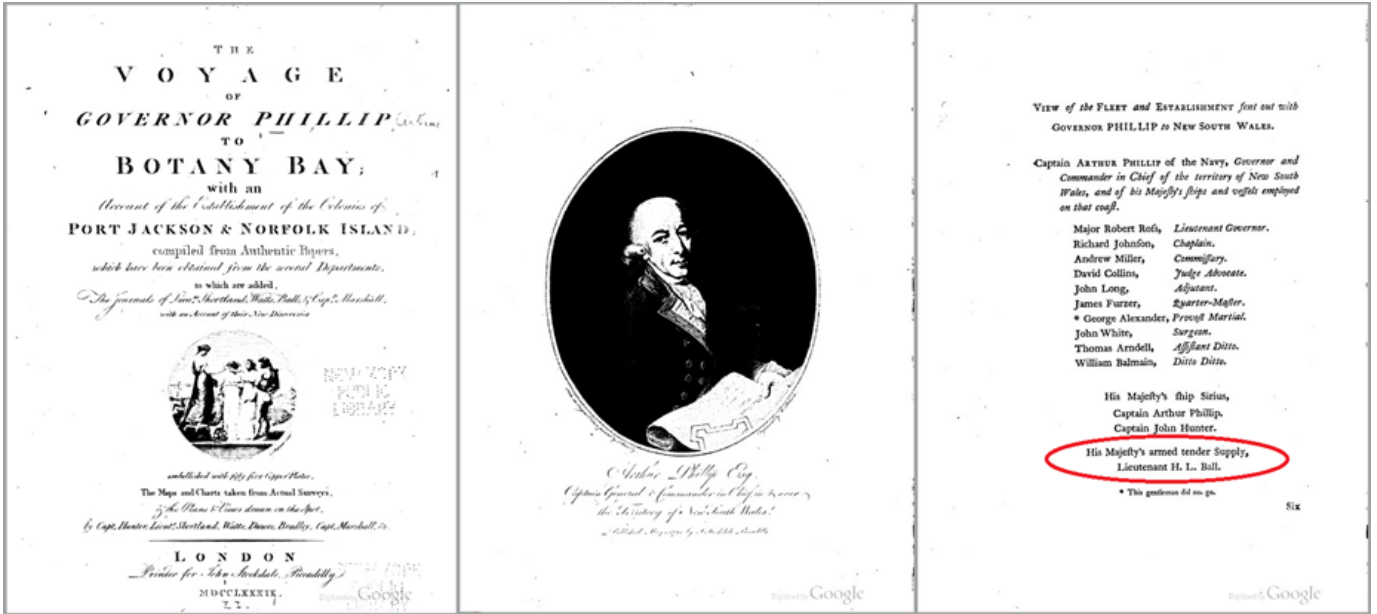


First Fleet escort His Majesty's Armed Tender, *Supply*

We refer to the various journals kept by professional naval officers who above all others would have been bound by the naval nomenclature of the 1780s, commencing with no less an authority than Captain ARTHUR PHILLIP of the Navy, *Governor and Commander in Chief of the territory of New South Wales, and of his Majesty's ships and vessels employed on that coast*, whose [journal](#) preamble includes a description of the fleet, led by



His Majesty's ship *Sirius*, Captain Arthur Phillip. (&) Captain John Hunter.

His Majesty's armed tender *Supply*, Lieutenant H. L. Ball.

followed by a further ten such references, notably to the exclusion of any reference therein to *Supply* as HMS. (with one only reference to the *Supply* brig) . Chapter VIII of this [publication](#) includes the following:

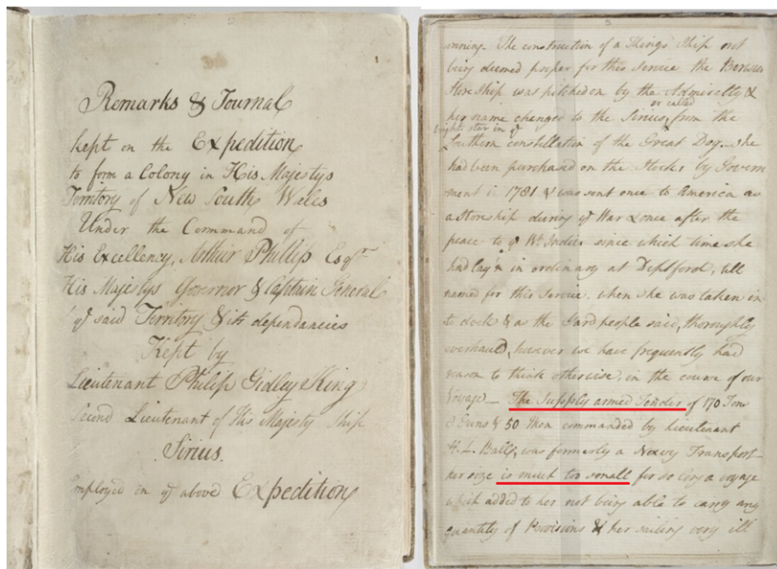
INSTRUCTIONS for PHILIP GIDLEY KING, Esq; Superintendant and Commandant of the Settlement of NORFOLK ISLAND.

With these instructions you will receive my Commission, appointing you to superintend and command the settlement to be formed in Norfolk Island, and to obey all such orders as you shall from time to time receive from me, his Majesty's Governor in Chief, and Captain General of the territory of New South Wales and its dependencies, or from the Lieutenant-Governor in my absence.

You are therefore to proceed in his Majesty's armed tender *Supply*, whose commander has my orders to receive you, with the men and women, stores and provisions necessary for forming the intended settlement; and on your landing on Norfolk Island you are to take upon you the execution of the trust reposed in you, causing my commission, appointing you superintendant over the said settlement, to be publicly read.

This convention was also observed by the future Governor PHILIP GIDLEY KING (Lieut. RN), who in his first journal clearly expressed [in the statement below] the inappropriateness of "ship" as a classification for *Supply*....

"The Supply armed Tender of 170 Tons 8 Guns & 50 Men commanded by Lieutenant H.L. Ball; was formerly a Navy Transport — her size is much too small for so long a voyage which added to her not being able to carry any quantity of Provisions & her sailing very ill renders her a very improper Vessel [sic] for this Service"

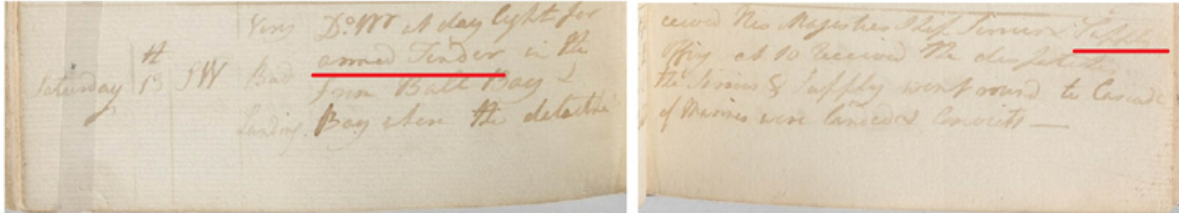


King, during his first command of Norfolk Island, assiduously referred to **SUPPLY** as HMAT, evidenced below (among a dozen entries, including his description of the arrival of **Sirius** and **Supply** on the fateful voyage of the loss of **Sirius**)

"Thursday 3rd [December, 1789] SSW Do Fresh Breezes & pleasant Weather at Daylight perceived **His Majesties Armed Tender Supply** at 8..."

"Friday 29 [January, 1790] Bad Landing Moderate Breezes & Cloudy Weather. at day light perceived **His Majesties Armed Tender Supply** in the Road...."

"Saturday 13th [March, 1790] S W Very Bad Landing..... at day light perceived His Majesties Ship **Sirius** & **Supply** armed Tender in the Offing at 10 Received the despatches from Ball Bay...."



Original document

King, Philip Gidley ~ Journal ~ 1787-1790			
Saturday	13th	SW	Very Bad Landing.
D ^o W ^r at day light perceived His Majesties Ship Sirius & Supply armed Tender in the Offing at 10 Received the despatches from Ball Bay & the Sirius & Supply went round to Cascade Bay where the detach[ment] of Marines were landed & Convicts —			

Transcription

King's 1st journal makes a further 92 references to the **Supply**, six of which qualified her as an armed tender, none as a ship. The Norfolk Island Victualling Book, in the transcribed King era entries, also describes **Supply** exclusively as HM Armed Tender.

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Time of Entry	From whom	Name	Quality	By	Time when
20 th South Bay	from whom	Nina	Quality	By	Monday near N ^o 10 th Street
21 st Nov ^r 1791	Detach ^t	Lieut ^t M ^r Manus	Marine	D	Sept ^r 21 1792
42 nd Nov ^r 1791	Detach ^t	Lieut ^t A. J. Scott	Seaman	D	Sept ^r 26 1793
43 rd Jan ^y 1792	Detach ^t	Lieut ^t Nicholas	Marine	D	Nov ^r 6 th 1794
44 th		Lieut ^t Hughes		D	Sept ^r 21 1792
45 th		Lieut ^t Phipps			

It is only after the arrival of the less recognised replacement **HMS Supply** under William Kent (Lieut. RN) on 7 September 1795 (recorded below by Captain David Collins) that the appellation HMS (in NIVB and elsewhere) became valid but arguably, having the same name but being a different vessel, caused much confusion amongst later chroniclers.

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An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales From Its First Settlement, in January 1788, to August 1801, vol. 2

Names of Ships.	Date of Arrival.	Whence.	Cargo.	Date of Departure.	Whither bound.
His Majesty's armed tender, Supply,	25th Jan. 1788	England		17th Ap. 1790	Batavia.
H. M. a t. Supply,	19th Sept. 1790	Batavia	Provisions		
H. M. S. Supply,	7th Sept. 1796	England	Stores	20th Sept.	C. of G. Hopc
H. M. S Supply,	16th May 1797	C. of G. Hope	Cattle		Condemned

Other contemporary journalists Captain John Hunter, Lt. William. Bradley, seaman Jacob Nagle, Midshipman Southwell, Surgeons White & Bowes Smyth and Marine John Easty consistently refer to **Supply** as simply the **Supply** OR armed tender, H.M brig, brig, or tender.

From Easty's journal

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[Sattaday April the 17th 1790](#)
[this Day His Majistys Armd tender Supply Brig Sailed from this Port for Norfolk and Batavie for Provisions for the Settlement](#)

In all of the reviewed First Fleet journals, there is ONE ONLY approximation of the term HMS in relation to **Supply**, being used by Lt Ralph Clark as the recipient's address transcribed as:

Surgeon, HM: S Supply

in his letter to Dr. James Callam, of Sept 29th 1791. In this letter-book, Clark made no fewer than an additional 29 references to the **Supply** as simply that ... "the **Supply**". Clarke was a marine, not a naval authority, and, challenged at times in his use of language, is not regarded as the most accurate, literate or qualified of those chroniclers.

Conversely, any of these sources when referring to the flagship do so as His Majesty's ship **Sirius**, or as the **Sirius**.

I have in the meantime been able to source yet another record supporting this premise, viz. the State Library's [David Blackburn papers](#) relating to his service in New South Wales, 1788-1792

In his [various instructions](#) to **HMAT Supply** Master David Blackburn (17 Jan 1791, 19 Mar 1791), Phillip referred to **Supply** deliberately and exclusively as His Majesty's Armed Tender **Supply**.

By His Excellency Arthur Phillip, Esq;
Captain General & Governor in Chief
of our His Majesty's Territory of
New South Wales & its Dependences.

Goⁿ Goⁿ Goⁿ

Whereas Lieutenant Henry
Lidghard Ball, is from Sickness unable
to proceed to sea, with His Majesty's Armed
Tender Supply, of which you are Master,
and I think fit that you should command
her during his Absence, or until you shall
receive further Orders:

You are hereby required & directed
to take upon you the Charge & Command
of the said Armed Tender accordingly, & proceed
without loss of Time to Norfolk Island, where
having landed the Stores & Provisions which
have been put on board by His Majesty's
Commissary for that Purpose, as well as such
Tools & other Possessions as you can conveniently
 spare, for the Use of that Settlement, you are
to receive onboard the Officers, Seamen & Marines
late belonging to His Majesty's Ship Service,
with whom you are to return to this Port.

For which this shall be your Order.

To
Mr. David Blackburn,
hereby appointed to
command His Majesty's
Armed Tender Supply.
By His Excellency's Command.

Government House, Sydney,
the 17th Day of January, 1791.

Phillip

David Collins,
Secretary.

So too did **Supply** Commander Henry L Ball (Lieut. RN) in his [numerous references](#) detailing Blackburn's service as Master from 8 April 1787 until 15 May 1792, which may add a little validation to the conduct of such a review.

These are to Certify the Principal Officers and Commissioners of His Majesty's
Navy that Mr David Blackburn served as Master of His Majesty's Armed
Tender Supply, under my Command, from the Eighth day of April 1791
to the Eighth day of April 1792. During which time he Comply'd with the
General Printed Instructions, was always sober and Obedient to
Command and was never six weeks absent from Duty, either by
Sickness or any other Occasion

Given under my hand on board His Majesty's Armed Tender Supply, at
sea this Eighth day of April 1792

H. L. Ball

We respectfully request, given the overwhelming credibility of the contemporary informed sources referred to above, and in the virtually complete absence of any extant record to the contrary, that consideration be given to a review of catalogue and website entries and static displays referencing HMS **SUPPLY**, the correction of which would be a guiding beacon for those aspiring historians and researchers who may otherwise be led astray by such a prevailing but misinformed convention.

That beacon would be perhaps amplified by publication of a statement acknowledging the provenance of the research underpinning such revision, and consultation/collaboration amongst the leading repositories/custodians of our Foundation history.

Awaiting your advice,

Jon Heppell

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