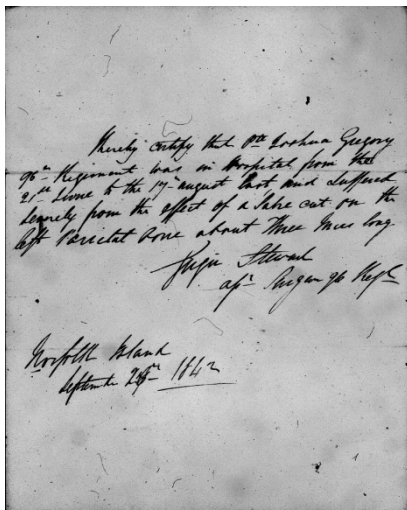


INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION

Early morning, on 21 June 1842, a daring escape attempt was undertaken by twelve convicts aboard the brig *Governor Phillip*. The Norfolk Island Museums and Research Centre are lucky to hold within our collection a copy of the diary of one of the soldiers wounded in the mutiny, Private Joshua Hamlet Gregory of the 96th Regiment (NIM20360), as well as a copy of his medical certificate which details the wounds he received in the scuffle.

The *Governor Phillip* had landed, after significant problems, some of its cargo at Cascade. However it was then forced to make way for the schooner *Coquette* which had arrived from Sydney. During this time, the convicts had been kept aboard the ship so they could start work at daybreak and therefore take advantage of the fair-weather conditions. Shortly after 7am the work party were let out to start unloading the launch, and after seeing that there were only two soldiers and a sergeant on duty the convicts overwhelmed the soldiers and took charge of the ship. The ship's Captain and the rest of the soldiers were trapped below decks but held all of the weaponry except that which was carried by the soldiers on deck, and all the food and water.

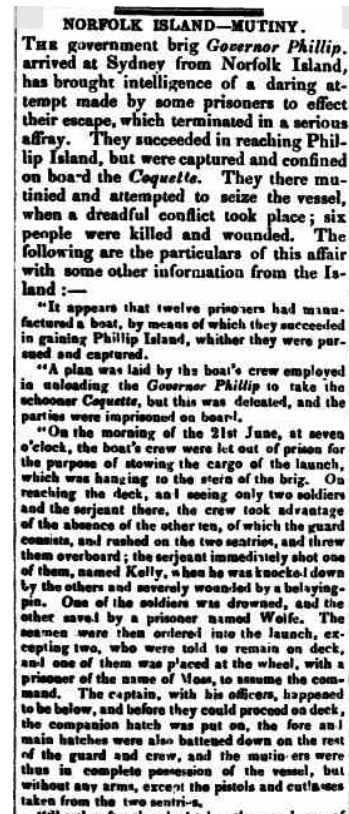


Surgeons Report 1842, Reel 693 4-2583
NI Research Centre

The convicts held the ship for roughly half an hour, before they were overcome and the Captain re-took command.

Five mutineers were killed in the scuffle, two were severely wounded and four later executed in Sydney. Sadly, one soldier drowned and two were wounded, including Private Gregory. Three of the convicts are identified as being buried in the cemetery at Kingston – James Saye/Say, Bartholomew (or Bartley) Kelly and Samuel Jones. A fourth, James/Patrick Bedwell is almost certainly one of the convicts killed in the mutiny and is also buried at the cemetery in Kingston.

Private Gregory was hospitalized on Norfolk Island for two months due to the serious nature of his wounds – his medical certificate states that he suffered from a deep cut approximately three inches long and was in hospital from the day of the mutiny through to 17 August 1842. From his diary, we know he was only 20 years old when the mutiny occurred, and that he was from a 'highly regarded' family with important military connections – his great-grandfather was a General and his great uncle had served with distinction at the Battle of

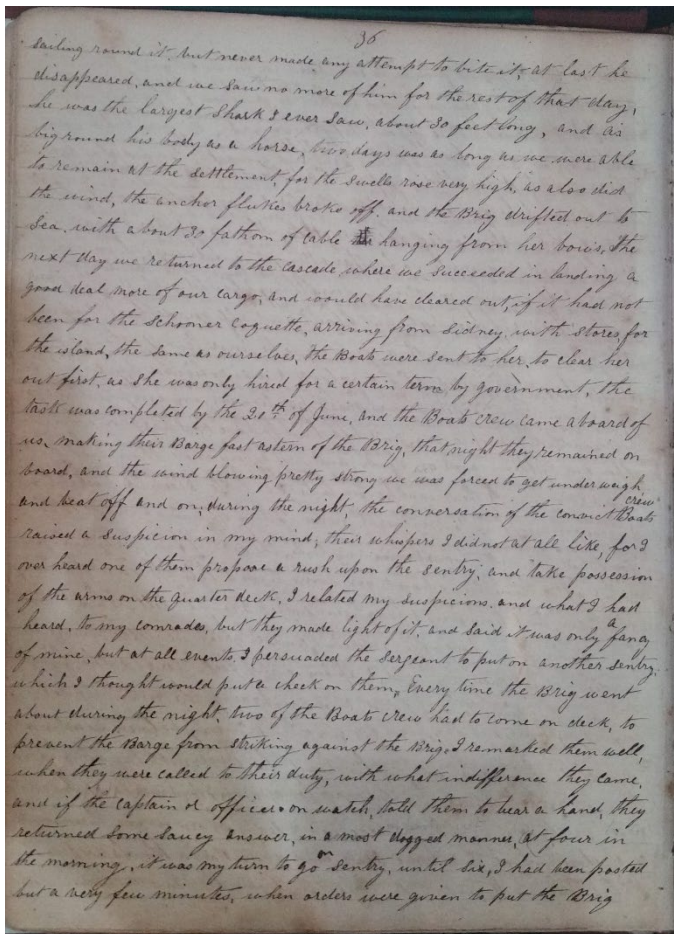


"Norfolk Island Mutiny", *Southern Australian*, 6 September 1842.
(Image courtesy of TROVE, National Library of Australia)

Trafalgar, "in whose arms the renowned Lord Nelson expired". He also speaks extensively about the mutiny in his diary, stating that he had overheard whispers by the convicts the previous night but upon warning his superiors was told that it was 'but a fancy' and to not worry.

Of the mutiny itself, he writes over five pages on the account with some excerpts below:

"... at four in the morning it was my turn to go on sentry until six. I had been posted but a very few minutes, when orders were given to put the brig about. I told two of the convicts to come on deck. Instead of two, four made their appearance. I said "I only called for two and that is all I want, so two of you can go below again", but they seemed to take no notice of what I said, still making their way up the fore hatch. I levelled my pistol at the head of the first of them and said if he moved one step I would blow out his brains. This cooled their mettle... At six o'clock I was relieved by another. On giving up my orders I was most particular in impressing on his mind my suspicion, and told him to have a sharp eye on them..."



Private Gregory continues to describe the scuffle in very detailed terms, having been filled in on what had occurred prior to his waking by a fellow soldier. He tells that the hatch leading between decks had been fastened by the convicts by placing heavy items over the top, but

they eventually broke through the prison and partition that lay between them and the cabin, which gave them a clear run through the lower decks. They attempted to saw through the hatch but Private Gregory reports that the convicts poured boiling water through the gaps, scolding three people badly. He goes on to give a detailed account of how the soldiers and officers received the upper hand and retook the ship, all of which is very interesting reading!

If you would like to read Private Godfrey's account or have any questions about this article, please do not hesitate to contact the Norfolk Island Museums on 23788.

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