Union Jack in the Australian Flag

What is the Union Jack?

First of all, 'jack' means a flag flown at the jack staff on the bow of a ship. The 'union' concerns the combination of the standards of the three patron saints of the United Kingdom, that of St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland, St. Patrick, of Ireland, and St. George, of England. Together, they form the flag of Great Britain.

After all, more than two hundred years have passed since Australia was colonised by the British. And we've been a country in our own right for almost a hundred years. A short walk around most major cities will confirm that many Australians have few family connections with the United Kingdom.

Why is the Union Jack present on our Flag?

At Circular Quay, in Sydney, stands part of the answer to our question.

This flagpole stands on the site where, in 1788, the First Fleet landed in Sydney Cove and the Union Jack (Pre 1801) was raised over Australian soil to mark the beginning of modern settlement by Captain Arthur Phillip RN, the first Governor of New South Wales.

The early pioneer settlers came from the British Isles bringing with them their passion for democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech and parliamentary government. Australia's State and Federal Parliaments were modelled upon the legislative houses of Britain. Another major factor in common was, and still is, the English language. These ideals were embodied in the Union Jack which the local designers felt appropriate for inclusion in the design of a flag for Australia.

One way to look at our national flag is to see the stars of the Southern Cross and the great seven pointed Federal Star as representing our progress while the Union Jack symbolises the principles on which that progress is based.

The 'union' refers to the combination of the standards of the three patron saints of the United Kingdom – St Andrew, patron saint of Scotland, St Patrick, of Ireland and St George of England.