

26th January

Memory Verse:

God is light
and in him is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5b

A book to read

Mary Elizabeth Mapes Dodge (1831 – 1905), American children's author was born on 26th January. During her lifetime she was a very well known author and the editor of a popular children's magazine. Nowadays she is known for one book, her most well-loved and enduring story, *Hans Brinker* or *The Silver Skates*.



In 1856 American ambassador and historian, John Lothrop Motley, published his *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, following this with his *History of the United Netherlands* in 1860. These books about the history of Holland were very popular in America and Mrs Dodge devoured them eagerly. She decided to write a children's tale set in the Netherlands which would retell some of the history she had been reading in a natural way through the development of the story. Mrs Dodge had two boys and she earned her living through her writing since her husband had died. She was devoted to her boys and began to create *Hans Brinker* as a bedtime serial story for them. She wove into it as much as she could of the interesting material she had read about the Netherlands – a country she had never visited.

She became absorbed in the subject and worked at the manuscript for long hours. She wanted her story to be as true to life as possible as well as entertaining to the young readers. She found every book she could on the Netherlands and asked advice from travellers who had been there. She was fortunate to have two well educated Dutchmen as neighbours. They helped her by reading each chapter as she wrote it and making suggestions.

At last the book was finished and sent off to the publishers. Mrs Dodge had already had great success with a collection of short stories for children and the publisher was hoping for another similar collection. He was surprised to get a full length story instead and considered rejecting *Hans Brinker*: it was not really the kind of book he wanted. "Have you anything else ready for publication?" he asked Mrs Dodge. But she had been so busy with *Hans Brinker* that she had written nothing else. Reluctantly the publisher decided that rather than miss out on following up the previous success, he would go ahead with *Hans Brinker*. Published in 1865, it became a bestseller at once and was translated into French, German, Dutch, Russian, and Italian. It has not been out of print since.

Hans Brinker is a lovely story, another good choice for that Christmas book token if you have one left! Second hand copies are about £3 including postage from ABE Books.¹

¹ Or you can read it here: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/764/764-0.txt> for free.

Map work²



Today is Australia Day! Get out your Atlas and find the places highlighted in the story.

It was on 26th January that the First Fleet landed at Sydney Cove (which is now called Circular Quay). The picture shows an artist's impression of the event drawn 100 years later.

The Union Flag was raised by by Captain Arthur Phillip (1738-1814) following days of exploration at Port Jackson in New South Wales. He had been initially recommended to Botany Bay but this was unsuitable. Port Jackson, however, he described as “without exception the finest Harbour in the World”. On 26th January 1788 British sovereignty over the eastern seaboard of Australia (which was then known as New Holland) was proclaimed. Although it was not known as Australia Day until over a century later, records of celebrations on 26 January date back to 1808. But who exactly was on board the First Fleet and why did they come to Australia?

The fleet was made up of eleven ships; two Royal Navy vessels, three store ships and six ships that carried male and female prisoners or convicts and their children. The convicts were transported for many reasons but often as punishment for quite small crimes such as stealing. Altogether there were over 1400 people including sailors, marines and their families, free settlers and civilian officers. Lord Sydney, Home Secretary, had decreed that the new colony was not to be a military prison, but a civil administration, recognising the property rights of convicts.



Charles Middleton (an associate of William Wilberforce) had been given the task of finding eleven suitable ships, fitting them out and equipping them. Middleton was opposed to all forms of corruption and his motto was ‘Without religion there can be no public principle.’ The contractor for the First Fleet was William Richards, a friend of Middleton and an evangelical Christian. He had a reputation for honouring his contracts with the government in both word and spirit.

During the long journey only 48 lives were lost. By contrast the 2nd and 3rd fleets that followed the first did not do so well. They had been contracted to a firm engaged in the slave trade and the contracts had not been so faithfully carried out. As a result, five times more deaths occurred (267 of the 1006 convicts) on the Second Fleet and the death rate on the Third Fleet was twice that of the First Fleet.

Also on board the First Fleet, was the chaplain, Samuel Johnson (1756-1827) together with his wife, Mary. He had proved his worth working in London alongside Henry Foster (c.1743-1814), friend of prominent Evangelicals such as William Romaine, the Countess of Huntingdon and Thomas Haweis. It was due to the influence of William Wilberforce that Mr Johnson had been selected to be chaplain of the first colony in Australia. He had with him Australia's first library. This was gift from the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. It arrived at Port Jackson

² Information from <http://diduno.info/the-first-fleet/> and other sources.

aboard the First Fleet. There were 500 Bibles, 100 Common Prayer Books, 400 Testaments and over 3,600 additional pieces of Christian literature.

The new colony ran into difficulties almost at once. There were not enough skilled farmers, seed brought from Britain had become spoilt and failed to germinate, the soil was poor, the climate was unfamiliar and many of the tools brought over proved unsuitable. The first crops failed and the colonists faced near starvation.

Captain Phillip was a fair man. He refused to bow to pressure from the officers and insisted that the limited food supplies were shared out equally. Free settlers were not to get more than convicts. He laid a good foundation for the colony with his declaration that 'there can be no slavery in a free land, and consequently no slaves'. It is interesting to note that this decree came while the slave trade was still legally being pursued by English merchants: the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was not signed for another nineteen years.

Captain Phillip wanted to encourage the emigration of free settlers. He had no illusions about the difficulties of transplanting a civilisation to the other side of the world and he knew that planning and administrative detail was required. For this reason he took an active part in drawing up rules of conduct and discipline and job descriptions for everyone. He refused to allow any mistreatment of the Aborigines, and used the wide governmental powers that he was granted to accomplish this end.

And he certainly had wide powers! The colony was such a long way away from Britain (and in any case Parliament did not care much what happened there) that Captain Phillip had absolute power over almost every area of the lives of the inhabitants. He had both legislative and executive functions, and could remit sentences. Only treason and murder were exempt. It is a great blessing for Australia that he was a man whose humane principles were grounded in Christian teaching.

Captain Phillip saw to it that evil was quickly punished and good behaviour and hard work rewarded. If convicts behaved well they were given grants of land and had their sentences shortened. He selected well-behaved prisoners to be supervisors and policemen.

The difficulties faced by the settlers often caused feelings of depression, defeatism and trouble but Captain Phillip took care to maintain morale by preserving an optimistic attitude and sending positive dispatches back to England. When for health reasons he had to return to England, the new settlement had survived near starvation and immense isolation for four years. Things were improving.

Gradually the population of freed convicts who could be granted land began to grow. They pioneered Sydney's trade. They were then joined by soldiers whose military service had expired, and later still by free settlers who began arriving from Britain. Can you see from this story why Sydney is so called?³

3 After Lord Sydney, Home Secretary.



Something to make – and eat!

The chef of the Queensland's eighth governor, Lord Lamington, invented a cake to feed unexpected visitors. Lamingtons have been a great favourite all over Australia ever since, especially on Australia Day. Australians love these sticky sponge cakes covered with chocolate and rolled in coconut and they even hold “Lamington Drives”, baking batches and selling them for charity. Here's how you can make “Lamos” yourself. To do the job properly you should bake your own sponge cake. However, you can get very good results with a plain bought sponge cake if it is fresh.

Ingredients:

Square or rectangular sponge cake.

For the icing:

40 grams cocoa powder

250 grams icing or powdered sugar

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

120 ml milk

120 grams dessicated coconut

Instructions

Cut your sponge into cubes. The best Lamingtons are supposed to be precise cubes so their size will be governed by the thickness of your sponge cake. However, any cuboids *taste* just as good.

To make the chocolate icing, sift cocoa powder and icing sugar. Add melted butter and milk and stir until the chocolate is smooth. Now dip each cube into the chocolate to coat it – using two forks is best. Allow the excess icing to drip back into the bowl and the roll the Lamington in the coconut. After you dip and roll each Lamington, put it on a wire rack to allow the icing to set, then do the next one.

No instructions for eating needed!



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Look out for more about Australia on February 4th.