

## BDA Source Description Pages

<http://www.bda-online.org.au>**Norfolk Island Victualling Book 1792-1796**

The Norfolk Island Victualling Book 1792-1796 (NIVB) covers nearly every individual who was on Norfolk Island in the period from January 1792, supposedly until early October 1796, although the days victualled are only recorded for each of the years 1792, 1793, 1794 and 1795. No victualling records are recorded for 1796 as such, although movements on and off the island, including births and deaths were made either against existing entries or in the case of arrivals/births in 1796 against new entries.

Details recorded include a person's name, status (convict, soldier, settler, convict's child etc), date of entry in the NIVB (whether birth or arrival including ship of arrival and sometimes place of departure), date of death or departure (including ship departed and sometimes destination), total number days victualled for each year from 1792 to 1795 inclusive, and the time when the person was settled if relevant. The ship of arrival is that to Norfolk Island, not Port Jackson, although in some cases it may be the same ship.

Entries are grouped under Civil Department, Military Department, Settlers and Free, Male Convicts, Free Women, Female Convicts, Civil Military & Free Children, & Children of Convicts. There is also additional information for various settlers who remained at the end of the book. Occasional inconsistencies are apparent. For example, a group of women who arrived at Sydney on the *Marquis Cornwallis* on 11 February 1796, but are listed on the Norfolk Island Victualling Book as commencing rations after landing from HMS *Reliance* the next day (an impossibility, because Norfolk Island was a week's journey and *Reliance* had left Sydney on 21 January). This discrepancy could be explained by some kind of accounting adjustment or clerical error, allowing for a later date of arrival on Norfolk Island some weeks later, most likely the other Sydney-based naval vessel HMS *Supply* which reached the island from Sydney in early April. Dates of arrival and departure have been checked against published information on shipping where available and discrepancies have been noted in the records with an Editor's comment.

On the whole however, the NIVB seems to be relatively accurate, the main stumbling block often relating to the use of a different name (or alias) or alternative spelling which can cloud some entries. With common sense, logic and a knowledge of family relationships, in Norfolk Island and Tasmania, many of these puzzles have been resolved in the Tasmanian database. Appearances of an individual in the NIVB have been confidently matched in most cases with what is considered to be the correct

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person. The Tasmanian database builds upon Reg Wright's pioneering effort in relation to the population of Norfolk Island. His list was first published in Raymond Nobbs' *Norfolk Island: and its first settlement 1788-1814*.

It should also be noted that in every case, where a convict woman is named in the victualling records, it is with her convict name, rather than any married name. This custom extends to children of convicts, where they are recorded under the surname of their convict mother, whether the mother was legitimately married to the child's father or not. This is not to say that these convict children were known by that name, merely that they were recorded for victualling purposes under that name.

No victualling lists are known to be extant before 1792, nor is there anything like the NIVB which records the whole population in later records, although annual or semi-annual victualling lists exist from 1802 onwards. Later victualling lists only record those victualled, but the structure of the 1805 "muster" for Norfolk Island which includes all persons whether victualled or not, suggests that the annual or semi-annual victualling lists, as well as the 1805 "muster" all derive from some document(s) or book similar in format to the NIVB of 1792-96, but now lost. It seems it would have been in essentially the same format as the 1792-96 NIVB. The pattern of those recorded (ie the order) remains consistent throughout all later victualling records and at least for those victualled in the 1805 "muster".

Norfolk Island was unique amongst the early colonies in being an isolated community with relatively easily monitored comings and goings. Keeping as it were a general register of the whole population in the form of a Victualling Book of the type extant for 1792-1796, would have been a relatively straightforward exercise, unlike the mainland or Van Diemen's Land.

Each division referred to above (Civil Department etc) starts with a list of those who were already on Norfolk Island at the start of 1792 (in generally chronological order of their arrival or birth), with later arrivals added in chronological order of arrival or birth, as the case may be, in each division, although birth additions appear to reflect the time of entry in the book rather than strict chronological order of births. "Additions" in this sense also include those transferred from one list to another, eg military taking up a grant as a settler, or a convict finishing his sentence and so forth. These transferees go to the bottom of the relevant list. In general, as persons leave or transfer, those on the "extracted" lists appear to shuffle up the list, maintaining the same general order.

Thus, in relation to the Norfolk Island victualling records as a whole, it is this pattern that can be seen not only in the way persons first came onto the list in January 1792 (ie from some previous similar "book"), but follows through (even spanning the "black hole" of available records from 1796 to 1801), picking up again through the ensuing victualling lists from 1802 onwards and as mentioned, even including the 1805 "muster".

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Once this pattern is understood, it makes more sense in dealing with otherwise tricky problems of identification etc. When victualling lists or other muster records are alphabetised as they often are for publication, this process causes vital and useful clues inherent in the structure of these documents to be lost. Although, most of the population were mustered in the early years of Norfolk Island because of the fledgling nature of the colony, children in fact were not in receipt of victuals until the end of March 1793 and inconsistently came onto the stores anywhere between a few months and upwards of one year's age.

It is also observed that whilst the arrival and departure (or birth and death are usefully noted), people did come on and off stores as they began to support themselves or needed victuals. Just because a person is victualled for only a limited number of days within a year, no inference should be drawn that they had left the Norfolk Island, nor when the period victualled occurred that year (unless it equates with a noted arrival, birth, death or departure). The days victualled in any year are generally a multiple of 7, strongly suggesting that the Commissariat Stores were open for the business of providing rations once a week.

The original book is held by the Manuscripts Section, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales Sydney (ref A1957, with a microfilm copy ML reel 3467). The number of days in each year that the person was on rations is also given but that detail is not included in this dataset. Thomas Davies Mutch (died 1958), transcribed the book and in the process gave each entry a running number which is also entered on index cards. This transcription and Index is also held by Mitchell Library (ref A4422).

The Norfolk Island Victualling Book lists 1878 entries but about 5% are the same person, mainly military who sailed for Sydney and returned to the island

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The data from this volume was edited by Carol J Baxter and Garry Wilson for inclusion in BDA.  
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