

# People in Australia's Past

their stories, their achievements



Susan Boyer

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Important note:

Readers of 'People in Australia's Past': please be aware that this book contains the names and images of deceased persons which in some Indigenous Australian communities may offend cultural prohibitions.

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# Introduction

Today Australia is a thriving modern society with residents who have come from all over the world to live here. But in global terms, we are a young nation; our multicultural history spans only a few centuries.

Prior to the arrival of British settlers on the First Fleet, the Aboriginal inhabitants had lived on the continent undisturbed for thousands of years. Then in 1788 everything changed and the modern history of Australia began.

'**People in Australia's past**' tells the amazing stories of just a few of the men and women who have shaped Australia's history. *Governor Arthur Phillip*, was an optimist who, despite the overwhelming problems faced by the settlers in 1788, built the foundation on which our nation is built. After a difficult start, a strong friendship eventually developed between Arthur Phillip and Bennelong, an aboriginal man who became known as Australia's first diplomat. *Bennelong* tried hard to understand British culture and to build bridges between his people and the new settlers who had come, uninvited, to his land.

Some people, such as *Mary Reibey* and *James Ruse*, were forced to come to Australia as convicts, yet they overcame immense obstacles and created promising futures for themselves and their families. Some women, like *Elizabeth Macarthur*, *Elizabeth Macquarie* and *Caroline Chisholm* came as free settlers. These women saw both the problems and the possibilities in the early colonial settlement and set out to bring about change and improvement in their own ways.

Some of our history-makers were native born Australians who saw injustice in society and devoted their lives to improving the living conditions of others of their generation.

These people include *Edith Cowan*, *David Unaipon*, *John Flynn*, *Eddie Mabo* and *Charles Perkins*. The reforms and improvements brought about by these men and women in health, education and legal areas led to a fairer, more equitable society and we are still enjoying the benefits of their efforts today.

Some people whose stories are included in this book became celebrities through their natural talents, adventures or discoveries. For example, *Charles Kingsford Smith* was an aviator who set world records in flying across Australia and around the world. *Douglas Mawson* was an explorer who almost died while collecting valuable scientific information in Antarctica. *Banjo Paterson* is remembered for his funny, unique stories of life in the Australian bush and of course for his most famous song: 'Waltzing Matilda'. *Dame Nellie Melba* was Australia's first superstar. She became famous around the world for the beauty of her voice.

And last but not least, is the story of *Edmund Barton*, Australia's first Prime Minister. He was also a tireless advocate for the development of our Australian Constitution.

There are many, many other people in Australia's past who could have been included in this book. Choosing *who* to include was not easy, but it was fascinating to research the many amazing men and women who overcame hardship and obstacles to achieve what they did. They are an inspiration to me and I hope you feel inspired too after reading the following stories.

I have included some sources for further reading and research at the back of this book.

*Susan Boyer*

The meanings of underlined words in each story are given in the corresponding vocabulary list on pages 38 - 55.