belonging to Admiral Phillip removing from Bathampton House; 16 September 1824, p 3, for sale advertisement of Bathampton House.
- 36 Assignment of 19 Bennett Street, 20 November 1806, Bath and North East Somerset Record Office, Bath BC153/2453/5.
- 37 Death notice, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 13 March 1823, p 3; burial, St Nicholas' Bathampton, transcribed by Somerset & Dorset Family History Society, National Burial Index, www.findmypast.co.uk.
- 38 Isabella Phillip, PCC will TNA PROB11/1668/173 (owing to a clerical error the TNA catalogue entry for her will wrongly gives her address as John Street Pentonville, Middlesex). The will mentions the tablecloths; Isabella Phillip, Bank of England will extract www.findmypast.co.uk; Sir Frederick Chapman, *Governor Phillip in Retirement*, Halstead, Sydney, 1962, p 34. (Australian Historical Monographs, ed George Mackaness).
- 39 Chapman, *Governor Phillip in Retirement*, p 34.
- 40 *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 10 April 1823, p 3.

