



## Day 8- Fact Sheet 20

### Tales of the Todd- Read all about it!

# Early Australian Weather Reports

---

---

The Aborigines of Australia have been keen observers of the weather for thousands of years. Special weather events have been part of Dreamtime stories and many ceremonies have been held to tell the stories of the weather and how it has played a role in shaping all life on the planet.

The first written records of the weather - made over a period of time - of Australian weather was recorded by William Dawes of the Australian royal Marines. He was the second Lieutenant on the *Sirrus*, when the colony was founded in 1788.

Dawes began his weather journal at the small weather observatory he built on the western side of Sydney cove, near where the south pylon of the Sydney Harbour bridge now stands and very close to the present Sydney Observatory, which opened in 1858.

Dawes instruments for measuring weather were two thermometers and a barometer. He later obtained a rain gauge and made himself some form of a hydrometer for measuring humidity.

The first notes on the weather conditions in inland Northern Australia were recorded by the ill fated William John Wills, of Bourke and Wills fame. On January 7 1861, with the small group still heading north and in the vicinity of the tropic of Capricorn, Wills wrote "The tremendous gales of wind that we had in the evening and night prevented me from taking a latitude observation ....I found taking out my instruments one of the spare thermometers was broken, and the glass of my aneroid barometer cracked-the latter, I believe, not otherwise injured. This was done by the camel having taken it into his head to roll while the pack was on its back"

On June 25 weak and just a day or so from death Wills continued to make entries in his journal: " night calm, clear and intensely cold, especially towards morning. Near day break, King reported seeing a moon in the East; with a haze of light stretching up from it, he declared it to be quite as large as the moon, and not dim at the edges. I am so weak that any attempt to get a sight of it was out of the question : but I think it must have been Venus in the zodiacal light that he saw, with a corona around her"