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Global Warming?..... It was warmer in Sydney in 1790

Anthony Watts / January 14, 2013

Australia has recently experienced a hot summer leading to calls of “global warming did”, but its actually been cooler than the time when the first convicts arrived in Australia back in 1790

Guest post by Craig Kelly MP

It’s been a scorcher. With the mercury soaring to 42.3 C in Sydney last week and the city in meltdown, the papers screamed, “This is climate change. It is here. It is real.” Even the taxpayer funded Climate Commission could not hide their excitement declaring, “it was hotter than before” and that “climate change” was responsible for the “unprecedented” extreme heat Sydneysiders were experiencing.

And with the satellites unable to detect any global warming for the last 16 years, and the IPCC computer modelled predictions failing to come to fruition, Labor Government



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ministers were quick to exploit the situation to claim the “extreme heat” was evidence of why the Carbon Tax was needed to “do the right thing by our children”. Yet they failed to detail how, when, or by how much (even to the nearest 0.0001 °C) that the Carbon Tax would change the temperature.

But I wonder if any of these people actually knew that Sydney’s so-called ‘record hot day’ on Tuesday 8th Jan this year, that had them screaming “Global Warming”, was actually COOLER than the weather experienced by the convicts of the First Fleet in Sydney way back in the summer of 1790/91 ?



Observatory Hill Sydney – photo by A. Watts

For while the mercury peaked at 42.3 C last Tuesday at Observatory Hill in Sydney – more than 222 years ago at 1.00pm on the 27th Dec 1790 (measured at a location just stones-throw from Observatory Hill) the mercury hit 108.5 F (42.5 C) before peaking at 109 F (42.8 C) at 2.20pm.

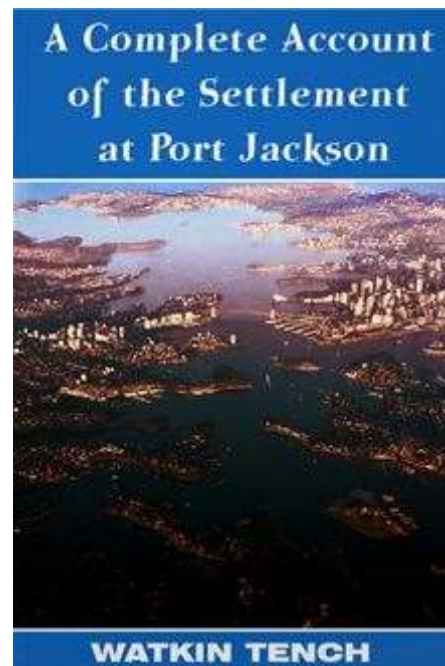
The extreme heat of Sydney’s summer of 1790/91 is detailed by Watkins Tench (1758 – 1833) in his book ‘*A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*’ published in 1793. (Available to download from the internet for free, [here](#)).

Watkins Tench was British marine officer whom accompanied 88 male and 20 female convicts on the First Fleet ship the Charlotte which arrived in Botany Bay 20th January 1788. Watkins then stayed in Sydney until December 1791 when we sailed home to Britain and later went on to fight in the Napoleonic Wars where after a naval battle he was taken prisoner by the French and imprisoned on a ship in Brest Harbor.

Of Sydney’s weather of 27th December 1790, when the mercury hit 42.8 C (109 F), half a degree Celsius higher than last Tuesday, Tench wrote; “it felt like the blast of a heated oven”. But the extreme heat wasn’t restricted to the 27th Dec 1790. The following day the

temperature again surpassed the old 100 Fahrenheit mark, hitting 40.3C (104.5 F) at 12.30pm.

And later that same summer, in February 1791, the temperature in Sydney was recorded at 42.2 C (108 F). Tench commented;



“*But even this heat [of 27th Dec 1790] was judged to be far exceeded in the latter end of the following February, when the north-west wind again set in, and blew with great violence for three days. At Sydney, it [the temperature] fell short by one degree of what I have just recorded [109F]: but at Rose Hill, [modern day Parramatta] it was allowed, by every person, to surpass all that they had before felt, either there, or in any other part of the world. Unluckily they had no thermometer to ascertain its precise height.*”

Tench also speculated on the cause of the extreme heat of the summer of 1790/91, and he didn't blame global warming, coal mining, or failure to pay homage to a pagan god. Tench deduced;

“*Were I asked the cause of this intolerable heat, I should not hesitate to pronounce, that it was occasioned by the wind blowing over immense deserts, which, I doubt not, exist in a north-west direction from Port Jackson, and not from fires kindled by the natives.*”

Now global warming devotees may be sceptical of Tench's records. After all, scepticism is a healthy thing. They may even seek to deny Tench's measurements and have them purged from our history, sent down a memory hole – as the global warming texts & prophecies

deem it heresy for it to have been warmer in Sydney way back in summer of 1790/91 than it is in the ‘unprecedented’ extreme heat of Sydney’s ‘globally warmed’ summer of 2012/13.

However, Tench’s meteorological recordings were undertaken following strict scientific procedure using a “large thermometer” made by Ramsden, England’s leading scientific instrument maker of the day. Tench also left a message for those that might seek to question the accuracy of the records;

“*This remark I feel necessary, as there were methods used by some persons in the colony, both for estimating the degree of heat, and for ascertaining the cause of its production, which I deem equally unfair and unphilosophical. The thermometer, whence my observations were constantly made, was hung in the open air, in a southern aspect, never reached by the rays of the sun, at the distance of several feet above the ground.*”

It also worth noting that in 1790, Sydney (population 1,715) was still surrounded by mostly natural bushland, where modern day Observatory Hill in Sydney (population 4,627,000) is now surrounded by the concrete, steel and glass of a modern city, not to mention the tens of thousands of air-conditioners pumping out hot air into the surrounding streets, nor the 160,000 cars & trucks that cross the Sydney Harbor Bridge daily and pass within 100 meters of Observatory Hill.

Further, the contemporaneous notes of the day concur with the empirical measurements. Lieutenant-Governor David Collins (1756-1810), in his book ‘An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales’ published in 1798 also commented on the incredible effect of the extreme heat of 1790/91 summer on the local wildlife:

“Fresh water was indeed everywhere very scarce, most of the streams or runs about the cove being dried up. At Rose Hill [Parammatta], the heat on the tenth and eleventh of the month, on which days at Sydney the thermometer stood in the shade at 105°F [40.6°C], was so excessive (being much increased by the fires in the adjoining woods), that immense numbers of the large fox bat were seen hanging at the boughs of trees, and dropping into the water... during the excessive heat many dropped dead while on the wing... In several parts of the harbour the ground was covered with different sorts of small birds, some dead, and others gasping for water.”

Tench also recorded the effects of the extreme heat of Feb 1791;

“An immense flight of bats, driven before the wind, covered all the trees around the settlement, whence they every moment dropped dead, or in a dying state, unable longer to endure the burning state of the atmosphere. Nor did the perroquettes, [parrots] though tropical birds, bear it better; the ground was strewn with them in the same condition as the bats.”

And even Governor Arthur Philip noted the effects of the extreme heat of the summer of 1790/91;

“from the numbers [of dead bats] that fell into the brook at Rose Hill [Parramatta], the water was tainted for several days, and it was supposed that more than twenty thousand of them were seen within the space of one mile.”

Yet 222 years later, reports of the mass death of birds and bats are more like to come from those sliced & diced by industrial steel wind turbines, than the heat.

Finally, Watkins Tench concluded on ‘climate change’ in Sydney back in 1790’s;

“My other remarks on the climate [of Sydney] will be short; it is changeable beyond any other I ever heard of”

Fortunately for the convicts and settlers of the new colony, Governor Arthur Philip and later Governors didn't believe they could change that with a new tax.

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Addendum from Anthony: Readers may also find my investigation into the thermometer at Observatory hill interesting: [Sydney's historic weather station: 150 meters makes all the difference.](#)

Note also the current placement of the BoM weather station at Observatory Hill is surrounded by heat sinks. Here are my photos from June 2010.

