



*Looking down from Garnet's Ridge towards Long Ridge to the left with Friday's Trail going down to Water Valley, and Talaloo's Ridge and Matt's Rocks off to the right. The valley according to old maps is called Johnny Tonina and wandering jew plants are covering the ground in between the tufts of grass*

# PITCAIRN NEWS

## DEM TULL

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ISSUE NO 90

**Kari tull:** The cruise ship season on Pitcairn has been busy, - as soon as they wave goodbye to one cruise ship, the islanders are back in the workshop to create more souvenirs for the eager tourists on the next one. And in between was Christmas, unloading of cargo from the supply ship Claymore 2, working on the alternative harbour project in Tedside, re-fitting and modernizing government buildings etc. etc.

Bounty Day was celebrated in January both on Pitcairn and in Wellington, in commemoration of the mutiny in 1789.

Pictures this time from Brian, Leona, Kim, Daphne, Pawl, Sue, Robert Irving, Basil Williams' family



Another tree in the Auckland Botanic Gardens, which I recognized from Pitcairn, where we call it "Heywood", I guess from the fact that Heywood Christian (1853-1926) brought the first tree to Pitcairn. Pitcairn men and women travelled extensively to Tahiti and other islands on the trading schooners a hundred years ago, and brought back exotic plants. The 'real' name is of course 'brugmansia'. When the Heywood trees at Carol's and Royal's are in full bloom, the flower bells are absolutely stunning

Pitcairn had lots of cruise ships visiting this season, and there is still Albatross and the Marina to come. Two scheduled cruise ship changed their mind and did not stop after all, while the unscheduled Queen Mary cruised by just to have a look and did not stop either.

The Soerlandet, the oldest full rigged tall ship in the world, built in Norway in 1926, with a professional crew of 15 plus students and volunteers from many countries, visited the island for a couple of days in February, some of them staying ashore overnight.



## JOYCE CHRISTIAN 1928 - 2016

Sad news from Wellington on 26<sup>th</sup> February that Joyce had passed away. Born on Pitcairn to Burley and Eleanor Warren, she married Radley Christian in 1953 and they moved to New Zealand many years ago. To the right Joyce with Radley and family in 2003.

Our sympathy to the family.



In January this year we got the sad news that Basil Williams had passed away:

*Dear all on Pitcairn, Basil would surely have said to you how lucky he was to have been able to help you build the new jetty extension and just as that has probably aged somewhat, Basil faded away aged 92. Thankyou for having taken care of my parents while they were with you and bless you all.*

*lots of love Sue, Alison and David*



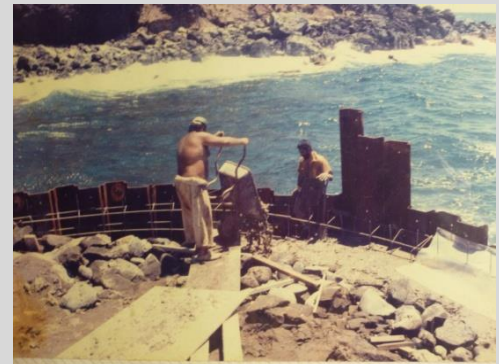
*Jeanne and Basil*



*Basil with Tim and Kari in 2007*

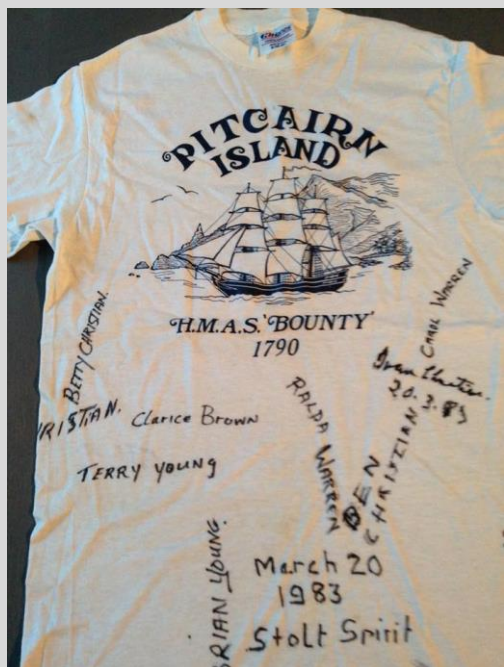
*Basil spent most of 1985 on the island supervising the building of the "nose", which in island fashion is still called "Basil", also supposed to minimize surge in the harbour. He and Jeannie lived in the government hostel, and were part of island life for many months.*

*Top picture at right shows the jetty as it was from 1977 till 1984. The constant waves had eaten in under the jetty, and there were big holes, so repairs and maintenance work was frequent. Middle picture shows pouring of cement to strengthen the additional "nose", and the bottom picture shows the 'new' look of the jetty.*





## THE NOSTALGIC PAGE



A picture of this Pitcairn t-shirt appeared recently on a facebook page for Norwegian Seamen. This guy had been onboard the *Stolt Spirit* which stopped at Pitcairn in March 1983, and had saved this autographed shirt the last 30-odd years as an item to be proud of. His post released a torrent of excited comments (about 80!) from other sailors who had visited Pitcairn, some of them had even been invited ashore for sightseeing and a cuppa, and most of them had of course ended up with a Pitcairn carving or tshirt as well. In those days we had so many ships stopping, most of them Norwegian companies – Wilhelmsen, Essi, Odfjell, Stolt, and they often picked up private cargo for us from Ellesmere Port, UK and Houston, USA, which we had ordered by radio beforehand. Thanks to these friendly ships we also had the opportunity to get a lift to New Zealand.

It was good to see from the positive comments by the Norwegian sailors that they benefited from the visits as much as we on Pitcairn did. Those were the days!!

### A PLANE –

#### A PLANE!!!

way back in the 1980s when we had two airdrops, one time a whole bulldozer in bits and pieces. Some of us had never seen an aeroplane before, and everyone met up in Aute Valley with cameras and great excitement.



Daphne let me copy this picture from her album:

*Two island beauties (who will remain nameless), immigrating to New Zealand close to fifty years ago, did not forget their island heritage. Wonder if they still remember how to hoooola?*

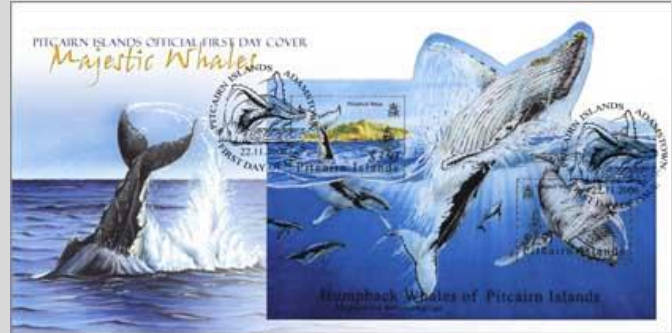


Back issues of Dem Tull 2007-2015 can be found at [www.demtullpitcairn.com](http://www.demtullpitcairn.com)

## “The humpbacks are here!

*Robert Irving wrote this article about the humpback whales in Pitcairn waters.*

This is likely to be the shout in Adamstown upon first seeing a spout go up off Bounty Bay towards the end of May each year. The island’s most charismatic (and certainly largest!) visitors have re-appeared once again to spend a few months in the warm, clear and undisturbed waters around the island. It’s a real wonder to think they swim all the way up from the Antarctic, a journey of just under 5,000 miles, to a pin-prick of a place in the middle of a vast ocean in order to spend their winters frolicking in the island’s waters. And Pitcairn and Henderson are relatively new destinations for them - they’ve only been visiting since the early 1990s – but it’s reassuring to know they’re happy to come back year on year.



*Pitcairn Islands’ Humpback whales stamp issue, 22 November 2006.*

So what do they come for? It’s certainly not for the food, as the islands boast some of the clearest waters in the world with a distinct dearth of plankton, krill or small shoaling fish which make up the bulk of the diet of these ocean giants. No, the females require safe, warm waters in which to give birth and for their young calves to spend the first few months of their lives growing as quickly as possible. Their annual migration requires both males (bulls) and females (cows) to eat as much as they can whilst in Antarctica before embarking on their trek northwards. They then don’t eat for the next 4-5 months during their time in sub-tropical waters, living off their thick layer of energy-providing blubber instead – well, you don’t want to be wearing a thick coat in the tropics now, do you?

Robert Irving and Terry Dawson of the Darwin Initiative project (who, besides assessing fish populations around the islands, are also gathering data on the humpbacks) made another of their visits to Pitcairn in August/September 2015 and had the good fortune of being able to get to Henderson for a few days, accompanying the RSPB change-over of personnel on Henderson. Their visit coincided with a small group of whales, probably about ten or so, which were being carefully monitored by Sue O’Keefe and Pawl Warren, on the island for six months as the support team for the RSPB scientists. As soon as we met up with Sue she started bubbling over with excitement about the whales: “Oh, you should have heard the sound the other night – it made the whole ground under our feet here in camp vibrate – such a loud, low deep wail – it was amazing!” Humpbacks are famous for their haunting songs. Only the male sings, perhaps to attract mates or possibly to see off rivals – it’s not yet known what the songs actually mean. The noise though can be heard under water over 200 km away, meaning that those at Pitcairn can probably hear the songs sung by those at Henderson and vice-versa.

Another thing that Sue told us was great news to our ears too. “We’ve definitely seen a young calf with some of the larger whales. Sometimes they come quite close to shore off the North Beach, so we can get a really good look at them”, she informed us. We were fortunate in that we had arranged with Nigel Jolly on board the *Claymore II* to use their jetboat to drop some baited underwater video cameras to record Henderson’s fish life. The following day when we were approaching our deployment site, a large whale broke the surface just ahead of the jetboat, followed by a much smaller one. We slowed right down and for the next 10 minutes we were entranced by their gracefulness and incredible size! What was particularly pleasing was that we were able to get a good look at the calf, long enough to be able to confirm its length as being about

*Two humpback whales off Henderson's North Beach, taken in 2009 by Pawl Warren.*



4.0 to 4.5 m long – the size one would expect for a calf less than two weeks old. This has allowed us to confirm that it is almost certain that they are using the waters around Henderson (and probably those around Pitcairn too) as birthing grounds. Up until now this was only supposition – it wasn't known if they simply 'had a breather' at these islands after giving birth elsewhere – but now we're 99% sure that that's not the case.

**Factfile:** *A new-born calf will put on weight rapidly. The fat-rich milk they obtain from their mothers allows them to do this - a nursing calf can gain more than 45 kg a day during its first weeks of life. It'll then be a further 10 months or so until it's fully*

*weaned, by which time it'll be a staggering 9 m in length. Whales reach maturity when they are about 11.5 m long (from 5–10 years of age). Males average 14.6 m long but females can reach 18 m and weigh up to 45 tonnes! Females will calve once every three years after a pregnancy of about 12 months. Most of the displaying (such as full breaching, tail-slapping and fin-waving) is likely to be done by males showing off their prowess and indicating their suitability as a mate.*

We have lots of unanswered questions regarding the small breeding groups present at Pitcairn and Henderson. Do the same individuals return each year? [We think this is highly likely, but to prove it we need positive identification of individuals]. Do the two groups interact in some way, with regular 'swopping' or some other socialising? [Again, highly likely, but tracking of individuals would be required to know this for sure]. And do they interact with the groups of whales which visit islands in French Polynesia (particularly Rurutu, Tahiti and Moorea)? Already we have begun gathering data on whale sightings around Pitcairn (thanks to all those who've been filling in their forms!) and we are hoping to start identifying individuals soon from their markings. It's reassuring to know that the Pitcairn Islands Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with other Pacific nations in 2009 to help protect whales and dolphins within its territorial waters. And the newly created Marine Reserve will help too. Let's hope that they continue visiting the islands' waters for many years to come.

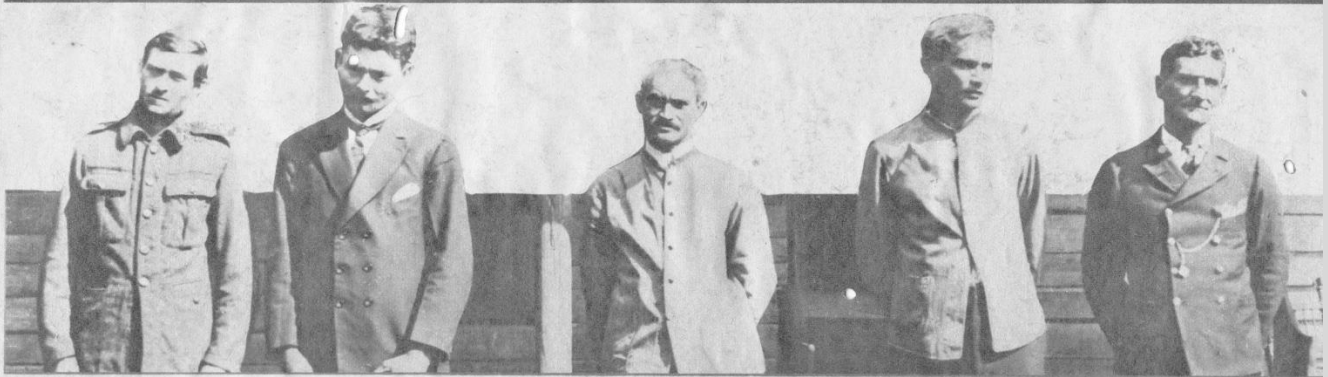


*Two humpbacks photographed off Bounty Bay in 2011 by Robert Irving.*

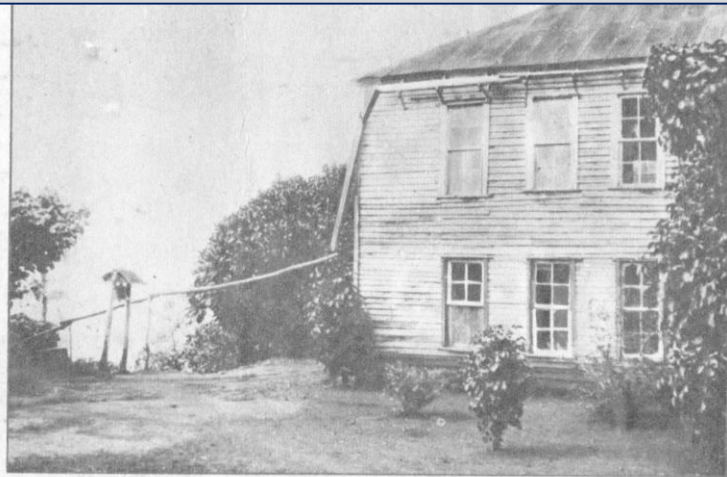




## Seven Men Govern Bounty Descendants



**Island Cabinet** The Affairs Of The Island are conducted by a council of seven members—with a President, who also acts as Chief Magistrate, and a vice-President who is also Government Secretary—subject to the control of the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. Five of the seven members of the council form a cabinet. The council adjudicates in all matters except murder, which comes under the ruling of the High Commissioner.



The Bell shown in this picture was presented to the Pitcairners in 1844 by Captain Stephens of H.M.S. Basilisk. It is rung every day at 9 a.m. to summon the islanders to prayer, and is also tolled when the mail-boat arrives.

The above picture of the island cabinet must be from the period between 1893 and 1904, the only years a president was elected instead of a magistrate or mayor. James Russell McCoy was elected every year except for 1897 and 1904, so he is probably one of the five men in the picture. Gerard Christian was also cabinet member most of those years. Unfortunately there are not many people left today who can identify these men. There is a remarkable absence of beards, which dominated a picture from 1890 of the ruling authorities, and their attire is also quite modern, so it is probably from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century



The two pictures to the left is from the Square, also taken at the beginning of the century. The top one looking eastwards to the old two storey church building, and the bottom one looking across from the church porch to the Square and the old court house where they are distributing incoming mail after one of the monthly visit from the New Zealand Shipping Company (according to the attached notes). The guttering running across from the church roof features in both pictures.



## *BOUNTY DAY CELEBRATION IN WELLINGTON*

Bounty day was celebrated Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January at Waikanae Pools north of Wellington – an all day event in glorious summer weather with swimming, ballplaying, relaxing, reminiscing and eating. All the Pitcairners occupied a large area of the lawn grounds, establishing ourselves under the trees for shade. The pools and jacuzzi were made good use of. The first thing the committee did, was hanging up the Pitcairn flag and displaying the large Bounty model, though we could not burn it according to tradition. And then the setting up the table with pitkern and other weckles for a huge lunch. Taking part was people who had grown up on Pitcairn and left up to 50-60 years ago, their children, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren.



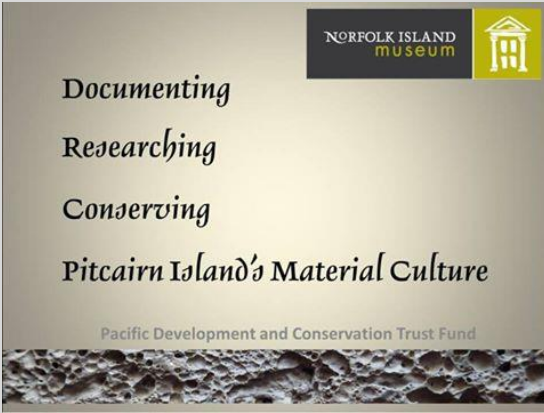
Kim, Roger and Maureen had every reason to be pleased with their planning and arrangement of the celebration at Waikanae. And look at that cake they are cutting up! – iced with a picture of Pitcairn and the Bounty, of course. Before we broke up to go home, we all stood and sang “In the Sweet bye and bye”, and I was impressed that even the children knew the words to the pitkern favourite hymn.





*EXCITING NEWS FROM NORFOLK ISLAND MUSEUM*

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*“Documenting, Researching and Conserving Pitcairn Island’s Material Culture. A Norfolk Island Museum project made possible by the Pacific Development Conservation Trust Fund*

*The aim of this project is to document Pitcairn Island’s material culture that is held primarily within the communities of Norfolk Island and New Zealand. It is important to note we are not collecting the actual material culture but simply capturing stories and providing advice on how to care*

*for it.*

*The decreasing and diaspora population of Pitcairn Island along with an ageing demographic place the islands material culture at risk. The brief for the project specified material in New Zealand and Norfolk Island as this is the residence for most of the Pitcairn diaspora, however we welcome information relating to Pitcairn’s material culture held anywhere in the world.*

*This project provides for a holistic approach to ensure material is identified and documented by this generation for the future of Pitcairn and Norfolk Islanders. Documentation of material and associated knowledge about its cultural contexts, uses and significance will provide a body of material for researchers wherever they may reside, through physical and digital access.*

*It will form a database of information for our communities’ interest in its cultural heritage and provide a wonderful resource for future exhibition development at cultural institutions”.*

This is really terrific news for Pitcairn and Norfolk both, for the old pitkern culture as well as the language is slowly disappearing, and probably forgotten in a few years, except by a few. It is not that many years since Pitcairn school kids got the strap for talking pitkern in school, yet now it is deemed so important that the kids have to be taught it in class. It is the same with the old stories and traditions, which some people still remember, but have not been recorded or written down.



The U.S. currency is just as plentiful on Pitcairn as the New Zealand dollar, for most of our money comes from the cruise ships. The official rate on island for the US dollar has been set by the Admin at NZ\$1.20, and has been the same for a couple of years. In the meantime the rate out in New Zealand has been hovering around NZ\$1.50 the last year, and it pays for islanders to hang on to their US dollars instead of exchanging them at the Government Treasurer's office at a low rate.

The schoolteacher's residence situated above the school house out Pulau has again been renovated, this time to house the resident British Administrator. The first teacher sent by the government moved into the newly built residence out Pulau in 1949, and the Pitcairn teachers and their families have lived there ever since. The teacher will from now on reside in the former Government Hostel in the centre of Adamstown.

I received a fantastic amount of mail after the last issue, which was encouraging and made my day. Thanks to all who showed their appreciation of Dem Tull. Julie would have been chuffed. The November/December issue was my last "regular" issue, but I will produce issues occasionally and send to subscribers. Those on my list who don't want it anymore, please let me know.

Letters to editor, a proper epitaph to the last regular issue in 2016:

*Just a few lines from afar, to give you my appreciation for the work and news you have recorded over these past years. It has been so nice to 'see' so much of Pitcairn life and happenings to someone who can never visit the island..... Still have 69 issues to keep me in touch over the years. A big thank-you.*

*Many thanks for all the work you do in providing us with Dem Tull. It is always great to hear news from back home.*

*Thank you Kari, we have really loved you en Jules dem tull. we will miss it. Please pass on my tah to Timmy es well..*

*Sanks to you and all who bin keep me in touch with Pitkern via Dem Tull.*

*Great job Kari, and all the other contributors. Have enjoyed all the Dem Tulls. It was good to read an independent view of life on Pitcairn.*

*How sad to think Dem Tull is no more.*

*Evening Kari, just to say thank you for "Dem Tull" such enjoyable reading.*

*Thank you Kari and Tim and of course to Julie for all of your caring and effort in the creating of Dem Tull for all of those of us who have no idea what island life is like on such a remote place such as Pitcairn island...I personally have enjoyed the history and the present day tales of Pitcairn and its people that have made this island come alive in the minds of all who have read Dem Tull...*

Hart's all. Ef any yorly wunta tull, tulla Kari in Auckland at [uptibi@hotmail.com](mailto:uptibi@hotmail.com) or Tim in Australia on [bigtimtull@gmail.com](mailto:bigtimtull@gmail.com). Hooray