

TOAST TO HENRY AND CHILDREN

Good evening.

My name is Jim Kable. I am a descendant of William Nathaniel and I was the Master of Ceremonies at the bicentennial Kable reunion in 1988.

So, here I am, 30 years later, with a new role as Toast Master, and I feel honoured to have been asked to do that.

As I was developing my notes about how to tackle a Toast Master's responsibility, I was inevitably drawn to the history of the Kable clan in Australia which now goes back 230 years. The history is widely known by the clan and, indeed, by many others especially after the recent publication by the Australian newspaper of a six part series about the first fleet.

However despite the extraordinary tale of Henry and Sussanna being so well known we must ensure that it continues to be told. So tonight I have decided to briefly touch on three unrelated episodes in Henry's and Sussanna's lives which, in my mind, define their impact on us as descendants and, in one case, on Australia's history, which is my first episode.

In making that decision I was very lucky, because I recently read an article focusing on the influence which Henry and Sussanna had on the beginnings of Australian law. The author of that article was none other than Ian Temby QC and I have drawn heavily on that article.

I'm sure that almost everyone here tonight knows about the **first civil legal case** in the new colony which was initiated by Henry and Sussanna. They **petitioned the Judge Advocate** for the return of goods which were donated to them in Plymouth and shipped to Sydney on the Alexander, which was the largest ship in the first fleet. But when the Alexander arrived in Sydney, the goods had disappeared.

Henry and Sussanna then decided to sue the Captain of the Alexander for the return of their goods. Their **petition** was a brave act because all convicts who had been sentenced to death, even though the sentence had been commuted to transportation, ceased to exist in law and therefore they had no legal rights. But Henry and Sussanna were determined to give it a go.

The outcome of that case was breathtaking. In spite of the fact that they had no legal rights, the Court found in favour of the convicts. In effect, the court had set a precedent. In future, everyone in the colony, including convicts, were to be governed by the rule of law. This was almost a revolutionary decision – and Australia has been the beneficiary of that decision ever since. Henry and Sussanna had made history by this one brave act.

My second episode is one which my Dad always believed to be true. It is that Henry carried Governor Phillip ashore at Sydney Cove and was therefore the first person from the first fleet to set foot in Sydney. I'm sure that everyone here tonight has also been aware of that claim, not knowing whether it was hearsay or fair dinkum.

It is on this issue that I must again draw significantly on the article by Ian Temby. He points out that when Henry's and Sussanna's second child Diana Teale died in 1754, the local Hawkesbury newspaper and indeed the Sydney Morning Herald, each published an **obituary** confirming that Mrs Teale's father, the late Henry Kable, was the **first of Governor Phillip's party** to set foot ashore at Sydney Cove.

Temby then went on to argue that there would have been **First Fleeters alive then** who would have challenged that claim if it were not true - **but they did – not – do – so**. For me, I am now convinced that Henry was, in fact, the first person from the First Fleet to set foot at Sydney Cove in the name of the British Government.

For my third episode, as I further developed my notes for this toast, I was drawn to the role of the turnkey John Simpson and **his** influence on the history of the Kable clan.

His decision to travel in a carriage from Plymouth to London and back, with baby Henry in tow and with the sole objective of obtaining papers from Lord Sydney giving permission for Henry Junior to travel with his parents in the first fleet, was one of determination, courage and overwhelming sympathy for the convicts' predicament.

The fact that Simpson succeeded in doing this was a major achievement and had a permanent influence on all of us here tonight.

Therefore what I would finally like to do this evening, as we raise our glasses to Henry and Sussanna and their children, is to quietly remember John Simpson. He deserves to be acknowledged.

So please charge your glasses and stand as we raise a toast as a gesture of our pride in our **first fleet forebears** - Henry, Sussanna and each of their eleven children.

Please stand.

To Henry, Sussanna and their children!